

HAPPINESS

ACCORDING TO THE MIND OF SAINT THOMAS

A Thesis

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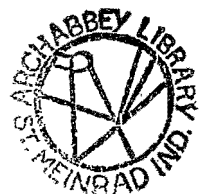


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PART I
THE PROBLEM OF HAPPINESS

Many people have tried to describe the present age here in these United States. Some have depicted the times as the age of fear, others as the age of specialization in the sciences. Numerous other terms could be used to describe the era of today, but no matter what name one chooses, he must agree with those who say that there is still a tremendous amount of misery in this world. Statistics bear witness to the fact that as much misery exists among all classes of people today as in past ages. This indeed seems strange, because never before have men had such an abundance of material things. That there is widespread misery can be pointed out merely by the crowded and ever-increasing mental institutions and jails. And the crime rate is soaring out of proportion to the population increase.

One is almost afraid to read the newspapers today, for he reads of so many crimes being committed by mere teen-agers. Or he looks at the "divorce" problem in America — about one out of every three marriages ends in divorce. In the pages of Hollywood's "stars" he sees that the wife is to be married for the fourth time and the husband for the third. Of course, Hollywood should not be used as an example, but such conditions do exist here in this country. He thinks of what a drastic effect divorce is having upon the children who are born of these marriages. Juvenile criminality is shocking; and again statistics prove that one of the reasons for this is the fact that these juveniles are the victims of broken homes. He sees, hears and reads of so much corruption among persons of the highest trust.

And if he glances at the different types of amusement and the large-scale advertising, he knows what is giving momentum to the prevalent idea that happiness consists in pleasure. What is he to think of all this?

The contemporary world indeed seems to be living upside down. Everyone is looking for happiness and trying to find it in everything but the right thing. One of the big problems with the people of this age, and perhaps with people ever since the time of Adam and Eve, in trying to find happiness, is that they fail to recognize the necessity of what might be called a teleological approach to the question of happiness.¹

First of all in the discussion of this teleological approach, it must be noted that all men have a natural desire for happiness. This desire can then be examined to see what it implies; and this investigation should lead to the understanding of two things. One is that it cannot reasonably be maintained that all men agree as to what precisely constitutes happiness. What is desired is felicity in general. Everyone would like to have his desires fully satisfied, but all men do not actually desire the same things. Thus, the investigation cannot be pursued by taking a vote as to the nature of happiness. This would only lead to many diverse opinions, and opinion is not knowledge. Nor can one try a psychological analysis of this desire, for such a study would show that most men's notions of happiness are very vague.

The second thing to be understood is that this desire is not an act in the metaphysical sense, but rather a sort of inclination or an innate tendency of man's will toward the good. Because it is an innate tendency, the natural desire for happiness is not free; it is an inclination

of the will, considered as a nature, that is, in its essence. This tendency is not an elective one. Freedom is founded in the actuation of this tendency by a series of particular human actions. Saint Thomas says, "The will naturally tends toward its ultimate end; for every man naturally desires happiness. And all other volitions are caused from this natural volition, since whatever a man desires is wished on account of an end. Therefore, the love of the good, which man naturally desires as an end, is a natural love, but the love derived from this, of a good loved for the sake of an end in other words, the love of a means to the end is an elective i.e. free love."²

Human happiness, therefore, can only be understood by giving some thought to the end or purpose of man or his final cause. Even without a technical study, one knows that a life which is purposeless is actually not a reasonable life. No man can be good unless he works for some purpose which is proper to his kind of being. There are many aspects of despair, but one of the surest indications of it is the abandonment of all purpose in life. So long as a man aims at something, he retains a little bit of ambition and human dignity. As soon as he becomes an aimless wanderer in this life, not knowing why he is alive, he loses his only guidepost to happiness. Such a person is a failure because he can no longer order his actions in any reasonable way.

Since the word "purpose" can be a very ambiguous term, it must be mentioned that there is quite a difference between an end which an agent, quite arbitrarily, sets up for himself as the culmination of his actual ambitions, and the end to which his nature is metaphysically directed from the

first moment of his existence. This first end could be likened to the "finis operantis", and the second to finis operis." Right now the main concern is with the specific end for which all men are fitted by their essence, as rational animals. And the question arises: "Is there a specific end or purpose of human life?" Yes. There is a reason why every being exists or can exist. It is rather evident that every agent acts for an end. Here, there are only two possibilities. An agent may by its nature be incapable of knowing its end, and in this case it must be directed toward that end by some intellect which does not form part of the agent, but which oversees its work, or which makes it in such a way that it achieves its end. Such an agent, since it does not know its end, will obviously possess no freedom; it tends necessarily towards its primary purpose, when it is in operation. All the world of beings below man is something like this; not precisely mechanical, but naturally determined by God their Maker, to certain predetermined purposes which are part of the formal nature of these subhuman things.

If one does not agree to this interpretation of natural operation, then he must think that the events of the natural world are all purposeless events. This would lead him to the conclusion that there is no order in this world, and that the world is entirely irrational in its activities. He would have to conclude that neither science nor philosophy is possible, for he cannot understand a world of purposeless events, whether he be a scientist or philosopher or both.

The other possibility besides that of agents naturally and necessarily ordered to their ends, is that of an agent so made that he can know

his own specific end, and freely order his actions so as to obtain this end. Men act in this manner. They have certain operations which are necessitated, or determined by their nature, to set ends. Eating and other biological functions follow this pattern; but men can perform other operations which are distinctly human in contrast to the biological operations which are of the animal functions; and these human actions can be regulated by human reason in view of a known end.³

Saint Thomas sums up the whole idea expressed in the above paragraphs with these words: "It is evident that all actions proceeding from any potency are caused by it according to the formal nature of its object. Now the object of the will is the end and the good. Hence, all human actions must be for the sake of an end."⁴

Footnotes

PART I

- 1 Bourke, Vernon, Ethics, p. 29.
- 2 St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, I, q., 60, a. 2.
- 3 St. Thomas Aquinas, Contra Gentiles, Book II, ch. 1-3.
- 4 Summa Theologiae, I-II, q. 1., a. 1.

PART II

DEFINITIONS OF HAPPINESS

Both the history and the literary remains of the ancient Greek and Roman civilizations, indicate that many of their greatest philosophers committed suicide because they could not answer the question "What is the ultimate end of man?" Without faith, of course, they could never arrive at a correct answer. But there are men in this twentieth century, and there were countless men like them during the two thousand years since the time of Christ, who, in spite of all the teachings of Christianity, still have extremely vague and hazy ideas of what the ultimate end of man is, or in other words, wherein the supreme happiness of man consists. To understand what man's ultimate end is, one should have a clear idea of the exact meaning of happiness.

Aristotle says in this connection, "Verbally there is very general agreement; for both the general run of men and people of superior refinement ... identify living well and doing well with being happy; but with regard to what happiness is, they differ, and the many do not give the same account as the wise."¹ Cicero defines the happy person as follows: "When we call someone 'happy', we mean by the word the sum-total of all goods, together with the exclusion of all evils."² And Saint Augustine calls happiness "the plenitude of all things to be desired."³ The definition of Boethius is also famous: "Happiness is a state made perfect by the aggregation of all good things."⁴ And finally, St. Thomas Aquinas gives this definition, "For nothing else is meant by the term 'beatitude' than the

perfect good of an intellectual creature capable of knowing that it has a plenitude of the good it possesses." More briefly Saint Thomas defines beatitude as "the perfect good of an intellectual nature."⁵ It can readily be seen that all of these definitions of "beatitude" or perfect happiness are in substantial agreement.

From man's point of view "happiness" consists in the possession of all good consonant with man's nature. This could be called the positive element of happiness. Not to have any good which man as man should or could possess would be an evil; and to possess an evil would make "perfect happiness" impossible, because man would be happier if he also possessed the good which he does not have. Therefore, the exclusion of all evil is the negative element of happiness. Moreover, the possession of all good and the exclusion of all evil must be everlasting. The very possibility of losing the actual possession of all good is itself an evil and contradicts the concept of beatitude. So it can be said that three things are essential for the happiness of man. The first is the actual possession of all good consonant with his nature; the second is the exclusion of all evil; and the third is the eternal duration of the state of beatitude with the certainty of this eternal duration.

Happiness can be considered in the abstract or in the concrete. Previously there were cited several definitions of happiness. They considered happiness abstractly. In that sense happiness is the everlasting possession of all good consonant with man's nature, together with the exclusion of all evil. If happiness is considered in the concrete, it means the possession of that specific good or of those specific goods which man

must possess in order to enjoy perfect happiness. It is easy to define happiness in the abstract sense. The difficulty of the problem of happiness consists in determining "concretely" the good or goods through which man will obtain supreme happiness.

If one looks around him today, he can see that all men are seeking happiness, at least in some limited way. However, in the strict sense of the word, perfect happiness is the everlasting possession of all good, with the exclusion of all evil. This poses an interesting question, "Is this perfect happiness possible, and then is it attainable?" To the first part the answer is "Yes." Everyone wants perfect happiness. Even though the average person may not be aware of it, and he may not be able to give a philosophical definition of the term "happiness" — but everyone seeks to avoid every type of evil and to possess every kind of good, as far as he is able. Possibly without even realizing it, all men instinctively strive for perfect happiness. This striving is universal and irresistible .

This presents another point for discussion, the universality of man's striving for perfect happiness. By asking the man who is desirous of power, of honor, of pleasure, or of health, one will find that at the bottom of his desires is the desire for perfect happiness. It is the root of all men's striving. Art and science, industry and commerce, war and peace, morality and religion — all are intimately tied up with man's insatiable craving for happiness. This craving begins when the infant baby is born, endures through the years of maturity, and flickers in the aged's feeble clutch at the end of life. In fact, wherever man goes and whatever

he does, everything is an expression of this craving. Man does not only strive, like the brute, for this or that particular concrete good; man has an immaterial intellect which grasps the meaning of the "good-as-such", universal good, good without limit as to time or place or range or content, whatever that may be, because it is coextensive with being in general.⁶

Man cannot resist this craving for happiness. It is not a matter of free choice on the part of man's will. The will must desire what is proposed by the intellect as the "perfect good," and perfect happiness is such a good.⁷ To strive for the realization of perfect happiness is simply the dictate of the nature of rational appetency. No human person can rid himself of this craving, any more than a hungry person can rid himself of the craving for food, or a thirsty person of the craving for drink. It is only with a good of limited value that man has freedom of choice; in its striving for perfect happiness the will is determined by the law of inexorable necessity.⁸ Even pessimists, materialists, and evolutionists recognize this fact as undeniable.

The universality and irresistibility of man's craving for happiness, like every other urge of appetency, cannot be the result of mere chance, but must have its source in the very nature of man. Such a natural craving demands that the perfect happiness toward which it is directed exist and be able to be attained, and this happiness has to be of endless duration. The reason is this: it should be agreed that the world is a purposive entity of law and order, not a world of irrational chance. Law and order guide the world. Even the atoms and other elements are small systems of orderly arrangement. The biologist offers a good example.

When he discovers an organ in a living being of any kind, it is a foregone conclusion that this organ has a definite function to perform in the cycle of the organism's life. He is sure of this, and so he sets himself to the task of finding out the purpose and object of this function and the various circumstances under which it operates.

Now, if the the principle of universal purposiveness is applied to man's craving for perfect happiness, it must be admitted that man should be able to attain perfect happiness; else why should he, the highest and noblest creature in the universe, alone be frustrated in his nature. Man craves irresistibly for happiness as much as his bodily organs function with respect to their proper object. Since the digestive apparatus has the natural function of assimilating food and actually does assimilate it; and since the sensory nervous system has the natural function of receiving sense impressions and actually does receive them, and since the sensuous appetency has the natural function of obtaining the sensuous good and actually does obtain it; then the human soul, since it has the natural function to crave and strive for perfect happiness, ought to be capable of actually attaining perfect happiness. If this be not true, then the constitution of man's nature would be frustrated in its very foundation, and the natural tendencies of his innermost being would be purposeless. It would be unreasonable to suppose that the universal purposiveness of the world would reach its highest peak in man and then suddenly stop and end in a contradiction. If this were true, it would be going against the basic principles of sound philosophy, which it cannot do.

It can also be shown that man must be able to attain perfect

happiness by citing some of the perfections of God. Evolutionists will not agree with this next statement, but since time does not allow a treatment of the evolutionists, the statement will stand. God created all things. He gave to each being its specific nature with all its powers and tendencies. Since God is infinitely wise, He would not have given man a soul with an irresistible craving for perfect happiness if He never intended to place this perfect happiness within his grasp. God is also infinitely just; but it is not being consistent with infinite justice to give man a rational nature which is filled with an unquenchable desire for perfect happiness and then make it impossible for man to attain it. Infinite goodness is another of God's perfections; it would, however, be irreconcilable with infinite goodness if God imposed a natural tendency upon man which can never accomplish its purpose. The craving for happiness was placed in man without his asking, through the goodness of a kind Creator. It would be an unmerited torture to labor under an irresistible craving without the possibility of ever having it receive its normal satisfaction, because this craving flows from man's constitution with natural necessity. Man's condition would be worse than that of the brute, since the brute is able to find the realization of its tendencies, and its cravings, in its immediate environment; nor is it even endowed with an insight capable of envisioning future possibilities of happiness. Man should thus be capable of attaining perfect happiness.

Lastly, the very concept of perfect happiness which man craves unceasingly and irresistibly with every fibre of his being, demands endless duration. If happiness were not endless, one of these three possibilities would occur of necessity: Man would either be aware of the eventual termi-

nation of his happiness; or he would be unaware of its termination in such a manner that his ignorance would be invincible; or his ignorance would not be invincible, so that he could arrive at a knowledge of the actual or probable termination of his happiness. In the first possibility - there could be no perfect happiness; the mere fact of being aware of its ultimate termination would haunt man during every moment of his existence, and so his happiness would never be perfect because of the knowledge of its eventual loss. In the second instance, this invincible ignorance would itself be an evil precluding perfect happiness; moreover, such an ignorance would only exist under the unthinkable supposition that God would deliberately blind man as to his real condition and permanently deceive him. In the third case, knowledge or doubt as to the actual or possible termination of happiness would, as in the first case, destroy perfect happiness from the very beginning of his knowledge or doubt. Therefore, man's happiness, in order to be perfect, must be endless in duration, or there is no possibility of perfect happiness at all. And yet, as has already been shown, perfect happiness must not only be possible but actual. As a consequence, perfect happiness must be endless in duration, and man must be able to enjoy it endlessly, knowing that it is endless.⁹

Man's subjective ultimate end is perfect happiness, and an end is always a good. Therefore, there must be a perfect good or a number of perfect goods as the object which will bestow perfect happiness upon man when it is obtained. Let happiness now be considered in the concrete rather than the abstract. The problem can then be put in the form of a question. "What exactly is the objective good which is capable of making

man perfectly happy?" "Can anything created or finite give complete happiness; or, must this objective good be an uncreated infinite good?" Before any positive answers are given to these questions, it is well to consider some of the false teachings of philosophers connected with the problem of perfect happiness. And possibly by discovering the errors in these philosophies, the mind will be more ready to accept the true doctrine concerning perfect happiness, namely, that of the great Saint Thomas of Aquinas.

Footnotes

PART II

1 Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Bk. I, Ch. 4, translated by
W. D. Ross.

2 Cicero, Tuscul., 5, 10.

3 St. Augustine, De civitate Dei, I, 5.

4 Boethius, De Consolatione Philosophi, I, 3.

5 St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, I, q. 26, a. 1; and
I-II, q. 3, a. 1, ad 2.

6 Ibid., I, q. 82, a. 2.

7 Ibid., I, q. 82, a. 2, ad 1.

8 Ibid., I-II, q. 1, a. 6.

9 Ibid., I-II, q. 1, a. 5.

PART III

FALSE NOTIONS OF HAPPINESS

The views on happiness of that eminent German philosopher, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), are deserving of consideration. Kant, as one learns from his writings, puts great emphasis upon the moral law and its supremacy. According to him, man is actuated by the natural craving for perfect happiness, but absolute happiness is necessarily connected with absolute holiness, and both together constitute the supreme good and end of man. Now, absolute holiness is so exalted that man can never, either in this life or in the next, attain it; consequently, perfect happiness is actually unattainable. Kant also states that man is destined to a perpetual progress in holiness and happiness, but without any hope of ever reaching the goal of absolute happiness.¹ Hobbes, another adversary, defended a theory of endless progress toward moral perfection.²

The theories expressed by Kant and Hobbes are obviously false. According to their theories, all actions would be intermediate ends leading interminably on to further ends, without the possibility of ever reaching a final end. Strictly speaking, there is no "ultimate end" in which the entire series of intermediate ends could come to rest, because an end that cannot be reached ceases to be an end at all. Man's natural craving for perfect happiness, therefore, is doomed to eternal frustration, and this frustration is an evil which must inevitably lead to eternal torture of the mind. If such is the case, why should man observe the moral law and strive for a holiness and happiness that must forever be out of his reach? The theories of Kant and Hobbes lead to nothing but despair in the human heart.

The topic of despair leads to a consideration of the pessimist, Schopenhauer. According to him, there is no possibility of real satisfaction for man, because apparent satisfactions are really only negative releases from pain. Even if all the pain is removed, only an ennui ensues. The reason for that situation is to be found in the nature of all willing and desiring. Schopenhauer has discovered that the thing in itself is the all-pervading "will to live", and the supreme manifestation of this is man. Man deludes himself when he imagines that he is an individual who wills; willing is his necessary function. Moreover, the process of willing is without termination because the concept "will" does not contain any element of completion in its notes; to will means to will forever. Schopenhauer was by temperament inclined to dwell on the gloomy side of life. The only positive feelings are those of pain; pleasure is merely a temporary satisfaction of a need, and hence is negative. Positive pleasure is an illusion. "We ought to be miserable." "Life is a path of red hot coals with a few cool places here and there."

Man can be delivered from the bondage of will and the misery of this life by the following: art, sympathy, and the negation of the will to live. When a man loses himself in artistic contemplation the will disappears and with it all suffering. Schopenhauer attaches special importance to music as a means of deliverance from the bondage of suffering. Sympathy leads one to look upon the sufferings of others as ours; it implies oneness of nature, consequently, the disappearance of individuality and of the substitution of the will-to-let-live for the will to live. However, sympathy can only alleviate suffering, in order to destroy and remove the source of

pain man must negate the will to live, which is the foundation of all suffering. Man must become indifferent to both self-preservation and the preservation of the race. The philosopher should strive for the complete eradication of the will to live.³

It is not too difficult to point out, as a matter of objection, that there is simply no evidence for any such "will to live", that, moreover, the phenomena of the universe can far better be explained by taking a realistic point of view. Schopenhauer's doctrine, which is basically pessimism, is not only contrary to right reason, but also to experience. Man naturally shrinks from suffering, and no man is willingly unhappy.

Opposed to the philosophy of Schopenhauer is the philosophy of Leibnitz. The former taught a philosophy of pessimism; the latter, one of optimism. The philosophy of Leibnitz is an optimism whose roots are similar to those of Schopenhauer's thought, in that both divorce the world of reason from the world of the concrete. Leibnitz asserts that there are two kinds of truth; those of reasoning and those of fact. He concludes that the existing world is the most fit of all possible worlds, because, in the mind of God, only one world - this one - has a sufficient reason for existing.⁴ What Leibnitz fails to include is the distinction, best for "God's purposes."

As was noted in the introduction to this treatise, many people are trying to find their happiness in sexual pleasure; a tendency which is especially evident in the types of amusements, and in the suggestive advertisements in almost all present publications. Many people are not conscious of the fact that they are advocates of Sigmund Freud and his philosophy of happiness. According to him, man is motivated completely by primitive

drives, particularly the sex drive. All of man's actions are the result of the "primitive" urges reaching their objects, or the diverting "sublimation" of these urges toward cultural ends.⁵

The synthesis of Saint Thomas will show that man is not simply the evolving product of a fight for survival. He has, and always has had, a number of radically different objects. That there is but one main source of "energy", which either may be used (and this "wasted" on its proper sexual object), or turned aside ("sublimated") toward higher, cultural objects is absurd. The error is a facile one because of the easily recognized phenomena of the need for physical energy for every activity. What Freud failed to see was that this physical energy is merely conditioned to every activity; the activity itself proceeds from the faculty involved. The truth is that one does have the energy to lead a complete sexual life, as well as a socially productive one. Freud contended that all restrictions on freedom originate from an artificially constructed society and this seems to be at least partially responsible for the over-emphasis on freedom, which, according to the opinions of many learned men, prevails in present day life here in the United States.

Human nature has not changed much, for just as the moderns have Sigmund Freud, the Cyrenaics, back in 435 B.C., had Aristippus, who was the founder of hedonistic ethics. The philosophers of Cyrene were sensists. They accepted the teaching of the sophist Protagoras that all knowledge is relativated, so they maintain that man's knowledge is restricted to his experiences or feelings. Assuming with Socrates that the aim of human conduct is happiness, they perverted Socrates' doctrine of happiness and gave it the

meaning of personal pleasure feelings. They saw pleasure as the supreme and only good, and everything, even virtue, as good only as a means of procuring and maintaining the maximum of pleasurable emotion, together with a minimum of painful emotion. Some of the later Cyrenaics, like Theodorus and Hegesias, advanced a less crude system of hedonism.⁶

Footnotes

PART III

- 1 Cf. George Boas, Dominant Themes of Modern Philosophy, pp. 506-516.
- 2 James Collins, cf., A History of Modern European Philosophy (Milwaukee, Bruce Publishing Co., 1956), p. 121.
- 3 Ibid., pp. 685-689.
- 4 Ibid., p. 263.
- 5 Cf. R. E. Brennan, O.P., Thomistic Psychology (New York, The Macmillan Co., 1953), pp. 352, 353.
- 6 Cf. "Biographical Dictionary", The Volume Library (New York, Educators Association, Inc., 1954c.), p. 1450.

PART IV

SAINT THOMAS' TEACHINGS ON HAPPINESS

In the foregoing pages some consideration was given to false theories of happiness. The true doctrine concerning perfect happiness is presented in the teachings of the great Saint Thomas Aquinas. In order to ascertain the nature of perfect happiness, it is well to investigate in what it consists. The following question may be helpful. What objective ultimate end, what thing, is such that its attainment will constitute the true and perfect happiness of man? To understand Saint Thomas well, it is important to give a consideration to the teachings of Aristotle. In his attempt to answer the question (what constitutes happiness), Aristotle takes into consideration many goods which different people have considered to be the object of perfect happiness. Pleasure, honor, wealth, natural virtue, practical wisdom — all of these are considered and finally rejected. He selects the life of speculative wisdom as that which is most appropriate to man's highest capacities. In this instance the objective end would seem to be perfect truth, but Aristotle was unable to find anything which is perfectly true and which could be contemplated by man.¹ Of course, he understood that there is no such perfect thing obtainable by man in this world. He had so defined the human soul that it did not seem reasonably possible for it to live in a future life without its body. And he had his concept of God as a perfect being so transcendent that man could never know this God in any essential way. Therefore, Aristotle, with great reluctance, taught that the life of contemplation is too high an ideal for man. This led him to the conclusion that in practice man's highest happiness must be sought on this

earth, in a life of practical wisdom accompanied by reasonable pleasure.² It must be remembered that Aristotle, who possessed one of the greatest intellects of all times, failed in his efforts to find a natural object which could guarantee perfect happiness to the good man.

In a work either by Aristotle or one of his disciples, it is suggested that the greatest happiness may consist in the worship and contemplation of God. This suggestion is further emphasized and developed both by Saint Augustine of Hippo and by Boethius. The various goods available to man in this earthly life are found wanting and the vision of God in heaven is pointed out as the ultimate end of man. From the viewpoint of these men this is, of course, a supernatural end.³

In a very orderly way, the Angelic Doctor classifies the many natural goods under three categories: (1) goods of fortune, (2) goods of the body, (3) goods of the soul. Goods of fortune include wealth, honors, fame, human glory and power. All of these are unsatisfactory ultimate objective ends for four reasons. First, the ultimate end necessarily implies the supreme good; it must be of such a nature that it is completely divorced from evil. None of the goods of fortune fulfill this requirement. Secondly, they fail to satisfy all of man's desires; thirdly, a perfectly satisfactory good must be such that no evil can come from it; but evil may arise from any of the goods of fortune. Finally, since man is directed toward happiness by an internal urge, its fulfillment cannot consist in something merely external.⁴ Goods of the body include such things as long life of the body, strength, health and physical beauty. Obviously, these being perfections of only a minor part of man's being cannot constitute the ultimate, objective happi-

ness of man. The soul does not exist for the body; in fact, its best operations are those which are capable of being performed independently of the body. Bodily pleasures, however, present a special problem. While Saint Thomas admits these do have a strong attraction for man in this life, still these pleasures cannot give man true happiness; because all pleasures are by-products of the essential act whereby man attains the good. Pleasure follows perfection of action; it is not itself perfect act. Added to this is the fact that pleasures of the body are inferior in quality to those of the soul.⁵

The goods of the soul are the soul itself or any of its powers, habits or acts. Some have thought wrongly that these goods are sufficient to constitute the ultimate end of man. These goods of the soul are neither the objective or subjective ultimate end of man. The faculties of the soul are not things, and even the soul itself is in potency to many things. Now the subjective end is an act of the soul and cannot, therefore, be the ultimate end of man. The subjective end, for its part, is not anything which belongs to the nature of the human soul, since if it did pertain to the nature of the soul it would be possessed from birth.⁶ No struggle would be needed to obtain it.

Hence, logic eliminates all created goods as the ultimate objective end of man. Such an end is not to be found in created nature. Limited and finite being cannot satisfy a desire for the perfect good. By a process of elimination, reason concludes that the end must be God. God is the ultimate objective end of man.⁷ Only God, who is pure act, can be the ultimate end of man.

That conclusion is quite important since it means that there is no natural ultimate end for man, that is, that no created being can serve as the ultimate end of man. That does not, however, necessarily mean that the perfect good, God, cannot be obtained in a natural manner. The next question to be examined is whether the way in which the ultimate end, God, is to be attained by man is natural.

The attainment of the ultimate objective end is an act and not merely a state. We say this because the word happiness can be somewhat misleading. Sometimes it suggests only a kind of habitual condition of enjoyment. That connotation must be rejected. There is under discussion now man's ultimate end from a subjective point of view, namely that which is most perfect within the individual human person. Every state is metaphysically imperfect in comparison with the act of which that state may be a principle. More simply stated — it is better to do something well rather than just to be able to do something well. Reading Saint Thomas, one finds a very good example as an illustration:

Up in Macedonia, there is a very high mountain which is called Olympus. It was customary to hold games and contests there, and they were called the Olympics. Now in these games, they didn't give the prizes to those who were the strongest or the best fighters, but to those who actually struggled and won victories. The man who did not fight could not win a victory. Now the same thing applies to those people who are good and best in the way of moral virtue; only those who do things rightly are illustrious and happy. So it is better to say that happiness is action in accordance with virtue, than that it is virtue itself. ⁸

According to the ethics of Saint Thomas, the true happiness of man consists in the continued action of man's highest potency, used in the most

perfect way. Now man's characteristic perfection of action cannot be said to be in the acts of the vegetative level, for these lowest vital functions are shared in common with all the plants and animals. This would be tantamount to saying that man's happiness lies in growing up, or in eating food, or in producing offspring; and one can readily see that this would be reducing man to the level of a plant. To add to this, vegetative functions are not in themselves free human actions. Again, acts of the sensitive powers, cognitive or appetitive, cannot constitute the happiness of man, for the senses are concerned with bodily objects; and it has been stated previously in this treatise that such things cannot give man true happiness.⁹

The only conclusion one can arrive at is that man's perfect happiness must be in some operation of the rational potencies. These are intellect and will. The intellectual appetite is that power which man possesses, by means of which he desires happiness as a perfect good. The will enjoys this good, after it has been attained. The act of attainment is preceded by the desire; the enjoyment follows the act of attainment. To speak with authority it is again necessary to quote Saint Thomas:

It is evident from our previous discussion that happiness is attainment of the ultimate end. Now the attainment of the end does not consist in the very act of the will. The will is impelled toward an end which is absent, when it desires it; and when the end is present, it rests and enjoys it. Now it is clear that the desire of the end is not the attainment of the end, but is a movement toward the end. And joy comes to the will by the fact that the end is already present; but the contrary is not true: nothing is present by reason of the fact that the will is enjoying it. Therefore, there must

be something else besides the act of the will,
whereby the end itself becomes present to the
will. ¹⁰

One is forced to the conclusion that it must be by an act of the intellect that man obtains the ultimate objective end. What is its most perfect act? The act of contemplation is the best kind of human act. This is an act of the speculative intellect, not of the practical intellect. The practical intellect functions for the sake of other actions, but speculation functions for its own sake. Therefore, the essence of happiness is found in the speculative contemplation, by the intellect, of divine things. There is no doubt that this answer is in full agreement with the whole metaphysical and moral outlook of Saint Thomas; for he says, "The best potency is the intellect. Its best object is the divine Good, and this is not the object of the practical intellect, but of the speculative. Hence, happiness chiefly consists in such an operation, namely, in the contemplation of divine things." ^H

However, the role of the will must not be overlooked. In the first place, the will urges the intellect to act; its act of desire prompts man to seek happiness. Secondly, once the intellect has reached speculative contemplation the will takes pleasure in this act. The acts of the will are like proper accidents.

Now that Angelic Doctor reached the conclusion that happiness consists in the intellectual contemplation of God, then he may wisely ask himself the question "How can this act be performed?" True, an imperfect contemplation can be obtained by the philosopher in this life. From reading Aristotle one would conclude that this was the ideal proposed by

him. But this type of earthly speculation is only a resemblance to divine speculation. Earthly speculation is not perfect because it is not eternal. It is not free from cares, or even from evils. Surely, this is not perfect happiness. As we know, all knowledge begins with the senses and is, therefore, dependent upon them. Such knowledge cannot be perfect. Someone may endeavor to find happiness in the contemplation of immaterial substance, for example, angels. But since angels are not perfect beings, the contemplation of them cannot result in perfect happiness. All knowledge obtained by natural means is analogous and, consequently, though true, it is imperfect. But even if in a future life man contemplated them in their essence, his perfect happiness would not be obtained since the angels themselves are participated being. They are imperfect and finite.

Contrary to the teaching of the ontologists who taught that it was possible first to know God's being and then to know finite beings through God, we hold that no one on this earth can know God's essence in and through itself. It must be concluded from philosophical studies that all of man's knowledge is sense knowledge. But God is not an object of sensation. If we knew God in his essence, we would have heaven on earth. More than sense knowledge is required.

In human knowledge the agent intellect provides the species and the light by which the species can be known by the passive intellect. But the agent intellect cannot abstract a species adequately expressing the essence of God. If man is to have a direct knowledge, the light and species must be given by God. Consequently, it must be concluded that the ultimate happiness of man, while it has its beginnings in the natural desire, must

find its end in a supernaturally performed act which is far more than natural. 10

But after all, the philosopher who is a seeker of wisdom and happiness must fall on his knees and exclaim with Saint Augustine, "Our hearts are restless, until they rest in Thee, O Lord."

PART IV

1 Aristotle, cf. Nicomachean Ethics, I.

2 Ibid.

3 Bourke, Vernon, Ethics, (New York, Macmillan Co., 1955), p. 33.

4 Summa Theologiae, I-II, q. 2.

5 Ibid., I-II, q. 3, a. 3.

6 Ibid., I-II, q. 3, a. 2.

7 Ibid., I-II, q. 3, a. 8.

8 St. Thomas Aquinas, In I Ethics, lect. 12 (quoted by Bourke).

9 Summa Theologiae, I-II, q. 3, a. 3.

10 Ibid., I-II, q. 3, a. 4.

11 Ibid., I-II, q. 3, a. 5.

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