

PETER KREEFT

A Summa of the *Summa*

The Essential Philosophical Passages of
St. Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologica*
Edited and Explained for Beginners

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A. Happiness

Question 1

Of Man's Last End¹

In this matter we shall consider first the last² end of human life; and secondly, those things by means of which man may advance towards this end, or stray from the path: for the end is the rule of whatever is ordained to the end. And since the last end of human life is stated to be happiness,³ we must consider (1) the last end in general; (2) Happiness. . . .

FIRST ARTICLE

Whether It Belongs to Man to Act for an End?

Objection 1. It would seem that it does not belong to man to act for an end. For a cause is naturally first. But an end, in its very name, implies something that is last. Therefore an end is not a cause. But that for which a man acts, is the cause of his action; since this preposition *for* indicates a relation of causality. Therefore it does not belong to man to act for an end. . . .

¹ Note the two related but distinct meanings of "end": (1) goal, good, purpose, object-of-desire (*telos*); and (2) term, conclusion, cessation, last-in-time, finish (*finis*). St. Thomas means "end" here in sense (1), for our "last" end is the determinate direction and orientation of all of our life at every moment, not just at the last moment. We love God in life, not just in death.

² The *last* end is considered *first* because it determines everything else in life and everything else in the moral science of life. "The end is the rule of whatever is ordained to the end."

³ "Happiness" (*eudaimonia* in Greek, *felicitas* in Latin) means not merely subjective contentment, or rest of desire, but also real blessedness, the state of possessing the objective good for man. It is contentment, but

I answer that, Of actions done by man those alone are properly called *human*, which are proper⁴ to man as man. Now man differs from irrational animals in this, that he is master of his actions. Wherefore those actions alone are properly called human, of which man is master. Now man is master of his actions through his reason and will; whence, too, the free-will is defined as *the faculty and will of reason*. Therefore those actions are properly called human which proceed from a deliberate will. And if any other actions are found in man, they can be called actions *of a man*, but not properly *human* actions, since they are not proper to man as man.—Now it is clear that whatever actions proceed from a power, are caused by that power in accordance with the nature of its object. But the object of the will is the end and the good. Therefore all human actions must be for an end.

Reply Obj. 1. Although the end be last in the order of execution, yet it is first in the order of the agent's intention. And it is this way that it is a cause. . . .

contentment in the true good. Like bodily health, it has both a subjective and an objective aspect. The word "happiness" in English usually connotes only subjective satisfaction. Moreover, it connotes something dependent on fortune, or chance ("hap"), something that just "happens", like falling in love, rather than something we work at, like charity.

"The last end of human life is stated to be happiness" because all seek it, and seek it as an end, not as a means to any further end, while they seek all other things as means to this end. No one seeks happiness in order to be rich, or powerful, or wise, but people seek riches, or power, or wisdom because they think these will make them happy, in either the subjective sense or in the objective sense (see above).

⁴ Logically "proper"—specific, unique—not *morally* "proper" (right). St. Thomas distinguishes a "human act" (*actus humanus*) from an "act of man" (*actus hominis*). A "human act" is specifically human in quality (e.g., reasoning or choosing); the "acts of a man" also include things like sleeping and growing.

SECOND ARTICLE

Whether It Is Proper to the Rational Nature [Alone] to Act for an End?

On the contrary, The Philosopher proves (*Phys.* ii. 5) that *not only mind but also nature acts for an end*.⁵

I answer that, Every agent, of necessity, acts for an end. For if, in a number of causes ordained to one another, the first be removed, the others must, of necessity, be removed also. Now the first of all causes is the final cause. The reason of which is that matter does not receive form, save in so far as it is moved by an agent; for nothing reduces itself from potentiality to act. But an agent does not move except out of intention⁶ for an end. For if the agent were not determinate to some particular effect, it would not do one thing rather than another: consequently in order that it produce a deter-

⁵ St. Thomas is not saying that nature is in some way conscious. It has no "order of intention". But it does have an "order of execution". Puppies always become dogs, and dogs always have puppies. Heavy bodies on earth always tend to fall, and heat always tends to flow from greater to lesser concentration. There is nothing complex, mysterious, or mystical about the traditional view that nature acts for an end, that there is in nature not only random chance pushing but purposive order pulling from the end, so to speak. It was universal common sense until the seventeenth century and mechanistic physics.

⁶ "Intention", like "certitude", is a word which has come to have an exclusively psychological meaning. Just as "certitude" used to mean any determination or definiteness, rational or not, so "intention" meant simply determination to a specific end, conscious or not. St. Thomas' argument is from the order within the four causes: matter needs form to be part of an actual substance; the formal cause needs an efficient cause to move it to inform matter; and an efficient cause needs a final cause to move it to one end rather than another. The reason for this last point is very simple: see the next sentence after the footnote. The argument assumes only the commonsensical "principle of sufficient reason": that there is always a real reason, a real and adequate "why" for everything, including repeated movement to a definite end (stars shine, rabbits reproduce, stones fall, grass grows). Of course efficient causes "push" things, but why do they "push" them *toward determinate ends*?

minate effect, it must, of necessity, be determined to some certain one, which has the nature of an end. And just as this determination is effected, in the rational nature, by the *rational appetite*, which is called the will; so, in other things, it is caused by their natural inclination, which is called the *natural appetite*.⁷

Nevertheless it must be observed that a thing tends to an end, by its action or movement, in two ways: first, as a thing, moving itself to the end,—as man; secondly, as a thing moved by another to the end, as an arrow tends to a determinate end through being moved by the archer, who directs his action to the end. Therefore those things that are possessed of reason, move themselves to an end; because they have dominion over their actions through their free-will, which is the *faculty of will and reason*. But those things that lack reason tend to an end, by natural inclination, as being moved by another and not by themselves; since they do not know the nature of an end as such, and consequently cannot ordain anything to an end, but can be ordained to an end only by another. For the entire irrational nature is in comparison to God as an instrument to the principal agent, as stated above (I. Q. 22, A. 2 *ad* 4; Q. 103, A. 1 *ad* 3).⁸ Consequently it is proper to the rational nature to tend to an end, as directing (*agens*) and leading itself to the end: whereas it is proper to the irrational nature to tend to an end, as directed or led by another, whether it apprehend the end, as do irrational animals, or do not apprehend it, as is the case of those things which are altogether void of knowledge.⁹ . . .

⁷ "Appetite" is another word that has narrowed in meaning. For St. Thomas it does not necessarily connote consciousness. Gravity, for instance, is a natural "appetite", but without consciousness. There is obviously an analogy between gravity (unconscious attraction) and love (conscious attraction): cf. the last line of *The Divine Comedy*: "the love that moves the sun and all the stars".

⁸ Cf. the fifth "way" in I, 2, 3.

⁹ Man knows the good rationally and in general, and therefore has free will to choose among particular goods. Animals know what is good for them in particular (e.g., their food) but do not freely choose it. They cannot will otherwise, against their instincts or natural inclinations: dogs do not fast. Unconscious nature does not know anything, yet it too works in a determinate way toward determinate ends: plants flower, stones fall, neither flies.

THIRD ARTICLE

Whether Human Acts Are Specified¹⁰ by Their End?

Objection 1. It would seem that human acts are not specified by their end. For the end is an extrinsic cause. But everything is specified by an intrinsic principle. Therefore human acts are not specified by their end. . . .

On the contrary, Augustine says (*De Mor. Eccl. et Manich. ii. 13*): *According as their end is worthy of blame or praise so are our deeds worthy of blame or praise.*

I answer that, . . . acts are called human, inasmuch as they proceed from a deliberate will. Now the object of the will is the good and the end. And hence it is clear that the principle of human acts, in so far as they are human, is the end. . . . And since, as Ambrose says (*Prolog. super Luc.*), *morality is said properly of man*, moral acts properly speaking receive their species from the end, for moral acts are the same as human acts.

Reply Obj. 1. The end is not altogether extrinsic to the act, because it is related to the act as principle or terminus; and it is just this that is essential to an act, viz., to proceed from something . . . and to proceed towards something.¹¹ . . .

¹⁰ I.e., morally specified, as good or evil. St. Thomas' thesis is not self-evident. Kant, for example, denies that an act's moral worth or goodness comes from its end; he claims it comes only from the actor's intention, or motive. St. Thomas is not saying that human (voluntary, moral) acts are specified *only* by their end; he will mention three (really four) distinct moral determinants in Question 18.

¹¹ N.b.: the end (*telos*) is not just the last point (*finis*). The last point on a line is not present to all the other points on the line, but the last end (*telos*) of a journey (e.g., home) is present to every step of the journey as its determining, guiding principle, making it this journey rather than that, i.e., a journey *home* rather than somewhere else.

This is also true of death: it is not only extrinsic and future but also intrinsic and present to our life now, which is a "being-towards-death" (Heidegger only develops the idea already latent in St. Thomas' teleology).

FOURTH ARTICLE

*Whether There Is One Last End of Human Life?*¹²

On the contrary, The Philosopher says (*Metaph.* ii. 2) that to suppose a thing to be indefinite is to deny that it is good.¹³ But the good is that which has the nature of an end. Therefore it is contrary to the nature of an end to proceed indefinitely. Therefore it is necessary to fix one last end.

I answer that, Absolutely speaking, it is not possible to proceed indefinitely in the matter of ends, from any point of view.¹⁴ For in whatsoever things there is an essential order of one to another, if the first be removed, those that are ordained to the first, must of necessity be removed also. Wherefore the Philosopher proves (*Phys.* viii. 5) that we cannot proceed to infinitude in causes of movement, because then there would be no first mover, without which neither can the others move, since they move only through being moved by the first mover. Now there is to be observed a twofold order in ends,—the order of intention, and the order of execution: and in either of these orders there must be something first. For that which is first in the order of intention, is the principle,

¹² The great classical question of the *summum bonum*—what is the last end of human life?—presupposes that there is one, that ends are really arranged in a hierarchy. It is this assumption that the modern mind tends to question; it questions St. Thomas' affirmative answer to this question before it questions his answer to the question whether the *summum bonum* is God.

¹³ N.b.: St. Thomas does not say *infinity* is incompatible with goodness but that *indefiniteness* is. God is infinite (and good) but not indefinite. The god of pantheism is indefinite and therefore not definitely good as vs. evil. He (or rather, it) is both good and evil, or neither good nor evil, or "beyond good and evil".

¹⁴ Parallel to the argument for the existence of a First, uncaused Cause in the order of efficient causality (I, 2, 3, second "way"), we have the argument in the order of final causality: second (caused) causes necessitate a first (uncaused) cause here too, and "first final cause" means "last end".

Because "second" means "dependent on, or ordered to, the first", order is necessarily hierarchical. Insofar as A is ordered to B, A is for B and teleologically dependent on B. Thus without the end (B), there is no means (A), for "the means" means "the means to the end".

as it were, moving the appetite; consequently, if you remove this principle, there will be nothing to move the appetite.¹⁵ . . . Now the principle in the intention is the last end. . . . Consequently, . . . if there were no last end, nothing would be desired. . . .

FIFTH ARTICLE

Whether One Man Can Have Several Last Ends?

On the contrary, That in which a man rests as in his last end, is master of his affections, since he takes therefrom his entire rule of life. Hence of gluttons it is written (*Phil* 3:19): *Whose god is their belly*: viz., because they place their last end in the pleasures of the belly. Now according to *Matthew* 6:24, *No man can serve two masters*, such, namely, as are not ordained to one another. Therefore it is impossible for one man to have several last ends not ordained to one another.

I answer that, It is impossible for one man's will to be directed at the same time to diverse things, as last ends. . . . Because, since everything desires its own perfection, a man desires for his ultimate end, that which he desires as his perfect and crowning good. Hence Augustine (*De Civ. Dei* xix. 1): *In speaking of the end of good we mean now, not that it passes away so as to be no more, but that it is perfected so as to be complete*. It is therefore necessary for the last end so to fill man's appetite, that nothing is left besides it for man to desire. Which is not possible, if something else be required for his perfection. Consequently it is not possible for the appetite so to tend to two things, as though each were its perfect good. . . .

. . . Therefore, just as of all men there is naturally one last end, so the will of an individual man must be fixed on one last end.¹⁶ . . .

¹⁵ Cf. Teilhard de Chardin in *The Divine Milieu*: "The more I consider the matter, the more I see that no one would move his little finger unless motivated, however obscurely, that he was building something definitive: Your kingdom, Lord."

¹⁶ What is true of all men must be true of each man, and what is true objectively and universally ("there is one last end") must be true subjectively and individually ("the will of an individual man must be fixed on one last end"). Free choice does not extend to violating the necessary metaphysical principles of our very essence.

SIXTH ARTICLE

*Whether Man Wills All, Whatsoever He Wills,
for the Last End?*

Objection 1. It would seem that man does not will all, whatsoever he wills, for the last end. For things ordained to the last end are said to be serious matter, as being useful. But jests are foreign to serious matter. Therefore what man does in jest, he ordains not to the last end.

Objection 2. Further, the Philosopher says at the beginning of his *Metaphysics* (i. 2) that speculative science is sought for its own sake. Now it cannot be said that each speculative science is the last end. Therefore man does not desire all, whatsoever he desires, for the last end.

Objection 3. Further, whoever ordains something to an end, thinks of that end. But man does not always think of the last end in all that he desires or does. Therefore man neither desires nor does all for the last end.

On the contrary, Augustine says (*De Civ. Dei* xix. 1): *That is the end of our good, for the sake of which we love other things, whereas we love it for its own sake.*

I answer that, Man must, of necessity, desire all, whatsoever he desires, for the last end. This is evident for two reasons. First, because whatever man desires, he desires it under the aspect of good. And if he desire it, not as his perfect good, which is the last end, he must, of necessity, desire it as tending to the perfect good, because the beginning of anything is always ordained¹⁷ to its completion; as is clearly the case in effects both of nature and of art. Wherefore every beginning of perfection is ordained to complete perfection which is achieved through [attaining] the last end. Secondly, because the last end stands in the same relation in moving the appetite, as the first mover in other movements. Now it is clear that secondary moving causes do not move save inasmuch as they are moved by the first mover. Therefore secondary objects

¹⁷ That is, in objective fact, though not necessarily in subjective, conscious intention. (The point of Objection 3 is true.)

of the appetite do not move the appetite, except as ordained to the first object of the appetite, which is the last end.¹⁸

Reply Obj. 1. Actions done jestingly are not directed to any external end; but merely to the good of the jester,¹⁹ in so far as they afford him pleasure or relaxation. But man's consummate good is his last end.

Reply Obj. 2. The same applies to speculative science; which is desired as the scientist's good, included in complete and perfect good, which is the ultimate end.²⁰

Reply Obj. 3. 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,²¹ even though one's thoughts be not actually directed to the last end. Thus while walking along the road one needs not to be thinking of the end at every step.

¹⁸ The point is commonsensical: we would not put one foot in front of the other unless we wanted to go somewhere.

¹⁹ Wit is a virtue for St. Thomas: "Jokes and plays are words and gestures that are not instructive but merely seek to give lively pleasure. We should enjoy them. They are governed by the virtue of witty gaiety to which Aristotle refers (*Ethics* 1128a1) and which we call pleasantness. A ready-witted man is quick with repartee and turns speech and action to light relief" (II-II, 148, 2). "It is against reason to be burdensome to others, showing no amusement and acting as a wet blanket. Those without a sense of fun, who never say anything ridiculous, and are cantankerous with those who do, these are vicious, and are called grumpy and rude" (II-II, 148, 4) (Thomas Gilby translation).

²⁰ The last end, our ultimate good (which St. Thomas will prove to be God in Question 2) is not *exclusive* of any natural and proper human good, but inclusive of them all. Cf. Augustine, *Confessions* II, 6, par. 2; Anselm, *Proslogion*, last three chapters.

²¹ How is the "virtue" (efficacy) of the intention of the last end "in" every desire? ("In" is perhaps the richest word there is, with the most different meanings.) Not merely potentially, but not actually either (certainly not *consciously*). Dietrich von Hildebrand calls this the "super-actual". Karl Rahner calls it the heart's "fundamental option" or orientation.

SEVENTH ARTICLE

Whether All Men Have the Same Last End?

Objection 1. It would seem that all men have not the same last end. For before all else the unchangeable good seems to be the last end of man. But some turn away from the unchangeable good, by sinning. Therefore all men have not the same last end.

Objection 2. Further, man's entire life is ruled according to his last end. If, therefore, all men had the same last end, they would not have various pursuits in life. Which is evidently false.²²

Objection 3. Further, the end is the term of action. But actions are of individuals. Now although men agree in their specific nature, yet they differ in things pertaining to individuals. Therefore all men have not the same last end.

On the contrary, Augustine says (*De Trin.* xiii. 3) that all men agree in desiring the last end, which is happiness.

I answer that, We can speak of the last end in two ways: first, considering only the [formal] aspect of last end; secondly, considering the thing [content] in which the aspect of last end is realized. So, then, as to the aspect of last end, all agree in desiring the last end: since all desire the fulfilment of their perfection, and it is precisely this fulfilment in which the last end consists, as stated above (A. 5). But as to the thing in which this aspect is realized, all men are not agreed as to their last end: since some desire riches, as their consummate good; some, pleasure; others, something else. Thus to every taste the sweet is pleasant; but to some, the sweetness of wine is most pleasant, to others, the sweetness of honey, or of something similar. Yet that sweet is absolutely the best of all pleasant things, in which he who has the best taste takes most pleasure. In like manner that good is most complete which the man with well-disposed affections desires for his last end.²³

²² This objection can be interpreted as reflecting a typically modern "pluralism"—"different strokes for different folks"—extended even to a pluralism of last ends. The confusion is between *life* and *lifestyle* ("various pursuits in life"), between end and means, between ultimate and proximate.

²³ Thus the good for man is (1) relative and different for different people with regard to its particular content (some desire riches, some wisdom,

Reply Obj. 1. Those who sin turn from that in which their last end really consists: but they do not turn away from the intention of the last end, which intention they mistakenly seek in other things.²⁴

Reply Obj. 2. Various pursuits in life are found among men by reason of the various things in which men seek to find their last end.

Reply Obj. 3. Although actions are of individuals, yet their first principle of action is nature, which tends to one thing, as stated above (A. 5). . . .

etc.), (2) absolute and the same for all in its essential form (all desire happiness), and (3) absolute also with regard to the *right* content, what is truly best for all (God). St. Thomas would answer the typically modern relativist's challenge to (3)—"Who's to judge?"—by saying the wise man, with healthy desires, is the rightful judge. Therefore if your desires are not well ordered, you are not just as qualified to judge as he is, as you imply you are with your rhetorical question "Who's to judge?" (Cf. I-II, 2, 1, Reply 1).

²⁴ Cf. Augustine: "Seek what you seek, but it is not where you seek it." (*Confessions* IV, 12, par. 1). The intention to happiness, fulfillment, and perfection is universal, but the knowledge of where and what it is, is not.

Question 2

Of Those Things in Which Man's Happiness Consists²⁵

FIRST ARTICLE

Whether Man's Happiness Consists in Wealth?

Objection 1. It would seem that man's happiness consists in wealth. For since happiness is man's last end, it must consist in that which has the greatest hold on man's affections. Now this is wealth: for it is written (Qo 10:19): *All things obey money.*²⁶ Therefore man's happiness consists in wealth.

Objection 2. Further, according to Boëthius (*De Consol.* iii), happiness is a state of life made perfect by the aggregate of all good things.

²⁵ This Question (2) is the most masterfully condensed summary of the basic answers which philosophers in their writings and people in their lives have always given to the most important question in life, the question of the *summum bonum*, the greatest good, final end, meaning and purpose of life. I have included an unusually large number of footnotes on this Question not because it is obscure but because it is crucially important. Moses, Solomon, Buddha, Krishna, Confucius, Lao-tzu, St. Paul, St. Augustine, Mohammed, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Bacon, Pascal, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Sartre, Marx—all sages and pseudo-sages answer this question, and their answer colors and determines the rest of their practical philosophy.

²⁶ The ancient version of "Everything has a price tag", or even "Every man has his price." N.b.: the arguments of all three objections are only clues; they find some feature common to the *summum bonum* and wealth. As demonstrations, they commit the fallacy of undistributed middle: the *summum bonum* is *x*, wealth is *x*, therefore wealth is the *summum bonum*. The same is true for most of the Objections in subsequent Articles in this Question.

Now money seems to be the means of possessing all things: for, as the Philosopher says (*Ethic.* v. 5), money was invented, that it might be a sort of guarantee for the acquisition of whatever man desires.²⁷ Therefore happiness consists in wealth.

Objection 3. Further, since the desire for the sovereign good never fails, it seems to be infinite. But this is the case with riches more than anything else; since *a covetous man shall not be satisfied with riches* (Qo 5:9). Therefore happiness consists in wealth.

On the contrary, Man's good consists in retaining happiness rather than in spreading it. But as Boëthius says (*De Consol.* ii), *wealth shines in giving rather than in hoarding: for the miser is hateful whereas the generous man is applauded.* Therefore man's happiness does not consist in wealth.²⁸

I answer that, It is impossible for man's happiness to consist in wealth. For wealth is twofold, as the Philosopher says (*Polit.* i. 3), viz., natural and artificial. Natural wealth is that which serves man as a remedy for his natural wants: such as food, drink, clothing, dwellings, and such like, while artificial wealth is that which is not a direct help to nature, as money, but is invented by the art of man, for the convenience of exchange, and as a measure of things salable.²⁹

²⁷ I.e., money is like an umbrella, over everything. Money can buy anything money can buy. Since it is its universality that seems to qualify it as the *summum bonum*, St. Thomas' reply is that its very universality is deceptive. It can buy only "anything money can buy" (Reply 2); the umbrella is really too small.

²⁸ Money, unlike happiness, is good only when spent, not kept. N.b.: the arguments in the "On the contrary" sections are not *demonstrations* from cause to effect, but often from effect to cause. The real cause or reason why wealth is not the *summum bonum* is given in the "I answer that". The "On the contrary" only points to a clue to the fact that wealth is not happiness, but not the real reason or cause.

When St. Thomas says that happiness, unlike wealth, is good when possessed, not when spread, he does not mean that our happiness is not in fact increased when we make others happy, but that the essential meaning of "happiness" is the satisfaction of an individual's desires. These may and should include the desire to make others happy too.

²⁹ The simple and obvious distinction between natural wealth and artificial wealth (and between natural and artificial anything, such as sex,

Now it is evident that man's happiness cannot consist in natural wealth. For wealth of this kind is sought for the sake of something else, viz., as a support of human nature: consequently it cannot be man's last end, rather is it ordained to man as to its end. Wherefore in the order of nature, all such things are below man, and made for him, according to Psalm 8:8: *Thou hast subjected all things under his feet*.³⁰

And as to artificial wealth, it is not sought save for the sake of natural wealth; since man would not seek it except because, by its means, he procures for himself the necessities of life. Consequently much less can it be considered in the light of the last end.³¹ Therefore it is impossible for happiness, which is the last end of man, to consist in wealth.

Reply Obj. 1. All material things obey money, so far as the

death, and birth control) is largely forgotten, in practice, in a capitalistic and industrial society. In a society like ours, which gives such prominence to artificial wealth, greed is a very great spiritual danger. For the desire for artificial wealth is unlimited, but the desire for natural wealth, however greedy, is always limited (Reply 3). There is never enough money, but there is often enough food. The good society would foster neither riches (of excess artificial wealth) nor poverty (of needed natural wealth).

³⁰ Man is an end, things (wealth) are means. For man to serve things is to reverse the order of reality. St. Thomas here assumes that man is an end, not a means. Yet he is not the final end. In Article 7, "*On the contrary*", he says that man is to be loved not for his own sake (as final end) but for God's sake. God is to be adored, man loved, and things used. Two of the commonest and deadliest errors are to adore man, or to use man and love things.

³¹ This is a good example of the *a minore* argument: if natural wealth is not the *summum bonum* because it is a mere means, not an end, then how much less can artificial wealth be the *summum bonum*, since it is a mere means to this means (natural wealth).

N.b.: St. Thomas takes the candidates for the *summum bonum* in a deliberate order: from the most foolish and external to the least foolish and most internal. Wealth is the farthest of all from happiness, yet it is the most popular candidate for that exalted office (see Objection 1 and Reply). Pleasure is much closer, since it is at least a *property* of happiness, flowing from it (Article 6, "*I answer that*")—though this is not just bodily pleasure.

multitude of fools is concerned, who know no other than material goods, which can be obtained for money. But we should take our estimation of human goods not from the foolish but from the wise: just as it is for a person, whose sense of taste is in good order, to judge whether a thing is palatable.³²

Reply Obj. 2. All things salable can be had for ~~money, not so~~ spiritual things, which cannot be sold. Hence it is written (Prov 17:16): *What doth it avail a fool to have riches, seeing he cannot buy wisdom*.

Reply Obj. 3. The desire for natural riches is not infinite: because they suffice for nature in a certain measure. But the desire for artificial wealth is infinite, for it is the servant of disordered concupiscence, which is not curbed, as the Philosopher makes clear (*Polit.* i. 3). Yet this desire for wealth is infinite otherwise than the desire for the sovereign good. For the more perfectly the sovereign good is possessed, the more it is loved, and other things despised: because the more we possess it, the more we know it. Hence it is written, (Sir 24:29): *They that eat me shall yet hunger*. Whereas in the desire for wealth and for whatsoever temporal goods, the contrary is the case: for when we already possess them, we despise them, and seek others:³³ which is the sense of Our Lord's words (Jn 4:13): *Whosoever drinketh of this water*, by which temporal goods are signified, *shall thirst again*. The reason of this is that we realize more their insufficiency when we possess them: and this very fact shows that they are imperfect, and that the sovereign good does not consist therein.³⁴

³² St. Thomas' answer to the popular skeptical question, "Who's to say?" (cf. n. 23).

³³ N.b.: the same is true of "sex objects" as of money: they are far less desirable once "attained" than when unattained and desired. The true good is just the opposite. St. Thomas would probably say that our society treats sex like money (as a medium of exchange) and money like sex (for under capitalism, money can reproduce itself in interest [usury], which St. Thomas, like most pre-modern Christian, Jewish, and Muslim thinkers, considered unnatural).

³⁴ Thus experience is an honest teacher, especially the experience of failure and unhappiness, as Augustine found in his life (cf. *Confessions*) and many find today.

SECOND ARTICLE

*Whether Man's Happiness Consists in Honors?*³⁵

Objection 1. It would seem that man's happiness consists in honors. For happiness or bliss is *the reward of virtue*, as the Philosopher says (*Ethic.* i. 9). But honor more than anything else seems to be that by which virtue is rewarded, as the Philosopher says (*Ethic.* iv. 3). Therefore happiness consists especially in honor.

Objection 2. Further, that which belongs to God and to persons of great excellence seems especially to be happiness, which is the perfect good. But that is honor, as the Philosopher says (*Ethic.* iv. 3). Moreover, the Apostle says (1 Tim 1:17): *To . . . the only God be honor and glory*. Therefore happiness consists in honor.

Objection 3. Further, that which man desires above all is happiness. But nothing seems more desirable to man than honor: since man suffers loss in all other things, lest he should suffer loss of honor.³⁶ Therefore happiness consists in honor.

On the contrary, Happiness is in the happy. But honor is not in the honored, but rather in him who honors,³⁷ and who offers deference to the person honored, as the Philosopher says (*Ethic.* i. 5). Therefore happiness does not consist in honor.

I answer that, It is impossible for happiness to consist in honor. For honor is given to a man on account of some excellence in him; and consequently it is a sign and attestation of the excellence that is in the person honored.³⁸ Now a man's excellence is in proportion, especially, to his happiness, which is man's perfect good; and to its

³⁵ The ancient version of honor ("high marks" from others) is hierarchical—being honored for being *superior*—while the more usual modern version is egalitarian—being accepted as "one of the crowd". But both versions remain subject to the same arguments here.

³⁶ This Objection, like Objection 1 in Article 1, confuses the *desired* with the *desirable*, or wants with needs.

³⁷ I.e., honor is external and happiness is internal.

³⁸ Working for a grade in a course rather than for wisdom is an example of wrongly reversing the sign and the thing signified. Going on a vacation just to take pictures of it is another. Being good just so that people will honor you, or to "get along with people", is a third, very popular form of the same mistake.

parts, *i.e.*, those goods by which he has a certain share of happiness. And therefore honor can result from happiness, but happiness cannot principally consist therein.

Reply Obj. 1. As the Philosopher says (*ibid.*), honor is not that reward of virtue, for which the virtuous work: but they receive honor from men by way of reward, *as from those who have nothing greater to offer*. But virtue's true reward is happiness itself, for which the virtuous work: whereas if they worked for honor, it would no longer be a virtue, but [the vice of] ambition.

Reply Obj. 2. Honor is due to God and to persons of great excellence as a sign of attestation of excellence already existing: not that honor makes them excellent.

Reply Obj. 3. That man desires honor above all else, arises from his natural desire for happiness, from which honor results, as stated above. Wherefore man seeks to be honored especially by the wise, on whose judgment he believes himself to be excellent or happy.³⁹

THIRD ARTICLE

*Whether Man's Happiness Consists in Fame or Glory?*⁴⁰

Objection 1. It would seem that man's happiness consists in glory. For happiness seems to consist in that which is paid to the saints for the trials they have undergone in the world. But this is glory: for the Apostle says (Rom 8:18): *The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us*. Therefore happiness consists in glory.

³⁹ Even in terms of how men *do* behave, much less how they *should* behave, they show that they do not pursue honor as the *summum bonum*, since if they did, it would not matter who gave them the honor. The fact that they want to be honored by the wise, who know the truth, rather than fools, means they want to be honored for being truly happy (*i.e.*, objectively good, blessed, worthy of honor).

⁴⁰ Though "honor" and "fame" are similar, they are not identical. We can be honored (by a few) without being famous (to the wider world), or famous without being honored (if the fame is negative or neutral in value). "Fame" here, however, is positive: honor multiplied, quantity added to quality (see "*I answer that*", second sentence).

Objection 2. Further, good is diffusive of itself, as stated by Dionysius (*Div. Nom.* iv.). But man's good is spread abroad in the knowledge of others by glory more than by anything else: since, according to Ambrose [Augustine, *Contra Maxim. Arian.* ii. 13], glory consists in *being well known and praised*. Therefore man's happiness consists in glory [cf. n. 35].

Objection 3. Further, happiness is the most enduring good. Now this seems to be fame or glory; because by this men attain to eternity after a fashion. Hence Boëthius says (*De Consol.* ii): *You seem to beget unto yourselves eternity, when you think of your fame in future time.* Therefore man's happiness consists in fame or glory.

On the contrary, Happiness is man's true good. But it happens that fame or glory is false:⁴¹ for as Boëthius says (*De Consol.* iii), *many owe their renown to the lying reports spread among the people. Can anything be more shameful? For those who receive false fame, must needs blush at their own praise.* Therefore man's happiness does not consist in fame or glory.

I answer that, Man's happiness cannot consist in human fame or glory. For glory consists in *being well known and praised*, as Ambrose [Augustine, —*Contra Maxim. Arian.* ii. 13] says. Now the thing known is related to human knowledge otherwise than to God's knowledge: for human knowledge is caused by the things known, whereas God's knowledge is the cause of the things known.⁴² Wherefore the perfection of human good, which is called happiness, cannot be caused by human knowledge: but rather human knowledge of another's happiness proceeds from, and, in a fashion, is caused by, human happiness itself, inchoate or perfect. Consequently man's happiness cannot consist in fame or glory.

On the other hand, man's good depends on God's knowledge as

⁴¹ Note the use of "true" and "false" here not as characterizing propositions but realities, as authentic and inauthentic (cf. I, 16, "*I answer that*").

⁴² God caused the universe by knowing it into existence, i.e., by uttering the mental word, according to Genesis. Things exist, and are *what* they are, because God knows them as such (e.g., dogs are doggy because God "thought them up"). Human knowledge is similar in creative art; but in science and in common sense, human knowledge is caused by and conforms to its object: we think "the sky is blue" because the sky is blue. This metaphysical principle entails the conclusion that fame cannot

its cause. And therefore man's beatitude depends, as on its cause, on the glory which man has with God;⁴³ according to Psalm 90:15, 16: *I will deliver him, and I will glorify him; I will fill him with length of days, and I will show him my salvation.*

Furthermore, we must observe that human knowledge often fails, especially in contingent singulars, such as are human acts. For this reason human glory is frequently deceptive. But since God cannot be deceived, His glory is always true; hence it is written (2 Cor 10:18): *He . . . is approved . . . whom God commendeth.*

Reply Obj. 1. The Apostle speaks, then, not of the glory which is with men, but of the glory which is from God, with His Angels. Hence it is written (Mk 8:38): *The Son of Man shall confess him in the glory of His Father, before His angels.*

Reply Obj. 2. A man's good which, through fame or glory, is in the knowledge of many, if this knowledge be true, must needs be derived from good existing in the man himself: and hence it presupposes perfect or inchoate happiness. But if the knowledge be false, it does not harmonize with the thing: and thus good does not exist in him who is looked upon as famous. Hence it follows that fame can nowise make man happy.

Reply Obj. 3. Fame has no stability; in fact, it is easily ruined by false report. And if sometimes it endures, this is by accident. But happiness endures of itself, and for ever.

FOURTH ARTICLE

*Whether Man's Happiness Consists in Power?*⁴⁴

Objection 1. It would seem that happiness consists in power. For all things desire to become like to God, as to their last end and first beginning. But men who are in power seem, on account of the

cause happiness, since fame is a form of human knowledge, and human knowledge does not cause its object but is caused by it.

⁴³ This praise and glory from God is an ingredient in supreme happiness (1) because God's knowledge causes reality rather than reflecting it, and (2) because each of the inadequate candidates for happiness is included, transformed, and perfected in true happiness as an ingredient (cf. n. 20).

⁴⁴ What modern thinkers usually mean by "freedom" comes under this heading (cf. especially *Objection 3*).

similarity of power, to be most like to God:⁴⁵ hence also in Scripture they are called *gods* (Ex 22:28),—*Thou shalt not speak ill of the gods*. Therefore happiness consists in power.

Objection 2. Further, happiness is the perfect good. But the highest perfection for man is to be able to rule others; which belongs to those who are in power. Therefore happiness consists in power.

Objection 3. Further, since happiness is supremely desirable, it is contrary to that which is before all to be shunned. But, more than aught else, men shun servitude, which is contrary to power. Therefore happiness consists in power.

On the contrary, Happiness is the perfect good. But power is most imperfect. For as Boëthius says (*De Consol.* iii), *the power of man cannot relieve the gnawings of care, nor can it avoid the thorny path of anxiety*; and further on: *Think you a man is powerful who is surrounded by attendants, whom he inspires with fear indeed, but whom he fears still more?*⁴⁶ Therefore happiness does not consist in power.

I answer that, It is impossible for happiness to consist in power; and this for two reasons. First because power has the nature of principle, as is stated in *Metaph.* v. 12, whereas happiness has the nature of last end.—Secondly, because power has relation to [is open to either] good and evil: whereas happiness is man's proper and perfect good. Wherefore some happiness might consist in the good use of power, which is by virtue, rather than in power itself.

Now four general reasons may be given to prove that happiness consists in none of the foregoing external goods. First, because, since happiness is man's supreme good, it is incompatible with any evil.⁴⁷ Now all the foregoing can be found both in good and in evil men.—Secondly, because, since it is the nature of happiness to *satisfy of itself*, as stated in *Ethic.* i. 7, having gained happiness, man cannot lack any needful good. But after acquiring any one of the foregoing, man may still lack many goods that are necessary to

⁴⁵ N.b.: we spontaneously think of this attribute before any other, even goodness, for we call Him "*Almighty God*", but use "*Good God*" as a mere expletive!

⁴⁶ Cf. Hegel's famous "master-slave dialectic" (the master is really the enslaved) and the maxim "Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown."

⁴⁷ Note the difference between (true, objective) *happiness* and mere (subjective) *contentment* here.

him; for instance, wisdom, bodily health, and such like.—Thirdly, because, since happiness is the perfect good, no evil can accrue to anyone therefrom. This cannot be said of the foregoing: for it is written (Qo 5:12) that *riches* are sometimes *kept to the hurt of the owner*; and the same may be said of the other three.—Fourthly, because man is ordained to happiness through principles that are in him; since he is ordained thereto naturally. Now the four goods mentioned above are due rather to external causes, and in most cases to fortune [chance]; for which reason they are called goods of fortune.⁴⁸ Therefore it is evident that happiness nowise consists in the foregoing.

Reply Obj. 1. God's power is His goodness:⁴⁹ hence He cannot use His power otherwise than well. But it is not so with men. Consequently it is not enough for man's happiness, that he become like God in power, unless he become like Him in goodness also.

Reply Obj. 2. Just as it is a very good thing for a man to make good use of power in ruling many, so is it a very bad thing if he makes a bad use of it.⁵⁰ And so it is that power is [open] towards good and evil.

Reply Obj. 3. Servitude is a hindrance to the good use of power: therefore is it that men naturally shun it; not because man's supreme good consists in power.

FIFTH ARTICLE

*Whether Man's Happiness Consists in Any Bodily Good?*⁵¹

Objection 1. It would seem that man's happiness consists in bodily goods. For it is written (Sir 30:16): *There is no riches above the*

⁴⁸ Note how this shallow error is implicitly at the root of the English word "happiness", which derives from "hap" (chance or fortune).

⁴⁹ For all of God's attributes are one with each other, since they are all one with His essence (cf. I, 3, 7).

⁵⁰ Cf. Lord Acton's maxim, "All power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." (Only God is incorruptible.)

⁵¹ *Pleasure* is considered in Article 6, not the Article on "bodily goods" (5), because St. Thomas means by "bodily goods" what is objectively good for the body—essentially, health—rather than subjective feelings of enjoyment.

*riches of the health of the body.*⁵² But happiness consists in that which is best. Therefore it consists in the health of the body. . . .

On the contrary, Man surpasses all other animals in regard to happiness. But in bodily goods he is surpassed by many animals; for instance, by the elephant in longevity, by the lion in strength, by the stag in fleetness.⁵³ Therefore man's happiness does not consist in goods of the body.

I answer that, It is impossible for man's happiness to consist in the goods of the body; and this for two reasons. First, because, if a thing be ordained to another as to its end, its last end cannot consist in the [mere] preservation of its being. Hence a captain does not intend as a last end, the preservation of the ship entrusted to him, since a ship is ordained to something else as its end, viz., to navigation.⁵⁴ Now just as the ship is entrusted to the captain that he may steer its course, so man is given over to his will and reason; according to Sirach 15:14; *God made man from the beginning and left him in the hand of his own counsel*. Now it is evident that man is ordained to something as his end: since man is not the supreme good.⁵⁵ Therefore the last end of man's reason and will cannot be the preservation of man's being.

Secondly, because, granted that the end of man's will and reason be the preservation of man's being, it could not be said that the end

⁵² To quote still another maxim, "If you have your health, you have everything." The plethora of maxims relevant to this Question shows that it is a question most men have thought about; in fact, it is probably the most popular of all the questions philosophers ask, since it is the most practical for everyone.

⁵³ Thus a trip to the zoo proves that man's *summum bonum* is not bodily good. The argument is extrinsic and does not reveal the real reason, as does the "*I answer that*"; but it is a valid argument. The first premise means we can be more deeply and truly happy than any animal. What ape can fall in love (as distinct from lust), or weep with joy at a symphony? This also shows the difference between happiness and contentment: the lower the animal, the more merely content it is. Slugs are more content than cats, cats than humans.

⁵⁴ St. Thomas means by "navigation" not just consulting navigational charts but actually sailing.

⁵⁵ Cf. Article 7 for a proof of this point.

of man is some good of the body. For man's being consists in soul and body; and though the being of the body depends on the soul, yet the being of the human soul depends not on the body, as shown above (I, Q. 75, A. 2); and the very body is for the soul, as matter for its form, and the instruments for the man that puts them into motion, that by their means he may do his work. Wherefore all goods of the body are ordained to the goods of the soul, as to their end.⁵⁶ Consequently happiness, which is man's last end, cannot consist in goods of the body.

Reply Obj. 1. Just as the body is ordained to the soul, as its end, so are external goods ordained to the body itself. And therefore it is with reason that the good of the body is preferred to external goods, which are signified by *riches*, just as the good of the soul is preferred to all bodily goods.⁵⁷ . . .

SIXTH ARTICLE

Whether Man's Happiness Consists in Pleasure?

Objection 1. It would seem that man's happiness consists in pleasure. For since happiness is the last end, it is not desired for something else, but other things for it. But this answers to pleasure more than to anything else: *for it is absurd to ask anyone what is his motive in wishing to be pleased* (*Ethic.* x. 2). Therefore happiness consists principally in pleasure and delight [cf. n. 35]. . . .

Objection 3. Further, since desire is for good, it seems that what all desire is best. But all desire delight;⁵⁸ both wise and foolish, and

⁵⁶ Contrast Hobbes, or any materialist, for whom the reverse is true: the soul is a mere servant to the body. Hobbes says that reason is "the scout for the senses".

⁵⁷ The eight Articles here are arranged in a hierarchical order, a scale of values, which is not merely St. Thomas' personal preference. Such an objective hierarchy is a practical necessity to all intelligent moral choices, for most choices are not between a good and an evil but between two competing goods.

⁵⁸ Cf. II-II, 35, 4, Reply 2: "No one can live without delight, and that is why a man deprived of spiritual joy goes over to carnal pleasures" (Gilby translation).

even irrational creatures. Therefore delight is the best of all. Therefore happiness, which is the supreme good, consists in pleasure.

On the contrary, Boëthius says (*De Consol.* iii): *Any one that chooses to look back on his past excesses, will perceive that pleasures [typically] have a sad ending: and if they can render a man happy, there is no reason why we should not say that the very beasts are happy too.*⁵⁹

I answer that, Because bodily delights are more generally known, the name of pleasure has been appropriated to them (*Ethic.* vii. 13), although other delights excel them:⁶⁰ and yet happiness does not consist in them. Because in every thing, that which pertains to its essence is distinct from its proper accident: thus in man it is one thing that he is [by essence] a mortal rational animal, and another that he [by proper (universal and necessary) accident] is a risible [able to laugh] animal. We must therefore consider that every delight is a proper accident resulting from happiness, or from some part of happiness; since the reason that a man is delighted is that he has some fitting good, either in reality, or in hope, or at least in memory. Now a fitting good, if indeed it be the perfect good, is precisely man's happiness: and if it is imperfect, it is a share of happiness, either proximate, or remote, or at least apparent. Therefore it is evident that neither is delight, which results from the perfect good, the very essence of happiness, but something resulting therefrom as its proper accident.⁶¹ . . .

⁵⁹ Another indication of how far the ancients were from the moderns on happiness: if *eudaimonia*, or *makarios* (in Greek), or *felicitas*, or *beatitudo* (in Latin) meant mere feelings of contentment, this argument would be unintelligible.

⁶⁰ As Plato pointed out (*Republic*, Bk. 9), all who have experienced both the greatest bodily delights and the greatest spiritual delights testify to the same results of this dual experiment: that the soul can experience far greater pleasure than the body. (It can experience far greater suffering, too.) All who doubt this simply prove they lack the experience and are in no position to judge.

⁶¹ The essence is the cause of the accident, and the cause cannot be identical with the effect. *Because* a triangle is a three-sided enclosed plane figure, it must have 180 degrees in its interior angles. *Because* man is a rational animal, he can laugh, pray, sing, etc. And *because* a man really possesses his fitting good, his end, he is pleased and rejoices. Pleasure is

Reply Obj. 1. . . . Delight . . . is nothing else than the appetite's rest in good: thus . . . just as good is desired for itself, so delight is desired for itself and not for anything else, if the preposition *for* denote the final cause. But if it denote the formal . . . cause, thus delight is desirable for something else, *i.e.*, for the good, which is the object of that delight, and . . . gives it its form: for the reason that delight is desired is that it is rest in the thing desired. . . .

Reply Obj. 3. All desire delight in the same way as they desire good: and yet they desire delight by reason of the good and not conversely, as stated above (*Reply 1*). Consequently it does not follow that delight is the supreme and essential good, but that every delight results from some good, and that some delight results from that which is the essential and supreme good.

SEVENTH ARTICLE

Whether Some Good of the Soul Constitutes Man's Happiness?

Objection 3. Further, perfection is something belonging to that which is perfected. But happiness is a perfection of man. Therefore happiness is something belonging to man. But it is not something belonging to the body, as shown above (A. 5). Therefore it is something belonging to the soul; and thus it consists in goods of the soul.

On the contrary, As Augustine says (*De Doctr. Christ.* i. 22), *that which constitutes the life of happiness is to be loved for its own sake*. But man is not to be loved for his own sake, but whatever is in man is to be loved for God's sake.⁶² Therefore happiness consists in no good of the soul.

I answer that, As stated above (Q. 1, A. 8), the end is twofold:

caused by the good, or part of the good, or a remembered or anticipated good, or an apparent good; therefore pleasure is not the good itself. We have found a proper effect of the *summum bonum*—it will always cause joy—but we have not yet found the *summum bonum* itself.

⁶² St. Thomas does not mean man is a means to be used rather than an end to be loved, but that the ultimate reason man is to be loved is not himself but God. For God is (1) man's exemplary formal cause: man is made in God's image. One loves the image because of the original, not

namely, the thing itself, which we desire to attain, and the use, namely, the attainment or possession of that thing. If, then, we speak of man's last end, as to the thing itself which we desire as last end, it is impossible for man's last end to be the soul itself or something belonging to it. Because the soul, considered in itself, is as something existing in potentiality: for it becomes knowing actually, from being potentially knowing; and actually virtuous, from being potentially virtuous. Now since potentiality is for the sake of act as for its fulfilment, that which in itself is in potentiality cannot be the last end. Therefore the soul itself cannot be its own last end.⁶³ . . .

But if we speak of man's last end, as to the attainment or possession thereof, or as to any use whatever of the thing itself desired as an end, thus does something of man, in respect of his soul, belong to his last end: since man attains happiness through his soul. Therefore the thing itself which is desired as end, is that which constitutes happiness, and makes man happy; but the attainment of this thing is called happiness. Consequently we must say that happiness is something belonging to the soul; but that which constitutes happiness is something outside the soul. . . .

Reply Obj. 3. 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, as stated above.

EIGHTH ARTICLE

Whether Any Created Good Constitutes Man's Happiness?

Objection 3. Further, man is made happy by that which lulls [satisfies] his natural desire. But man's natural desire does not reach out to a good surpassing his capacity.⁶⁴ Since then man's capacity

vice versa. And (2) God is man's first efficient cause, his Creator. (3) God is also man's final cause, *summum bonum*, or ultimate end, not vice versa.

⁶³ If the soul were its own end, this would be as if a moving arrow were its own target.

⁶⁴ St. Thomas, following St. Augustine, disagrees with this premise

does not include that good which surpasses the limits of all creation, it seems that man can be made happy by some created good.⁶⁵ Consequently some created good constitutes man's happiness.

On the contrary, Augustine says (*De Civ. Dei* xix. 26): *As the soul is the life of the body, so God is man's life of happiness: of Whom it is written: "Happy is that people whose God is the Lord"* (Ps 143:15).

I answer that, It is impossible for any created good to constitute man's happiness. For happiness is the perfect good, which lulls [satisfies] the appetite altogether; else it would not be the last end, if something yet remained to be desired. Now the object of the will, i.e., of man's appetite, is the universal good; just as the object of the intellect is the universal true. Hence it is evident that naught can lull man's will, save the universal good.⁶⁶ This is to be found, not in any creature, but in God alone; because every creature has goodness by participation. Wherefore God alone can satisfy the will of man, according to the words of Psalm 102:5: *Who satisfieth thy desire with good things.* Therefore God alone constitutes man's happiness. . . .

Reply Obj. 3. Created good is not less than that good of which man is capable, as of something intrinsic and inherent to him: but it is less than the good of which he is capable, as of an object, and which is infinite. And the participated good which is in an angel, and in the whole universe, is a finite and restricted good.

(cf. *Confessions* 1, 1: "Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee"). Whether it is to be called a natural desire or a supernatural desire, there is in us an inherent desire for God.

⁶⁵ Another maxim: "Know then thyself; presume not God to scan. The proper study of mankind is man" (Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Man*). C. S. Lewis replies, "The proper study of mankind is everything."

⁶⁶ N.b.: St. Thomas does not say universal *goodness*, but the universal *good*. God might be called a "concrete universal" rather than either an abstract universal or a concrete particular.

Thirdly, it is again evident, from the fact that in the contemplative life man has something in common with things above him, viz., with God and the angels, to whom he is made like by happiness. But in things pertaining to the active life, other animals also have something in common with man, although imperfectly.

Therefore the last and perfect happiness, which we await in the life to come, consists entirely in contemplation. But imperfect happiness, such as can be had here, consists first and principally in contemplation, but secondarily, in an operation of the practical intellect directing human actions and passions, as stated in *Ethic.* x. 7, 8. . . .

SIXTH ARTICLE

*Whether Happiness Consists in the Consideration of Speculative Sciences?*⁷¹

On the contrary, It is written (Jer 9:23): *Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom:* and this is said in reference to speculative sciences. Therefore man's final happiness does not consist in the consideration of these.

I answer that, As stated above (A. 2 ad 4), man's happiness is twofold, one perfect, the other imperfect. And by perfect happiness we are to understand that which attains to the true notion of happiness; and by imperfect happiness that which does not attain thereto, but partakes of some particular likeness of happiness. Thus perfect prudence is in man, with whom is the idea of things to be done; while imperfect prudence is in certain irrational animals, who are possessed of certain particular instincts in respect of works similar to works of prudence.

Accordingly perfect happiness cannot consist essentially in the consideration of speculative sciences. To prove this, we must observe that the consideration of a speculative science does not

⁷¹ Though happiness is an operation of the speculative *intellect*, it is not a speculative *science*. It is knowing God (Article 8), not knowing philosophical and theological truths *about* God, for these truths that we can know are severely limited, dependent as they are on sense experience as the beginning of all human knowing.

extend beyond the scope of the principles of that science: since the entire science is virtually contained in its principles. Now the first principles of speculative sciences are received through the senses, as the Philosopher clearly states at the beginning of the *Metaphysics* (i. 1), and at the end of the *Posterior Analytics* (ii. 15). Wherefore the entire consideration of speculative sciences cannot extend farther than knowledge of sensibles can lead. . . .

EIGHTH ARTICLE

Whether Man's Happiness Consists in the Vision of the Divine Essence?

On the contrary, It is written (1 Jn 3:2): *When He shall appear, we shall be like to Him; and (Vulg., because) we shall see Him as He is.*

I answer that, Final and perfect happiness can consist in nothing else than the vision of the Divine Essence. To make this clear, two points must be observed. First, that man is not perfectly happy, so long as something remains for him to desire and seek: secondly, that the perfection of any power is determined by the nature of its object. Now the object of the intellect is *what a thing is*, i.e., the essence of a thing, according to *De Anima* iii. 6. Wherefore the intellect attains perfection, in so far as it knows the essence of a thing. . . . Consequently, when man knows an effect, and knows that it has a cause, there naturally remains in man the desire to know about that cause, *what it is*. And this desire is one of wonder, and causes inquiry, as is stated in the beginning of the *Metaphysics* (i. 2). For instance, if a man, knowing the eclipse of the sun, consider that it must be due to some cause, and know not what that cause is, he wonders about it, and from wondering proceeds to inquire. Nor does this inquiry cease until he arrive at a knowledge of the essence of the cause.

If therefore the human intellect, knowing the essence of some created effect, knows no more of God than *that He is* . . . it is not yet perfectly happy. Consequently, for perfect happiness the intellect needs to reach the very Essence of the First Cause. And thus it will have its perfection through union with God as with that object, in which alone man's happiness consists, as stated above (AA. 1, 7; Q. 2, A. 8). . . .

Question 5

Of the Attainment of Happiness

FIRST ARTICLE

*Whether Man Can Attain Happiness?*⁸⁸

I answer that, Happiness is the attainment of the Perfect Good. Whoever, therefore, is capable of the Perfect Good can attain Happiness. Now, that man is capable of the Perfect Good, is proved both because his intellect can apprehend the universal and perfect good, and because his will can desire it. And therefore man can attain Happiness.⁸⁹—This can be proved again from the fact that man is capable of seeing God, as stated in the First Part (Q. 12, A. 1): in which vision, as we stated above (Q. 3, A. 8) man's perfect Happiness consists. . . .

SECOND ARTICLE

Whether One Man Can Be Happier Than Another?

Objection 3. Further, since Happiness is *the perfect and sufficient good* (*Ethic.* i. 7) it brings rest to man's desire. But his desire is not at rest, if he yet lacks some good that can be got. And if he lack

⁸⁸ The answer is far from obvious, not only to modern pessimists like Freud (cf. *Civilization and Its Discontents*) and Sartre (cf. *Nausea*), but to ancient sages like Ecclesiastes ("vanity of vanities") and perhaps even to Aristotle, who in *Ethics* I, 10 seems to vacillate uncertainly between pessimism ("Call no man happy until he is dead") and optimism, because he vacillates between partial reliance on the goods of fortune, and detachment from them à la Socrates.

⁸⁹ The assumption is that what we naturally know, we naturally desire,

nothing that he can get, there can be no still greater good. Therefore either man is not happy; or, if he be happy, no other Happiness can be greater.

On the contrary, It is written (Jn 14:2): *In My Father's house there are many mansions*; which, according to Augustine (*Tract.* lxvii. in Joan.) signify *the diverse dignities of merits in the one eternal life*.⁹⁰ But the dignity of eternal life [the degree of] which is given according to merit, is Happiness itself. Therefore there are diverse degrees of Happiness, and Happiness is not equally in all.

I answer that, As stated above (Q. 1, A. 8; Q. 2, A. 7), Happiness implies two things, to wit, the last end itself, *i.e.*, the Sovereign Good; and the attainment or enjoyment of that same Good. As to that Good itself, Which is the object and cause of Happiness, one Happiness cannot be greater than another, since there is but one Sovereign Good, namely, God, by enjoying Whom, men are made happy.—But as to the attainment [degree of penetration into] or enjoyment of this Good, one man can be happier than another; because the more a man enjoys this Good the happier he is. Now, that one man enjoys God more than another, happens through his being better disposed or ordered to the enjoyment of Him. And in this sense one man can be happier than another.⁹¹ . . .

Reply Obj. 3. None of the Blessed lacks any desirable good; since they have the Infinite Good Itself, Which is *the good of all good*, as Augustine says (*Enarr.* in Ps cxxxiv). But one is said to be happier than another, by reason of diverse participation of the same good. . . .

and what we naturally desire, it is possible for us to attain. Nature never gives desires to any creature without giving a corresponding attainable object. Fish do not desire to fly or birds to swim; men do not desire to hatch eggs, or birds to philosophize.

⁹⁰ We attain Heaven by God's grace, but we attain our place or level in Heaven (our degree of ability to participate in grace) by merit, by the works of love, which dig in us a deeper place for more of God to fill.

⁹¹ The gas tank of every heavenly car is totally filled with the highest octane gasoline, but some cars have bigger tanks than others.

THIRD ARTICLE

Whether One Can Be Happy in This Life?

On the contrary, It is written (Job 14:1): *Man born of a woman, living for a short time, is filled with many miseries.* But Happiness excludes misery. Therefore man cannot be happy in this life.

I answer that, A certain participation of Happiness can be had in this life: but perfect and true Happiness cannot be had in this life.⁹² This may be seen from a twofold consideration.

First, from the general notion of happiness. For since happiness is a *perfect and sufficient good*, it excludes every evil, and fulfils every desire. But in this life every evil cannot be excluded. For this present life is subject to many unavoidable evils: to ignorance on the part of the intellect, to inordinate affection on the part of the appetite, and to many penalties on the part of the body; as Augustine sets forth in *De Civ. Dei* xix. 4. Likewise neither can the desire for good be satiated in this life. For man naturally desires the good, which he has, to be abiding. Now the goods of the present life pass away; since life itself passes away, which we naturally desire to have, and would wish to hold abidingly, for man naturally shrinks from death. Wherefore it is impossible to have true Happiness in this life.⁹³

⁹² The reason why St. Thomas gives a primarily negative answer to this question, with a qualification—a “yes” only regarding “a certain participation in happiness”—rather than a primarily positive answer with a qualification like “but of course this is not perfect happiness”, is because he judges the imperfect by the perfect rather than vice versa. After all, Christ did not say, “Pray, ‘Thy Kingdom come . . . in Heaven as on earth.’” Like us in our own deepest hearts, made in God’s image, St. Thomas is a perfectionist, an idealist.

⁹³ Of all the arguments in the *Summa* this would seem to be (1) the most obviously conclusive, since its premises are verified in everyone’s experience every day, yet (2) the one most Americans resist most “religiously” and feel the most scandalized and threatened by. The value of this terrible truism of Thomas’ is that it heads us off from the desperate optimism of hunting for Heaven on earth, which has always brought about enormous misery, both individually and socially, while its traditional “pessimism” (“I never promised you a rose garden”) can produce a joyful detachment,

Secondly, from a consideration of the specific nature of Happiness, viz., the vision of the Divine Essence, which man cannot obtain in this life, as was shown in the First Part (Q. 12, A. 11). Hence it is evident that none can attain true and perfect Happiness in this life. . . .

FOURTH ARTICLE

Whether [True] Happiness Once Had Can Be Lost?

Objection 1. It would seem that Happiness can be lost. For Happiness is a perfection. But every perfection is in the thing perfected according to the mode of the latter. Since then man is, by his nature, changeable, it seems that Happiness is participated by man in a changeable manner. And consequently it seems that man can lose Happiness.

Objection 2. Further, Happiness consists in an act of the intellect; and the intellect is subject to the will. But the will can be directed to opposites. Therefore it seems that it can desist from the operation whereby man is made happy: and thus man will cease to be happy.

Objection 3. Further, the end corresponds to the beginning.⁹⁴ But man’s Happiness has a beginning, since man was not always happy. Therefore it seems that it has an end.

On the contrary, It is written (Mt 25:46) of the righteous that *they shall go . . . into life everlasting*, which, as above stated (A. 2), is the Happiness of the saints. Now what is eternal ceases not. Therefore Happiness cannot be lost.

I answer that, If we speak of imperfect happiness, such as can be had in this life, in this sense it can be lost. This is clear of contemplative happiness, which is lost either by forgetfulness, for

as in the lines of the poet Dunbar: “Man, please thy Maker and be merry/And for this world give not a cherry.”

⁹⁴ This is the fundamental premise of Buddha’s metaphysics, which he calls “the pure and spotless eye of the *dharma* [doctrine]”, viz., that “whatever is an arising thing, that also is a ceasing thing.” Unless Christianity is false, it is a false premise; for the human soul, the resurrected body, and man’s happiness constitute the exception to this rule: they have a beginning (in time) but no end (in eternity).

instance, when knowledge is lost through sickness; or again by certain occupations, whereby a man is altogether withdrawn from contemplation.

This is also clear of active happiness: since man's will can be changed so as to fall to vice from the virtue, in whose act that happiness principally consists.⁹⁵ If, however, the virtue remain unimpaired, outward changes can indeed disturb such like happiness, in so far as they hinder many acts of virtue; but they cannot take it away altogether, because there still remains an act of virtue, whereby man bears these trials in a praiseworthy manner.—And since the happiness of this life can be lost, a circumstance that appears to be contrary to the nature of happiness, therefore did the Philosopher state (*Ethic.* i. 10) that some are happy in this life, not simply [absolutely], but *as men*, whose nature is subject to change.

But if we speak of that perfect Happiness which we await after this life, it must be observed that Origen (*Peri Archon.* ii 3), following the error of certain Platonists, held that man can become unhappy after the final Happiness.

This, however, is evidently false, for two reasons. First, from the general notion of happiness. For since happiness is the *perfect and sufficient good*, it must needs set man's desire at rest and exclude every evil. Now 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. Therefore it is necessary for true Happiness that man have the assured opinion of never losing the good that he possesses. If this opinion be true, it follows that he never will lose happiness: but if it be false, it is in itself an evil that he should have a false opinion: because the false is the evil of the intellect, just as the true is its good, as stated in *Ethic.* vi. 2. Consequently he will no longer be truly happy, if evil be in him.

Secondly, it is again evident if we consider the specific nature of Happiness. For it has been shown above (Q. 3, A. 8) that man's perfect Happiness consists in the vision of the Divine Essence.

⁹⁵ That happiness in this life is primarily "an activity of the soul in accordance with virtue" rather than any of the goods of fortune is shown by Aristotle in the *Ethics* and Plato in the *Republic*, for virtue is to the soul as health is to the body.

Now it is impossible for anyone seeing the Divine Essence, to wish not to see It.⁹⁶ Because every good that one possesses and yet wishes to be without, is either insufficient, something more sufficing being desired in its stead; or else has some inconvenience attached to it, by reason of which it becomes wearisome. But the vision of the Divine Essence fills the soul with all good things, since it unites it to the source of all goodness; hence it is written (Ps 16:15): *I shall be satisfied when Thy glory shall appear*; and (Wis 7:11): *All good things came to me together with her, i.e., with the contemplation of wisdom*. In like manner neither has it any inconvenience attached to it; because it is written of the contemplation of wisdom (Wis 8:16): *Her conversation hath no bitterness, nor her company any tediousness*. It is thus evident that the happy man cannot forsake Happiness of his own accord. Moreover, neither can he lose Happiness, through God taking it away from him. Because, since the withdrawal of Happiness is a punishment, it cannot be enforced by God, the just Judge, except for some fault; and he that sees God cannot fall into a fault, since rectitude of the will, of necessity, results from that vision as was shown above (Q. 4, A. 4).—Nor again can it be withdrawn by any other agent. Because the mind that is united to God is raised above all other things: and consequently no other agent can sever the mind from that union. Therefore it seems unreasonable that as time goes on, man should pass from happiness to misery, and *vice versa*; because such like vicissitudes of time can only be for such things as are subject to time and movement.

Reply Obj. 1. Happiness is consummate perfection, which excludes every defect from the happy. And therefore whoever has happiness has it altogether unchangeably: this is done by the Divine power, which raises man to the participation of eternity which transcends all change.

Reply Obj. 2. The will can be directed to opposites, in things which are ordained to the end; but it is ordained, of natural necessity, to the last end.⁹⁷ This is evident from the fact that man is unable not to wish to be happy.

⁹⁶ This is why there can be no evil and no motive for evil in Heaven.

⁹⁷ That is, formally, but not materially. We are not necessarily ordained to, but free to choose, diverse means to the ultimate end of happiness; and we are also free to choose among different interpretations of happiness, or

Reply Obj. 3. Happiness has a beginning owing to the condition of the participator: but it has no end by reason of the [eternal] condition of the good, the participation of which makes man happy. Hence the beginning of happiness is from one cause, its endlessness is from another.

FIFTH ARTICLE

Whether Man Can Attain Happiness by His Natural Powers?

Objection 1. It would seem that man can attain Happiness by his natural powers. For nature does not fail in necessary things. But nothing is so necessary to man as that by which he attains the last end. Therefore this is not lacking to human nature. Therefore man can attain Happiness by his natural powers. . . .

I answer that, Imperfect happiness that can be had in this life, can be acquired by man by his natural powers, in the same way as virtue, in whose operation it consists: on this point we shall speak further on (Q. 63). But man's perfect Happiness, as stated above (Q. 3, A. 8), consists in the vision of the Divine Essence. Now the vision of God's Essence surpasses the nature not only of man, but also of every creature, as was shown in the First Part (Q. 12, A. 4). . . .

Reply Obj. 1. Just as nature does not fail man in necessities, although it has not provided him with weapons and clothing, as it provided other animals, because it gave him reason and hands, with which he is able to get these things for himself; so neither did it fail man in things necessary, although it gave him not the wherewithal to attain Happiness: since this it could not do. But it did give him free-will, with which he can turn to God, that He may make him happy.⁹⁸ . . .

material contents to happiness (I-II, 2). Our desire for happiness formally, on the other hand, is not a free choice, but a necessity of our nature (cf. Article 8 and the argument in the last sentence of this Reply). Even a grumpy person gets happiness out of being grumpy, a masochist gets happiness from pain, and a suicide is seeking to escape from an unhappy life, not from a happy one.

⁹⁸ Thus nature provides (1) the *desire* for perfect happiness and (2) one

EIGHTH ARTICLE

Whether Every Man Desires Happiness?

I answer that, Happiness can be considered in two ways. First according to the general notion of happiness: and thus, of necessity, every man desires happiness. For the general notion of happiness consists in the perfect good, as stated above (AA. 3, 4). But since good is the object of the will, the perfect good of a man is that which entirely satisfies his will. Consequently to desire happiness is nothing else than to desire that one's will be satisfied. And this everyone desires. Secondly we may speak of Happiness according to its specific notion, as to that in which it consists. And thus all do not know Happiness; because they know not in what thing the general notion of happiness is found.⁹⁹ And consequently, in this respect, not all desire it. . . .

of the means (free will) to attain it, but not (3) the exercise of this free will in choice (this is our doing, not nature's), nor the three following factors that come only from God, viz., (4) the supernatural revelation of God, which is in practice necessary for many or most men, at least, to attain happiness (see I, 1, 1 "*I answer that*"), (5) the real object (God Himself) in which happiness consists, and (6) the efficient cause needed to attain this object, viz., divine grace.

⁹⁹ Cf. St. Augustine: "Seek what you seek, but it is not where you seek it" (*Confessions* IV, 12, par. 1).

Question 90

Of the Essence of Law

FIRST ARTICLE

Whether Law Is Something Pertaining to Reason?

I answer that, Law is a rule and measure of acts, whereby man is induced²⁴⁸ to act or is restrained from acting: for *lex* (law) is derived from *ligare* (to bind), because it binds one to act. Now the rule and measure of human acts is the reason, which is the first principle of human acts, as is evident from what has been stated above (Q. 1, A. 1 *ad* 3); since it belongs to the reason to direct to the end, which is the first principle in all matters of action. . . .

SECOND ARTICLE

Whether the Law Is Always Something Directed to the Common Good?

I answer that, . . . the first principle in practical matters, which are the object of the practical reason, is the last end: and the last end of human life is bliss or happiness, as stated above (Q. 2, A. 7; Q. 3, A. 1). Consequently the law must needs regard principally the relationship to happiness.²⁴⁹ Moreover, since every part is ordained

²⁴⁸ I.e., led, moved, commanded. This is something stronger than merely "advised" or "requested" but weaker than "forced" or "necessitated". Law binds morally but not physically. It obligates but it does not necessitate. It appeals to free will to obey or disobey. Free will follows upon reason—where reason is, free will is too—therefore law appeals to reason.

²⁴⁹ Contrast this with Kant's concept of law, which has nothing to do with happiness, only with duty.

to the whole, as imperfect to perfect; and since one man is a part of the perfect community,²⁵⁰ the law must needs regard properly the relationship to universal happiness. Wherefore the Philosopher, in the above definition of legal matters mentions both happiness and the body politic:²⁵¹ for he says (*Ethic.* v. 1) that we call those legal matters *just, which are adapted to produce and preserve happiness and its parts for the body politic.* . . .

THIRD ARTICLE

Whether the Reason of Any Man Is Competent to Make Laws?

I answer that, A law, properly speaking, regards first and foremost the order to the common good. Now to order anything to the common good, belongs either to the whole people, or to someone who is the viceregent²⁵² of the whole people. And therefore the making of a law belongs either to the whole people or to a public personage who has care of the whole people. . . .

FOURTH ARTICLE

Whether Promulgation Is Essential to a Law?

I answer that, As stated above (A. 1), a law is imposed on others by way of a rule and measure. Now a rule or measure is imposed by being applied to those who are to be ruled and measured by it. Wherefore, in order that a law obtain the binding force which is proper to a law, it must needs be applied to the men who have to be

²⁵⁰ Somewhat as the soul is both a substance in its own right and also, as the form of the body, a part of the substance "man", so the individual is a whole in himself and also a part of the larger whole of the community.

²⁵¹ I.e., communal, or social. The word "politics" did not have the narrow, specialized, and bureaucratic connotation it has today.

²⁵² A "vice-regent" is a *representative*. St. Thomas holds that the good state, whether ruled by one, a few, or many, should contain at least an essential element of democracy; even a king reigns for the people's good, not for his own.

ruled by it. Such application is made by its being notified to them by promulgation. Wherefore promulgation is necessary for the law to obtain its force.

Thus from the four preceding articles, the definition of law may be gathered; and it is nothing else than [1] an ordinance [2] of reason [3] for the common good, [4] made by him who has care of the community, [5] and promulgated.²⁵³

²⁵³ There are thus five notes in the definition: the first is the genus, the second the specific difference, the third the final cause, the fourth the efficient cause, and the fifth a necessary property or proper condition. It follows from this definition that if a law is essentially (1) disordered, (2) irrational, (3) harmful, (4) unauthorized, or (5) unknown, it is not a real law, not binding.

Question 91

Of the Various Kinds of Law

FIRST ARTICLE

Whether There Is an Eternal Law?

I answer that, As stated above (Q. 90, A. 1 *ad* 2; AA. 3, 4), a law is nothing else but a dictate of practical reason emanating from the ruler who governs a perfect [complete] community. Now it is evident, granted that the world is ruled by Divine Providence, as was stated in the First Part (Q. 22, AA. 1, 2), that the whole community of the universe is governed by Divine Reason. Wherefore the very Idea of the government of things in God the Ruler of the universe, has the nature of a law. And since the Divine Reason's conception of things is not subject to time but is eternal, according to Proverbs 8:23, therefore it is that this kind of law must be called eternal. . . .

SECOND ARTICLE

Whether There Is in Us a Natural Law?

On the contrary, A gloss on Romans 2:14: *When the Gentiles, who have not the [Mosaic] law, do by nature those things that are of the law,* comments as follows: *Although they have no written law, yet they have the natural law, whereby each one knows, and is conscious of, what is good and what is evil.*

I answer that, As stated above (Q. 90, A. 1 *ad* 1), law, being a rule and measure, can be in a person in two ways: in one way, as in him that rules and measures; in another way, as in that which is ruled and measured, since a thing is ruled and measured, in so far as it partakes of the rule or measure. Wherefore, since all things subject

to Divine providence are ruled and measured by the eternal law, as was stated above (A. 1); it is evident that all things partake somewhat of the eternal law, in so far as, namely, from its being imprinted on them, they derive their respective inclinations to their proper acts and ends. Now among all others, the rational creature is subject to Divine providence in the most excellent way, in so far as it partakes of a share of providence, by being provident both for itself and for others. Wherefore it has a share of the Eternal Reason, whereby it has a natural inclination to its proper act and end: and this participation of the eternal law in the [very nature of the] rational creature is called the natural law. Hence the Psalmist after saying (Ps 4:6): *Offer up the sacrifice of justice*, as though someone asked what the works of justice are, adds: *Many say, Who showeth us good things?* in answer to which question he says: *The light of Thy countenance, O Lord, is signed upon us*: thus implying that the light of natural reason, whereby we discern what is good and what is evil, which is the function of the natural law, is nothing else than an imprint on us of the Divine light. It is therefore evident that the natural law is nothing else than the rational creature's participation of the eternal law.²⁵⁴ . . .

THIRD ARTICLE

Whether There Is a Human Law?

I answer that, As stated above (Q. 90, A. 1, *ad* 2), a law is a dictate of the practical reason. Now it is to be observed that the same procedure takes place in the practical and in the speculative reason: for each proceeds from principles to conclusions, as stated above (*ibid.*). Accordingly we conclude that just as, in the speculative reason, from naturally known indemonstrable principles,²⁵⁵ we draw the conclusions of the various sciences, the knowledge of

²⁵⁴ Thus the voice of conscience (natural reason judging good and evil) is the echo of the voice of God, and is therefore sacred and inviolable.

²⁵⁵ Self-evident theoretical axioms like the law of non-contradiction. There are also self-evident practical axioms, both general ("Do good, avoid evil") and specific ("Be just"). These are "the precepts of the natural law", which, since it is in our nature, is also naturally *known*, just as first theoretical principles are.

which is not imparted to us by nature, but acquired by the efforts of reason, so too it is from the precepts of the natural law, as from general and indemonstrable principles, that the human reason needs to proceed to the more particular determination of certain matters. These particular determinations, devised by human reason, are called human laws.²⁵⁶ . . .

FOURTH ARTICLE

*Whether There Was Any Need for a Divine Law?*²⁵⁷

I answer that, Besides the natural and the human law it was necessary for the directing of human conduct to have a Divine law. And this for four reasons. First, because . . . man is ordained to an end of eternal happiness. . . .

Secondly . . . on account of the uncertainty of human judgment. . . .

Thirdly, because . . . man is not competent to judge of interior movements, that are hidden. . . .

Fourthly, because . . . human law cannot punish or forbid all evil deeds. . . .

FIFTH ARTICLE

Whether There Is But One Divine Law?

On the contrary, The Apostle says (Heb 7:12): *The priesthood being translated, it is necessary that a translation also be made of the law*. But the priesthood is twofold, as stated in the same passage, viz.,

²⁵⁶ "Human law" is "positive law", law posited (made) by man. Moral positivism reduces all moral law to this, denying the eternal law and the natural law. A philosopher could admit the natural law without admitting the eternal law, since one could know the effect without knowing the cause; therefore the argument between legal positivism and natural law does not depend only on whether or not God is admitted. St. Thomas would disagree with Dostoyevski's saying, "If God does not exist, everything is permissible."

²⁵⁷ The divine law is that part of the eternal law which God made known by special revelation.

the Levitical priesthood, and the priesthood of Christ. Therefore the Divine law is twofold, namely the Old Law [covenant, testament] and the New Law.

I answer that, . . . In the first place, it belongs to law to be directed to the common good as to its end, as stated above (Q. 90, A. 2). This good may be twofold. It may be a sensible and earthly good; and to this, man was directly ordained by the Old Law: wherefore, at the very outset of the law, the people were invited to the earthly kingdom of the Chananaeans (Ex 3:8, 17).²⁵⁸ Again it may be an intelligible and heavenly good: and to this, man is ordained by the New Law. . . .

Secondly, it belongs to the law to direct human acts according to the order of righteousness (A. 4): wherein also the New Law surpasses the Old Law, since it directs our internal acts, according to Matthew 5:20: *Unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.* Hence the saying that *the Old Law restrains the hand but the New Law controls the mind* (3 Sentent., D. xl).

Thirdly, it belongs to the law to induce men to observe its commandments. This the Old Law did by the fear of punishment: but the New Law, by love, which is poured into our hearts by the grace of Christ, bestowed in the New Law, but foreshadowed in the Old.²⁵⁹ . . .

²⁵⁸ St. Thomas is not implying that the Hebrews knew no higher good than earthly goods. But (1) life after death was not clearly revealed in the Old Testament until quite late, and (2) the distinction between the sensible and the intelligible, body and soul, also became clear only gradually, and late.

²⁵⁹ The Old Law prophesies that a later, newer law will do this: Jer 31:31-34.

Question 92

Of the Effects of Law

FIRST ARTICLE

*Whether an Effect of Law Is to Make Men Good?*²⁶⁰

Objection 1. It seems that it is not an effect of law to make men good. For men are good through virtue, since virtue, as stated in *Ethic.* ii. 6 is *that which makes its subject good*. But virtue is in man from God alone, because He it is Who *works it in us without us*, as we stated above (Q. 55, A. 4) in giving the definition of virtue. Therefore the law does not make men good.

Objection 2. Further, Law does not profit a man unless he obeys it. But the very fact that a man obeys a law is due to his being good. Therefore in man goodness is presupposed to the law. Therefore the law does not make men good.

Objection 3. Further, Law is ordained to the common good, as stated above (Q. 90, A. 2). But some behave well in things regarding the community, who behave ill in things regarding themselves. Therefore it is not the business of the law to make men good.

Objection 4. Further, some laws are tyrannical, as the Philosopher

²⁶⁰ The question, in contemporary terms, is: Can you legislate morality? St. Thomas answers, Of course! What else is worth legislating? Of course, law cannot *guarantee* moral behavior, since man's will is free to disobey; but it can certainly make a great difference, and make men better. St. Thomas would agree, I think, with Peter Maurin's simple definition of the good society: the good society is a society where it is easy to be good (because of its good laws). But he would also agree with St. Thomas More that "the times (or the society) are never so bad but that a good man can live in them."

says (*Polit.* iii. 6). But a tyrant does not intend the good of his subjects, but considers only his own profit. Therefore law does not make men good.

On the contrary, The Philosopher says (*Ethic.* ii. 1) that the intention of every lawgiver is to make good citizens. . . .

Reply Obj. 1. Virtue is twofold, as explained above (Q. 63, A. 2), viz., acquired and infused. Now the fact of being accustomed to an action contributes to both, but in different ways; for it causes the acquired virtue; while it disposes to infused virtue, and preserves and fosters it when it already exists. And since law is given for the purpose of directing human acts; as far as human acts conduce to virtue, so far does law make men good. Wherefore the Philosopher says in the second book of the *Politics* (*Ethic.* ii) that lawgivers make men good by habituating them to good works.

Reply Obj. 2. It is not always through perfect goodness of virtue that one obeys the law, but sometimes it is through fear of punishment.²⁶¹ . . .

Reply Obj. 3. The goodness of any part is considered in comparison with the whole; hence Augustine says (*Conf.* iii) that unseemly is the part that harmonizes not with the whole. Since then every man is a part of the state, it is impossible that a man be good, unless he be well proportionate to the common good: nor can the whole be well consistent unless its parts be proportionate to it. Consequently the common good of the state cannot flourish, unless the citizens be virtuous,²⁶² at least those whose business it is to govern. But it is enough for the good of the community, that the other citizens be so far virtuous that they obey the commands of their rulers. . . .

Reply Obj. 4. A tyrannical law, through not being according to reason, is not a law, absolutely speaking, but rather a perversion of law. . . .

²⁶¹ Objection 2 has a good point: no law is needed in Heaven. Antinomians merely confuse earth with Heaven. Antinomianism is impatience.

²⁶² Cf. also "*I answer that*". This is the most obvious and also the most important truth in social science, yet the one most frequently forgotten by many theorists today.

SECOND ARTICLE

Whether the Acts of Law Are Suitably Assigned?

Objection 4. Further, the intention of a lawgiver is to make men good, as stated above (A. 1). But he that obeys the law, merely through fear of being punished, is not good: because *although a good deed may be done through servile fear, i.e., fear of punishment, it is not done well*, as Augustine says (*Contra duas Epist. Pelag.* ii). Therefore punishment is not a proper effect of law.

On the contrary, Isidore says (*Etym.* v. 19): *Every law either permits something, as: "A brave man may demand his reward": or forbids something, as: "No man may ask a consecrated virgin in marriage": or punishes, as: "Let him that commits a murder be put to death."* . . .

Reply Obj. 4. From becoming accustomed to avoid evil and fulfil what is good, through fear of punishment, one is sometimes led on to do so likewise, with delight and of one's own accord. Accordingly, law, even by punishing, leads men on to being good.²⁶³

²⁶³ Another very evident truism of individual and social psychology known by all the ancients and medievals and often forgotten by moderns.

Question 93

Of the Eternal Law

We must now consider each law by itself; and (1) The eternal law; (2) The natural law; (3) The human law; (4) The old law; (5) The new law, which is the law of the Gospel. . . .

SECOND ARTICLE

Whether the Eternal Law Is Known to All?

Objection 1. It would seem that the eternal law is not known to all. Because, as the Apostle says (1 Cor 2:11), *the things that are of God no man knoweth, but the Spirit of God*. But the eternal law is a type [ideal, model, plan] existing in the Divine mind. Therefore it is unknown to all save God alone. . . .

On the contrary, Augustine says (*De Lib. Arb.* i. 6) that *knowledge of the eternal law is imprinted on us*.

I answer that, A thing may be known in two ways: first, in itself; secondly, in its effect, wherein some likeness of that thing is found: thus someone not seeing the sun in its substance, may know it by its rays. So then no one can know the eternal law, as it is in itself, except the blessed who see God in His Essence. But every rational creature knows it in its reflection, greater or less. For every knowledge of truth is a kind of reflection and participation of the eternal law, which is the unchangeable truth, as Augustine says (*De Vera Relig.* xxxi). Now all men know the truth to a certain extent, at least as to the common principles of the natural law: and as to the others, they partake of the knowledge of truth, some more, some less; and in this respect are more or less cognizant of the eternal law.

Reply Obj. 1. We cannot know the things that are of God, as they are in themselves; but they are made known to us in their effects, according to Romans 1:20: *The invisible things of God . . . are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made.* . . .

THIRD ARTICLE

Whether Every Law Is Derived from the Eternal Law?

Objection 2. Further, nothing unjust can be derived from the eternal law, because, as stated above (A. 2, *Obj. 2*), *the eternal law is that, according to which it is right that all things should be most orderly*. But some laws are unjust, according to Isaiah 10:1: *Woe to them that make wicked laws*. Therefore not every law is derived from the eternal law.

Objection 3. Further, Augustine says (*De Lib. Arb.* i. 5) that *the law which is framed for ruling the people, rightly permits many things which are punished by Divine providence*. But the type of Divine providence is the eternal law, as stated above (A. 1). Therefore not even every good law is derived from the eternal law. . . .

I answer that, . . . Since the eternal law is the plan of government in the Chief Governor, all the plans of government in the inferior governors must be derived from the eternal law. But these plans of inferior governors are all other laws besides the eternal law. Therefore all laws, in so far as they partake of right reason, are derived from the eternal law.²⁶⁴ Hence Augustine says (*De Lib. Arb.* i. 6) that *in temporal law there is nothing just and lawful, but what man has drawn from the eternal law*. . . .

Reply Obj. 2. Human law has the nature of law in so far as it partakes of right reason; and it is clear that, in this respect, it is derived from the eternal law. But in so far as it deviates from reason, it is called an unjust law, and has the nature, not of law but of violence. Nevertheless even an unjust law, in so far as it retains some appearance of law, though being framed by one who is in power, is derived from the eternal law; since all power is from the Lord God, according to Romans 13:1.

²⁶⁴ In objective fact, not merely in subjective knowledge. St. Thomas is not implying that our knowledge of natural law or human law depends on our knowledge of eternal law explicitly and as such. When an atheist knows that theft is wrong he in fact knows something of the eternal law, but he does not know that it is the eternal law. Note also: "eternal law" is not the same as "divine law". "Eternal law" is not "religious", i.e., specially revealed by Church or Scripture, as is "divine law", both the "Old Law" and the "New Law".

Reply Obj. 3. Human law is said to permit certain things, not as approving of them, but as being unable to direct them. And many things are directed by the Divine law, which human law is unable to direct, because more things are subject to a higher than to a lower cause. Hence the very fact that human law does not meddle with matters it cannot direct, comes under the ordination of the eternal law. It would be different, were human law to sanction what the eternal law condemns. Consequently it does not follow that human law is not derived from the eternal law, but that it is not on a perfect equality with it. . . .

SIXTH ARTICLE

Whether All Human Affairs Are Subject to the Eternal Law?

I answer that, There are two ways in which a thing is subject to the eternal law, as explained above (A. 5): first by partaking of the eternal law by way of knowledge; secondly, by way of action 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, as stated above (*ibid.*). But since the rational nature, [in addition to] that which it has in common with all creatures, has something proper to itself inasmuch as it is rational, consequently it is subject to the eternal law in both ways; because while each rational creature has some knowledge of the eternal law, as stated above (A. 2), it also has a natural inclination to that which is in harmony with the eternal law; for *we are naturally adapted to be the recipients of virtue* (*Ethic. ii. 1*).²⁶⁵

²⁶⁵ Note the optimistic view of human nature here. Though fallen and sinful, it retains its essential properties, including its innate inclination to the good that God ordained for it by His eternal law. St. Thomas is sometimes criticized by modern thinkers for being too pessimistic about man's sinful *acts* (e.g., I-II, 77, 8 and the next paragraph here) and too optimistic about man's *nature* (e.g., this footnoted paragraph). That is because the typically modern mind is less certain that we have an essence, or that it can be known, or that it can be known to be metaphysically good, and also less certain that sin is as serious as Christianity has traditionally seen it to be; and also because the modern mind tends toward

Both ways, however, are imperfect, and to a certain extent destroyed, in the wicked; because in them the natural inclination to virtue is corrupted by vicious habits, and, moreover, the natural knowledge of good is darkened by passions and habits of sin. But in the good both ways are found more perfect: because in them, besides the natural knowledge of good, there is the added knowledge of faith and wisdom; and again, besides the natural inclination to good, there is the added motive of grace and virtue. . . .

egalitarianism and is uncomfortable with strong value judgments such as the sharp distinction between the wicked and the good in the last paragraph. But this is an ideologically-based opinion: cf. Scott Peck, *People of the Lie*.

Question 94

Of the Natural Law

SECOND ARTICLE

Whether the Natural Law Contains Several Precepts, or One Only?

On the contrary, The precepts of the natural law in man stand in relation to practical matters, as the first principles to matters of demonstration.²⁶⁶ But there are several first indemonstrable principles. Therefore there are also several precepts of the natural law.

I answer that, As stated above (Q. 91, A. 3), the precepts of the natural law are to the practical reason, what the first principles of demonstrations are to the speculative reason; because both are self-evident principles. Now a thing is said to be self-evident in two ways: first, in itself; secondly, in relation to us. Any proposition is said to be self-evident in itself, if its predicate is contained in the notion of the subject: although, to one who knows not the definition of the subject, it happens that such a proposition is not self-evident. For instance, this proposition, *Man is a rational being*, is, in its very

²⁶⁶ I.e., they are axioms to which all else is reduced, not from which all else is deduced. The three axioms of logical demonstration are the law of identity ($x = x$), the law of non-contradiction ($x \neq \text{non-}x$), and the law of excluded middle (either x or $\text{non-}x$). From these we cannot deduce anything (e.g., that all men are mortal), but to them we reduce all demonstrations (e.g., "all animals are mortal and all men are animals, therefore all men are mortal" is valid because of these laws). Similarly, from "Do good and avoid evil" and "give each his due" we cannot deduce that defensive war is just and aggression unjust, but "it is just to defend civilians by repelling unjust aggressors" is reduced to and validated by these principles.

nature, self-evident, since who says *man*, says *a rational being*: and yet to one who knows not what a man is, this proposition is not self-evident. Hence it is that, as Boëthius says (*De Hebdom.*), certain axioms or propositions are universally self-evident to all; and such are those propositions whose terms are known to all, as, *Every whole is greater than its part*, and, *Things equal to one and the same are equal to one another*. But some propositions are self-evident only to the wise, who understand the meaning of the terms of such propositions: thus to one who understands that an angel is not a body, it is self-evident that an angel is not circumscriptively in a place: but this is not evident to the unlearned, for they cannot grasp it.

Now a certain order is to be found in those things that are apprehended universally. For that which, before aught else, falls under apprehension, is *being*,²⁶⁷ the notion of which is included in all things whatsoever a man apprehends. Wherefore the first indemonstrable principle is that *the same thing cannot be affirmed and denied at the same time*, which is based on the notion of *being* and *not-being*: and on this principle all others are based, as is stated in *Metaph.* iv, text. 9. Now as *being* is the first thing that falls under the apprehension simply, so *good* is the first thing that falls under the apprehension of the practical reason, which is directed to action: since every agent acts for an end under the aspect of good. Consequently the first principle in the practical reason is one founded on the notion of good, viz., that *good is that which all things seek after*. Hence this is the first precept of law, that *good is to be done and pursued, and evil is to be avoided*.²⁶⁸ All other precepts of the natural law are based upon this: so that whatever the practical

²⁶⁷ "Before" not chronologically but logically, and not explicitly but implicitly.

²⁶⁸ N.b.: for St. Thomas, all ethics is most fundamentally about *goods*; most modern ethics is about rights, obligations, duties, laws, or "values". The significance of the word "good" is that "good" is (1) decidedly metaphysical, (2) objective (unlike "values"), (3) universal (unlike "rights" and "duties"), (4) intellectually known ("naturally apprehended by reason as being good"), and (5) correlative with natural inclination, in accord with human nature. All this contrasts both with "deontological" (Kantian) and "teleological" (Utilitarian) ethics.

reason naturally apprehends as man's good (or evil) belongs to the precepts of the natural law as something to be done or avoided.

Since, however, good has the nature of an end, and evil, the nature of a contrary, hence it is that all those things to which man has a natural inclination, are naturally apprehended by reason as being good, and consequently as objects of pursuit, and their contraries as evil, and objects of avoidance. Wherefore according to the order of natural inclinations, is the order of the precepts of the natural law. Because in man there is first of all an inclination to good in accordance with the nature which he has in common with all substances: inasmuch as every substance seeks the preservation of its own being, according to its nature: and by reason of this inclination, whatever is a means of preserving human life, and of warding off its obstacles, belongs to the natural law. Secondly, there is in man an inclination to things that pertain to him more specially, according to that nature which he has in common with other animals: and in virtue of this inclination, those things are said to belong to the natural law, *which nature has taught to all animals* [*Pandect. Just. I., tit. i.*], such as sexual intercourse, education of offspring and so forth. Thirdly, there is in man an inclination to good, according to the nature of his reason, which nature is proper to him: thus man has a natural inclination to know the truth about God, and to live in society: and in this respect, whatever pertains to this inclination belongs to the natural law; for instance, to shun ignorance, to avoid offending those among whom one has to live, and other such things regarding the above inclination.²⁶⁹ . . .

THIRD ARTICLE

Whether All Acts of Virtue Are Prescribed by the Natural Law?

Objection 2. . . . Every sin is opposed to some virtuous act. If therefore all acts of virtue are prescribed by the natural law, it seems to follow that all sins are against nature: whereas this applies to certain special sins. . . .

²⁶⁹ Thus the natural law is not merely "biologistic", or animal instinct, because (1) natural instinct is only its matter, or substratum, and (2) because

I answer that, . . . If . . . we speak of acts of virtue, considered as virtuous, thus all virtuous acts belong to the natural law. For it has been stated (A. 2) that to the natural law belongs everything to which a man is inclined according to his nature. Now each thing is inclined naturally to an operation that is suitable to it according to its form: thus fire is inclined to give heat. Wherefore, since the rational soul is the proper form of man, there is in every man a natural inclination to act according to reason: and this is to act according to virtue. Consequently, considered thus, all acts of virtue are prescribed by the natural law: since each one's reason naturally dictates to him to act virtuously. . . .

Reply Obj. 2. By human nature we may mean either that which is proper to man—and in this sense all sins, as being against reason, are also against nature, as Damascene states (*De Fide Orthod.* ii. 30): or we may mean that nature which is common to man and other animals; and in this sense, certain special sins are said to be against nature; thus contrary to sexual intercourse, which is natural to all animals, is unisexual lust, which has received the special name of the unnatural crime. . . .

FOURTH ARTICLE

Whether the Natural Law Is the Same in All Men?

On the contrary, Isidore says (*Etym.* v. 4): *The natural law is common to all nations.*

I answer that, As stated above (AA. 2, 3), to the natural law belongs those things to which a man is inclined naturally: and among these it is proper to man to be inclined to act according to reason. Now the process of reason is from the common to the proper, as stated in *Phys.* i. The speculative reason, however, is differently situated in this matter, from the practical reason. For,

this substratum is both broader and narrower than man's animal nature: broader because man shares the natural desire for self-preservation with all substances, not just animals, and narrower because the properly human part of the natural law concerns what only reason can know. See also Reply 2 of the next Article.

since the speculative reason is busied chiefly with necessary things, which cannot be otherwise than they are, its proper conclusions, like the universal principles, contain the truth without fail. The practical reason, on the other hand, is busied with contingent matters, about which human actions are concerned: and consequently, although there is necessity in the general principles, the more we descend to matters of detail, the more frequently we encounter defects. Accordingly then in speculative matters truth is the same in all men, both as to principles and as to conclusions: although the truth is not known to all as regards the conclusions, but only as regards the principles which are called common notions. But in matters of action, truth or practical rectitude is not the same for all, as to matters of detail, but only as to the general principles: and where there is the same rectitude in matters of detail, it is not equally known to all.²⁷⁰

It is therefore evident that, as regards the general principles whether of speculative or of practical reason, truth or rectitude is the same for all, and is equally known by all. As to the proper conclusions of the speculative reason, the truth is the same for all, but is not equally known to all: thus it is true for all that the three angles of a triangle are together equal to two right angles, although it is not known to all. But as to the proper conclusions of the practical reason, neither is the truth or rectitude the same for all,

²⁷⁰ For the *application* of the unchanging first principles of the natural law to diverse and changing situations is diverse and changing. To sum up,

		First, general principles	Proper conclusions
Speculative Reason	Objectively	True for all equally	True for all equally
	Subjectively	Known by all equally	Known only by some, unequally
Practical (Moral) Reason	Objectively	True for all equally	Not true for all, but for the most part
	Subjectively	Known by all equally	Not known by all, even when true for all

nor, where it is the same, is it equally known by all. Thus it is right and true for all to act according to reason: and from this principle it follows as a proper conclusion, that goods entrusted to another should be restored to their owner. Now this is true for the majority of cases: but it may happen in a particular case that it would be injurious, and therefore unreasonable, to restore goods held in trust; for instance if they are claimed for the purpose of fighting against one's country. And this principle will be found to fail the more, according as we descend further into detail, e.g., if one were to say that goods held in trust should be restored with such and such a guarantee, or in such and such a way; because the greater the number of conditions added, the greater the number of ways in which the principle may fail, so that it be not right to restore or not to restore.²⁷¹

Consequently we must say that the natural law, as to general principles, is the same for all, both as to rectitude and as to knowledge.²⁷² But as to certain matters of detail, which are conclusions, as it were, of those general principles, it is the same for all in the majority of cases, both as to rectitude and as to knowledge; and yet in some few cases it may fail, both as to rectitude, by reason of certain obstacles (just as natures subject to generation and corruption fail in some few cases on account of some obstacle), and as to knowledge [cf. n. 272], since in some the reason is perverted by passion, or evil habit, or an evil disposition of nature; thus formerly, theft, although it is expressly contrary to the natural law, was not considered wrong among the Germans, as Julius Caesar relates (*De Bello Gall.* vi). . . .

FIFTH ARTICLE

Whether the Natural Law Can Be Changed?

I answer that, A change in the natural law may be understood in two ways. First, by way of addition. In this sense nothing hinders the natural law from being changed: since many things for the

²⁷¹ N.b.: St. Thomas, like Jesus, is not the kind of moral absolutist and legalist who denies moral common sense (cf. Mk 2:27).

²⁷² "Rectitude" = what is objectively right; "as to knowledge" = as to

benefit of human life have been added over and above the natural law, both by the Divine law and by human laws.²⁷³

Secondly, a change in the natural law may be understood by way of subtraction, so that what previously was according to the natural law, ceases to be so. In this sense, the natural law is altogether unchangeable in its first principles; but in its secondary principles, which, as we have said (A. 4), are certain detailed proximate conclusions drawn from the first principles, the natural law . . . may be changed in some particular cases of rare occurrence, through some special causes hindering the observance of such precepts, as stated above (A. 4). . . .

SIXTH ARTICLE

Whether the Law of Nature Can Be Abolished from the Heart of Man?

On the contrary, Augustine says (*Conf. ii*): *Thy law is written in the hearts of men, which iniquity itself effaces not*. But the law which is written in men's hearts is the natural law. Therefore the natural law cannot be blotted out.

I answer that, As stated above (AA. 4, 5), there belong to the natural law, first, certain most general precepts, that are known to all; and secondly, certain secondary and more detailed precepts,

whether all know it. Thus the natural moral law tells what is naturally and usually right (e.g., "pay debts"), just as natural physical law tells us how nature usually behaves (e.g., "birds fly"); but there are exceptions to both when we come to detail. "Do not give a murderer his gun back" is an exception to "Justice means paying what is owed", and dodos are an exception to "birds fly." The natural moral law is also naturally *known*, as is much of natural physical law; yet there are exceptions to both: e.g., in the case of natural moral law, St. Thomas' example of those Germans in Caesar's day who justified theft (or, in our own day, genocide); and in the case of natural physical law, some South Pacific natives believed women got pregnant by sitting under a sacred tree.

²⁷³ E.g., the Beatitudes and the "evangelical counsels" in the New Testament add significantly to the old law; and there is the obligation to vote in a modern democracy, but not in an ancient monarchy.

which are, as it were, conclusions following closely from first principles. As to those general principles, the natural law, in the abstract, can nowise be blotted out from men's hearts. But it²⁷⁴ is blotted out in the case of a particular action, in so far as reason is hindered from applying the general principle to a particular point of practice, on account of concupiscence or some other passion, as stated above (Q. 77, A. 2).—But as to the other, *i.e.*, the secondary precepts, the natural law can be blotted out from the human heart . . . by vicious customs and corrupt habits, as among some men, theft, and even unnatural vices, as the Apostle states (Rom 1), were not esteemed sinful.²⁷⁵ . . .

²⁷⁴ *I.e.*, the *knowledge* of the moral law, not the "rectitude" or objective rightness of it.

²⁷⁵ The greatest harm done by vice is thus its blinding of the reason against even *knowing* good and evil (cf. Jn 7:17). Cf. the blithely self-confident justification of "unnatural vice" today.

Question 95

Of Human Law

FIRST ARTICLE

Whether It Was Useful for Laws to Be Framed by Men?

On the contrary, Isidore says (*Etym.* v. 20): *Laws were made that in fear thereof human audacity might be held in check, that innocence might be safeguarded in the midst of wickedness, and that the dread of punishment might prevent the wicked from doing harm.* But these things are most necessary to mankind. Therefore it was necessary that human laws should be made.

I answer that, As stated above (Q. 63, A. 1; Q. 94, A. 3), man has a natural aptitude for virtue; but the perfection of virtue must be acquired by man by means of some kind of training.²⁷⁶ Thus we observe that man is helped by industry in his necessities, for instance, in food and clothing. Certain beginnings of these he has from nature, viz., his reason and his hands; but he has not the full complement, as other animals have, to whom nature has given sufficiency of clothing and food. Now it is difficult to see how man could suffice for himself in the matter of this training: since the

²⁷⁶ St. Thomas would disagree with both Rousseau, who says we are born virtuous, and Hobbes, who says we must be compelled by artifice and force to act contrary to our vicious nature (and also with Behaviorists, who deny we have an "innate" nature, good or bad). There is a parallel in epistemology: St. Thomas would disagree with both rationalism (Platonic or Cartesian), which teaches that knowledge is innate in us, and Empiricism (Hume), which teaches that knowledge is merely the passive reception and ordering of sense impressions. Rather, we have a natural aptitude for knowledge, and for virtue, but we must freely choose the active work to acquire both. This Article and the following one are so clear that no footnotes seem necessary; and their practical importance is also very clear.

perfection of virtue consists chiefly in withdrawing man from undue pleasures, to which above all man is inclined, and especially the young, who are more capable of being trained. Consequently a man needs to receive this training from another, whereby to arrive at the perfection of virtue. And as to those young people who are inclined to acts of virtue, by their good natural disposition, or by custom, or rather by the gift of God, paternal training suffices, which is by admonitions. But since some are found to be depraved, and prone to vice, and not easily amenable to words, it was necessary for such to be restrained from evil by force and fear, in order that, at least, they might desist from evil-doing, and leave others in peace, and that they themselves, by being habituated in this way, might be brought to do willingly what hitherto they did from fear, and thus become virtuous. Now this kind of training, which compels through fear of punishment, is the discipline of laws. Therefore, in order that man might have peace and virtue, it was necessary for laws to be framed: for, as the Philosopher says (*Polit.* i. 2), *as man is the most noble of animals if he be perfect in virtue, so is he the lowest of all, if he be severed from law and righteousness; because man can use his reason to devise means of satisfying his lusts and evil passions, which other animals are unable to do.* . . .

SECOND ARTICLE

Whether Every Human Law Is Derived from the Natural Law?

Objection 3. Further, the law of nature is the same for all; since the Philosopher says (*Ethic.* v. 7) that *the natural just is that which is equally valid everywhere*. If therefore human laws were derived from the natural law, it would follow that they too are the same for all: which is clearly false. . . .

I answer that, As Augustine says (*De Lib. Arb.* i. 5), *that which is not just seems to be no law at all*: wherefore the force of a law depends on the extent of its justice. Now in human affairs a thing is said to be just, from being right, according to the rule of reason. But the first rule of reason is the law of nature, as is clear from what has been stated above (Q. 91, A. 2 *ad* 2). Consequently every human law has just so much of the nature of law, as it is derived from the

law of nature. But if in any point it deflects from the law of nature, it is no longer a law but a perversion of law.

But it must be noted that something may be derived from the natural law in two ways: first, as a conclusion from premises, secondly, by way of determination of certain generalities. The first way is like to that by which, in sciences, demonstrated conclusions are drawn from the principles: while the second mode is likened to that whereby, in the arts, general forms are particularized as to details. Thus the craftsman needs to determine the general form of a house to some particular shape. Some things are therefore derived from the general principles of the natural law, by way of conclusions; e.g., that *one must not kill* may be derived as a conclusion from the principle that *one should do harm to no man*: while some are derived therefrom by way of determination; e.g., the law of nature has it that the evil-doer should be punished; but that he be punished in this or that way, is a determination of the law of nature.

Accordingly both modes of derivation are found in the human law. But those things which are derived in the first way, are contained in human law not as emanating therefrom exclusively, but have some force from the natural law also. But those things which are derived in the second way, have no other force than that of human law. . . .

Reply Obj. 3. The general principles of the natural law cannot be applied to all men in the same way on account of the great variety of human affairs: and hence arises the diversity of positive laws among various people. . . .

Question 96

Of the Power of Human Law

FIRST ARTICLE

Whether Human Law Should Be Framed for the Community Rather Than for the Individual?

On the contrary, The jurist says (*Pandect. Justin. lib. i, tit. iii, art. ii, De legibus*, etc.) that *laws should be made to suit the majority of instances; and they are not framed according to what may possibly happen in an individual case.*

I answer that, Whatever is for an end should be proportionate to that end. Now the end of law is the common good; because, as Isidore says (*Etym. v. 21*), that *law should be framed, not for any private benefit, but for the common good of all the citizens*. Hence human laws should be proportionate to the common good. Now the common good comprises many things. Wherefore law should take account of many things, as to persons, as to matters, and as to times. Because the community of the state is composed of many persons, and its good is procured by many actions; nor is it established to endure for only a short time, but to last for all time by the citizens succeeding one another, as Augustine says (*De Civ. Dei ii. 21; xxii. 6*). . . .

SECOND ARTICLE

Whether It Belongs to the Human Law to Repress All Vices?

I answer that, . . . the same thing is not possible to one who has not a virtuous habit, as is possible to one who has. Thus the same is not possible to a child as to a full-grown man: for which reason the law for children is not the same as for adults, since many things

are permitted to children, which in an adult are punished by law or at any rate are open to blame. In like manner many things are permissible to men not perfect in virtue, which would be intolerable in a virtuous man.

Now human law is framed for a number of human beings, the majority of whom are not perfect in virtue. Wherefore human laws do not forbid all vices, from which the virtuous abstain, but only the more grievous vices, from which it is possible for the majority to abstain; and chiefly those that are to the hurt of others, without the prohibition of which human society could not be maintained: thus human law prohibits murder, theft and suchlike.²⁷⁷ . . .

THIRD ARTICLE

Whether Human Law Prescribes Acts of All the Virtues?

Objection 1. It would seem that human law does not prescribe acts of all the virtues. For vicious acts are contrary to acts of virtue. But human law does not prohibit all vices, as stated above (A. 2). Therefore neither does it prescribe all acts of virtue.

Objection 2. Further, a virtuous act proceeds from a virtue. But virtue is the end of law; so that whatever is from a virtue, cannot come under a precept of law. Therefore human law does not prescribe all acts of virtue.²⁷⁸

Objection 3. Further, law is ordained to the common good, as stated above (Q. 90, A. 2). But some acts of virtue are ordained, not to the common good, but to private good. Therefore the law does not prescribe all acts of virtue.

On the contrary, The Philosopher says (*Ethic.* v. 1) that the law prescribes the performance of the acts of a brave man, . . . and the acts of the temperate man, . . . and the acts of the meek man: and in like manner

²⁷⁷ St. Thomas' point here has been used to justify legalizing abortion—a use which presumes abortion is a small vice, like overeating, and does not hurt anyone(!).

²⁷⁸ This is what people mean when they say, "You can't legislate morality." Law cannot enforce virtuous *character*, but it can enforce virtuous *behavior*.

as regards the other virtues and vices, prescribing the former, forbidding the latter.

I answer that, The species of virtues are distinguished by their objects, as explained above (Q. 54, A. 2; Q. 60, A. 1; Q. 62, A. 2). Now all the objects of virtues can be referred either to the private good of an individual, or to the common good of the multitude: thus matters of fortitude may be achieved either for the safety of the state, or for upholding the rights of a friend, and in like manner with the other virtues. But law, as stated above (Q. 90, A. 2), is ordained to the common good. Wherefore there is no virtue whose acts cannot be prescribed by the law. Nevertheless human law does not prescribe concerning all the acts of every virtue: but only in regard to those that are ordainable to the common good,—either immediately, as when certain things are done directly for the common good,—or mediately, as when a lawgiver prescribes certain things pertaining to good order, whereby the citizens are directed in the upholding of the common good of justice and peace.

Reply Obj. 1. Human law does not forbid all vicious acts, by the obligation of a precept, as neither does it prescribe all acts of virtue. But it forbids certain acts of each vice, just as it prescribes some acts of each virtue.

Reply Obj. 2. An act is said to be an act of virtue in two ways. First, from the fact that a man does something virtuous; thus the act of justice is to do what is right, and an act of fortitude is to do brave things: and in this way law prescribes certain acts of virtue.—Secondly an act of virtue is when a man does a virtuous thing in a way in which a virtuous man does it. Such an act always proceeds from virtue: and it does not come under a precept of law, but is the end at which every lawgiver aims.

Reply Obj. 3. There is no virtue whose act is not ordainable to the common good, as stated above, either mediately or immediately.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁹ Therefore there are no "victimless crimes". Suicide, for instance, harms your friends, family, and society. Prostitution harms the institution of the family, thus all members of all families. Drugs harm the social body by harming the individual member of the body.

FOURTH ARTICLE

Whether Human Law Binds a Man in Conscience?

Objection 1. It would seem that human law does not bind a man in conscience. For an inferior power has no jurisdiction in a court of higher power. But the power of man, which frames human law, is beneath the Divine power. Therefore human law cannot impose its precept in a Divine court, such as is the court of conscience.

Objection 2. Further, the judgment of conscience depends chiefly on the commandments of God. But sometimes God's commandments are made void by human laws, according to Matthew 15:6: *You have made void the commandment of God for your tradition.* Therefore human law does not bind a man in conscience.

Objection 3. Further, human laws often bring loss of character and injury on man, according to Isaiah 10:1 *et seq.*: *Woe to them that make wicked laws, and when they write, write injustice; to oppress the poor in judgment, and do violence to the cause of the humble of My people.* But it is lawful for anyone to avoid oppression and violence. Therefore human laws do not bind man in conscience.

On the contrary, It is written (1 Pet 2:19): *This is thankworthy, if for conscience . . . a man endure sorrows, suffering wrongfully.*

I answer that, Laws framed by man are either just or unjust. If they be just, they have the power of binding in conscience, from the eternal law whence they are derived, according to Proverbs 8:15: *By Me kings reign, and lawgivers decree just things.* . . .

On the other hand laws may be unjust in two ways: first, by being contrary to human good, . . . as when an authority imposes on his subjects burdensome laws, conducive, not to the common good, but rather to his own cupidity or vainglory;—or . . . when a man makes a law that goes beyond the power committed to him;—or . . . when burdens are imposed unequally on the community. . . . The like are acts of violence rather than laws; because, as Augustine says (*De Lib. Arb.* i. 5), *a law that is not just, seems to be no law at all.* Wherefore such laws do not bind in conscience, except perhaps in order to avoid scandal²⁸⁰ or disturbance, for which cause a man should even yield his right, according to Matthew 5:40-41:

²⁸⁰ "Scandal" means not merely *upsetting* people, but harming people morally—e.g., if a drinker leads a teetotaler to drink, which he considers

If a man . . . take away thy coat, let go thy cloak also unto him; and whosoever will force thee one mile, go with him other two.

Secondly, laws may be unjust through being opposed to the Divine good: such are the laws of tyrants inducing to idolatry, or to anything else contrary to the Divine law: and laws of this kind must nowise be observed, because, as stated in Acts 5:29, *we ought to obey God rather than men.*

Reply Obj. 1. As the Apostle says (Rom 13:1, 2), all human power is from God. . . . *therefore he that resisteth the power, in matters that are within its scope, resisteth the ordinance of God;* so that he becomes guilty according to his conscience.

Reply Obj. 2. This argument is true of laws that are contrary to the commandments of God, which is beyond the scope of (human) power. Wherefore in such matters human law should not be obeyed.²⁸¹

Reply Obj. 3. This argument is true of a law that inflicts unjust hurt on its subjects. The power that man holds from God does not extend to this: wherefore neither in such matters is man bound to obey the law, provided he avoid giving scandal or inflicting a more grievous hurt. . . .

SIXTH ARTICLE

Whether He Who Is Under a Law May Act Beside the Letter of the Law?

On the contrary, . . . we should take account of the motive of the lawgiver, rather than of his very words.

I answer that, . . . Now it happens often that the observance of

wrong. "Disturbance" also means more than "bothering people"; it means disturbing the real common good. Jesus and the saints often upset and bothered people.

²⁸¹ N.b.: *only* one who believes in a higher law than human law—natural law or eternal law or both—can justify disobedience to human law. Thus a moral positivist, who believes only in man-made ("posited") laws, must logically be a legalist and a status-quo conformist, since human law is the highest thing. The prevailing view, that believers in a natural law and/or an eternal law are conformists and legalists, while unbelievers are bold rebels, is exactly upside down.

some point of law conduces to the common weal in the majority of instances, and yet, in some cases, is very hurtful. Since then the lawgiver cannot have in view every single case, he shapes the law according to what happens most frequently, by directing his attention to the common good. Wherefore if a case arise wherein the observance of that law would be hurtful to the general welfare, it should not be observed. For instance, suppose that in a besieged city it be an established law that the gates of the city are to be kept closed, this is good for public welfare as a general rule: but, if it were to happen that the enemy are in pursuit of certain citizens, who are defenders of the city, it would be a great loss to the city, if the gates were not opened to them: and so in that case the gates ought to be opened, contrary to the letter of the law, in order to maintain the common weal, which the lawgiver had in view.

Nevertheless it must be noted, that if the observance of the law according to the letter does not involve any sudden risk needing instant remedy, it is not competent for everyone to expound what is useful and what is not useful to the state: those alone can do this who are in authority, and who, on account of such like cases, have the power to dispense from the laws. If, however, the peril be so sudden as not to allow of the delay involved by referring the matter to authority, the mere necessity brings with it a dispensation, since necessity knows no law.²⁸² . . .

²⁸² One is right to break speed laws to get a patient in danger of death to a hospital, without taking time to get police permission first. Jean Valjean, in *Les Misérables*, is justified even in stealing a loaf of bread from the rich to feed his starving family. Moral common sense never takes a beating in St. Thomas.

Question 97

Of Change in Laws

FIRST ARTICLE

Whether Human Law Should Be Changed in Any Way?

On the contrary, Augustine says (*De Lib. Arb.* i. 6): *A temporal law, however just, may be justly changed in course of time.*

I answer that, As stated above (Q. 91, A. 3), human law is a dictate of reason, whereby human acts are directed. Thus there may be two causes for the just change of human law: one on the part of reason; the other on the part of man whose acts are regulated by law. The cause on the part of reason is that it seems natural to human reason to advance gradually from the imperfect to the perfect. Hence, in speculative sciences, we see that the teaching of the early philosophers was imperfect, and that it was afterwards perfected by those who succeeded them. So also in practical matters: for those who first endeavored to discover something useful for the human community, not being able by themselves to take everything into consideration, set up certain institutions which were deficient in many ways; and these were changed by subsequent lawgivers who made institutions that might prove less frequently deficient in respect of the common weal.²⁸³

On the part of man, whose acts are regulated by law, the law can be rightly changed on account of the changed condition of man, to whom different things are expedient according to the difference of his condition. An example is proposed by Augustine (*De Lib. Arb.* i. 6): *If the people have a sense of moderation and responsibility, and are most careful guardians of the common weal, it is right to enact a law*

²⁸³ The idea of progress was not invented in modern times; the idea of necessary, automatic, universal progress was.

allowing such a people to choose their own magistrates for the government of the commonwealth. But if, as time goes on, the same people become so corrupt as to sell their votes, and entrust the government to scoundrels and criminals; then the right of appointing their public officials is rightly forfeit to such a people, and the choice devolves to a few good men.

SECOND ARTICLE

*Whether Human Law Should Always Be Changed,
Whenever Something Better Occurs?*

I answer that, As stated above (A. 1), human law is rightly changed, in so far as such change is conducive to the common weal. But, to a certain extent, the mere change of law is of itself prejudicial to the common good: because custom avails much for the observance of laws. . . . Consequently, when a law is changed, the binding power of the law is diminished, in so far as custom is abolished. Wherefore human law should never be changed, unless, in some way or other, the common weal be compensated according to the extent of the harm done in this respect. Such compensation may arise either from some very great and very evident benefit conferred by the new enactment; or from the extreme urgency of the case, due to the fact that either the existing law is clearly unjust, or its observance extremely harmful. Wherefore the jurist says [*Pandect. Justin. lib. i. ff., tit. 4, De Constit. Princip.*] that *in establishing new laws, there should be evidence of the benefit to be derived, before departing from a law which has long been considered just.*²⁸⁴

²⁸⁴ Ambrose Bierce defined a conservative as "one who is enamored of existing evils; a liberal is one who wishes to replace them with new ones." By this definition, St. Thomas is neither (how *can* he not fit into our categories?) but he is farthest from the liberal. "If it's not broken, don't fix it." Common sense again.

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