

HENRI DE LUBAC, *NATURAL DESIRE FOR THE SUPERNATURAL*

The natural order is interiorly ordered to the fulfilling order of grace, without in the least possessing this grace in anticipation, that is, it is not able to claim it for itself.

The structural principle of the divin plan for the world shows itself to be a unified one.

We are not created uniquely for our own beatitude but for the glorification of the God of grace and love: 'Beatitude is service, vision is adoration, freedom is dependence, possession is ecstasy.' In the order of absolute love, only the law of selflessness is valid; categories such as 'rights, advantages, commutative justice' are quite out of place there."

"image" (*imago*) created to become "likeness" (*similitudo*) [Irenaeus]

"datum optimum" (nature) oriented towards fulfillment in the "*donum perfectum*" (grace) [the Areopagite]

"*datio*" (creation) which is oriented towards the "*donatio*" [Thomas]

Thomas: spiritual nature is not simply another "instance" of nature in general. It is created immediately by God and, for this reason, immediately *for God*. How can we understand "spiritual nature"?

"*Capacitas*"

[*potential oboedientialis* <-----> *aptitude passive* <-----> *appetitus perfectus*]
(nature in general) (spiritual nature) (graced spiritual nature)

This "*capacitas*" excludes, on the one hand, any inner-worldly (and thus 'natural' final goal). Thomas transforms Aristotle's final goal of inner-worldly contemplation into a purely intermediate goal. But neither can it be satisfied by an "eternal striving" after the vision of God, an eternal asymptotic approach to this vision. Here de Lubac parts ways with Marechal and his disciples. Such a striving would not be "natural beatitude" but the torture of Tantalus.

On the other hand, there is, in this "*capacitas*" that constitutes the innermost being of the created spiritual nature, no trace yet of supernatural grace or even such an orientation. This is in no way a denial of the fact that the concrete ('*elicited*') act of concrete man as a movement toward his final goal is, of course, borne by grace. It is first a question only of the signature inscribed in the created spiritual nature, unknown to this nature itself as created, purely 'habitual,' lying as a 'lack,' as the basis of all consciousness. The knowledge of what the human spirit ultimately "really desires" is only communicated in the personal call of the God of free grace. And with this knowledge is also communicated the possibility, itself a gift of grace, to respond to this call. It is obvious that, seen biblically and theologically, this call, this free self-communication of God, is what was first intended by him: for its sake is spiritual nature created and, for the sake of this nature, the material cosmos. The whole work remains penetrated from moment to moment by God's freedom, so that the first moment (the creation of spiritual nature) does not make it "necessary" for God to pass to the second moment (grace's call).