Implausible Diagnosis: A Response to Germain Grisez

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For one who has learned a great deal from Grisez’s work over the years, it is an honor to be asked to comment on one of his papers. What is more (since wisdom is better than honor), I have found it rewarding to comment on a paper that covers the whole problem of human action: how it relates to volition, how it comes under norms, how it aims at personal fulfillment, and how it can achieve (when elevated by the love of God) a supernatural Kingdom. Truly systematic treatments of this are rare, even over the long haul of Church history. There was Augustine’s; then there was Aquinas’s (each tinkered with by countless subsequent disciples); now there is Grisez’s.

It is impossible, alas, to find a quick slogan with which to say how Grisez’s system is new. It incorporates the entire moral tradition of the Church, with the tradition’s substantial debts to Augustine and Aquinas; yet it also criticizes Aquinas as both too Augustinian and too Aristotelian. Readers of Grisez have generally failed to find the thread that ties these criticisms together; conservative readers have often underestimated the extent of the criticisms, or missed their motivation. This is where Grisez’s latest paper, “Natural Law, God, Religion, and Human Fulfillment,” offers important help. It is a broad-stroke summary of the system, which lets Grisez’s non-Augustinian and non-Thomist elements be seen in a coherent light.

By that light, I think I have seen (finally) why I should be a fellow traveller with Grisez’s party rather than a card carrier. Allow me to develop this figure. First and negatively, a fellow traveller is not an opponent. Grisez has at least three classes of opponents. In one, I put those (mostly consequentialists/proportionalists) who are dissenters from the Church’s moral doctrine. In a second, I put the mixed bag of thinkers (mostly phenomenologists and Balthasarians) who hold that ethics does not start with practical reason or practical volition, but with something more aesthetic, such as admiration for noble examples. In a third class, I put those who refuse to disagree with St. Thomas about anything they think he says in philosophy or theology (the neo-Thomist remnant). I belong to none of these classes.

Second and positively, a fellow traveller agrees with Grisez that there are serious problems in Aquinas’s account of man’s natural and supernatural fulfillments, that it is high time to fix them, and that an improved account can be reached by putting the biblical and patristic data into fruitful dialogue with analytical philosophy. Third and again negatively, a fellow traveller is not a
party member. The party members agree with Grisez about where the wrong turn in Aquinas lies. A fellow traveller has a different diagnosis.

The content of Grisez’s paper divides for my purposes into three main parts:

— part A is Grisez’s natural-law theory, dealing with how human action arises in choice and how it comes under natural-law norms by relating to certain basic goods (this is section I in Grisez’s text, pp. 3-11);
— part B is the bit of Grisez’s philosophy that concerns arguing to an uncaused entity (the initial part of his section II, pp. 11-12);
— part C is Grisez’s effort to connect the natural law and the same bit of his philosophy to the supernatural, dealing with how natural-law norms are seen to be guidance from the uncaused entity, how biblical revelation confirms this insight, how Aristotle missed it, how Aristotle’s influence led to mischief in Aquinas, etc. (the rest of Grisez’s text).

My problems with Grisez’s system come mainly in part C. Before I get to them, however, a word or two will be in order about parts A and B.

I agree with all the moves and main ingredients in part A. Grisez’s construction of natural-law ethics and metaethics (articulated first by himself, then by John Finnis, then in joint works with Finnis and other collaborators) is by far the most plausible we have ever had. It meets the philosophical problems, makes sense psychologically, and conforms to what we know anthropologically. Moreover, I think Aquinas would recognize it as a fleshed-out version of his own position.1 After all, Aquinas’s first 20 qq. in the Prima Secundae (hereafter 2/1) are a main source of Grisez’s action theory; and the Common Doctor’s discussion of where the norms for action come from (2/1, 94, aa. 2-3), namely, from practical reasoning’s first principle plus our apprehension of the goods to which we are naturally inclined, is the principal source of Grisez’s own account of how the “basic goods” figure in a sound natural-law theory. Indeed, this part of Grisez’s work has been widely (and I think accurately) hailed as a rediscovery of the natural law as Thomas intended it, after a long burial under Suarezian distortions.2

1. Grisez has defended himself and his reading of Aquinas very ably against critics like McInerny and Hittinger, and I have tried to second his defenses; against Hittinger, see my “Tale of Two Beatitudes” in Faith and Reason 17 (1991) 218-233; against McInerny, see “Does Practical Reason Start with ‘Good’ or with ‘Complete Good’? A Critique of Ralph McInerny,” forthcoming in Faith and Reason.
2. An especially good study is Patrick Lee, “Theology and Thomistic Ethics: An Ignorant Misunderstanding,” Faith and Reason 3 (1979) 47-68. A predecessor of Grisez on the path to rediscovery was Walter Farrell, whose dissertation was published in 1930 as The Natural Moral Law according to St. Thomas and Suarez.
To be sure, there are some differences between Grisez’s list of basic goods and Aquinas’s list of goods-to-which-we-are-naturally-inclined. But nothing important turns on the differences—not even where the “good of religion” is concerned. For although Aquinas lacked the anthropological data upon which Grisez was able to draw, he did acknowledge that acts religiously motivated are practiced among every people, and that there is a naturally apprehended good for whose sake such acts are chosen. In the Secunda Secundae (hereafter 2/2) 81, 2 ad 3, he called this good “reverence for the divine” (reverentia divina); he said that natural reason prescribes that man should do something towards this good (although exactly what to do has to come from the questionable traditions of a community or from divine revelation), and he carefully distinguished this good from God Himself, who is the end-and-object of the theological virtues (2/2, 81, 5). Aquinas said elsewhere, of course, that everything prescribed by natural reason belongs to one or another of the natural virtues and thus to natural law (2/1, 94, 3). So Grisez did not have to depart an inch from Aquinas in order to posit a “basic good” for whose sake natural law prescribes religious acts of some kind. He just had to broaden the notion of “the divine,” to make room for some not-very-theistic religions and for the secular ideologies that have served as religions in the lives of modern zealots. And if Grisez’s description of the good in question as “being in harmony” with what serves as one’s god is understood broadly enough to cover the known range of cases, then Grisez’s description conveys little, if anything, more than Aquinas’s. For the minimum content of “being in harmony” with a higher-than-human source of meaning is just “being in a posture of reverence” towards it. I shall return to this topic.

The uncaused entity

With part B of Grisez’s paper, namely, the bit of his philosophy in which he argues to the existence of an uncaused entity, I have a quarrel—not about the argument itself, but about how much it proves—which I am going to pursue here, in order to savor an irony. Grisez’s argument, based on the obtaining of contingent states of affairs, is a way, and an especially economi-

3. Besides the list in 2/1, 94, aa. 2-3, see also the very important list in 3 SCG c. 63.
4. In other words, Aquinas had no trouble distinguishing (a) the natural, human good which is being in a posture of reverence towards one’s god from either (b) the uncreated Good which is the True God Himself or (c) the created, supernatural good of having the True God in one’s soul by acts of infused faith, etc. That goods (a) and (c) remain distinct even in the Christian life is seen from a familiar biblical figure: a temple is distinct from the worship paid in it, and so the good of having one’s soul turned into a Temple of God (good (c)) is distinct from the good one gains by worshiping Him there or anywhere else (good (a)).
cal way, to get the conclusion that an uncaused entity obtains. Grisez believes that it also gets the conclusion that a creator obtains, and this belief, I am going to argue, is mistaken. His argument would get this conclusion, if Grisez were clear about granting that existence is a predicable in ‘John exists’, so that it and similar propositions would be logically in order and would pick out “existential” states of affairs which might or might not obtain. But Grisez is not clear about this. In his principal work on the subject, Beyond the New Theism, he dismisses the traditional metaphysics of esse in rather sweeping terms. Then he gives only a brief, inconclusive discussion of what to do with ‘John exists’ and the like. For general existential propositions, like ‘A unicorn exists’, Grisez is disposed to grant what the analytical philosophers used to insist upon, namely, that all talk of existence reduce to the force of the particular quantifier (\(\exists x\ldots\), ‘there is a . . .’). Given that disposition, Grisez’s argument proves no more than Aristotle’s. Here is why.

Suppose the dictum that existence is not a predicate is allowed by Grisez to mean all that the analytical philosophers of thirty years ago thought it meant. Then an apparent proposition like ‘A quark exists’ is logically out of order and so (of course) picks out no state of affairs. Its proper replacement, ‘There is a quark’, is satisfied just in case ‘x is a quark’ comes out true for some value of ‘x’, call it V(x); and so ‘There is a quark’ picks out no state of affairs except V(x)’s being a quark. Well, quarkhood is not existing, and so the moral is that “existential” states of affairs vanish. There simply is no state of affairs, SA, such that something’s existing is the content of SA, as distinct from the obtaining of SA. This outcome, if I have read Beyond the New Theism accurately, is one with which Grisez is prepared to live in peace, for purposes of his argument to an uncaused entity. Now, his argument begins with our noticing that, typically, we can understand what it would be like for a state of affairs to obtain without knowing whether it does obtain. In other words, typical states of affairs are such that their content does not include (and so does not explain) their obtaining. Grisez’s argument then presses for an explanation of why these typical states of affairs (called “contingent” ones) obtain, if they do obtain. Well, arguably, the state of affairs which is V(x)’s being a quark obtains for no other reason than that V(x) is a quark, which is its content, so that this “quidditative” state of affairs does not count as a contingent one. Suppose, then, that all the contingent states of affairs

5. Germain Grisez, Beyond the New Theism (New York: Notre Dame University Press, 1975), p. 12 with footnote 6. Grisez’s project was not to abandon the “real distinction” between esse and essence but to transpose it. He thought he could have the comforts of the real distinction without predicable existence.
6. Ibid., pp. 46-47
7. Don’t say: no, the content of this state of affairs is V(x)’s being a quark in signified act,
involving \( V(x) \) are *arrangements* in which \( V(x) \) might or might not stand. Instantly, we are returned to an Aristotelian universe, updated in its particle physics—a universe in which the fundamental furniture (for which I picked quarks, but you are welcome to pick strings, forces, substantial forms, or whatever you prefer) is just undiscussably “around,” and so nothing can need or get explaining except why the furniture is moving, clumping, unclumping, and otherwise getting arranged as it is. The quest for such explanation still leads rationally to an uncaused entity, \( D \), whose mysterious causing (in a sense of ‘causing’ that emerges only in the argument itself) is the state of affairs, \( Dc \), whose obtaining explains the obtaining of all the other contingent states of affairs which do obtain; but \( D \) is no longer a creator in the intended (Bible-influenced) sense of ‘creator’, because \( D \) does not “create” anything except arrangements of the (oops, I almost said “pre-existing”) furniture. And since \( D \)‘s causing is irreducibly different from (and only analogous to) any sort of causing we attribute to the entities in our experience, there is no reason why \( D \)’s causality should be more analogous to efficient than to final causality. And so perhaps \( Dc \) is (analogously) \( D \)’s being “that for the sake of which” contingent arrangements are made to obtain by whatever contingent efficient causes of theirs obtain. In short, there is an interpretation of Grisez’s argument in which his \( D \) turns out to be no better than Aristotle’s god.

whereas its obtaining is \( V(x) \)’s being a quark in exercised act, hoping to appeal to the idea that something’s being the case in signified act is never that by virtue of which it is the case in exercised act. For this appeal can only be relevant if the content of a state of affairs is in fact signified act, and that would ruin Grisez’s argument. Grisez needs the uncaused entity to be a state of affairs which obtains by virtue of being the state of affairs which it is. For his purposes, then, the content of a state of affairs must be its being the state of affairs which it is; and if this latter is signified act, then no state of affairs obtains by virtue of being the state of affairs which it is (unless Anselm was right all along).

Don’t say: no, the content of this state of affairs is what \( V(x) \) is, whereas its obtaining is the fact that \( V(x) \) is, hoping to appeal to the idea that a truly noncontingent state of affairs is one which obtains by virtue of being the state of affairs which it is, whereas, here, the fact that-\( V(x) \)-is does not count as a fact “by virtue of” what-\( V(x) \)-is. Don’t say this sort of thing, I repeat, because this is sneaking existential states of affairs back into good grace. If existence is really and utterly and finally not a predicable, then there is no “fact that \( V(x) \) is.”

In that case, are essence and existence not distinct? Quite the contrary. They must be distinct, because what-\( V(x) \)-is is a fact, and that-\( V(x) \)-is is not a fact.

Well, but if essence and existence are only distinct in this Pickwickian sense, doesn’t that ruin Grisez’s argument anyway? Not at all. No more than it ruined *Physics VIII* for Averroes. The Pickwickian distinction just makes existence as undiscussable as analytical philosophers said it was 35 years ago (when Grisez was dodging their knives) and as Averroes said it was about 800 years before that.
Needless to say, Grisez’s intended interpretation was quite different, both in *Beyond the New Theism* and now in “Natural Law, God, Religion, and Human Fulfillment.” For while he has always been explicit that his argument itself does not prove that $D$ is God or a god, because bestowing religious significance upon $D$ is a further step, he is equally explicit that his argument concludes to an entity that, as a recognizable creator, invites the bestowal of a different and more salient religious significance than Aristotle’s god invited. I just wanted to point out that this latter contention is unsuccessful, so long as Grisez’s argument itself is vulnerable to an unwanted interpretation—as it will be, until Grisez is prepared to grant that the substantial being with which we say a quark exists, Jones exists, etc., is at least some sort of predicable, however odd, so that a thing’s existing can go back to being discussable as a contingent state of affairs in its own right. Grisez has plenty of room to do this; and he will have plenty of company these days, if he does.

*How natural law gets to be a praeparatio Evangeliae*

In part C of his paper, Grisez sketches out a preferred path to get from natural law to covenant theology, and he criticizes Aquinas for not taking it. The path is long, and the criticism of Aquinas is multifaceted. So this part of his paper is very extensive; one can easily get lost in it, because there are side paths. But if I am not mistaken, the main path runs through the following markers.

1. Natural-law norms guide human action.
2. Nothing accounts for these norms except a giver-of-good-guidance.
3. It is rational to identify the giver-of-good-guidance with the creator posited by natural reason (as in part B).
4. One who gives us good guidance is to be thought of as an intelligent, personal agent, who calls us to cooperate with him.

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8. See pp. 84-91 in *Beyond the New Theism*.
9. To restore the intended force of Grisez’s argument, the most economical course is just to replace the “classical” first-order predicate calculus with a free logic, that is, a predicate calculus which admits vacuous names as values for its individual variables and an existence predicate, $E$, so as to replace the “classical” version of existential generalization ($\forall y \exists x \phi x$) with a better one: $\forall y (E y \exists x \phi x)$. But the more principled course of action, in my opinion, is to adopt the standpoint of quantified modal logic with an existence predicate and Kripke models. Then ‘$A$ quark exists’, said of the actual world, $w_0$, does not reduce to picking out the state of affairs that, for some value $V(x)$ of ‘$x$’, $V(x)$ is a quark in $w_0$, but also picks out the state of affairs that $V(x)$ is in the population of $w_0$—without being automatically in the populations of the worlds accessible from $w_0$. From this standpoint, $V(x)$’s being in the population is a perfectly good state of affairs, which might or might not obtain.
Ergo, it is rational to think of the creator posited by natural reason as an intelligent, personal agent who calls us to cooperate with him.

Ergo, it is rational to think of the creator posited by natural reason as one's god and to think of the basic good of religion as not just being in harmony with this god (say, by submissively keeping one's head down and sending up the occasional puff of incense in token of reverence), but as also cooperating actively with Him.

With these six markers in front of one's mind, one can see the force and relevance of just about everything else Grisez does in this part. For example,

since natural-law norms guide every human choice, it is rational, given markers (2)-(6), to think of the good of religion as being at stake in every choice (one can be cooperating or failing to cooperate with divine guidance in every choice), so that a commitment to pursue this good assumes an overarching status in the "examined life" of natural virtue.

Whereupon,

anyone who assented to markers (2)-(7) would be optimally disposed (as far as his philosophy went) to accept a revelation from the God who speaks in Scripture, because this God is both the creator and the giver of natural-law guidance, who is in fact intelligent and personal, and who now reveals a further call to human persons to collaborate with Him on a special basis, called a covenant.

In other words, the covenant comes from beyond reason's reach but does not go against reason's grain. As coming from beyond reason's reach,

God's covenant with man is special in its acceptance and its reward. Because it is revealed, its acceptance is an act of faith, whose impact on one's life is that of a fundamental and overarching commitment, at stake in every further choice. Because the covenant is a deal with the personal God Himself, its reward is a truly personal fulfillment in God's Kingdom. There one lives forever, enjoying not only human activity (in a community of resurrected persons) but also certain divine activities.

On the other hand,

Aristotle argued to an uncaused entity unworthy of the name of 'god'. Because of this and other mistakes, he missed the blessings of markers (2)-(6). So his conception of the good of religion remained partial and sub-standard and did not significantly influence his account of the virtuous life.

Rather and alas:
Aristotle’s ethics was shaped by an idea of species-specific flourishing, borrowed from biology. All animals are set by their nature to pursue their complete good. The complete good specific to man is all-around accord with reason (which is hard and requires the mind and will to be strengthened with acquired “virtues”), topped off by the optimal activity of man’s highest faculty (the understanding), which is theoretical inquiry into “divine matters,” namely, the primordial cause and ultimate purpose of everything.

Aquinas thought his job was to insert biblical revelation (interpreted as much as possible as the Fathers, especially Augustine, had done already) into the best going philosophy of his era, which was Aristotle’s. Whereupon, and again alas:

Aquinas, too, missed the blessings of markers (2)-(6). He, too, imagined that man was after a species-specific complete good, and so he had to construe the Kingdom as providing the same, which he did by identifying our understanding’s highest exercise with a more-than-Aristotelian theoria, the Beatific Vision (which Augustine had called our true happiness). Thus he blurred the distinction between the ultimate human activity and divine activity.

There is more, of course, but these twelve markers suffice to trace out the main path through part C. From it, Grisez launches two sorts of excursions, one to develop his own theology of salvific action and eschatology, the other to show in more detail how the Common Doctor went wrong (mostly) by missing the early markers. So the twelve markers also trace out Grisez’s diagnosis of what went wrong in Aquinas. My own view of the patient is different; I reject the diagnosis.

When I am invited to respond to a paper, I don’t like to abuse the invitation by turning in a response longer than the paper. So in the remainder of this article, I am going to do just one job properly, while turning in a perfunctory performance on another. Properly, I am going to argue that Grisez’s main path from natural law to covenant theology is no path at all; it cannot be traversed. Perfunctorily, I am going to defend Aquinas from Grisez’s attacks. Someday, Deo volente, I shall point out where (in my less than reliable opinion) an attack might better have been aimed.

From norms to a guide?

A road that starts here and resumes on the other side of a bridgeless chasm is no road. In just the same way, Grisez’s path from marker
(1) Natural-law norms guide human action to the blessings of markers (2)-(6) is no path. A chasm lies between (1) and (2) Nothing accounts for these norms except a giver-of-good-guidance over which Grisez’s remarks are intended to fashion a bridge but fail to do so. Here are his remarks (with emphasis added by me).

Natural law manifests providence and benevolence because nothing else can account for its guidance toward the intelligible goods of every individual and community. Even if we evolved from lower forms, subhuman nature cannot account for practical principles that guide us toward intelligible goods; even though we experience and understand many naturally given goods, experience and theoretical knowledge cannot account for principles that direct us toward goods still to be realized; and even though many moral requirements follow from our previous actions and the actions of others, no human action can account for principles that guide every human action.

So, as people become aware of being guided towards intelligible goods by the principles of practical reason, they also become at least dimly aware of the more-than-human source of that guidance. . . . p. 13

In this passage, either a question is being raised about the principles (i.e. starting points or most basic norms) of practical reason—or else a question is being raised about the guidance they give. What accounts for them? Or what accounts for it? We are conducted along a process of elimination: $X$ does not account for the PPR (or for the guidance they give), $Y$ does not account for them (or it), etc., leading to the (implicit) lemma that nothing human or less-than-human accounts for them (or it), so as to end up with the conclusion that something more-than-human accounts for the PPR (or for the guidance they give). The key verb throughout is ‘account for’, which is why I italicized its four occurrences in the passage quoted.

We are supposed to have some sense of what this verb means; and if we are unclear about it, the process of elimination supplies the meaning intended by Grisez. Subhuman nature, previous human cognitive experiences, and previous human actions are eliminated. These items are evidently being thought of as explanatory factors in a causal explanation and are being dismissed as failing to explain where the PPR (or their guidance) have “come from.” This interpretation is confirmed in the second paragraph quoted, where the word ‘source’ is used; the source of anything is where it comes from. Well, a thing “comes from” either that which has what it takes to be turned into it (like raw material) or that which has what it takes to produce it (like an active agent) or
both. So Grisez's elimination-process is looking for a material or efficient *cause* of the PPR (or their guidance) and is coming up with none, short of a more-than-human guide.10

If the question is not about the principles themselves but about the guidance they give, it is answered easily—so easily, as to embarrass whoever asks it. The guidance given by the PPR “comes from” what they say. Period. The PPR are intentional entities, like propositions or formulated rules, composing a “message.” No doubt, a message “does nothing” unless a mind entertains it, in the relevant sort of propositional attitude. But given a mind so attending to the message, the guidance it gives to the owner of that mind, to do this, or pursue that, comes entirely from what the message says (which is what the message is, which is an intentional content). The state of affairs that the mind-owner is guided has (and needs) no special causes beyond the mind’s attention and the intentional content attended to.11

Suppose, then, that the question is about the principles of practical reason themselves, the PPR. Where does the very “message” come from? To get an interesting answer, let us set aside all the cases where the message consists of one or more norms reached by (typically subconscious) deduction from, or application of, prior (and often tacit) principles, because the answer is obvious in all such cases: the message “comes from” the (typically subconscious) processing of prior principles. Let us focus rather on the case where the message is an underivable “first principle.” And let us approach the case of a practical first principle by looking first at the parallel case of a theoretical first principle—say, the first axiom in Russell’s axiomatization of the

10. In reading an earlier draft of Grisez’s paper, I was struck by the weakness of this argument but passed over the matter in silence in my response to that draft, because the earlier draft bristled with troublesome statements about fulfillment in the Beatific Vision, which I thought were at the heart of Grisez’s case and hence more urgent to clarify. To my surprise, the other responders passed over the guidance matter as well, and so it never came up in oral discussion. Now, in the final draft of his paper, many troublesome statements about the Vision have disappeared, changing my view of where the heart of Grisez’s case lies and making the importance of the guidance matter more apparent to me. So in this new response, and with apologies to Grisez and the others for my belatedness, I am breaking the silence.

11. Does the mind’s act of attention need explaining? Well, the contingent state of affairs that my mind attends to this message is no doubt caused to obtain by prior triggering experiences or prior choices, any of which are contingent states of affairs which obtain, and their obtaining is no doubt caused in the end by whatever it is (call it D) that causes contingent states of affairs to obtain. But D’s causing would also explain my mind’s doing something other than attending to this message, whatever state of affairs that might be. So since D’s causing explains any contingent state of affairs’ obtaining whatsoever, its causing cannot be appealed to as explaining *specially* why the state of affairs which is my mind’s attending to *this* message obtains. Hence D is no special “guide.” As Aquinas would say, an *apprehensio* is “specified” by its object, not by its First Cause.
propositional logic: \((p \lor p) \supset p\). Where does this principle come from? Answer: it comes from the meaning of disjunction. Nothing “accounts for” its being a true proposition but the meaning of disjunction, and nothing “accounts for” its being a known-to-be-true judgment but the mere understanding of disjunction. And how is this understanding acquired? Answer: by abstracting it from previous encounters with the use of ‘or’.

And once the concept is acquired, of course, it guides (through typically tacit judgments analytically unpacking the concept) one’s future formation of disjunctive phrases or propositions, one’s future inferences to or from such propositions, etc. Now take the first principle of practical reason, according to Aquinas and Grisez: ‘Good is to be done or pursued; its opposite, avoided’. Where does this principle “come from”? Answer: it comes from the meaning of ‘good’ (or whatever other term is used to express positive evaluation). Nothing “accounts for” its being a sound norm but the meaning of ‘good’, and nothing accounts for its being a known-to-be-true practical judgment but the mere understanding of good. And how is this understanding acquired? Answer: by abstracting the general concept of good from previously encountered benefits (primordially, those to which we are naturally inclined), or from previous evaluations of things (primordially, those spontaneously prompted by natural inclination), etc. And again: once the concept is acquired, it suffices (through typically tacit judgments which, if made explicit, are per se nota thanks to the concept itself or thanks to one’s naturally inevitable applications of it) to guide one’s future evaluations of things, options, actions, etc.

So, beyond the human intellectual acts of concept- and judgment-formation, no further special cause or source of just this message is required. Ergo, Grisez’s appeal to a more-than-human message-source or guide is blocked.

One evaluates such an appeal differently, of course, when one is already convinced on independent grounds that one has come from an intelligent and free creator. Then one naturally regards one’s very faculties, one’s very ability to abstract, etc., as gifts from this creator, and then one sees “providence and benevolence” in the proper functioning of those faculties, and nowhere more so, perhaps, than in the functioning whereby those faculties yield moral norms and attention to them. In other words, one readily yields assent to an argument for guidance when one encounters it in a different

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12. Loose translation: if ‘p or p’ is true, where ‘p’ is any proposition you please, then ‘p’ itself is true.
13. A German speaker abstracts it from his previous encounters with uses of ‘oder’; a Latin speaker, from previous encounters with ‘vel’, etc.
14. Again, does the mind’s act of abstracting, or its act of judging, need explaining? Go back to footnote 11, uniformly replace ‘attends to this message’ with ‘abstracts this concept’ or ‘forms this judgment’, and then replay the entire footnote.
context, where it is being put to a different and more familiar use. The use I mean is to draw out one of the consequences of having a free and intelligent creator, and the context is Catholic theology. But Grisez's use is to establish a reason to suppose that his $D$ has the relevant attributes in the first place, in a context where one is devoid of any independent reason to think of $D$ as intelligent at all, much less free. In that context, I say, and for that use, Grisez's argument goes nowhere.

When Grisez's philosophical bridge from marker (1) to marker (2) is seen to vanish, philosophical support for the blessings of (2)-(6) vanishes with it. Tough-minded philosophy simply does not support an enriched view of the good of religion, whereby it is cooperation with divine guidance rather than just humble reverence (if not for the popular gods, then for a philosophers' surrogate). And so tough-minded philosophy does not support a commitment "to act always in accord with all the guidance God provides," (p. 16) rather than just "to act always in accord with reason" (as Aristotle said). And so tough-minded philosophy can say little or nothing to support the view that a humanly virtuous life is overwhelmingly a religious life in Grisez's sense (marker 7), that is, a life organized around cooperating with one's god, as if living out a vocation from him/her/it. In classical antiquity, this vocation-like idea came only to special heroes from special oracles, not from philosophy. In Israel and in early Christianity, it came to prophets, apostles, and ultimately to the whole people, from divine revelation. In Islam, it came to the obedient muslimīn from pseudo-revelation or by derivation from the true one. In modern times, the vocation-like idea comes to collaborators with the Dialectic, guerillas for the Proletariat, little sisters of Womanhood, oblates of the Environment, etc., from ideological ersatz religion, not from serious philosophy.¹⁵

No doubt, an unconverted but morally serious person who held the vocation-like idea of pursuing the good of religion, without distortions introduced by false revelations or ideologies, would be easier to evangelize, because virtually holding the prima credibilia, than many other sorts of

¹⁵. Even Aquinas's idea that the virtue of religion can "command" acts of the other virtues (2/2, 81, 4 ad 1 and ad 2) has little support without the revealed information that God sets moral requirements for even some basic acts of reverencing Him, e.g., demands morally clean hands as a prerequisite for sacrifices to be acceptable (cf. Isaiah 1:11-17). No such idea was entertained in the great Bronze Age civilizations, where the gods were thought to set ritual requirements but not what we would call moral ones. Indeed, the whole idea that what we call morality was relevant to religion has few traces (outside Israel) prior to what Jaspers has called the "Axial Age" (6th to 5th centuries B.C.); and when that idea did emerge (in China with Confucius, in India with Gautama, in Persia with Zarathustra, etc.), either it had nothing to do with philosophy at all, or, in the one place where it did (in Greece, with Socrates), it had nothing to do with proof for a creator.
persons (marker 8). I wouldn’t dream of denying it. I am just pointing out that such a person’s favorable frame of mind could not have arisen from tight philosophical reasoning from marker (1) to marker (7) via Grisez’s case for $D$.\textsuperscript{16}

\textit{Aquinas defended (with indecent brevity)}

Once Grisez’s illusory path from natural law to covenant theology fades out of one’s mind, one is disposed to look again, and more favorably, at the work of Aristotle and its appropriation by Aquinas. Yes, the Stagirite’s treatment of \textit{ta ethika} has its eccentricities. Like the rest of his corpus, it has blind spots, omissions, ambiguities, and other flaws.\textsuperscript{17} But with an exception I shall not be discussing, there is not much wrong with what Aquinas lifted from Aristotle and put to his own theological ends.

I shall try to support this judgment in five areas, beginning with the fundamental openness of nature to grace, and ending with the issue over which Grisez has chosen to lament most volubly, namely, the alleged mischief of “complete good.”

\textit{i.} Since Christians have the same nature as their unconverted neighbors and differ from them only by grace,\textsuperscript{18} the first task is to say how persons with a set nature are open to grace. This Aquinas did by taking advantage of

\textsuperscript{16} As a theologian, I should guess that the favorable frame of mind arose from cooperation with prevenient actual graces. Some such graces impact the mind as \textit{illuminationes}, but they don’t have to be lighting up premises in a philosophically cogent argument.

\textsuperscript{17} Which is not to say that I agree with Grisez’s bitterly hostile portrait. Nothing in Aristotle’s philosophy is “equally” as “disastrous for religion and moral life” as Asiatic monism (p. 18). The idea of harmony with Aristotle’s god is thinner than Grisez would like but not “meaningless” (p. 19). Human agents stand in causal chains, like everything else, but are not thereby determined in what they choose; those causal chains are not “incompatible with the self-determination of choice required for freedom” (p. 19, note 30), because, for Aristotle, any necessary condition counted as “a cause” and so it could not be said in general that “causes” necessitate. So despite the causal chains in which one stands, one can and does “organize one’s life” to a significant extent “by free commitments” (p. 19). To that extent, one shapes one’s own participation in the community and interior lives that deliver human fulfillment; one achieves a “human goodness” that is at once “personal” and “species specific” (pp. 19-20). This is not the place to debate these matters in detail. Suffice it to say that Grisez summarizes Aristotle’s thought as a collection of warts, so as to make it a foil for “the biblical worldview.” One expects this sort of thing from the exegetes favored at the Zondervan publishing house, who are always happy to push Calvinist “dichotomies” between “Greek thought” and “the biblical categories.” One expects better from Catholic philosophers.

\textsuperscript{18} See canon 19 from the Council of Orange, in Denzinger-Schönmetzer, \textit{Enchiridion Symbolorum etc.} # 389 (old # 192). I cite this hereafter as \textit{Denz}. Aquinas rightly thought of grace as really distinct from our nature, calling it a “forma superaddita” (2/1, 109 passim).
Aristotle's contrast between that which is "by nature" and that which is "by art" (In II Physicorum, lectio 1). Things are actually or potentially certain ways "by nature"; they can be made other ways "by art." Supernatural grace is divine art. God gives rational creatures a new design that goes beyond what they can be "by their nature"—a design to which they are not in "natural potency," in other words, but in non-natural potency (De Veritate q. 27, a. 2; Compendium Theol. cc. 103-104). For Aquinas, a nonnatural potency could be "forced potency" (violenta) or "obediential potency," the latter being the sort relevant in this context (De Potentia Dei 4, 1 ad 20; 6, 1 ad 18; etc). Grisez mentions none of this but endorses, at least, the notion of obediential potency (in footnote 47 on p. 26). Unfortunately, Grisez also contradicts the endorsement by adopting a definition of created nature inconsistent with it. "A created thing's nature," he says, "is the potency fulfilled by its complete actualization . . ." (p. 25). In that case, obediential potency has no room, because the very nature of $x$ is being defined by everything $x$ can be, {$\phi: x$ is potentially $\phi$}. To be consistent, Grisez should return to Aquinas’s definition. A thing’s nature is not just potency; it includes part of the thing’s actuality, i.e. a subset of the traits {$\phi: x$ is $\phi$}. As actual, a thing’s nature explains some of its potencies and fails to explain others (leaving the others to be nonnatural); as potential, a thing’s nature is just the potency fulfilled by its connaturally complete actualization (leaving obediential potency to be the one fulfilled by any higher-than-connatural actualization).

ii. Next, there is nothing seriously wrong with Aquinas’s account of the elevation of human action by grace. Christians have the same natural faculties, inclinations, appetites, etc., as their unconverted neighbors, and human actions flow from these. Yet somehow, thanks to the divine design at work in them, Christians do not perform the same actions as their neighbors. They "walk in the light," as Christ is "in the light." They have turned away from the works of darkness, whose end is death. In a word, the human actions of the Christians have become "salvific,” while those of their neighbors are, even at their best, just "morally good."19 To account for this difference—which is not just a difference in how many norms are known, but in the ability and motivation to attend to the norms, to live up to them, etc.—Aquinas thought it necessary to see how the supernatural design "works" in detail. For this, he thought he needed an account of how our actions are made better in a known way (morally, by acquired virtues), to shed light on how they might be made better in an unknown way (salvifically, by

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19. This point became a part of official Church teaching in the condemnations of Baius (Denz. ## 1961-62). Aquinas had prepared the way for it by distinguishing doing-good proportionate to our nature from doing-good exceeding our nature (2/1, 109, 2 corpus).
infused virtues). Grisez seems to object to all this because it doesn’t sound very biblical. “Virtue, as philosophers understood it, is hardly mentioned,” he says, in the Bible (p. 21 along with footnote 36 on p. 22). He seems to think that Aquinas broke up St. Paul’s broad categories (of “being in Christ,” of “gift of the Spirit,” etc.) into a detailed virtue-by-virtue analysis because he was misled by Aristotle. Well, to begin with the obvious, a theologian should sound different from St. Paul, because he is doing a different job. Paul was communicating revelation; a theologian is supposed to compare the revelation with naturally known truths—in this case, about good conduct—so as to connect and synthesize. Then, to continue with the obvious, Aquinas did not invent an act-by-act, faculty-by-faculty, virtue-by-virtue approach to connecting the Scriptures with the philosophical ethics of antiquity. He inherited it ready-made from the Church Fathers. Read the Moralia of Gregory the Great, the De moribus ecclesiae of Augustine, the Conferentiae of Cassian.20 Aquinas used Aristotle just to clarify and refine an approach already made authoritative by a consensus patrum.21

iii. Next, there is nothing wrong with Aquinas’s account of “participating” in the divine nature. By salvifically “walking in the light,” with whatever equipage of appetite-tamers, inclination-raisers, and faculty-strengtheners it takes for a human being to do so, the Christian man or woman resembles God (“who is in the light”) more closely than it is possible for a human being to resemble God naturally. Aquinas took the equipage to be a set of created entities and used this new resemblance to explicate the New Testament’s talk of participation (2 Peter 1:4). By having these created but supernatural entities in one’s soul, he said, one participates in the divine nature according to a certain likeness (2/1, 110, 3). Grisez takes strong exception:

20. For a quicker impression, pick up the Enchiridion Asceticum of Rouët de Journel and Dutilleul (New York: Herder, 1965) or the companion Enchiridion Patristicum, and go through the indices for ‘virtus’ and for the Latin names of the several virtues.

21. If Grisez just wants to suggest that Aquinas did not do this work with as much regard for ontological parsimony as he should have shown (so that he posited infused prudence and a raft of infused moral virtues as real entities, because he missed the possibility that just two or three supernatural gifts could be doing, in a Christian, what it would take 50 or 100 natural virtues to do, and then some), I welcome the suggestion. But if Grisez means to suggest that Aquinas’s inheritance from the Fathers is licitly replaceable with something radically simpler and more biblical-sounding, something owing nothing to Stoic ethics or any other ancient ethics, then I have to tell him that Catholic theologians have no such liberty. As the Latin Church says, a consensus of the Fathers is irreformable; as the Eastern Church puts it, the works of the Fathers are the eikōn τῆς theologiaς. Radical programs to “de-hellenize dogma” are heretical, as Lucien Laberthonnière was told by Pius X, and as Leslie Dewart should have been told by the feckless Paul VI.
The significance of “according to a certain likeness” becomes clear if one considers the following: If someone said that the Word of God did not assume human nature itself but only participated in it according to a certain likeness, that person would be denying the Incarnation. [p. 24, note 43]

The suggestion is that the structure of the Christian-in-grace should be understood on the model of God-in-the-flesh—as two natures are present in Christ, both in their integrity, so two natures are present in the Christian, the human in entirety, the divine in part—and Aquinas is making this last unreal. To avoid such unreality, Grisez posits in the Christian something genuinely uncreated. He identifies sanctifying grace and infused charity, not with any created quale, but with an uncreated entity whose description he borrows from Gregory Palamas (divine energeia, distinct from the divine essence/ousia and also from the divine Persons). Grisez seems to think that, with this uncreated entity lodged in them, Christians really do have the divine nature (in part) and not just a likeness to it. Hence the sharp poke at Aquinas. Well, suffice it to say that, in this contest, it is Aquinas who has the coherent conception of participation, and he also wins the palm for ontological parsimony. An uncreated entity which is neither what God is nor who God is, but something communicated to creatures, is an oddity not to be posited without serious reason and good warrant in tradition. Around 1340 and without a glimmer of warrant, Palamas invented his divine energeiai out of whole cloth. Grisez now picks up the invention for nothing. I say this because it explains nothing. If participating in the divine nature is having the divine nature (in part), how is this participating explained by our having something that is not the divine nature? Having something uncreated is no better than having something created, if what we have is not the divine nature. And it is not. On that point, Palamas and Grisez are equally explicit (p. 24 and note 44). So is the Church. Dogmatic usage sets strong limits on how far one can assimilate our structure-in-grace to the hypostatic union. Christ had the divine nature, and we don’t; we only share in it. Hence He is Deus verus de Deo vero, and we are not. If one takes this clear and traditional usage as one’s guide, one will abandon the idea that participating is literally having (in part). No, participating is literally resembling. Everything “shares” in the divine nature by literally resembling God in some manner (at least by existing). But by giving Christians created gifts that are above their nature, God makes Christians resemble Him more


23. Prima Pars, q. 4, a. 3. The reader may need to recall that ‘literally’ contrasts with ‘figuratively’, not with ‘analogically’.
than they would by nature, and so they “participate in the divine nature” in a
new and higher way. End of problem.

iv. Next, there is nothing wrong with Aquinas’s claim that the Beatific
Vision fulfills human beings. He never said that the Vision fulfills us “qua
human,” if that means “with a good connatural to us.” Aquinas always said
that the Vision fulfills us qua graced, or qua sharing in the divine nature,
which means that the Vision fulfills us with a good above our nature,
connatural to God alone. This much, Grisez also wants to say. But
somehow he wants to say it in a more radical sense than Aquinas. In footnote
46 of his paper (on p. 25), he therefore objects to

Aquinas’s claim that created persons, by an act (albeit a supernatural act) of a
capacity pertaining to their own created nature, can attain to divine goodness
itself and thereby be absolutely fulfilled by it [emphasis original].

The act in question is the act of understanding that takes place in the Beatific
Vision (which Grisez admits is a highly supernatural act, not a human sort of
act, for Aquinas), and so the “capacity pertaining to . . . created nature” is just
the human intellect of a saint in glory. Well, Aquinas did think that, when a
saint in glory enjoys the Vision, the human intellect in him or her is “actuated”
(is conscious of an Object) by the Seeing; the human intellect is the faculty
“wherein” the Seeing occurs. One would think the point trivial. Where else
would the Seeing occur? In the saint’s will? In her foot? But Grisez makes
it nontrivial, by insinuating again his idea that the structure of the human-in-
grace (this time, the soul-in-glory) is to be understood on the model of God-in-
the-flesh. As Christ has a divine intellect as well as a human one, so (Grisez
seems to suggest) St. Rita in glory has two intellects, so that her Vision of God
can be “an act of” the divine one and not “an act of” her human one. Well, if
Grisez really means to suggest this (e.g. at the bottom of p. 26), he is provid-
ing the reductio ad absurdum of his incarnational model. For there is no
explaining how St. Rita has the divine Intellect so available to her that her
Seeing is Its act, unless she in person operates (is conscious of the divine
Object) through an act-state included in the Actualness which is the divine

24. According to the Prima Pars 12, aa. 4-5, it is not qua equipped with the cognitive
faculties natural to us, but qua made “deiform” by the light of glory, that human persons (or
souls) are fulfilled by the Vision. This light and the Vision itself (a) cannot flow from any cre-
ated nature but only from the divine nature, according to a. 5 ad 3, and (b) they represent the
completion of the divinization begun in Christians in this life by the gifts of sanctifying grace
and infused virtue, according to 2/1, 5, 7 ad 3 and many other places. So the Vision only fulfills
people qua graced.
nature, in which case she counts as another case of hypostatic union—which is heresy, and Grisez does not allege it. So what, exactly, does he allege? Never mind. He lays no careful metaphysics on the table in “Natural Law, God, Religion, and Human Fulfillment,” just as he offers no clarity about how much of Palamas’s mess he really means to borrow. Suffice it to say that, even if he can sustain his incarnational model here, without heresy, it still tells against him on the main point at issue. For in orthodox Christology, Our Lord’s omniscience is not just in his divine nature; it is in His human nature without being from His human nature. So by Grisez’s own model, the higher-than-human scientia of St. Rita in glory will be in her human nature without being from it. If it is in her human nature, it is in her human intellect (where else?), and in that case her human intellect is conscious, given an Object, “actuated,” in the Vision. Which is what Aquinas said.

v. Finally and most centrally, there is nothing in the world wrong with applying to man the talk of a species-specific form of flourishing or “complete good.” So Aquinas made no mistake in holding that, in every human action, the human agent is seeking his all-around or “complete” good. Grisez thinks he made a very large mistake (pp. 28ff). Why? Because “complete good” is supposed to be our ultimate purpose (2/1, 1, 5); if we did seek it, Aquinas would be right in claiming that, at a given time, a person has only one ultimate purpose to which he orders his every endeavor (2/1, 1, aa. 5-6). Why would Aquinas be right? Because the logic of ‘complete good’ is like the logic of

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25. Which cannot be evaded so long as God is pure actuality (for then the faculty which is His intellectus is really identical to the act-state which is His intelligere) and so long as God is cognizant by nature (for then His intelligere is included in the Actualness which is just “being what it is to be God”).

26. Which cannot be evaded so long as the divine nature is inseparably one Actualness (for then the intelligere included in it cannot be “had” where the rest of it, so to speak, is not “had”).

27. Palamas pictured God as an uncreated Light Bulb, eternally on, shedding light-rays that were distinct from itself but not creatures. This is how he got uncreated energeiai really distinct from God. Grisez cannot take this picture at face value, without allowing each ray to be a noncontingent state of affairs which, nevertheless, does not obtain by virtue of being the state of affairs which it is (because it is not God). What will that do to his argument for D?

28. See the dogmatic epistle of Gregory the Great to Eulogios of Alexandria (Denz. 475; old # 248).

29. Grisez thinks there is, because he sees that in Aristotle, a natural form of flourishing is meant to give a human life a unity of purpose. Grisez thinks that a person’s life only gets unity of purpose from freely chosen and freely unified commitments. But this is picking a fight where there is none. Nobody ever thought that human nature (via the union of objects to which it inclines us) gives each human life a “unity of purpose” in the same sense in which an overarching commitment, faithfully carried out, gives one’s life a “unity of purpose.”
‘all I want’. Obviously, I choose everything I do in order to have “all I want.” Observe, then, that the conjunction,

\[ x \text{ is all I want, and } y \text{ is all I want, and } x \neq y, \]

is contradictory.\(^{30}\) Since a purpose gets to be ultimate by being sought as complete good, the logic which makes it contradictory to think of pleasure as “all I want” while also thinking of wealth as “all I want,” makes it contradictory to think of these things as simultaneous but distinct ultimate purposes.\(^{31}\) So the logic is tight, but the conclusion is wrong, says Grisez (p. 30). Why? Because there are counterexamples, where a person has two or more “ultimate purposes” at once. Grisez offers four of them:

1. The child Joe does not order the fun for which he plays ball to his goal of getting to heaven;
2. The religious but romantically infatuated Joan chooses both to make a bad marriage and also to improve her chances of eventual repentance;
3. A skirt-chasing politician, lest he lose office, reluctantly postpones further philandering;
4. A venial sinner (according to 2/1, 88, 1) retains God as his “ultimate purpose” habitually but (Grisez adds) must be getting the motivation to commit the sin from a different “ultimate purpose.”

Ergo, a person need not be willing “complete good.”

Here Grisez is offering the most sustained argument in his paper. The reader needs to see that everything turns on whether these four cases are counterexamples to what Aquinas held. If they are not, Grisez has “no case” against our willing complete good in the sense in which Aquinas meant to borrow it (or develop it) from Aristotle and Augustine. So now everything turns on what Aquinas held. In what way did he use ‘bonum perfectum’ (‘complete good’)? How did he use ‘finis ultimus’ (‘ultimate purpose’)?

Grisez follows a long line of Iberian commentators and neo-Thomists in assuming (without even bothering to mention the assumption) that Aquinas used ‘finis ultimus hominis’ univocally. Whenever he called something someone’s ultimate purpose, he meant the same sort of item, willed in the same sort of way. It was always a concrete, achievable thing—like wealth, a pleasure, a marriage, or getting to heaven—willed “as” complete good. In other words, “complete good” was never the achievable object intended, but the formal ratio under which the achievable was intended, if it was being

\(^{30}\) This is the point at stake in the answer ad (3) in 2/1, 1, 5.

\(^{31}\) But thinking of them as one joint ultimate purpose is not contradictory, according to the answer ad (1) in the same article.
willed as the *finis ultimus*. If this reading of Aquinas is correct (and it is certainly common enough), then ‘*finis ultimus*’ is being used in the *same* sense throughout articles 5-7 in 2/1 q. 1, and so these articles are advancing a very extreme doctrine, indeed. At any given time in a person’s life, he or she must be intending as “*last end*” just one achievable state of affairs (a. 5), and during that time everything that he or she undertakes must be chosen for the sake of (and thus ordered to) that one achievable state of affairs (a. 6), and although, during that time, different people are intending different achievable states, they must each intend theirs in the same way, namely, as nothing less than complete good (a. 7).

So let’s take a typical family on a typical day. According to St. Thomas, uncle Frank, who has a weakness for the bottle, does everything he undertakes today (with no exceptions) for the sake of getting drunk, and wills his inebriation as *complete* good. (My family contains some sots, but none like that.) According to St. Thomas, cousin Mark, a would-be tycoon, chooses every action he does today for the sake of getting rich, and wills this last as *complete* good. (In my family, thank God, even the most ambitious businessmen are never like that; they all have the additional ambitions of sportsmen, family men, etc.) According to St. Thomas, aunt Christine (in a state of grace today, as usual) wills getting to Heaven and chooses every action she undertakes today (with no exceptions) in order to get to there. (The would-be saints in my family are not so perfect.)

In short, the common interpretation, adopted by Grisez, gives Aquinas a doctrine so implausible that one doesn’t need Grisez’s four cases to see its faults. Grisez agrees. He realizes that his diagnosis of what is out-of-joint in Aquinas attributes to him a massively implausible mistake. But he reaches for a biographical explanation: Aquinas mistakenly generalized “from his own unusual experience” (p. 33).

Well, Grisez would have done better to reach for Cajetan’s commentary. In the comment on a. 6 in 2/1, 1, he would have found a treatment (misread for centuries) of the same problem; it had been posed by Scotus. He would have found that Cajetan’s solution was based squarely on the text of the answer *ad* (1) in 2/1, 1, 7, where Aquinas said that the man who turns away from God still intends the ultimate purpose (taking ‘ultimate purpose’ in another sense, that of complete good). Cajetan saw what this implied. The distinction being drawn in a. 7 was not between two quasi-parts of the *same* purpose; so it was not between the mere *ratio* and what is intended under it (God, money, whatever); it had to be a distinction between two different senses of ‘ultimate end’, both fully capable of being *objects intended*. In the first sense, an “ultimate purpose” is that which is thought to verify the predicate ‘is complete good’ *formaliter* (as an animal verifies ‘is healthy’ *formaliter*). Call this a
UPF. In the second sense, an “ultimate purpose” is that which is thought to cause or deliver complete good (as a diet verifies ‘is healthy’ causaliter). Call this a UPM. In other words, a UPF is not the same kind of item as a UPM. Aquinas used ‘finis ultimus hominis’ analogously, not univocally, to cover fundamentally different kinds of items—analogenes—willed in different kinds of ways.32

What are these analogates? Well, what formally “is” complete good is a set of goods—a package of goods or benefits that human beings can find complete. So a UPF is a union of goods willed as ideal. What “delivers” the goods is an achievable arrangement (getting drunk, getting rich, getting to heaven). So a UPM is an arrangement, in which one thinks to find the goods in one’s UPF.33

Now, says Cajetan, the strong doctrines in 2/1, 1, articles 5-6, are about one’s UPF. They say that, at a given time in one’s life—say, this Tuesday—one has inevitably just one working ideal of happiness or complete good, and whatever one chooses to undertake, one inevitably chooses for the sake of that ideal.34 These articles and their doctrines are not about the UPM, which was not even introduced until a. 7, unless it be in some weaker or secondary sense. So, at that same time in one’s life—this Tuesday—even if one is aiming at some one achievable arrangement (or some one arrangement of such arrangements), one need not be choosing everything one undertakes for the sake of such an arrangement.35 A good Christian does have reaching

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32. Therefore, nothing prevents one from having a UPM at the same time as one has one’s UPF. Since they are only analogously alike as purposes, they are not intended in the same sense of ‘intended’, and so they are not “what I want” in the same sense of ‘want’, and so they are not rivals under the logic of “all I want,” just as a cow and its diet would not be rivals in a contest to be “the only healthy thing there is.”

33. The contrast in a. 7 between ‘ultimate purpose’ in the sense of what amounts to complete good and ‘ultimate purpose’ in the sense of where such good is found, is reinforced later, at 2/1, 5, 8, by an exactly parallel contrast between ‘beatitudo’ in the sense of what everybody wants (complete good) and ‘beatitudo’ in the special sense of where this lies (consistit). The source of the contrast is two familiar questions: (1) What is happiness, anyway? vs. (2) Where am I going to find it? The answer to (1), Cajetan says, is our UPF. Your personal answer to (2)—in wealth, in pleasure, in God—is your UPM.

34. This is easy to grant. Suppose you are conflicted this Tuesday over whether to finish your education or marry Michael. You say that you don’t know what your “ideal” is. Good point. But the reason you are conflicted is because the good of knowledge and the good of marital communion are both in your UPF, and nobody says your UPF has to be completely catalogued in your mind, or internally ordered under a preference relation. An ideal can be largely inarticulate, or deeply muddled, and still do its job.

35. One can be, but one need not be. Pursuit of a UPM is a freely chosen commitment. One can be living out a commitment, or one can be failing to do so. One can be living out a commitment that genuinely unifies one’s life, drawing out the best that is in one, in every area,
God (or getting to Heaven) as her UPM, but she can turn aside from this without ceasing to will her normal, human UPF (said Aquinas in 2/1, 1, 7 ad 1), and so she can choose something unordered to her UPM because it is still motivated by something in her UPF. Her choice will represent a failure of zeal, or even a moral wrong, but not a volitional impossibility. (So much for Joe, Joan, and the venial sinner). On a really bad day, uncle Frank might possibly want to get drunk (and nothing else) as his UPM, but he can still choose something unordered to demon rum (like working his shift) because it is still motivated by something in his UPF. His choice will represent a moral amelioration, a failure in zeal for inebriation, if you will, not a volitional impossibility. (Ditto for the skirt-chasing politician). Goodbye to Grisez’s cases. They are not counterexamples.

Before a flock of Augustinianizing neo-Thomists launched a campaign against him, Cajetan was widely thought to have been the best and brightest mind ever to comment on the Summa. I agree with that older assessment. I think he got this business of “ultimate” purposes and “complete” good just about right. If he did, the central exhibit in Grisez’s diagnosis is as illusory as the other exhibits in “Natural Law, God, Religion, and Human Fulfillment.” The problems in Aquinas (and there are some big ones) lie elsewhere.

I should like to conclude this response on a different note, however. I am eager to have my neo-Thomist colleagues read Grisez’s paper. I am not one bit eager to have them read the defenses of Aquinas that I have penned in response to it. I predict what they will say. “Of course St. Thomas was right; we knew it all along.” But they didn’t know it. I don’t know it. I have been helped to see some things which may, after a lot more criticism, turn out to hold up. I was helped to see them by the force and clarity of Grisez’s objections. In theology as in philosophy, it is strong objections that reveal what needs fixing, and (the strict demands of orthodoxy aside) a choice should always be open: to fix by defending, or to fix by abandoning. Cajetan was helped in the same way by Scotus and by a very few others. I was talking one day to one of my younger colleagues, a would-be Catholic philosopher, about Grisez’s view of something or other (I forget what, but it wasn’t the conventional Thomist view). The young wannabe said to me, “I don’t know what you see in that guy.” I’ll tell you what I see. I see someone to thank for his help. I see all the difference between a real Catholic thinker and a plaster imitation.

or one can be living out a commitment that narrows and stultifies one’s life—and in either case, one can lapse from living it out.