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Abstract

Henri de Lubac's doctrine of grace and nature emerged out of the pastoral and sacramental context of confession. Although recent critics have assumed a Thomist setting, a close reading shows that the doctrine is rooted in de Lubac's critical engagement with Augustinianism. In the form of Jansenism and drawing especially on Augustine's late, anti-Pelagian writings, this sensibility pervaded modern French theology. Notwithstanding its distorted conceptions of grace's mode of operation and of human nature, Jansenism provoked de Lubac into developing new understandings of the relation between belief and knowledge, and of theological anthropology. In advocating for the continuity of Augustine's theology, de Lubac made an important contribution to Augustine scholarship. His resulting doctrine of grace and nature, in which the person of Adam is central, has wider, abiding theological salience.

"Forgive me Father, for I have sinned." Following the opening words of the confessional rite, the penitent enumerates the sins that he or she has identified in the examination of conscience. For a priest, to hear a confession is fundamentally to reflect on human action, seeking to discern its motivation, origin, and other causes, its relation to virtue and character, and its conformity or otherwise to the divinely ordained end for human life. In other words, the purpose of confession is to discern if, where, and how grace is operative in the penitent's life and in their particular actions. For this reason, grace was an essential doctrine for seminarians in nineteenth-century France, occupying almost a year of their curriculum.¹ Its study led future clergy to consider God's will for humanity, to contemplate the extent and precise nature of human depravity, and to articulate the possibilities for redemption, all within the concrete context of the specific acts and omissions of daily life. This historic centrality of confession in sacramental and ecclesial life also accounts for the tremendous importance accorded in seminaries to moral theology, as evidenced by the teaching manuals that shaped the dealings of generations of clergy with individual laypeople and congregations.²

¹ Austin Gough, *Paris and Rome: The Gallican Church and the Ultramontane Campaign, 1848–1853* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986), 7.

² Among the most important were Arsène Vincent, *Theologia dogmatica et moralis ... ad mentem S. Thomae Aquinatis et S. Alphonsi de Liguorio* (6 vols; Paris: Roger et Chernoviz, fourth edn, 1899); Tommaso Zigliara, *Summa philosophica in usum scholarum* (3 vols; Paris; Beauchesne, 6th edn, 1919), vol. 3: *Philosophia moralis, seu Ethica et jus naturae*; Adolphe Tanquerey, *Synopsis theologiae moralis et pastoralis ad mentem S. Thomae et S. Alphonsi* (3 vols; Paris: Desclée, 1925–9); Jean

Far from being an abstruse topic of purely historical interest, the meta-ethical questions that the grace–nature debate framed shaped the pastoral ministry of the clergy and the spiritual life of the laity. They continue to do so, and probably more so than detailed church teaching on specific ethical topics. The principal recent focus for the grace–nature debate has been the theory of “pure nature.” The debate has taken this form now as a result of the new confrontation between neo-Thomists, who are often Dominican, and alternative schools of the interpretation of Thomas, such as Radical Orthodoxy. De Lubac, it is generally agreed, wished to promote a revised reading and to dismantle the neo-Thomist interpretive framework that had developed around him. So de Lubac has been drawn into the pure nature debate partly as a proxy, the primary representative of a contrary interpretive trend. John Milbank has lent support to the idea that de Lubac indeed represents just such a trend on the grounds that he provides a launching pad toward a radical assimilation, within the order of knowing, of nature into grace.³ Referring to de Lubac’s theology, he writes that the difference grace makes is “something ... like the infinite (practical and theoretical) task of *rereading* all of human reality in the light of grace.”⁴ Milbank complements this view of grace as a lens through which to read the entire created order with a view of grace as the final cause of all human activity. He avers that “where a teleological outlook remains in place ... it is likely that ultimate actual human orientation will be thought of as decisively influencing even the lowliest human proclivities.”⁵

Milbank’s use of de Lubac has placed the latter in the firing line of the new generation of neo-Thomist defenders of the theory of pure nature, who have adopted varying lines of attack.⁶ Laurence Feingold draws heavily on critical contributions to the original debate around de Lubac’s *Surnaturel*, from the later 1940s and the decades following, and for this reason his study often feels like a re-presentation of that debate. Steven Long’s primary sources, in contrast, are texts of Thomas, which he deploys as standards against which to measure de Lubac’s statements about the grace–nature relation. What unites Feingold and

Berthier, *Abregé de théologie dogmatique et morale* (Lyons: Vitte, fifth edn, 1929); Jean-Benoît Vittrant, *Théologie morale, bref exposé à l’usage des membres du clergé et spécialement des confesseurs* (Paris: Beauchesne, 25th edn, 1953).

³ Paul J. DeHart, *Aquinas and Radical Orthodoxy* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 9, 11, 29, correctly recognises that Milbank radicalizes de Lubac rather than straightforwardly interpreting him.

⁴ John Milbank, *The Suspended Middle: Henri de Lubac and the Debate concerning the Supernatural* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 42.

⁵ Milbank, *Suspended Middle*, 20.

⁶ Lawrence Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God according to St. Thomas Aquinas and his Interpreters* (Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia, 2nd edn, 2010 [2001]); Steven A. Long, *Natura Pura: On the Recovery of Nature in the Doctrine of Grace* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010); Bernard Mulcahy, *Aquinas’s Notion of Pure Nature and the Christian Integralism of Henri de Lubac: Not Everything is Grace* (New York: Lang, 2011).

Long, however, is their common desire to appraise de Lubac solely in terms of his conformity or otherwise to a neo-Thomist reading of Thomas. In contrast, de Lubac's Augustinian heritage is given greater attention by Bernard Mulcahy.

By means of careful exegesis, each of these studies offers much of value to comprehending a neo-Thomist view of grace and nature and de Lubac's response to it. Yet by presenting neo-Thomists as de Lubac's sole interlocutors, his critics have encouraged a false impression of the origins of de Lubac's theology and of his continuing theological engagements. Admittedly, in *The Mystery of the Supernatural* he was concerned to demonstrate the compatibility of his doctrine of grace and nature with that of Thomas, if not with that of later neo-Thomists. This was an important exercise because of Thomas's pre-eminent status in Roman Catholic theology: in *Aeterni patris*, Pope Leo XIII had presented the scholastic theology that he inspired as collecting, sifting and storing for posterity the teaching of the Church Fathers. This implied that no further, modern work of *ressourcement* or synthesis was needed.⁷ De Lubac never accepted, however, that Thomas provided the ultimate or sole normative standard of orthodoxy. He wrote: "I do not regard the 'common Doctor' as an 'exclusive Doctor' who dispenses us from the task of familiarizing ourselves with the others; and I deem it regrettable that a certain partiality, inspired by a certain misguided strictness and artificial controversies, should sometimes have obscured the sense of profound unity which exists among the great masters."⁸ De Lubac's meticulous study of Augustinianism enabled him to display the variegated quality of this unity.

De Lubac on Grace in Baius and Jansenius

Why has the notion that, for de Lubac, Augustine was less important than Thomas so easily found acceptance? The main reason is the widespread lack of knowledge of the French theology of the nineteenth century out of which de Lubac was working. This theology was Jansenist. A highly rigorist form of Augustinianism, the doctrine associated with the Dutch theologian Cornelius Jansenius (1585–1638) may be summarized by its "five propositions." First, some divine commandments are impossible even for just people, who lack the grace necessary to perform them. Second, in the fallen state interior grace, when present, is irresistible. Third, in the fallen state, in order for acts to be meritorious they need not be free

⁷ *Aeterni patris* 14, in *The Papal Encyclicals*, vol. 2, ed. Claudia Carlen (5 vols; Pierian, MI: Ann Arbor, 1990), 22.

⁸ Henri de Lubac, *The Discovery of God*, trans. Alexander Dru with Mark Sebanc and Cassian Fulsom (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996 [1960]), 209.

from necessity, merely free from compulsion. Fourth, prevenient grace, defined as a grace that may be obeyed or resisted, is inconceivable. Fifth, Christ died not for all people but only for the predestined.⁹

In broad terms, Jansenism remained the French national theology until at least the 1850s. It was taught to seminarians via the widely-used manual of Louis Bailly, in which penance was the most prominent sacrament and thereby informed the moral instruction of laypeople in the confessional.¹⁰ It was this theological heritage, with origins in the doctrines of Jansenius and of his precursor Michel Baius (1513–89), with which de Lubac was primarily concerned in the first and longest part of his three-part *Surnaturel*.¹¹ The grace–nature debate thereby drew de Lubac into deep engagement with the theology of Augustine, whom even *Aeterni patris*—frequently supposed to have promoted Thomism alone—had lauded as a “most powerful genius and thoroughly saturated with sacred and profane learning, with the loftiest faith and with equal knowledge” who “combated most vigorously all the errors of his age.”¹²

The beginnings of de Lubac’s own interest in Augustine are usually dated too late. In fact, as Georges Chantraine has admirably demonstrated, they may be traced as early as his time as a student at the Maison Saint-Louis philosophate at St Helier on the island of Jersey. In an unpublished paper on the desire for God in Plotinus and Augustine, written in 1922, de Lubac questions the two prevailing readings of Augustine: Cartesian ontologism, which presented him as proposing a purely mental, rational union with God; and Protestant voluntarism, which consigned reason to a lower plane in favour of belief founded on faith alone.¹³ Neither group of interpreters recognized, however, that intellect is active or that it propels

⁹ Leszek Kolakowski, *God Owes us Nothing: A Brief Remark on Pascal’s Religion and on the Spirit of Jansenism* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 1–30; Nigel Abercrombie, *The Origins of Jansenism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1936), 1–158. The propositions are from the papal bull *Cum occasione* of Pope Innocent X, promulgated in 1653.

¹⁰ Louis Bailly, *Theologia dogmatica et moralis ad usum seminariorum* (7 vols; Dijon: Frantin, 1789; rev. edn 1842). After this manual’s condemnation in 1852 it was replaced by others, such as Jean-Baptiste Bouvier, *Manuel des confesseurs* (Brussels: Carlier, 1864). For the continuing pastoral impact of Jansenist theology, see Joseph Burnichon, *La Compagnie de Jésus en France : histoire d’un siècle, 1814–1914* (4 vols; Paris: Beauchesne, 1914–22), vol. 3, 218–29. For much more on this topic, see David Grumett, “The Concordat era in France: from Jansenism to Neo-Thomism,” in *The Oxford Handbook to the Reception History of Christian Theology*, eds Sarah Coakley and Richard Cross (Oxford University Press, in press).

¹¹ De Lubac, *Surnaturel: études historiques* (Paris: Aubier, 1946), 7–183. This part was revised as *Augustinianism and Modern Theology*, trans. Lancelot Sheppard (New York: Herder, 2000 [1969]). The new portions in *Augustinianism* will be indicated: this text was not merely a republication of *Surnaturel*, part I, as wrongly suggested by Louis Dupré in his introduction (p. ix).

¹² *Aeterni patris* 13, in *Papal Encyclicals*, 22.

¹³ Henri de Lubac, «Le désir de Dieu chez Plotin et chez saint Augustin», unpublished M.S., Jersey 1922, 35 pp.; summarized in Georges Chantraine, *Henri de Lubac: les années de formation (1919–29)* (Paris: Cerf, 2009), 392–400; and idem, « Le désir de Dieu chez Plotin et chez saint Augustin », in *Die Gegenwart des Gegenwärtigen : Festschrift für P. Gerd Haeffner SJ zum 65. Geburtstag*, eds Margarethe Drewsen and Mario Fischer (Freiburg: Alber, 2006), 475–83.

belief. De Lubac argues that the antinomy that they bequeathed needed to be overcome via the category of “mental dynamism” (*dynamisme mental*). The mind, de Lubac argues, passionately desires God, rather than, as Plotinus had thought, being constituted by fixed states within an hierarchic order of being. Drawing on *De Trinitate*, book XIV, de Lubac affirms that the mind is nothing less than the image of God. It is *capax Dei*, capable of God and, through grace, of participation in God even after it has lost that participation.¹⁴

Notwithstanding his deep interest in Augustine, de Lubac recognized that his theology had been received by the Church primarily via intermediaries. In the field of political theology, it was Giles of Rome who had shaped thinking, rather than a direct reading of Augustine on the earthly and heavenly cities in *De civitate dei*.¹⁵ Similarly on the topic of grace and nature, on which this article will focus, Augustine’s theology had typically been received not directly but via previous generations of interpreters. De Lubac published his first study on grace and nature in the early 1930s, at around the same time as the essay on Giles.¹⁶ The former provided much of the material for *Surnaturel*, the first three chapters of which constituted, in due course, the bulk of the text of *Augustinianism*.¹⁷

The first protagonist whom de Lubac examines is Baius, who sought to refute the theory of pure nature by refusing the possibility of a nature neither graced nor fallen. In *De meritis operum*, Baius contended that the condition in which Adam was created had been one of “original integrity.” In this state, Adam, as the representative of the whole of humankind, had possessed the liberty of will needed freely to choose either good or evil.¹⁸ Adam had been naturally oriented to the beatific vision, de Lubac reasoned, and, through divine justice, had received eternal life as the reward for his good actions. As a result of the fall, however, this integrity had been destroyed, along with the capacities to choose freely and to pursue proper ends. Good acts then became the consequence of continually repeated divine interventions on the human will. Although these interventions might be regarded as manifestations of grace, their discrete

¹⁴ Augustine, *The Trinity* 14.11, trans. Edmund Hill (Brooklyn, NY: New City, 1991), 379.

¹⁵ See especially Henri de Lubac, ““Political Augustinianism?”” in *Theological Fragments*, trans. Rebecca Howell Balinski (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 1984 [1932]), 235–86.

¹⁶ Henri de Lubac, «Deux augustiniens fourvoyés: Baius et Jansenius», *Recherches de science religieuse* 21 (1931), 422–43, 513–40.

¹⁷ The genetic schema by Michel Sales in Henri de Lubac, *Surnaturel : esquisses historiques* (Paris: Desclée, 1991), xiv, helpfully shows the relationship between de Lubac’s different publications on the topic. In the present article, the points at which a text incorporates significant new material will be indicated.

¹⁸ For a brief summary, see P.J. Donnelly, “Baius,” in *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 2.18b-21b.

character and restrictive purpose meant that they were quite different from habitual grace. Accordingly, no *state* of grace prevailed, such as one due to habitual justification or to adoption in Christ.

Baius considered that he had demolished the theory of pure nature. In fact, de Lubac contends, pure nature was the only nature that he recognized.¹⁹ To Baius's credit, he recognized that, even before the fall, a kind of grace had been needed for good human action. Yet his theory of "original justice" made prelapsarian grace a mere postulate of nature, presenting divine assistance as not truly graced but as the payment of a debt of justice.²⁰ For de Lubac, this fatally undermined the gratuity of grace. Baius's order of justice amounted to an order of pure nature in everything but name, with grace a necessary, justifying reward for meritorious acts rather than a truly transformative power freely bestowed by God.

What were the implications of Baius's theory of "original justice" for understanding the human condition after the fall? His prelapsarian optimism determined his postlapsarian pessimism. Humans had been created with the freedom to keep the commandments (Sir. 15.4), which had consisted in the simple injunction not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2.17). Having once infringed the order of justice thus ordained, humans lost the capacity for autonomous just action, becoming unable to perform any meritorious act without a wholly gratuitous, unmerited divine intervention. In construing such an intervention as a necessary corollary of just action, however, Baius transposed divine action from the order of grace into the order of nature.²¹ God could no longer be viewed as acting on nature externally. Furthermore, Baius came to view the soul as no more than a psychic entity, with its "spiritual" aspect a function of nature.

The second key figure whom de Lubac examines is Jansenius, who presented a more pessimistic anthropology than Baius. Popularized by Saint-Cyran (Jean du Vergier de Hauranne), this made a wide public impact. As already stated, Jansenius held that grace was offered arbitrarily and rarely, and that it entirely mastered the will. The key difference between his doctrine and that of Baius was that the human condition prior to the fall was not one of original integrity or the autonomous exercise of free will. Rather, before the fall humans had been in a state of "original grace." Jansenius founded this doctrine on a view of the original human condition as truly, supernaturally graced. In this pristine state, divine determinism and human freedom had been "balanced": with sufficient grace, Adam had been at liberty to will or not to will a particular act. Without such grace, no good act would have been possible.

¹⁹ De Lubac, *Augustinianism*, 24–5 (*Surnaturel*, 34). On this point Mulcahy seems unclear, suggesting that de Lubac wished to show that Baius rejected the idea of pure nature, and that he succeeded in this. (*Aquinas's Notion*, 124, 140).

²⁰ De Lubac, *Augustinianism*, 2 (*Surnaturel*, 16); idem, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (New York: Herder, 1967 [1965]), 93–4.

²¹ De Lubac, *Augustinianism*, 15–19 (*Surnaturel*, 26–9).

Despite recognizing this fundamental difference between Baius's original integrity and Jansenius's original grace, de Lubac describes the doctrine of grace and nature developed by Jansenius as the "exact continuation of Baianism."²² Although Jansenius stated clearly that Adam had not merited grace, he nevertheless presented grace, de Lubac contends, as effectively "owed" by God to humanity as a result of the creative act. In consequence of humanity's natural weakness, God appeared to owe it to himself to grant aid. Grace thus became little more than a tool ready-to-hand for human use: a "means at its sovereign disposal" and a "mere instrument in the service of free will."²³

As in the case of Baius, Jansenius's view of the original human condition shaped his appraisal of that condition after the fall. "Everything", de Lubac writes of Jansenius's theology, "is governed by the theory concerning the relationship of grace and free will in Adam."²⁴ In the aftermath of Adam's refusal of the grace that was sufficient, necessary, and available for good action, an "opposite determinism" was inaugurated, in which efficacious grace extrinsically compensated the fallen powers of the will but did not restore them. Redeemed nature therefore remained fallen, with good human acts made possible only in so far as the freedom of the will was abrogated by a grace reigning victoriously over the ruins of a formerly self-determining nature. The delectation motivated by grace became, in effect, an "inverse concupiscence," distinguished by "only a difference of object not of nature, as if both were made, so to say, of the same stuff."²⁵

What were the central points in de Lubac's contention with Baius and Jansenius over their readings of Augustine? Referring to Baius, de Lubac contends that he failed to grasp the "great gulf in any circumstances between the creature and the Creator, and the madness of the creature's dream, inspired by the Creator, to raise himself up to him for everlasting union." This led Baius to refuse the possibility recognized by Augustine that humanity was completed by its elevation above its natural state into a condition of true freedom, and to fail to envision the gratuitous character of this elevation.²⁶ With respect to Jansenius, de Lubac launches a sustained critique of his failure to understand correctly the *adiutorium sine quo non*, the "aid without which something is not done," which had been given to Adam at his creation and which therefore constituted the "primitive and enduring relationship of man with God."²⁷ In

²² De Lubac, *Augustinianism*, 35–6 (*Surnaturel*, 41–3).

²³ De Lubac, *Augustinianism*, 37–8 (*Surnaturel*, 43–4).

²⁴ De Lubac, *Augustinianism*, 39 (*Surnaturel*, 45).

²⁵ De Lubac, *Augustinianism*, 68–77 (76) (*Surnaturel*, 69–76 (75); « Deux augustiniens », 533–6). In the course of his three texts, de Lubac progressively extended and amplified this argument.

²⁶ De Lubac, *Augustinianism*, 17–19, 27 (*Surnaturel*, 28–9, 36).

²⁷ De Lubac, *Augustinianism*, 43 (absent from *Surnaturel*). See Cornelius Jansenius, *Augustinus* II.13-16 (3 vols.; Paris: Soly et Guillemot, 1641), 59–69; summarized in Nigel Abercrombie, *The Origins of Jansenism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1936), 137–8, 153–

Augustinianism, de Lubac complains that few of Jansenius's opponents challenged him on this fundamental point, focusing rather on the *adiutorium quo*, the "aid by which something is done," which was given to humans after the fall, and the implications of this aid for the scholastic concept of efficacious grace. Following the course set by Baius, Jansenius equated the *adiutorium sine quo non* with "sufficient" or "small" grace. In other words, prior to the fall only a limited grace was required for good human action, which remained essentially self-determining. In sharp distinction, Jansenius identified the postlapsarian *adiutorium quo* with "victorious delectation" or "grace efficacious in itself." Grace after the fall was qualitatively different from that which had preceded it, with the possibility excluded that human acts were performed in genuine freedom.

In response, de Lubac argues that the correct basis for the Augustinian distinction between the two aids is not that Adam's original nature was more complete or more self-determining than that of the humans who followed him, but, quite simply, the fact that Adam sinned.²⁸ Because Adam received the *adiutorium sine quo non*, the "first aid" that made it possible for him to persevere in exercising his free will for good, not as an entitlement but as a gift, the grounds for Jansenius's distinction could not be maintained. The difference between Adam and the humans who followed him therefore hinges not on the presence or absence of grace, nor even on the objective power of grace. Rather, Adam and the rest of humanity are distinguished by their subjective experience of the power of grace, which is greater coming from the second Adam, who is Jesus Christ, than it was in the first Adam. It is this grace of Christ that disposes humans to perform good acts. De Lubac states, with reference to Augustine: "Grace is not more necessary to us, basically, than it was to Adam, nor has it to make up for our strength or take the place of our will. Properly speaking, it does not lead us further, but it comes to seek us further away—and further down."²⁹ The *adiutorium quo* is therefore truly a grace of victory over sin and of deliverance from sin, not a mere remedy for sin's ill effects. It is more abundant, greater, and more powerful in its effects even than the *adiutorium sine quo non*, enabling a perseverance in the good that Adam lacked.³⁰ In failing to grasp this, Jansenius failed to understand the "profound continuity" from "man in a state of innocence to man redeemed by Christ" that results from the fact of *both* conditions being graced.³¹

8. The debate concerns the interpretation of *De correptione et gratia* 34, in *Works* I/26, trans. Roland J. Teske (New York: New City, 1999), 107–45 (132–3).

²⁸ De Lubac, *Augustinianism*, 44 (*Surnaturel*, 50).

²⁹ De Lubac, *Augustinianism*, 48 (*Surnaturel*, 52).

³⁰ In order not to regress back into Baianism, de Lubac insists that the *adiutorium sine quo non* was also *operative* on the human will, determining that will and not merely dependent on it.

³¹ De Lubac, *Augustinianism*, 49–50 (*Surnaturel*, 53–4).

The second area in which de Lubac found Jansenius wanting was his understanding of grace's mode of operation. Grace after the fall too often appeared to Jansenius, he contended, as an invading, enslaving power that acted on the will extrinsically. De Lubac argues, in contrast, that grace works through love, which, he states, "precedes the human effort that it has itself set in motion [*suscité*]." ³² Despite its irresistible strength, grace does not therefore conquer the will. Rather, grace enables the will, in the freedom of "victorious delectation," to overcome concupiscence, which is the opposite of freedom. De Lubac states: "It is not grace which is termed invincible in relation to the will: it is the will itself by the working of this grace." ³³ Grace is the opposite of concupiscence not only in the objects that it presents to the will, but in the manner in which it causes the will to seek those objects.

It is by now clear that de Lubac's engagements with Baius and Jansenius provided the impetus for his own Augustinian doctrine of grace and nature. Baius taught him that to commodify grace was fruitless, and that grace had to be understood as an intervention rather than as a state. Jansenius showed him the absurdity of construing grace, whether originally or after the fall, as a remedy for weakness, and that grace, because it originated in God, could not be viewed as changed by human sin. In order to resolve the contradictions inherent in the theories of both Baius and Jansenius, de Lubac directed his attention back yet further, to their sources. He nevertheless accepted the shared supposition of their theological anthropologies that the exemplum of human nature is not Christ but Adam.

De Lubac, Augustine, and Thomas

The preceding examination of the sixteenth and seventeenth century iterations of the doctrine of grace allows a clear understanding of the theory of pure nature in its Augustinian context. The primordial condition of Adam prior to either sin or supernatural grace, pure nature was posited as a state in which the human, in de Lubac's words, was "cut off from his transcendent finality and those higher faculties by which ... he is made in the image of God." ³⁴ In other words, purity implied a severance from grace acting transcendently. In several places, de Lubac acknowledges that pure nature was sometimes viewed as nothing more than an hypothesis constructed to assist theological reasoning, enabling theologians to speculate on what the powers of a creature would be were the creature subject neither to grace nor to sin. Yet this anthropology was derived from naturalistic Greek philosophy, primarily that of Aristotle. When

³² De Lubac, *Augustinianism*, 68 (*Surnaturel*, 69). See also the concluding words of *Surnaturel*, 494. The whole conclusion has been translated by David Coffey in *Philosophy and Theology* 11 (1999), 368–80.

³³ De Lubac, *Augustinianism*, 75 (*Surnaturel*, 74).

³⁴ De Lubac, *Augustinianism*, 120 (*Surnaturel*, 107).

interpreted via the metaphysical categories of divine act and natural potency, de Lubac argues, it excluded the fundamental Christian understanding, inspired in large part by Augustine, of grace as originating in the divine act of creation and thereby as refusing the possibility of a wholly ungraced potency dependent for its fulfilment on externally intervening grace. Over time, pure nature thereby ceased to be a mere useful fiction—equivalent, for example, to the idea of a state of nature in early liberal political theory—but became the dominant model for conceiving actual human existence. Once constructed as an hypothesis, the *idea* of the state of pure nature came to be used to provide the conceptual foundation for belief in an actually existing purely natural *order*.

De Lubac accepts that pure nature as an idea has its uses. First, if the category is used to distinguish nature from grace it may safeguard, at least potentially, the gratuitousness of grace by demonstrating that grace is no mere corollary of nature.³⁵ Second, by retaining pure nature as an idea, theologians may preserve an appropriately humanistic dimension in their thought, acknowledging that nature, even in its fallen condition, may retain some freedom and not become only a function of divine willing.³⁶ Third, by presenting humanity independently of transcendent divine action or revelation, the idea of pure nature can promote apologetics, making theological discourse about the human person comprehensible in philosophical terms.³⁷ Fourth, pure nature may be used to indicate the fallenness of humanity, emphasizing its existence in a state of sinful estrangement from grace.³⁸ All these potential benefits depend, of course, on precisely how the concept of pure nature is constructed and how it is employed in doctrine. Moreover, because of their divergent implications for anthropology, not all possible benefits seem compatible. For instance, the use of pure nature to describe human sinfulness appears in tension with its use to engage philosophers and humanists. Nevertheless, to develop pure nature as a theory was to separate the discussion of pure nature from its primary scriptural context of the prelapsarian state of Adam. This had the effect of removing the idea of pure nature from the Christian narrative of creation, fall, and redemption, which the person of Adam was central, and relocating it into a realm of purportedly objective metaphysical theory.

I shall shortly consider the recent neo-Thomist defences of the theory of pure nature. The discussion so far demonstrates, however, that the indisputable context for the development of the theory of pure nature that de Lubac delineates is Augustinian. Invented by Baius and adapted by Jansenius, the theory is fundamental to their discussions of several interrelated classic topics, including grace, creation, the fall, the will, freedom, and teleology. De Lubac shows, however, that the theory of pure nature as it developed in

³⁵ De Lubac, *Augustinianism*, 15 (*Surnaturel*, 26).

³⁶ De Lubac, *Augustinianism*, 240 (*Surnaturel*, 161).

³⁷ De Lubac, *Augustinianism*, 275.

³⁸ Henri de Lubac, “Faith and piety in Amidism,” in *Theological Fragments*, 355–69 (365).

the tradition was a perversion of Augustine's own aims, which were strictly theological. Whereas the bishop of Hippo had wished to subvert the naturalism of the ancient world by privileging theological discourse over philosophical categories, the theory of pure nature had in fact come to be used to reinstate exactly the kind of separatist anthropology of the human species that he had been determined to contest.³⁹

De Lubac wished to narrate a genealogy of Roman Catholic theology different from the standard one that proceeded from Thomas, through Thomism, and thereby to neo-Thomism. Twelfth century theologians such as Prevostin of Cremona (c. 1150–1210) were, he affirms, often closer to the Augustinian tradition and terminology than were contemporaries of Thomas in the following century.⁴⁰ In the final chapter of *Augustinianism*, de Lubac traces this genealogy beyond Jansenius and through into the nineteenth century, via figures such as William Estius, Pierre de Bérulle, and François Fénelon, situating himself implicitly within this succession. He concludes with the striking claim that theological renewal will entail, first and foremost, the re-reception of Augustine.⁴¹

What difference does it make to an understanding of de Lubac to ally him more closely with Augustinianism than with Thomism? In view of Thomas's use of several of Augustine's texts in developing his own doctrine of grace it might, of course, be supposed that Thomists derive the theory of pure nature from Augustine. Indeed, Bernard Mulcahy even suggests that the theory was "part of St Augustine's conceptual repertoire."⁴² Although, as will later be discussed, such derivation is possible, the theory seems incompatible with Augustine's developed theology. Even de Lubac, of theologically irenic temper and disposed to intellectual synthesis, acknowledges in several places at least varying emphases, which point to "an essential difference but not a contradiction" between Thomas and Augustine on topics related to pure nature.⁴³

In general terms, de Lubac recognizes that Thomas and Augustine adopt distinct theological methodologies. The "most usual difference" between them is that, whereas Thomas "frequently begins by considering human nature as such in the abstract, independent of sin and its consequences," Augustine "takes as his starting point the experience of sinful man."⁴⁴ De Lubac charges Thomas with giving "perhaps a somewhat too facile interpretation" of Augustine's opening statement in his *Confessions* that God has

³⁹ De Lubac, *Mystery*, 19, 22.

⁴⁰ De Lubac, *Surnaturel*, 193–212.

⁴¹ De Lubac, *Augustinianism*, 235–77 (*Surnaturel* 157–83).

⁴² Mulcahy, *Aquinas's Notion*, 211.

⁴³ Henri de Lubac, *A Brief Catechesis on Nature and Grace* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 1984), 70. See further Jean-Pierre Torrell, "Nature and grace in Thomas Aquinas," in *Surnaturel: A Controversy at the Heart of Twentieth-Century Thomistic Thought*, ed. Serge-Thomas Bonino, trans. Robert Williams (Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia, 2009), 155–88.

⁴⁴ De Lubac, *Brief Catechesis*, 122.

“made us for himself,” without paying sufficient attention to what follows.⁴⁵ As the neo-Thomists contemporary with de Lubac and their present-day counterparts are both content to demonstrate, Thomas sometimes suggests that humans, because of the endowments of their natural constitution, are able to obtain their ends without divine aid. In common with some more recent readers of Thomas, however, de Lubac wished to emphasize the eschatological dimension of the act of making, which establishes a future destiny rather than issuing in a product that is in any sense already completed.⁴⁶

In exploring the implications of such differences between Augustine and Thomas, de Lubac was giving much greater specificity to the thesis being developed around the same time by Étienne Gilson, whose broad and thinly-referenced theses on the subject would have gained much from his close textual work.⁴⁷ So far as de Lubac is concerned, this acknowledgement of difference is especially apparent with regard to the topics of belief and knowledge, and theological anthropology. In order to endorse his assertion of this “essential difference,” I shall briefly examine these two topics and consider how, in the texts of Thomas that de Lubac cites, Augustine is used but each time qualified by the master of qualifications.

With regard to the first topic, belief and knowledge, de Lubac identifies in Thomism a tendency to distinguish what is believed (*creditum*) from what is known (*scitum*), in contrast with what he sees as the stronger Augustinian inclination to fuse belief and knowledge.⁴⁸ Such a distinction suggests that believing and knowing may occur as two distinct operations. De Lubac cites the opening of the *Secunda secundae*, in which Thomas expounds the theological and cardinal virtues, where belief is defined using Augustine’s terminology of “thinking with assent,” by which Augustine means an intellectual affirmation that stops short of certainty. Thomas adds that this assent is an act of the mind only in so far as the mind is led to its

⁴⁵ Augustine, *Confessions* I.1 (1), trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford University Press, 1998), 3.

⁴⁶ On this, see recently Reinhard Hüter, *Dust Bound for Heaven: Explorations in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 129–82.

⁴⁷ E.g., Étienne Gilson, « Réflexions sur la controverse saint Thomas–saint Augustin », *Mélanges Mandonnet*, Bibliothèque thomiste 13–14 (Paris: Vrin, 1930), 2.371–83; idem, “The idea of philosophy in St. Augustine and in St. Thomas Aquinas,” in *A Gilson Reader: Selected Writings*, ed. Anton C. Pegis (Garden City, NY: Image, 1957 [1930]), 68–81. For an overview, see Goulven Madec, « Etienne Gilson et la ‘philosophie augustiniennne’ », in *Petites études augustiniennes* (Paris: Institut d’études augustiniennes, 1994), 179–87. Although, when in Paris, de Lubac occasionally heard Gilson lecture and cites his study of Augustine in *Surnaturel*, the two did not become acquainted until the 1950s and Gilson remained unfamiliar with de Lubac’s oeuvre until then. See *Letters of Etienne Gilson to Henri de Lubac*, trans. Mary Emily Hamilton (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 1988), 7–8; 80–3. In his letter of 20 June 1965, despatched after reading *Augustinianism*, Gilson asked: “How could I have remained insensitive to the whole first part of the old edition of *Surnaturel*?” (80)

⁴⁸ De Lubac, *Augustinianism*, 103 (*Surnaturel*, 99–100).

decision by the will.⁴⁹ He nevertheless then presents “natural” reason and faith as relatively distinct, arguing that things provable by natural reason must also be accepted by faith, because this enables humans to arrive at the knowledge of divine truth more quickly, makes knowledge of this truth available to the unintelligent, busy, and indolent, and provides certitude.⁵⁰

The source for the definition of Augustine’s that Thomas cites is his *De praedestinatione sanctorum*. Yet the point of that passage is not to present thought as potentially detachable from faith but to relate faith to the succession of spontaneous thoughts that humans inevitably have. Augustine’s point is that there cannot be a self-grounded—or, in Alvin Plantinga’s terminology, “properly basic”—faith that is unrelated to thought. Augustine writes: “However hastily, however speedily, some of our thoughts fly before [*antevolo*] the will to believe, and even if this will follows them in such a manner that it appears to accompany them, as though they were inseparable, still it is necessary that all things which are believed, are believed after thought has preceded.”⁵¹ There follows immediately the definition of belief as thinking with assent. For Augustine, this supposes a view of faith and thought as intimately connected rather than as functioning independently of each other. Without the unifying power that faith provides, thought remains diffuse and inchoate, while in the absence of the raw data of unformed thoughts, faith gains no purchase in the world.

The second topic of difference between Thomas and Augustine is theological anthropology. Endorsing Augustine again, de Lubac argues in *Augustinianism* that he shows better than the Thomists, and better than Thomas himself, how humanity is a “great abyss” between nature and grace.⁵² This theme is developed in *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, in which de Lubac criticizes the tendency of some Augustinians—Baius, Jansenius, and their successors—to elide the orders of grace and nature and thereby to dissolve the “fundamental paradox” of humanity’s relationship to God, of which Augustine offers one of the profoundest expressions.⁵³ This paradox is not resolved by mediation: as Augustine repeatedly insists, there is no mediating nature between the creature and God.⁵⁴

If de Lubac is correct on this point, how does Augustine’s view of grace infusing nature become translated by Thomists into a view of nature as an order distinct from grace? In the key question 109 on

⁴⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* (61 vols.; London: Blackfriars, 1964–81), IIaIIae, q. 2, a. 1, resp. and ad 3, in 31.60–1, 64–5.

⁵⁰ Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* IIaIIae, q. 2, a. 4, resp., in 31.76–9.

⁵¹ Augustine, *On the Predestination of the Saints* 2 (5), in *Four Anti-Pelagian Writings*, trans. John A. Mourant and William J. Collinge, The Fathers of the Church, 86 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1992), 218–70 (221–2).

⁵² De Lubac, *Augustinianism*, 253–4 (absent from *Surnaturel*).

⁵³ De Lubac, *Mystery*, 17, 21.

⁵⁴ De Lubac, *Mystery*, 111.

grace, situated close to the end of the *Summa theologiae* IaIIae, Thomas draws heavily on Augustine in posing a succession of *sed contra* propositions that contribute key components to his doctrine of grace: humans can do no good at all without grace, whether in thought, will, love, or action; humans need grace in order not to sin; and humans receive eternal life from God as a gift.⁵⁵ In the first two instances, however, Thomas, while apparently concurring with Augustine, in fact adopts a position that significantly qualifies his view, and in the third instance attributes to Augustine a position that is not, in fact, even his own.

With regard to the first proposition, that humans can do no good at all without grace, Thomas, after accepting the proposition, adds: “Yet since human nature is not wholly spoiled by sin so as to be deprived of the whole good proper to nature, man can indeed, even in the state of spoiled nature [*naturae corruptae*], perform some particular good actions by his natural powers, such as building houses, planting vines and the like.”⁵⁶ The text from the *De correptione et gratia* that Thomas cites, however, reads: “We have free choice both for doing evil and for doing good. But in doing evil one is free of righteousness and enslaved to sin, while in doing good no-one can be free unless he has been set free by [Christ].”⁵⁷ Augustine thereby excludes the possibility of the neutral zone of human activity that Thomas, by presenting creation as gratuitous rather than as graced, delineates. In Augustine’s text, good acts are those performed under grace, whereas all others are evil. Expressed more fully, good acts for Augustine are those that are moved by the divine goodness to participate in divine goodness.

In the second article in question, Augustine’s *De perfectione iustitiae* is cited in favour, justifiably, of the statement that a human needs God’s grace in order not to sin. In Thomas’s reply, however, he suggests (taking as his example Paul’s mental slavery to the law in Rom. 7.25) that a human who is renewed [*reparatus*] “can refrain from mortal sin, which is the affair of the reason.”⁵⁸ The scope of the original statement is thereby limited to venial sins, which are due to the corrupted lower appetite. Yet Augustine’s text reads: “the choice of our will is of little use, if [grace] does not add its help.”⁵⁹ Indeed, in this passage Augustine discusses the grace liberally “poured into our hearts” (Rom. 5.5) in order that the commandments be not burdensome. This is important because infringement of the commandments would frequently entail the commission of mortal sin. The grace that is necessary to avoid such sin is not conferred on one condition of nature or type of action alone.

⁵⁵ Cited in de Lubac, *Augustinianism*, 172, 182, 223; idem, *Surnaturel*, 85, 149, 454. These citations are not parallel.

⁵⁶ Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* IaIIae, q. 109, a. 2, resp., in 30.74–5. See also Alfred Vanneste, *Nature et grâce dans la théologie occidentale: dialogue avec H. de Lubac* (Leuven: Peeters, 1996), 279–81.

⁵⁷ Augustine, *Rebuke and Grace* 2, in *Works* I/26, trans. Roland J. Teske (New York: New City Press, 1999), 107–45 (109–10).

⁵⁸ Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* IaIIae, q. 109, a. 8, resp., in 30.96–7.

⁵⁹ Augustine, *The Perfection of Human Righteousness* 21, in *Works* I/23, 289–316 (299–300).

Thomas justifiably accepts the third proposition, that eternal life is a divine gift, but then states that the human “can, however, perform actions leading to some good connatural to man, such as working in the field, drinking, eating, and having friends, and so on.”⁶⁰ Traditionally, the anti-Pelagian text that he cites in support has been tentatively attributed to Augustine, but this authorship is no longer accepted. Although Thomas cites the text accurately, it cannot therefore be assumed to reflect Augustine’s own view of the matter.⁶¹ On the contrary, the *Hypomnesticon*’s primary critical expositor considers that its author is “specially explicit” about the possibility of “naturally good acts” performed by sinless humanity gaining sanctity by its own efforts, and “developed the theme at considerable length in the third *Responsio*,” on which Thomas draws.⁶²

De Lubac thus identifies clear divergences between Augustine and Thomas on topics of central relevance to the doctrines of grace and nature. These include the relation between knowledge and faith, and humans’ dependence on God in performing even mundane acts. His close textual reading also shows that it is extremely difficult to maintain that Thomas saw himself as a neutral interpreter of Augustine. Rather, Thomas applied his synthesizing methodology to Augustine, as to his many other theological and philosophical sources, in order to enlist him for particular theological and apologetic purposes. Moreover, the systematic exposition that Thomas adopted in many works discouraged him from considering pure nature in the narrative Adamic context that was fundamental for both Augustine and de Lubac.

De Lubac and his Critics

As has already been explained, the primary contention of de Lubac’s recent critics is that he departs from Thomist doctrines. This is certainly true and, as has been shown, was sometimes his express intention. Yet the simple fact that de Lubac either accepted a specific Thomist doctrine or failed to accept it says little about the coherence of his theology, especially on points at which Thomas parts company with Augustine.

How does fuller recognition of de Lubac’s appropriation of Augustine inform a response to the charges levelled at him by his critics? Central to Steven Long’s case is that, by privileging those texts of Thomas that refer to humanity’s supernatural end above those addressing its proximate end, de Lubac

⁶⁰ Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* IaIIae, q. 109, a. 5, resp., in 30.86–7.

⁶¹ *Hypomnesticon* 3.4-5, in *The Pseudo-Augustinian Hypomnesticon against the Pelagians and Celestiniens*, ed. and trans. John Chisholm (2 vols.; Fribourg University Press, 1967–80), 2.122–3. For a recent discussion of authorship, which remains inconclusive but does not advocate for Augustine, see Alexander Y. Hwang, *Intrepid Lover of Perfect Grace: The Life and Thought of Prosper of Aquitaine* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2009), 22–5.

⁶² Chisholm, in *Hypomnesticon* 1.158–9.

employs an “exclusory eye” that results in an imbalanced presentation.⁶³ The two articles to which Long gives particular attention are: those stating that human and angelic souls are of different species, and therefore possess different natural proximate ends; and those which distinguish perfect happiness, granted only by God, from imperfect happiness, which is attainable with a human’s own resources. Long suggests that de Lubac’s dissolution of proximate ends is ultimately motivated by a desire to deny to atheist humanism any ungraced territory for colonization.⁶⁴ In this article it has been clearly shown, however, that the primary theological inspiration for de Lubac’s theology of grace and nature was neither Thomism nor secularism, but Augustinianism. De Lubac necessarily engaged Thomas in order to develop an alternative to contemporary neo-Thomist readings of him. In so doing, de Lubac elucidated Thomas’s Augustinian heritage and showed how Thomas consciously used Augustine rather than read him neutrally. De Lubac thereby proved that real theological choices needed to be made between Augustine and Thomas, and that the notion that their theologies could be melded into an overarching “orthodoxy” was untenable.

The importance to de Lubac of his Augustinian heritage is recognized by Bernard Mulcahy, who seeks to trace the theory of pure nature back to scriptural references to *physis*, which are most numerous in Romans, and to Augustine himself.⁶⁵ Mulcahy also defends the theory for its possible apologetic usefulness, suggesting that the shared human nature, common rationality, and law of nature that pure nature implies provide good bases on which Roman Catholic theology might connect with modernity.⁶⁶ Although the hermeneutical issues raised by the scriptural passages that Mulcahy presents cannot be discussed here in detail, it is clear that the passages, which are Pauline, address live issues within emerging Christian communities. These often concern the nature of Jewish Christians living under the law, the nature of formerly Gentile Christians born before the coming of Christ, who previously acknowledged no law but nature, and whether outward observance can renew inner nature. Although these scriptural antecedents contribute to an understanding of how the idea of pure nature might have arisen, it seems strange to take such exegesis that is highly specific to the particular context of the early church as directly normative for today. As has been shown, however, de Lubac also recognized the apologetic points that Mulcahy raises, but did not accept that such pragmatic considerations could trump the deep theological issues at stake. In so far as he was motivated by an apologetic imperative, however, de Lubac did not consider that theologians would best promote mission by constructing a restricted realm of secular nature and reason that revealed theology might then engage. For theologians to do so, de Lubac thought, would likely be

⁶³ Long, *Natura Pura*, 13–16, 241–5.

⁶⁴ Long, *Natura Pura*, 43–4. See Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* Ia, q. 75, a. 7, in 11.32–7; and IaIIae, q. 5, a. 5, in 16.128–33.

⁶⁵ Mulcahy, *Aquinas’s Notion*, 21–48; see Rom. 1.26–7, 2.14, 2.27, 11.21,24; also Gal. 2.15; Eph. 2.5; 1 Cor. 11.14.

⁶⁶ Mulcahy, *Aquinas’s Notion*, 207–8, 214.

counterproductive. Rather, theologians should pursue the more ambitious project of demonstrating that there is no autonomous secularity and that every well-ordered part of apparently mundane nature is a graced manifestation of the divine goodness.⁶⁷

The earliest and most extensive of the new critiques of de Lubac has been made by Lawrence Feingold. Its most interesting and potentially damaging aspect is the claim, repeated at several points, that de Lubac is in thrall not to atheist humanism but to the Jansenism that he had purported to refute. Feingold alleges that de Lubac makes common cause with Jansenius in positing an “innate and unconditional natural desire to see God,” and by maintaining that this desire is absolute and therefore incapable of frustration.⁶⁸ On this point, Feingold’s presentation of de Lubac’s position is fair. For Jansenius, however, desire is not a key category, being viewed as, at best, inefficacious and imperfect. Admittedly, he accepts that desire is the most important proximate cause of willing.⁶⁹ Yet because Jansenius views desire as entirely mastered by grace, what he presents cannot be true desire. Indeed, Jansenius argues that, before the fall, natural desire did not exist, and that after the fall such desire cannot be resisted.⁷⁰ This is far removed from de Lubac’s nuanced conception of desire as internalized, “inscribed and recognized in the being’s very self.”⁷¹

Feingold also argues that de Lubac “ultimately tends, like Jansenism, to identify the gratuitousness of the supernatural with the gratuitousness of creation,” and with the exigency, or need, that God implanted into the creature at creation.⁷² These misidentifications are due, Feingold asserts, to de Lubac’s confusion of gratuitousness with non-dependence. In fact, Feingold contends, the fears on which they are based are unfounded: it does not follow from the fact that God implanted a purely natural inclination in Adam, or has done so in any other creature, that God has become dependent on that creature. In thinking otherwise, he continues, de Lubac treats the final, spiritual end of humanity as if it were a connatural end. It must be acknowledged that de Lubac does indeed relate the dual gratuities of the supernatural and of creation more closely than many Thomists, but this is for reasons very different from those of Jansenius. As has already been shown, de Lubac’s stated reason for positing this close relationship was his rejection of the Jansenist dichotomy by which original, refusable, and sufficient grace was exchanged for compensatory, yet non-

⁶⁷ See especially Henri de Lubac, “Internal causes of the weakening and disappearance of the sense of the sacred,” in *Theology in History*, trans. Anne Englund Nash (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 1996), 223–40 (230–3).

⁶⁸ Feingold, *Natural Desire*, 295, 304–5, 344–54.

⁶⁹ Jansenius, *Augustinus* 3.7; Abercrombie, *Origins*, 150.

⁷⁰ Jansenius, *Augustinus* 2; 3.8; Abercrombie, *Origins*, 136, 151.

⁷¹ De Lubac, *Mystery*, 207.

⁷² Feingold, *Natural Desire*, 377–8.

restorative, postlapsarian grace. For him, grace is greater than that, and not subject to internal differentiation. In particular, its mode of operation is not via human acts.

Finally, on the grounds that de Lubac confuses the natural and supernatural orders, Feingold accuses him of a “Jansenist denigration” of the natural order.⁷³ Because an order is defined by its end, Feingold insists, if no natural end exists then there can be no natural order. This objection is less clearly met. De Lubac certainly subjects the idea of a purely natural order to extensive critique, but his aim in so doing is not to devalue any dimension of concrete human life. Rather, he wishes to show how, by supernatural grace, natural life is sustained and completed. De Lubac remains convinced that nature was denigrated by the refusal to recognize its inseparability from grace.

From an Augustinian perspective, the most discordant aspect of Feingold’s critique is his classically Thomist exaltation of reason: humanity, in its essence, is a rational creature, and any failure to acknowledge the splendour of its rational powers amounts to a denigration of its divine capacity. In particular, Feingold challenges de Lubac for suggesting that revelation, as well as reason, is needed in order for humans to recognize their natural desire for God, and for his view that reason alone is insufficient to allow knowledge of causes and essences in general, including of the first cause and the final end.⁷⁴ In fact, Feingold avers, the knowledge of faith is required, and to maintain otherwise is to assume the truth of that which requires proof. Notwithstanding de Lubac’s and Feingold’s differing teleologies, however, what becomes clear as Feingold’s critique nears its conclusion is that his dispute with de Lubac is not primarily about the greatness or otherwise of the end for which humanity is destined. Rather, their contestation concerns the relative power of reason and grace, and of human initiative and divine action. For Feingold, the human desire for the vision of God must be founded on knowledge, and self-transcendence by nature is possible through elicited desire.⁷⁵ De Lubac’s contrary Augustinian exaltation of grace calls into serious question his critics’ confidence in reason.

De Lubac and his critics are sometimes speaking at cross-purposes. Notably, all embrace a high theological anthropology, although disagree on whether this is best promoted by establishing grace and nature in distinct orders or by encompassing the two within a single order. Feingold’s provocative suggestion that de Lubac retained, unwittingly or otherwise, a Jansenist doctrine of original grace cannot, however, be accepted. An examination of de Lubac’s own direct reading of Augustine’s doctrine of grace will make the reasons for this clearer.

⁷³ Feingold, *Natural Desire*, 393–4.

⁷⁴ Feingold, *Natural Desire*, 354–6; see de Lubac, *Mystery*, 53–74.

⁷⁵ Feingold, *Natural Desire*, 397–403.

The interpretation of Augustine goes in cycles. The scholarly consensus sometimes favours readings that emphasize the continuity of his thought, and at other times stresses discontinuities. In recent decades, the discontinuity thesis has been encouraged by the biographical industry that has developed around the *Confessions*. According to a standard narrative, Augustine underwent a sharp conversion from youthful, optimistic Neoplatonism to an anxious, Pauline sin-consciousness.⁷⁶ This historiography is now being rewritten.⁷⁷ Within this context, de Lubac's reading of Augustine appears curiously contemporary, assisting the retrieval of a stream of Augustine interpretation that presents his theology as essentially continuous. Interestingly, the figure who was the earliest identifiable influence on de Lubac's reading of Augustine was one of a previous generation of interpreters who emphasized this continuity. Charles Boyer was the author of both of the secondary sources on Augustine that de Lubac cited his 1922 text « Le désir de Dieu ». Boyer had written in 1920: "We cannot endorse the variations in doctrine and the oppositions that several claim to observe in the evolution of Saint Augustine."⁷⁸ Similarly, Étienne Gilson averred in 1929: "Saint Augustine determined his principal ideas from the time of his conversion, including, we believe, regarding grace, and he always remained on this once-constituted foundation."⁷⁹

De Lubac contested the discontinuity thesis in especially daring fashion, arguing that Augustine's teaching had gained its essential form prior to the Pelagian controversy and "never deviated from this standard."⁸⁰ Augustine's doctrine of grace is sought more profitably through his whole corpus, de Lubac contended, including his earlier, anti-Manichean writings. Indeed, in several of his early works, such as the *Soliloquia* and *De Genesi adversus Manichaeos*, we see clear evidence of Augustine's belief that

⁷⁶ Especially Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (London: Faber & Faber, 1969), 146–57. This presentation is qualified in the new edition (London: Faber, 2000), 489–90.

⁷⁷ Nello Cipriani, *Molti e uno solo in Cristo : la spiritualità di Agostino* (Rome: Città Nuova, 2009); Carol Harrison, *Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology: An Argument for Continuity* (Oxford University Press, 2006); Goulven Madec, *La Patrie et la voie : le Christ dans la vie et la pensée de saint Augustin* (Paris: Desclée, 1989).

⁷⁸ « Nous n'avons pas constaté ces variations de doctrine et ces oppositions que plusieurs pensent observer dans l'évolution de saint Augustin. » (Boyer, *L'Idée*, 260.)

⁷⁹ « Saint Augustin a fixé ses idées maîtresses dès sa conversion, même, croyons-nous, en ce qui concerne la grâce, et il a toujours vécu sur ce capital une fois constitué ». (Étienne Gilson, *Introduction à l'étude de saint Augustin* (Paris: Vrin, 1919), 293.)

⁸⁰ De Lubac, *Augustinianism*, 77–8, 87 (*Surnaturel* 76–8, 87).

knowledge of the good, and the ability to perform works that are good, are due to God.⁸¹ De Lubac could have more easily made his case for the primordial goodness of human life by deploying earlier texts such as these, which are more susceptible of Neoplatonic interpretation. Instead, by immersing himself in the history of interpretation, and above all in the Jansenism that continued to permeate the French theological psyche, he set himself the far more arduous task of interrogating the far more challenging late texts, such as *De correptione et gratia* (*On Rebuke and Grace*), *De gratia et libero arbitrio* (*On Grace and Free Will*), *De praedestinatione sanctorum* (*On the Predestination of the Saints*) and *De dono perseverantiae* (*On the Gift of Perseverance*).⁸² Composed by Augustine during the final five years of his life, at the height of his battle against Pelagianism, these had been the preferred proof texts of Jansenists, on the understandable grounds that they polemically accentuated the corruption of human nature resulting from the sin of Adam and its subsequent dependence on divine grace. Moreover, by means of thinly-veiled implication the Jansenists were able to use these texts to cast the Jesuits as the semi-Pelagians.⁸³ By focusing on this late portion of Augustine's corpus, de Lubac adopts a different approach from that of another continuity advocate, Carol Harrison, who sees the main interpretive challenge as being to demonstrate that Augustine's critique of Pelagianism was implicit in his *earlier* works, including those on creation and grace.⁸⁴ In other words, it is not possible to retrieve an "early" Augustine whose teaching is more consistent with the theory of pure nature or more amenable to modernity. De Lubac's concern, in contrast, is to show that Augustine retained positive elements of theological anthropology in his *late* works. He sought to demonstrate the unity of Augustine's teaching by demonstrating the full glory of the freedom that divine grace bestows on human nature.

De Lubac's affinity with Boyer is also evident in their shared understanding of Augustine's theory of truth as illumination.⁸⁵ Boyer states that this enabled Augustine to avoid ontologism, which is the view that the first object of human knowledge is the divine ideas. Rather, human ideas "participate" in the divine

⁸¹ Lenka Karfiková, *Grace and the Will according to Augustine*, trans. Markéta Janebová (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 7–33, especially 27–8.

⁸² Augustine, *Rebuke and Grace*, in *Works I/26*, trans. Roland J. Teske (New York: New City Press, 1999), 107–45; idem, *Grace and Free Will*, in *The Teacher: The Free Choice of the Will; Grace and Free Will*, trans. Robert P. Russell, The Fathers of the Church, 59 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1968), 243–308; idem, *On the Predestination of the Saints* and *On the Gift of Perseverance*, in *Four Anti-Pelagian Writings*, trans. John A. Mourant and William J. Collinge, The Fathers of the Church, 86 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1992), 218–70, 271–337.

⁸³ Jansenius, *Augustinus* 1.8; Abercrombie, *Origins*, 131–4.

⁸⁴ Carol Harrison, *Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology: An Argument for Continuity* (Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁸⁵ Charles Boyer, *Christianisme et néo-platonisme dans la formation de Saint Augustin* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1920); idem, *L'Idée de vérité dans la philosophie de saint Augustin* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1920). See Chantraine, *Henri de Lubac*, 398.

ideas, meaning that human knowledge is not clear and distinct but veiled, divided, and, most importantly, analogical.⁸⁶ Some of the inspiration for the concept of “mental dynamism” that de Lubac develops in « Le désir de Dieu » surely lies here. Boyer also refuted the doctrine of occasionalism, which held that objects in the world do not exercise efficient causality, being subject to direct divine causation. As has been seen, this was also a key element in de Lubac’s critique of Jansenism, which was likewise Boyer’s principal target: unlike de Lubac’s more recent critics, he accepted the validity of an Augustinian context for theology.⁸⁷ Both Boyer and de Lubac argued, as did Augustine, that humans under grace were not the puppets of a deity who retained all active power himself. Rather, as a result of divine grace humans exercise real efficient agency in the world.

Despite these affinities traceable in the 1920s and 1930s, Boyer attacked *Surnaturel*, arguing that de Lubac had constructed “pure nature” arbitrarily in order to preclude the possibility of divine action upon it.⁸⁸ In contrast, Boyer contended, pure nature should be understood as the reality that the natural law imposes on nature, and divine action as aiding pure nature in the exercise of the natural powers and attainment of the natural ends that this law imposes on it. Alongside Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, Boyer was a key figure behind the censure of de Lubac by the Jesuit order that closely followed his attack.⁸⁹ Yet his later response to *The Mystery of the Supernatural* was far more irenic in tone, opening with a retraction of his previous attack and even an expression of regret for having published it.⁹⁰ A broad interpretive agreement between de Lubac and Boyer therefore exists, to which the controversies of the later 1940s and 1950s, on which accounts of the reception of *Surnaturel* invariably focus, are the exception.

The shifting theological allegiances around de Lubac are now difficult fully to comprehend. Nevertheless, two points of context aid an understanding of why de Lubac’s oeuvre was received as it was: the significance in ecclesiastical politics of deviation from neo-Thomism; and the historical strength in France of Jansenism, which made Augustine’s later, anti-Pelagian writings so important. In his willingness to tackle these writings directly, de Lubac follows Thomas. Yet whereas de Lubac seeks to synthesize

⁸⁶ Boyer, *L’Idée*, 156–220.

⁸⁷ E.g., Charles Boyer, « Le système de saint Augustin sur la grâce. Paraphrase du ‘de correptione et gratia’ », *Recherches de science religieuse* 20 (1930), 481–505.

⁸⁸ Charles Boyer, « Nature pure et surnaturel dans le *Surnaturel* du Père de Lubac », *Gregorianum* 28 (1947), 379–95.

⁸⁹ Henri de Lubac, *At the Service of the Church: Henri de Lubac Reflects on the Circumstances that Occasioned his Writings*, trans. Anne Elizabeth Englund (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 1993), 108, 170, 255–6, 284.

⁹⁰ Charles Boyer, « Note sur ‘Le mystère du Surnaturel’ du Père H. de Lubac », *Gregorianum* 48 (1967), 130–2. Curiously, although Feingold makes use of Boyer’s 1947 and 1967 reviews he makes no reference to the retraction. Jürgen Mettepenning, *Nouvelle Théologie, New Theology: Inheritor of Modernism, Precursor of Vatican II* (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 80–1, in contrast, presents Boyer as part of a contrary trend *within the nouvelle théologie*.

Augustine's corpus as a whole, in a way that remains faithful to both his intentions and his explicit statements, Thomas, as has been seen, effects some questionable conflation in his own reading of Augustine. To take a further example, in the midst of the Augustinian material in the *Summa theologiae* IaIIae, question 109, Thomas cites Aristotle's *Physics*: "Each thing acts according to what is proper to it by nature."⁹¹ This makes an important contribution to Thomas's developing vision of things moving themselves naturally. He writes: "In the state of integral nature [*naturae integrae*] man did not need a gift of grace supplementing his natural endowments in order to love God naturally above all things."⁹² To be fair to Thomas, he adds that, in order thus to love God, man "needed the aid [*auxilio*] of God moving him." Nonetheless, from an Augustinian perspective it is unclear how an action and the power to perform it could then remain natural. This is a good example of what de Lubac critically describes as Thomas's tendency to "baptize" Aristotle.⁹³ This baptism is in preference to faithfulness to Augustine.

If one of Thomas's aims was to demonstrate his continuity with Augustine, he could have done better. This is because Augustine did consider at least one possible alternative to the view of grace as governing the whole of nature: the act of faith. In his writings on Romans and Galatians of the mid-390s, Augustine entertained the possibility that faith was freely-willed. Although the will is free only to choose faith, and following its choice can perform no good work without grace, the "single moment of faith" nevertheless constitutes a "momentary flicker of independent human willing."⁹⁴ Yet Augustine quickly saw that humans, belonging to the *massa peccati* (lump of sin), did not in any sense "merit" faith; rather, even the will to faith must be a work of grace.⁹⁵ In summary, Augustine's usual approach to the theory of pure nature may be stated quite briefly. For a creature to believe that it is self-sufficient is for it to turn away from God, from whom it receives its perfections, and to descend into the nothingness of evil. To assert such self-sufficiency is effectively to deny that the world was created by God out of nothing. In any case, the motivation to attribute good works to oneself is pride, which can never bring true freedom, which comes only via grace.⁹⁶ Finally, habit (*consuetudo*) may be presented as the root of postlapsarian sin in part because the routinized behaviour that it produces obscures from the human mind the knowledge that it is

⁹¹ Aristotle, *Physics* 2.8 (199a10), in *Summa theologiae* IaIIae, q. 103, a. 3, resp., in 29.78–9.

⁹² Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* IaIIae, q. 109, a. 3, resp., in 30.80–1.

⁹³ De Lubac, *Surnaturel*, 259, n. 3.

⁹⁴ Harrison, *Rethinking*, 140–2, 219–20.

⁹⁵ It seems excessive to claim that there is "genuine tension" in Augustine's theology over whether humans are ordered to their final end of union with God gratuitously or naturally, as in Stephen J. Duffy, *The Graced Horizon: Nature and Grace in Modern Catholic Thought* (Collegeville, MI: Liturgical, 1992), 26–8.

⁹⁶ Harrison, *Rethinking*, esp. 83, 99–100, 176–7, 286. For de Lubac's own acerbic comment on pride, see *Surnaturel*, 237.

constituted “in such a way that it cannot hold to a truth, cannot maintain it, unless it seeks and seeks continually.”⁹⁷

Conclusion

De Lubac’s reading of Augustine was remarkably consistent. Four decades after producing his paper « Le désir de Dieu », in which he embraced Augustine’s dynamic desire in preference to hierarchic Plotinian stasis, he reminded his readers that Augustine did not, in his early life, become Neoplatonist, but that, with Augustine, Neoplatonism became Christian.⁹⁸ Thanks to de Lubac, we might well say today that, in the twentieth century, Christianity did not become modern, but that, through the assumption of secular categories into a theology of grace, modernity finally became Augustinian.

The paradoxical questions around grace and nature with which de Lubac grapples are, at one level, perennial.⁹⁹ For example, the “Dogmatic constitution on the Catholic faith” that was promulgated at the First Vatican Council inveighed in successive paragraphs against the privileging, in public discourse, of the “voice of simple reason or nature” (*vocant rationis vel naturae*), and the confusion within theological circles of nature and grace.¹⁰⁰ De Lubac saw that the origins of the secular rationalism by which this Council felt threatened lay ultimately in the attempt to demarcate a “pure” nature relative to grace. Despite its intrinsic importance, however, his doctrine of grace and nature is easily sidelined from current theology. On one side it is contested by neo-Thomists, who argue that it is simply wrong. Yet, as has been shown in this article, this “wrongness” is relative to a particular set of theological criteria. Furthermore, from another perspective the doctrine of grace and nature is surrendered on the grounds that the categories in which it is framed have become redundant. To this end, Noel O’Sullivan discusses the “Christological impoverishment” of the supernatural debate, drawing attention to how, at specific points in *Augustinianism*, de Lubac identified grace explicitly with Christ, in contrast with the corresponding points in *Surnaturel*, in which Christology was, at best, implicit.¹⁰¹ O’Sullivan thereby suggests that even de Lubac came to accept

⁹⁷ De Lubac, *Brief Catechesis*, 70; citing Augustine, *Predestination* 5.

⁹⁸ De Lubac, *Mystery*, 225–7.

⁹⁹ As capably shown in Milbank, *Suspended Middle*, 56–61, 94–6.

¹⁰⁰ “Dogmatic constitution on the Catholic faith” 7-8, in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, ed. Norman P. Tanner (2 vols.; Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 2.804–5.

¹⁰¹ Noel O’Sullivan, *Christ and Creation: Christology as the Key to Interpreting the Theology of Creation in the Works of Henri de Lubac* (Bern: Lang, 2009), 217–78; idem, “Henri de Lubac’s *Surnaturel*: An Emerging Christology,” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 72 (2007), 3–31 (19–21).

that the categories of grace and nature were inadequate. Alfred Vanneste, another admirer of de Lubac's, likewise asserts a preference for Christology.¹⁰²

The categories of grace and nature cannot, however, be effaced. This is because the ontological realities and conceptual distinctions to which they point would then simply be transposed into another sphere of discourse where they would either remain unnamed, or need to be rearticulated by means of a parallel set of conceptual apparatus. In particular, to dissolve these categories into a Christology that itself failed to address Christ's divine and human natures, and their interrelation, would constitute a retrogressive step rather than one of progress. This is because, in de Lubac's doctrine of grace and nature, there already exists a person in whom the dramatic play of grace and nature is both embodied and conceptualized, and with whom humans share solidarity. This person is Adam. In de Lubac's sophisticated theological anthropology Adam is the mediator between humankind, which was born from him, and Christ, who as the second Adam overcame the effects of the sin of the first Adam. The importance that de Lubac attaches to Adam as the mediator between humans and Christ provides a welcome corrective to a current tendency to instrumentalize Christ as the mediator between humankind and God. For de Lubac, in contrast, Adam is, for humans, a graced exemplum, an origin, and a nature, who, being such, surpasses both purely natural anthropology and purely transcendent metaphysics.

¹⁰² Vanneste, *Nature*, 266–9, 274–6.