Grace, Natura Pura, and the Metaphysics of Status: Personalism and Thomism on the Historicity of the Human Person and the Genealogy of Modernity

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Abstract: Christian Personalists (such as Balthasar and Yannaras) have objected to Thomism's claim that humans could have existed in a state (status) of pure nature, on the grounds that this claim entails that historical states like grace do not give fundamental meaning to us, that these states are merely accidental, and that it led to modern secularism. I show that Thomism can affirm its traditional claims regarding grace and pure nature, while denying the first two implications, by developing the Thomistic metaphysics of status. In Thomism rightly understood persons develop historically through status in non-accidental ways and grace gives fundamental meaning to our lives. But I also argue that modern secular experiences (such as experiences of secularity, anxiety, and absurdity described by Heidegger, Camus, and Taylor) are natural to the human person, not merely the result of sin, and that this is rightly supported by the theory of pure nature.

In their focus on our personhood, Christian Personalists tend to emphasize the dynamic and relational aspects of personhood more than our substantiality or our being instances of an unchanging essence (e.g., rational animality); on this view, we have a dynamic, self-revealing mode of existing. In this vein, many hold that a fundamental understanding of the human person involves our historicity: we are not just accidentally changing substances, but persons that fundamentally and dynamically change across historical and cultural contexts. On Christian Personalism, our historicity has a theological context: we were created in a state of grace for the sake of divinization, and this is the basis for understanding everything else about us.

Personalism draws on the Fathers of the Church and on modern humanism, and opposes reductionism (e.g., nominalism, rationalism, empiricism, and positivism). On this basis, some Personalists critique the Thomistic account of the person, and the place of historicity in it. Some (e.g., Maurice Blondel, Henri de Lubac, Hans Urs Von Balthasar) object to post-fifteenth-century Thomism, according to which
God could have created us in a state (status) of “pure nature” (natura pura), with our natural powers, but without grace and oriented to a purely natural end. The Personalists claim that if grace gives us fundamental meaning and directedness towards our end, as Christianity seems to claim, then we could not exist in a state where we do not have at least an orientation to grace. But since Thomism claims that we could have existed in such a state, then it must deny the core Christian claim that grace gives us fundamental meaning, for in Thomism, grace and other historical states seem to be mere accidents of an ahistorical, abstractly-graspable human nature.

Some Personalists (e.g., Christos Yannaras, John Zizioulas) claim that this error is even committed by Aquinas, not just his later followers. Personalism holds that our fundamental experience of ourselves, and what ought to be held on a correct metaphysics of the human person, is that our historical situatedness, and our orientation toward or away from God, reveal the essential meaning of our lives. Our historicity cannot be understood as accidental, where to be ‘accidental’ is to be a purely contingent addition to a substance, not revealing or constitutive of that substance’s essential meaning or teleology. Von Balthasar, for example, argues, on the grounds of both experience and the claims of Christian revelation, that the historically-situated vocation that God gives to each of us is not an accident. While it presupposes an existing human nature, it restructures that nature such that nature becomes instrumental to the vocation, since the vocation is the purpose for which God created the nature. Such a view, he says, is excluded by Thomism.

On all these Personalist views, the Thomistic claim that we could exist in a state of pure nature, our definability through an essence distinct from any historical mode of existing, and the claim that we are naturally oriented to an end other than the beatific vision, are seen as laying the ground for secular modernity and modern reductionism. Since the life of grace is, according to Thomism, but one historical contingency that could have befallen us among many, Thomism leads to what Charles Taylor has identified as the core secular experience: an experience of always having other options for our lives than following any religion, rather than one of certainty in our religion. The Thomistic view is further seen to lead to the modern experiences, described by philosophers like Martin Heidegger and Albert Camus, of encountering the world fundamentally through attitudes like anxiety before death, of a sense of absurdity at the lack of meaning and value in the world which is seen as a set of naturalistic, value-free, abstractly-definable essences, and of a heroic but futile resolution in the face of such absurdity. Personalists hold that these experiences are understandable reactions to secularity, but they result from fallenness, and are not (as their describers think) revelatory of our nature or personhood: all experiences must be reinterpreted within the drama of grace and fallenness, for Christianity alone reveals our full reality. But Thomism implicitly denies this.

Some Thomists (e.g., Lawrence Feingold, Steven Long) have responded to these claims. They deny that the Thomistic account leads to secularity: even in the hypothetical state of pure nature, our existence would have been a gift from God, we would have been oriented to contemplation of God as our final end (a natural contemplation of Him as creator of the world, but not a supernatural contempla-
tion of Him in Himself), and we would have been guided by Providence. We must hold, they claim, that there is nature apart from grace, and that this nature could have existed apart from grace to safeguard the gratuity of grace: grace is God’s free elevation of us above what is naturally due to us. Actual history is understood in terms of grace and fallenness, but all history involves a level of gift over and above our nature.  

I endorse these Thomistic responses, but, in this paper, I give a new defense of Thomism against these Personalist objections. I contend that Thomism contains a resource to include Personalist claims about historicity, the principle of state or status. Though Thomists have not drawn out the account of historicity that their metaphysics allows, they have laid its foundations, which can be synthesized from Aquinas and his commentators. I show that the Thomistic metaphysics of status gives us good reasons to deny that the status of grace and other historical conditions are mere accidents in Thomism, and also to deny the Personalist claim that if grace gives fundamental meaning to our lives, then we could not exist in a state of pure nature. I argue that Thomism can account for both Christian and secular experiences, taking each as it experientially gives itself, rather than reinterpreting the latter as entirely the result of sin. Christian metaphysics should take seriously both revelation and modern secular experiences. Just as some Christian metaphysicians have shown that modern scientific claims like those regarding the evolution of biological species are compatible with the claims of revelation and with core principles of scholastic metaphysics, so the Christian metaphysician should, when possible, incorporate the claims of contemporary philosophy into a full account of the human person. While I do not argue that the claims of philosophers like Taylor, Heidegger, and Camus are true, and while I do not directly address the genealogical claims of the Personalists, I contend that the Thomistic metaphysics of status shows that it is possible for a Christian to both affirm that grace gives definitive meaning to our lives and that secular experiences are natural to us. This lays the groundwork for better understanding the place of Christian faith and life under modern secular conditions.

The primary sense of ‘status’ is physical, the posture of standing (status), which is the posture proper to us, since our rational nature is revealed best in this posture, with our heads raised so we can be observant and our hands free to act. An accident of standing is a member of the category situs, which contains accidents that are the arrangements of bodies’ parts, that is, intrinsic modes (or ways of existing) of a body resulting from how it relates to its surroundings. On this basis, ‘status’ is then transferred to the condition of persons as such. This moral use of the term arose in civil and canon law, which refer, for example, to the religious, lay, and military states (status). It is further applied to other conditions of the person, such as professions, and to fundamental states like the states of grace and sin. Aquinas gives his most developed treatment of status in three sets of texts in the Summa theologiae. The first is in the Prima pars (q. 94–102), in the “Treatise on Human Nature,” where Aquinas treats the status of innocence in which we were created and other related status. In some commentaries on this Treatise, such as that of the seventeenth-century Dominican Jean-Baptiste Gonet, status became the central topic.
is in the Prima secundae pars (q. 109), in the Treatise on Grace, where the status of grace, fallenness, and nature are considered. Francisco Suárez commented at length on this text. The third is in the Secunda secundae pars (q. 183–189), in the Treatise on Acts Pertaining to Specific Persons, where states of life, such as the religious and episcopal are treated. Many from the sixteenth century onward commented on this. There are also many other isolated texts where Aquinas treats status.17

Some commentators, such as the seventeenth-century Dominican, Peter Maria Passerini, hold that this moral usage of ‘status’ is a metaphor based on physical standing; others, such as Cajetan, hold that the term is equivocal. But while most Thomists do not directly address how ‘status’ is applied in its many senses, there is a tradition, including Aristotle, Abelard, Albert, and Suárez, on which ‘status’ belongs to the post-predicaments—that is, it is a term applied analogically in many categories. Aristotle holds that “rest” (quies) is a predicate that applies in each category, and this notion is linked to status by the later tradition. Albert shows that in each category, being (esse) is said in two senses: standing being (esse stans) and moving being (esse fluens, motio), that is, categorical beings sometimes exist stably, and sometimes in a state of change.

‘Status’ in its moral or personal uses denotes, for Thomists, a stable way in which a personal substance exists, such that he or she has some obligation; for many Thomists, it requires that one be bound to that obligation with some permanence. For example, a person in the religious status is bound by a vow to remain in that state. When one has a status one is bound such that one “stands” toward the world in a stance of servitude or freedom. For example, to be in the state of sin is to be in servitude to sin, while to be in the state of grace is to be free of that servitude. Any servitude or freedom come from a law (iustus) applied to the human person, which is in keeping with the origin of the moral notion of status in civil and canon law: to be in a status is to be bound by or free from a human or divine law such as the “law of sin” or of grace.

But status is not something extrinsic to a person, such as a mere legal condition under which one is regarded as having obligations but is not intrinsically changed by being in that status. Rather, it is a standing of the person, an intrinsic bearing of the whole person toward an end. Just as being in a place in a certain position gives a body an intrinsic mode in the category of situs, so being in a legal context gives a whole person an intrinsic status. A moral ‘status’ is a “condition” (conditio) of a person; it is a stable way of living. Status results from accidents—such as the act of making of a vow—but the accident is not the same as the resulting status. For example, the accident of grace is not the state (status) of grace. Rather, the former is that in virtue of which one is in the latter.

A Personalist might object that although a Thomistic status is not identical to the accident from which it results, it is still an accident, and so genuine historicity, in which the person would be fundamentally and not just accidentally changed by some change of historical state, is not possible on this view. The Personalist objector might point to the fact that Suárez and Passerini closely associate or even sometimes
identify status with habitus, for both are dispositions that are difficult to change;\textsuperscript{25} since habitus are accidents, then status must be too.

But this does not show that status are accidental, for ‘habitus’ is an analogical term, and it can refer to habits or stable dispositions of powers, such as virtues, in the category of quality; to accidents such as having clothes, in the category of habitus; and to many other kinds of having, in the post-predicament habitus, including having things substantially united to one, such as one’s limbs.\textsuperscript{26} Other Thomists make it clear that although status is a habitus in the sense of “something stably had” and in the sense of a disposition, it is not a habitus like a virtue in the category of quality. Aquinas says that the state of beatitude is a status perfect with respect to being an aggregation of all goods, and later Thomists like Jean-Baptiste Gonet say that the status of original justice involved many habitus. From these examples, we can see that a status is not a single accident but involves many accidents.\textsuperscript{27} Furthermore, Passerini distinguishes status of persons from status of virtues and acts. One can have a stable, accidental status of virtue, such as charity, but this is different from status of a whole person. For example, a person who has charity is in the status of one of the three stages of the spiritual life, which are the stages of being a beginner, one who is proficient, or one who is perfected in that life. One’s status as a whole person thus differs from one’s status of having a certain habitus, like charity. A distinction among personal status is not a distinction of accidents in the person, but of stable ways in which the person acts or pursues an end. Materially, these status involve different accidents, but the formal distinction among them has to do with how the person in him or herself is ordered to various ends.\textsuperscript{28} To see further how status are not accidents, we must consider how they relate to different modes of living.

Though not a Thomist, the thirteenth-century scholastic Henry of Ghent introduces the idea that a status is a mode of existing (modus essendi) or of living (modus vivendi),\textsuperscript{29} an idea taken up by Suárez and the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Salamanca commentators on the Summa theologiae. On the latter’s account, a status is a form or way of life (forma vivendi, ratio vivendi) by which one is disposed in some way toward some end.\textsuperscript{30} This is explicated by Hans Urs Von Balthasar, the one Personalist who has treated status at length, and who sees Aquinas as holding that a status is a form of living, a structure of an entire life. Balthasar explicates this idea by arguing that while one has a natural end in virtue of one’s substantial form, status or “forms of life” reconfigure one’s life to be ordered to a further end.\textsuperscript{31}

Living (vivens) adds to the existence (esse) of a living substance a determinate mode of existing (modus essendi), but this is understood in two ways, depending on how substance is understood.\textsuperscript{32} Substance can be understood in two ways: first, ‘substance’ can refer to an individualized essence, that is, an essence together with its principles of individuation; second, it can refer to a supposit, that is, an individualized essence with accidents and a principle of incommunicability—that is, that by which the substance is rendered its own, unable to become part or intrinsic principle of another. A “person” is a rational supposit, and so included in a person is not just the individualized essence, but accidents too.\textsuperscript{33} A human substance considered as an individualized essence lives through its substantial form and the powers that flow
from it. But a human person or supposit lives not only through his or her substantial form but through his or her accidents as well.\(^34\)

Accidents also can be considered in two ways: Considered insofar as they have the *modus essendi* of inhering in an individualized essence they are inferior to the substantial *modus essendi* of their subject. But considered not as having an accidental *modus essendi*, but as being a form or actuality, they can be greater than their subjects, as in the case of grace, which elevates a person to a higher life than his or her substantial life.\(^35\) These forms are extrinsic to an individualized essence, but intrinsic to persons. They reconfigure persons, bringing them to a new form of life, a state (status) of rest with regard to being a substance of this kind.\(^36\) This new form of life includes the substantial form of the person and its orientation toward its natural end, but also includes new forms that stably determine the person toward new ends which build on the natural end. Although this precise account is not given by the Thomists, it is, I contend, the best way to understand *status* on the Thomistic view. A *status* is not an accident, but a restructuring, in virtue of accidental forms, of a person’s life toward an end.

If, in Thomism, all changes to a person were just the taking on of new accidents, then the Personalist objection would succeed. But some changes are not just adding accidents but are intrinsic alterations to a person’s total form of life or *status* (albeit in virtue of accidents). In virtue of having a *status*, one is not oriented purely to the end given by nature, but to a modification or elevation of that end. Historically, this occurred, for example, in the *status* of original justice, that is, Adam’s state of harmony among his parts and principles, which he had through a gift from God that was not due to human nature, but which was still a good (*bonum*) for that nature, and which reconfigured his parts and principles so that he would not die and would pursue the good.\(^37\) This reconfiguration of our life also occurs in the *status* of grace.\(^38\)

Furthermore, this account builds on the Thomistic principle of “obedience”: creatures not only have natural potencies for performing acts and achieving ends, but, because of their nature, have “obediential potencies,” ways in which their teleological orientations can be extended by beings and situations extrinsic to them and greater than they are, so that they achieve ends and perfections higher than those to which they are directed by nature. Obedience occurs in the supernatural order, when God bestows grace on us and orders us to an end that we could never achieve by nature. Obedience also occurs in the natural order, as when the human intellect raises bodily senses and appetites to serving not just their own ends (achieving sensible goods), but also the intellect’s ends. When we are raised to a state of grace, we do not lose our natural ordering to virtue and contemplation of God insofar as He can be known on the basis of the senses. Rather, our ordering to know and love beings through the senses is extended to know and love the ultimate Being in Himself. Nor do the senses lose their ordering to the sensible good when they obey the intellect, but that ordering is elevated to obey a higher, rational end.\(^39\) Likewise, when one enters some legal situation (which is something greater than the individual), and so comes to be in a *status*, one’s natural teleological ordering is reconfigured toward a new end, which modifies and specifies one’s natural end. Although these *status* are...
achievable in the order of nature, they do not flow from nature, but require obe-
dience to a situation outside oneself. Persons cannot be understood through their
essential principles alone; equally fundamental to them as persons are conditions
under which they exist and by which they are raised, obediently, to new forms of
life.\textsuperscript{40} Insofar as we have a rational and social—that is, personal—mode of being,
we can be reconfigured by certain rational and social situations.

Aquinas and Passerini distinguish many conditions of persons besides \textit{status},
each of which makes a difference to the total “form of life” of a person. Conditions
of “grade” (\textit{gradus}), such as poverty or riches, are conditions of inferiority or superi-
ority in society. Such conditions do not pertain to the perfection of the person and
are not as stable as a \textit{status} is; similarly, a “dignity,” such as belonging to the Senate,
is a condition that is easily changed. A duty or office (\textit{officium}) is a condition of
the person that orders one toward acting for the good of another, and a life (\textit{vita}) is
a condition that orders one toward one’s own good. These conditions overlap: for
example, the episcopal state is a \textit{status}, a \textit{gradus}, and an \textit{officium}, for it is a stable
condition ordering one to some end, a condition of superiority, and an ordering to
the good of another; the state of sin is a \textit{status} and a \textit{gradus} (of inferiority to those
in the state of grace) but not an \textit{officium} (for it gives one no obligation to sin); the
condition of being judged in court is a \textit{gradus} and an \textit{officium} (to obey the judge)
but not a \textit{status} (for it is not stable). In each condition, the whole person is affected;
each condition is not just an accident, but a way that a person lives.\textsuperscript{41}

As we have already seen, \textit{status} arise from civil and canon law, from professional
obligations, and from having orientations regarding our ultimate end. The last of
these forms of \textit{status} are distinguished in virtue of whether one is oriented to a nat-
ural end (and so is in the state of pure nature or the state of integral nature, both
discussed below) or a supernatural end (and so is in the state of innocence, falleness,
 grace, or glory). States involving our ultimate end are further distinguished based
on whether one is on the way (\textit{status in via}) to one’s natural or supernatural end, or
one is in a state of having attained that end (\textit{status in termino}).\textsuperscript{42}

Many Thomists stuck to this taxonomy and to Aquinas’s definition of \textit{status}
as stemming from taking on a permanent obligation, as in a vow.\textsuperscript{43} But in the sev-
eventeenth century, beginning with the work of the Jesuit Ioannis Busaeus and the
Barnabite Homobono de Bonis, treatises and confessional manuals began to be
written listing as \textit{status} changeable professions such as artist and farmer, grades like
poverty and riches, and ages of life such as adolescence and old age. In these texts,
each \textit{status} is described, often by drawing examples from poetic and historical texts,
as bestowing certain duties, requiring certain virtues, and involving propensities to
certain vices. Such manuals continued to be written until the mid-twentieth centu-
ry.\textsuperscript{44} In accepting such conditions as \textit{status}, Thomists seem to reconcile themselves
to the position of Henry of Ghent, who argued that \textit{status} does not require that
one be bound by obligation to remain in it, but just that one have some degree of
persistence in it.\textsuperscript{45} (Because of this requirement, temporary conditions like “being
judged in court” are still never defined as \textit{status}, but just as a form of life, in the
manuals \textit{de statibus}. ) Von Balthasar laments this change, seeing it as a reduction of
status from requiring a formal obligation to the mere material content of status, that is, the mere content of being some way of life. But Aquinas's own usage of 'status' is broader than his definition, for he already lays the groundwork for this expansion of the understanding of status. For example, he calls being a certain age or sex a status: these, on my interpretation, are total configurations of the person such that one is oriented to the human end in a distinctive way, and to new ends also. Aquinas also writes of being in a culture or political state similar to how he writes of status: to be subject to laws or customs is to be reconfigured in one's obligations and form of life.

Status alters not only one's relation to one's end and obligations, but the way in which one exercises one's powers. Those whose souls are in the status of informing matter, and who are in via to their end, know by turning to phantasms. But for those who have reached beatitude, or for those whose souls are in the separated status, they know by different modes, such as through infused species or by turning directly to intelligible objects. Change in status does not change one's nature, but it can give one new modes of cognition and appetite. This, again, is explained by the Thomistic notion of obediential potency. We are naturally oriented to cognizing and willing through the senses, but, as persons with powers unrestricted by materiality, we have an obediential potency for being raised to further status, and to modes of acting consonant with those status. Thomism accounts for both our experiences of both natural, sense-directed experience, and our personal experience of cognitive and volitional openness to unexpected conditions of personal existence. Thomism thereby includes a key Personalist notion: persons transcend nature, and persons' world-openness is irreducible to the openness of merely natural teleology.

Given that status can reconfigure one's powers and give one new ends, and given that this can occur through legal, cultural, and professional contexts, status seems to me to be a Thomistic notion by which the Personalist account of historicity can be incorporated into Thomistic metaphysics. This claim is supported by the fact that many Thomists, drawing on authorities predating Aquinas, such as Augustine and Hugh of St. Victor, see status as defining periods of human history (e.g., the periods of innocence, fallenness, and redemption). Drawing on Aquinas's claims about how being under a nation's laws or customs alters one's form of life, one could hold that not only broad periods of history, but also particular ones, change one's status.

The Thomistic metaphysics of status, with the ability of status to reorient our ends without eliminating our unchanging nature with its teleological orientation, shows that Thomism can deny that the status of grace and other historical conditions are mere accidents. While they involve accidents, they are not reducible to them; rather, they are new forms of persons' lives. Furthermore, the Thomistic view accounts for our experiences of ourselves as both having an abstractly-graspable unchanging nature and as existing in a dynamic personal way, without privileging one over the other. This metaphysics of status allows us to hold that grace gives fundamental meaning to human life, but also that we, given our unchanging nature, could have existed without being teleologically oriented to it in particular (though we would still have had an obediential or personal openness to it). To take on a status is to receive a
new meaning and teleological orientation to one’s life; to receive grace is to be raised to a status in which one’s natural potencies are extended, in obedience to and by being placed in the situation of the divine mission, such that they are oriented to the supernatural end, wherein they will be entirely fulfilled. Accordingly, the experience of being in the status of grace includes the experience of being oriented toward the definitive meaning of one’s life, and this latter experience is reliable and veridical.

But every status, including that of grace, is also experienced as contingent, as such that things could have been otherwise, that is, such that I could have had some other status than this one. The phenomenologist Emmanuel Falque argues that I always experience myself first as a “pure nature,” a finite, mortal being apart from any status or orientation to God. Personalism explains such experiences as results of sin. Yet many contemporary philosophers argue that, given their ubiquity, these experiences reveal our nature and are constitutive, in part, of what it is to be human. Thomistic metaphysics of status can show how such claims are compatible with the claims about grace in the last paragraph, without reinterpreting them as the result of sin.

Thomists, following Aquinas, contend that even fallenness is experienced as an addition to my underlying nature. What is, in the actual history of the world, a punishment and privation of grace and of harmony among my powers, could have been, in the state of pure nature, a mere lack of grace and harmony. As has already been said, I experience any historical status as contingent: although status give meaning to our lives, the human nature that underlies them could have existed in a different historical context with different status. Thomism highlights the contingency of the status involved in the actual history of the world by outlining two possible histories that are alternatives to the actual history of the world. On one alternative history, we would have been created in the status of pure nature, in which we would have been mortal, with all human powers, but with conflict between our sensitive and rational powers, in orientation to natural contemplation of God, which we could have reached by our own powers. On a second alternative history, we would have been created in the status of integral nature, in which we would have been created without grace, but with the preternatural gifts of immortality and harmony among our powers. The notion of the state of pure nature affirms the experienced naturalness of the war within us between our sensitive and rational natures. If Personalism were correct and the conflict in us were just due to fallenness, then our very biology, a root of our rebellious sensitive nature, would be due to sin. But this is implausible: although sin affects the way we experience our biological nature and its conflict with our rational nature, this does not annul the sheer naturalness of our experience of our own biological and sensitive tendencies.

Secular modernity has allowed us to experience the variability and contingency of human life in a pronounced way. There is always a residual lack of meaning in any status, a feeling that some other status could satisfy me, except perhaps at times in status received from God; no status received in obedience to a human historical situation, such as a profession, can ever be ultimately satisfying. Rather than interpret this experience of dissatisfaction and secular variability as purely the result of sin,
Thomism can make sense of it, and “modern” experiences in general, as revealing something true about the human person. In Thomism, the conflicts in our nature are rooted in prime matter, which is never fully satisfied by any form but always can receive others; we experience prime matter’s “longing” for other forms in the conflicting qualities, and the sensitive and rational natures, that actualize our matter, and in our tendency toward violence and death. Anxiety is a proper response to matter’s insatiable longing, and the instability it gives to us. Furthermore, as persons, we have obediential potencies for status for which there is no upward limit on how fulfilled they can be. There is a dimension of absurdity and futility in this materially-insatiable, obedientially-open world, where we long for status, but no natural status can satisfy us. The notion of a state of pure nature safeguards the experience that these conflicts, experiences, and open-ended potencies are endemic to who we are.

These conflictual and insatiable features of our nature do lead to secular experiences, and while these can lead to sin (e.g., pride) or false beliefs (e.g., atheism), the experiences themselves need not be explained entirely as the result of sin, but rather just as experiences of persons with a nature like ours. While grace bestows definitive meaning on our lives and stills the conflicts among the parts of our nature, it does not eliminate these conflicts and the experiences that properly flow from it. Even in the resurrected body, prime matter will retain its potency for other forms; the longing for other forms, and the conflicts within us, will just be fulfilled, not eliminated. The Thomistic metaphysics of status, then, allows the Christian metaphysician to affirm, with the Personalists, that grace gives definitive meaning to our lives, but also, with philosophers like Heidegger and Camus, that we naturally experience the physical world through anxiety and a sense of the absurd. If Thomism has contributed to the genealogy of the latter experiences (and it is beyond the scope of the paper to say if this is actually so), it is only because it seeks to present a metaphysics that is true to all facets of human experience. An account of Christian experience that denies or denigrates secular experiences fails to be true to who we are as human persons, and so cannot account for the sort of fulfillment that grace actually provides: a fulfillment that does not eliminate secular experience, which flows from our nature, but adds definitive meaning. This allows us to see the modern period and its genealogy not (at least in all respects) as a reductionist detour from a true picture of the human person, but as focusing our attention on aspects of the human person and on experiences overlooked by other ages. Christian metaphysics should not denigrate these discoveries but incorporate them into itself and its broader vision of the human person.
Notes


4. Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 21, 96–104; Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, ch. 1. As members of the Eastern Orthodox tradition, Yannaras and Zizioulas deny the possibility of seeing the divine essence. In this, they differ from the other, Catholic personalists mentioned here. Rather, they refer to the possibility of being united with the divine operations or ἐνεργείαι. It is beyond the scope of this paper to consider the differences here, but they are not important for the purposes of this paper. Both the Orthodox and the Catholic Personalists agree that divine union, however understood, is the natural end of the human person, that there is no natural end apart from this, and that human persons must be considered in their concrete reality, not defined by an abstract nature. For more on the differences between the Catholic and Orthodox views on this issue, and for ways to overcome those differences, see my “The Flexibility of Divine Simplicity: Aquinas, Scotus, Palamas,” *International Philosophical Quarterly 57* (2013): 123–139.


6. Von Balthasar argues that while there is a sense in which supernatural calling is added to our natural being, the former is actually more fundamental to our meaning than the latter, since it is our fundamental teleological orientation and the context for all other states into which we can be put; see *The Christian State of Life*, trans. Sr. Mary Frances McCarthy (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983), 70, 75, 133. See also Von Balthasar, *Persons in Christ*, 154–155, 207–208; *Anthropology*, 82–87. cf. De Lubac, *Supernatural*, 90–94; Milbank, *Suspended Middle*, 73–74. Similarly, Zizioulas (*Being as Communion*, ch. 1, especially p. 53) concedes that we have a mortal biological nature, but it is meant to be taken up into a new, graced, relational mode of personal existence that is not accidental to our nature. Furthermore, Zizioulas, like the first set of Personalists considered here, and unlike Yannaras, recognizes that Aquinas makes the distinction between natural individual and personal existence; see *Being and Communion*, 164.


11. It is further necessary to maintain these things to make sense of the nature that the Son assumed in the Incarnation: if that nature were already defined by reference to grace—that is, by reference to Christ—then any account of the Incarnation would be circular. The nature that the Son assumes and that grace elevates must be something in itself. Also, the possibility of grasping morality apart from faith requires that we have a nature with its own teleology. On all these points, see Lawrence Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God According to St. Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters*, 2nd ed. (Naples: Sapientia Press, 2010), especially ch. 5; Steven A. Long, *Natura Pura*: *On the Recovery of Nature in the Doctrine of Grace* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), especially ch. 1.


14. For a very close analogy between physical standing and conditions of the whole person see Gerard of Abbeville’s *Quodlibet XIV*, q. 1, summarized in Kevin White, “The Quodlibets of Thomas Aquinas,” in *Theological Quodlibeta in the Middle Ages: The Thirteenth Century*, ed. Christopher Schabel (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 74–75. At *De perfectione*, c. 41 and at QQ III q. 6 a. 3, Aquinas rejects the way that Gerard interprets the analogy, insisting that in states like the religious state, we mean a condition of a person, not just a “straightness” or “firmness” by analogy to physical state, but he moves closer to Gerard’s position at *ST* II-II q. 183 a. 1. See Suárez, *Opera omnia*, v. 7, *De statibus humanae naturae*, Prolegomena 4, c. 1, 179; Peter Maria Passerini, *De hominum statibus et officiis inspectiones morales* (Rome: Typis Nicolai Angeli Tinassii: 1663), 6; Salmanticenses, *Cursus theologicus*, v. 9, *De gratia Dei*, d. 1, c. 2 (Paris: Palmé, 1878), 13.


17. On the centrality of the notion of status to Aquinas’s moral theology as a whole see White, “Quodlibets,” 77–78. See QQ I, q. 5–8; III, q. 4–12; IV, q. 8–11; V, q. 5–14, and the whole structure of STII-II.


19. Cajetan, _In II-II ST_, v. 10, q. 184 a. 6 (Vatican: Leonine ed., 1899), 459.

20. Aristotle, _Categories_ 10–15; Peter Abelard, _Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters_, Band XXI, Heft 1, _Peter Abaelards Philosophische Schriften_, I, _Die Logica ‘Ingredientibus’_, I, _Die Glossen Zu Porphyrus_, ed. Bernhard Geyer (Münster: Verlag der Aschendorffschen Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1919); Albert, _Opera omnia_, v. 1, _De praedicamentis_, t. 7, c. 14–15 (Paris: Vivès, 1890), 298–299, 302. See my “Abelard on Status and their Relation to Universals: A Husserlian Interpretation,” _International Philosophical Quarterly_ 51 (2011): 223–240. This post-predicamental use of ‘status’ is further brought out by Suárez, who talks of existing as a status of essence (DM d. 31 s. 5 n. 21), act and potency as status of an entity (DM d. 32 s. 1 n.11), and batches of water separated from one another not having the status of parts of a larger batch of water, but being incomplete substances only by ratio of their status (DM d. 33 s. 1 n. 11; d. 34 s. 5 n. 62); he summarizes the many uses of ‘status’ with the common notion pertaining to them all at _De statu_, 2–3.

21. Albert, op. cit. cf. Aquinas, _In IV Sent._ d. 12 q. 1 a. 1 qc. 1 ad 1; _DV_ q. 1 a. 1. The etymological link between the post-predicament of _quies_ and the notion of _status_ is further drawn, e.g., in the eighteenth century, for example, by Charles-René Billuart, _Summa Sancti Thomae hodiernis academiarum moribus accommodate_, v.5, _De statu religioso_ (Paris: Palmé, 1900), 309.

22. _STII-II_ q. 183 a. 1; _QQI_ q. 7 a. 2; _SCG_ III c. 130; Suárez, _De statu_, 3–4; Passerini, _De hominium statibus_, 5–6, 17. On obedience as the core of many status, see Von Balthasar, _State of Life_, 155.

23. _STII-II_ q. 183 a. 1&3; q. 184 a. 6; Suárez, _De statu_, 3–6; Passerini, _De hominium statibus_, 3, 16. Servitude does not always indicate an inferior state: as Suárez, points out, to be in the religious state is to be in servitude to one’s superiors, while to be in the lay state is to be free of that servitude.

24. _STI-II_ q. 109 a. 9; _II-II_ q. 183 a. 1 ad 3; Suárez, _De statu_, 3–7; _De statibus_, 179; Passerini, _De hominium statibus_, 1–4; Homobono de Bonis, _De humanae vitae statibus_ (Bononia: Ex Typographia Victorii Benatii, 1619), 14; Billuart, _Summa_, v. 5, 309; Salmanticenses, _Cursus_, v. 9, 13–15.

25. Suárez, _De statu_, 3; Passerini, _De hominium statibus_, 5.


27. _STI-II_ q. 3 a. 2 ad 2; Gonet, _Cypeus_, 326. cf. _In III Sent._ d. 34 q. 1 a. 4.

28. Passerini, _De hominium statibus_, 14–17. The distinction between _status_ of persons and of acts is, in part, perhaps rooted in the claim that the “condition” of a person is an accidental circumstance attending on acts, at _STI-II_ q. 7 a. 1 ad 3 and a. 4 ad 3. Also see _QQI_ q. 7 a. 2, where a distinction is made between acts that prepare one for perfection and a stable _status_ of perfection in which one has bound oneself by a vow to a way of life aiming at perfection.
30. Suárez, De statu, 3; Salmanticenses, Cursus, v. 9, 13–14. They distinguish four kinds of status: those deriving from the civil law such as being a foreigner or a citizen, those deriving from the canon law such as the religious state, professions pertaining to human business, and those orienting to our last end in some way such as the fallen state or the state of grace. The phrase conditio personae appears only in the definition of the first kind, the phrases forma and ratio vivendi only in the definition of the second, and the claims about orientation to an end only in the fourth. But from the way that each is discussed later, and from the way in which these phrases are applied by other Thomists, it would seem most plausible that each phrase applies to each kind of status.


32. ST I q. 4 a. 2 ad 3

33. ST I q. 16 a. 12 ad 2; q. 29 a. 3 ad 4; q. 45 a. 4; III q. 2 a. 2; q. 2 a. 6 ad 3; DUV a. 2. There is a controversy over what exactly is the principle of personhood or incommunicability, but it is not essential for my argument here that it be settled what that is. For treatments of the source material on this question see Von Balthasar, Persons in Christ, 217–20; and my own “The Personhood of the Separated Soul,” Nova et Vetera 12 (2014): 863–912. For more source material, from throughout the Thomistic tradition, on the claim that persons include their accidents as intrinsic modifications, see my “Created Persons are Subsistent Relations,” Proceedings of the ACPA 89 (2015).

34. See ST-I-II q. 112 a. 4 ad 3.

35. ST I q. 8 a. 3 ad 2; q. 43 a. 6; I-II q. 110 a. 2 ad 2; QDV q. 2 a. 1 ad 22.

36. A status, then, could perhaps be understood as a kind of “substantial mode.” Substantial modes were posited by scholastics to account for ways in which a substance could be completed, determined, or terminated in various ways, which could change without the substances ceasing to be the individualized essence that it is. For example, “subsisting in oneself” is a substantial mode, which could be lost by a substance, e.g., if assumed by a divine person. These modes are non-accidental ways of being a substance. See my “Personhood of the Separated Soul,” 890–892 for source material on substantial modes. I am grateful to Fr. Philip Neri Reese, O.P., for suggesting this way of interpreting status.

37. ST-I-II q. 82 a. 1–2; q. 85 a. 1; In II Sent d. 32 q. 2 a. 2 ad 2; d. 30 q1 a. 1 ad 3; Suárez, De statibus, 191–192, 198. See Feingold, Natural Desire, 224–225. On the intrinsic work of these forms, see Suárez, De statibus, 191–195.

38. “The status of grace” covers both the state of innocence or original justice, and the state of those now who receive grace. See ST-I-II q. 89 a.3; q. 109 a. 9; Suárez, De statibus, 191.

39. ST-I-II q. 56 a. 4 ad 3; CT I c. 104; QDV q. 1 a.10 ad 13; a. 4; Suárez, DM d. 16 s. 2 n. 17–18; d. 43 s. 4 n. 17; John of St. Thomas, Cursus, v. 3, p. 3 q. 10 a. 2, 451–458;
cf. Feingold, *Natural Desire*, 107; Long, *Natura Pura*, c. 1; and my own “Habits, Potencies, and Obedience.”

40. The Personalist Thomist Edith Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being*, trans. Kurt Reinhardt (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 2002), 73–76 and 151–152, seems to have at least implicitly grasped this point: on her view we may speak of the essence of persons changing, as when they undergo a change of lifestyle in a conversion. Yet she grants that persons have an unchanging substantial form. When she speaks of essences changing their content and being transformed, she surely means something like a transformation of the total configuration or *modus vivendi* of the person, considered as a whole.

41. Aquinas, *Contra doctrinam retrahentium a religione* c. 2; *De Perfectione* c. 17; *ST* II-II q. 183 a. 1 ad 3; a. 2 ad 2; a. 3 ad 3; Passerini, *De hominium statibus*, 1, 12–13. cf. Von Balthasar, *State of Life*, 305. Some Thomists also argue that the charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit (*gratia gratis datae*), bring about unique conditions of the person.

42. Suárez, *De statu*, 7; *De statibus*, 179; Salmanticenses, *Cursus*, v. 9, 14.

43. Suárez, *De statu*, 4; Passerini, *De hominium statibus*, 6.

44. Ioannis Busaeus, S.J., *De statibus hominum* (Lyon: Apud Haeredes Gulielmi Rouillii, 1614);


47. *ST* II-II q. 184 a. 1 ad 1; *In VII Phys* lect. 6 n. 7; cf. *ST* I-II q. 96 a. 2.

48. *In IV Sent*. d. 25 q. 2 a. 1 qc. 1.

49. *ST* I-II q. 97 a. 3; II-II q. 154 a. 4&9; q. 169 a. 1; *Super Isaiam* c. 3 lect. 3; *Super 1 Tim*. c. 2 lect. 2; *In II Pol* lect. 15 n. 12. Likewise, Aquinas describes professions like being a soldier as *status* in his sermon “Beatus Vir” for the Feast of St. Martin.

50. On our different modes of cognizing and having appetites *in via versus in patria*, see: Aquinas, *In I Sent* q. 1 a. 1; d. 8 q. 2 a. 3; d. 17 q. 1 a. 4; d. 3 q. 1 a. 1 ad 5; q. 2 a. 2 ad 4; *In II Sent* d. 7 q. 1 a. 2; d. 13 q. 1 a. 2 qc. 3 ad 2; d. 49 q. 1 a. 1 qc. 2 ad 3; d. 49 q. 2 a. 7; d. 50 q. 1 a. 3 ad 1; *ST* I q. 13 a. 11; II-II q. 175 a. 4; III q. 63 a. 5 ad 1; *DV* q. 10 a. 11; q. 12 a. 6 ad 12; q. 13 a. 1 ad 1; q. 26 a. 10 ad 14; *In I De Trin*. q. 1 a. 2. On the different modes of cognizing depending on whether our souls are in the embodied or separated *status*, see: *ST* I q. 89 a. 1; *DV* q. 24 a. 11. Further evidence for the claim that a change in *status* leads to change in cognitive and appetitive acts, without change in essence, comes with Aquinas’s claim that Adam, in the *status* of innocence, due to the configuration that that *status* was, knew both by turning to phantasms and through infused species; see *ST* I q. 94 a. 3; *DV* q. 18 a. 1&2. It is furthermore possible to be in multiple *status* at once in different respects, for example Moses and Paul were in the *status in via* considered simpliciter, but entered into our *status in patria* in a certain respect (*secundum quid*) when they momentarily ecstatically beheld the divine essence; see *DV* q. 18 a. 1 ad 13&14. Likewise, the souls in purgatory are still *in via* in a certain respect, since they have not yet attained the beatific vision, but they
are not in via simpliciter, since they cannot change whether they are going to heaven; see In IV Sent. d. 21 q. 1 a. 3 qc. 1 ad 4; d. 45 q. 1 a. 1 qc. 2.

On all of this, see also the commentarial sources in note 42. Further consideration of the many status under which human nature can exist, and the difference this makes to human cognitive and appetitive acts, would involve also considering the status of Jesus and Mary; see Cajetan, In I-II ST, v. 7, q. 109 a. 2, 292; Suárez, De statibus, 193; Busaeus, De statibus, 469ff; Von Balthasar, Persons in Christ, 161–162, 178–179, 189–1891.

51. In this, Aquinas differs from John Duns Scotus, for whom change in status just reveals facets of one’s nature that were already there—for example, the fact that we can know God directly when we are in termino reveals that it is not our nature to know by turning to phantasms, but that is just a contingency of our current status. See John Duns Scotus, Opera omnia, v. 3, Ordinatio, I d. 3 p. 1 q. 3 n. 187 (Vatican, 1954), 113–114.

52. Dionysius the Carthusian, In II Sent d. 25 q. 4 (Turin: Typis Carthusiae S. M. de Pratis, 1903), 309, draws from Augustine the claim that there are four status of free will in man (prior to sin, under sin, under grace, and in glory), with four resulting potencies involving sin, and corresponding to four historical period of the human race. Gonet, Clypeus, 319–20, draws from Hugh of St. Victor the notion that there have been three human status: innocent, fallen, and restored, corresponding to three periods of the human race.

53. Emmanuel Falque, The Metamorphosis of Finitude: An Essay on Birth and Resurrection, trans. George Hughes (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 15–19, 158–159. While Falque sides with the Personalists in arguing that theologically speaking we could not exist apart from an orientation to the beatific vision (though this is because he wrongly thinks that the pure nature thesis is a claim that we could have existed without there being a God), he nevertheless argues that phenomenologically our fundamental experience of ourselves is one of “pure nature,” one of finitude, morality, and lack of orientation to God in Himself.

54. De Malo q. 5 a. 1 ad 15. In the actual history of the world, human moral obligations always have reference to the call of grace, but we could have been beholden only to natural morality; this both acknowledges what is true in De Lubac’s claim about what would result from the possibility of a state of pure nature (see note 8 above) and alleviates his worries about this.


56. Falque (Finitude, 8) shows that, given a nature like ours, grace could not remove the conflicts and limitations that belong to that nature, but rather it can transform these.

57. Supplement to ST q. 82 a. 1 ad 1&2; Gotti, In I ST, 631; Salmanticenses, Cursus, v. 9, 14. The one exception to this insatiable longing of prime matter is in the heavenly bodies, on Aquinas’s view, where matter is entirely satisfied by form; see SCG III c. 20 n. 3–4.

58. On the infinitude of obediential potency, in contrast to fulfillable natural potencies for particular acts, here in the context of our obediential potency to God, see: ST III q. 1 a. 1 ad 3; q. 11 a. 1; DV q. 8 a. 4 ad 13; q. 8 a. 12 ad 4; q. 29 a. 3 ad 3. See Feingold, Natural Desire, 136–154.

59. The secular condition also leads to skeptical worries about how a being like us, defined as a self-contained essence rather than relationally, could relate to a world (and a God) outside itself. See Sameer Yadav, The Problem of Perception and the Experience of God
(Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), ch. 7, and Yannaras, op. cit. The Thomistic view can account for this experience as well: given the unsatisfiability of pure nature by any form, the conflict among our powers, and the presence in us of a non-relational essence, it makes sense that we would experience our relation to the world and others with a skeptical tinge. But Thomism can also account for how this experience is alleviated: our personal mode of existence renders us, at the level of substance qua person, intrinsically relational, and status like that of grace can render our perceptual and intellectual acts virtuous and more certain.

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