

Nature, Normativity, and Creation

The 2024 Barry Lecture

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It is a privilege to give this Barry Lecture for the Canterbury Institute, and to do so in this auditorium on the far north-eastern edge of St. John's, almost touching the Science Area. We are in the far corner of Dr. Case's fields, the four acres north of the Front Quad; they were taken within the curtilage of St. John's soon after they had reverted to the college in January 1600 on the death of John Case, once a chorister at New College and later a Scholar and then philosophy fellow of St. John's, having been taught Rhetoric here by Edmund Campion. In 1584 Case arranged the re-establishment of Oxford University Press which promptly began publishing his philosophical works, eventually some three-thousand pages across his treatises/lectures in Philosophy (you can read them all online through the Bodleian website). The first to be put out by the Press was in 1585, Case's five-hundred and fifty page treatise/commentary on Aristotle's works on Ethics, and the series finishes, seven or eight treatises later, with his nine-hundred page volume of Natural Philosophy, taking off from Aristotle's *Physics*. This volume came out in the first quarter of 1600, just after Case's death, entitled *Lapis Philosophicus* or in English *Philosophical Touchstone*.¹ In 1574, John Case had married the widow of Oxford's secondary gaoler—thus vacating his fellowship. But he set up a one-man college or private hall across the road, in

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¹ In work I did some time ago and hope to publish before too long, I show that Case appears in affectionate parody—as the clown, Touchstone—in *As You Like It*, which was entered on the *Stationers' Register* on 4 August 1600.

her house looking over the church graveyard towards the southwest corner of Balliol, and for many years students matriculated as members of Master Case's House and were tutored by him there, Case himself also lecturing regularly in the University in Natural, Moral and Political Philosophy while also (some years on) practising medicine—becoming wealthy enough to acquire the land on which this auditorium stands.

I wish the Canterbury Institute all the Oxford presence and success of Master Case's House, and more. They suggested that I talk tonight about 'Is' and 'Ought', fact and value, the rational foundations and truth of judgments of right and wrong in ethics, morality, or natural moral law—the source of the normativity, the oughtness, of such practical judgments.

I

In my books about moral, political and legal philosophy, the question of divine Creation is the last question to be posed, though when it is posed, argued out, and answered, the unoriginal conclusion is that Creation is the very source or first cause of the intelligibility and truth of moral principles and norms. This evening I touch on Creation first, in very abbreviated form, and attending only to philosophical arguments or considerations, remaining throughout the lecture within the bounds of *natural reason*, to use the traditional name for reasoning that needs nothing except natural science, history, sound logic, and (for reasons I will explore) some norms of natural morality honestly affirmable by anyone willing and able to attend to data and follow argument. Such strictly natural reasoning can and should conclude, in some ways more easily today than in earlier eras, that the natural world, the whole realm of Nature, the universe or cosmos in one tiny part of which we find ourselves—with the human nature, the species-specific genetic, biological, psychosomatic makeup we find ourselves to have (and to have in common, to share)—all this is from beginning to end, from the furthest reaches of the galaxies to subatomic processes (whether particles or waves), constituted of light-energy and information. (I talked about the science of this right here in this auditorium, in the Anscombe Lecture for 2015.)² The

² John Finnis, 'Body, Soul and Information: On Anscombe's "Royal Road" to True Belief' in *The Moral Philosophy of Elizabeth Anscombe*, eds. L. Gormally, D. Jones,

physicist and cosmologist Stephen Hawking put it this way in his final book— ‘... every particle and every force contains information.’³ He’s using the term ‘information’ in the way contemporary natural scientists have found fairly compelling reason to, with a meaning different from the content-neutral IT sense of mere input, and different equally from the humanistic sense of what mind can communicate *to mind*. The information to which Hawking is referring does not, of course, inform without energy⁴ but, by lending that energy form, shape, direction, and tendency, information directs and forms anything that has a describable form and reality as a being—every distinct kind of being and all the laws of nature that, to Hawking’s way of thinking, *determine* all such beings and indeed everything whatsoever.

Thirty years earlier, deploying the very same assumptions and substantially the same Physics, Hawking wrote a famous sentence to wrap up the final chapter of his best-selling 1988 book *A Brief History of Time*, the chapter whose opening questions are: ‘What is the nature of the universe? *Why* is it the way it is?’⁵ Hawking’s discussion soon leads him to say very reasonably that any transcendent Creator—

would, of course, ... have had the freedom to choose the laws that the universe obeyed ... Even if there is only one possible [complete] unified theory, it is just a set of rules and equations. **What is it that breathes fire into the equations and makes a universe for them to describe?** The usual approach of science of constructing a mathematical model cannot answer the questions of **why there should be a universe for the model to describe. Why does the universe go to all the bother of existing?**⁶

What Hawking calls here a ‘complete unified theory’ is a set of rules and equations describing the whole set of laws of nature. Anyway, he went on quickly to his famous conclusion:

and R. Teichman (Imprint Academic, 2016), 263–88; another version: ‘On Anscombe’s “Royal Road” to True Belief’, *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 90.2 (2016), 347–68.

³ Stephen Hawking, *Brief Answers to the Big Questions* (John Murray, 2018), 104.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 104.

⁵ Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes* (Bantam, 1988), 210.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 213 (emphasis added).

If we do discover a complete theory, ... we shall all ... be able to take part in the discussion of the question of **why it is that we and the universe exist**. If we find the answer to that, it would be the ultimate triumph of human reason—for then we would know the mind of God.⁷

So, in 1988, to ‘know the mind of God’ is *not* a matter of knowing all the laws of nature or the complete unified theory that describes them, but rather the *further* matter or question of *why* those laws and that complete theory have an *existing* universe to apply to, determine, and describe. Answering *that* further question would be, in Hawking’s vivid but rough and ready metaphor, ‘knowing the mind of God’—and Hawking was volunteering, *opining*, that it is a genuine question to which (he thought) we do not (yet) have the answer.

But thirty years later, in 2018, in his final work, published (like Case’s *Lapis Philosophicus*) very shortly after its author’s death, Hawking affirms, with argument, that there is actually no such further question to be answered. *Now*, knowing the mind of God is just a matter of knowing all the laws of nature and the unified complete theory that describes them. There is *now* no need to postulate or conclude to a Creator, for there is nothing that needs explaining, because Physics has discovered, he says, that

[W]hen the Big Bang produced a massive amount of positive energy, it simultaneously produced the same amount of negative energy. In this way, the positive and the negative add up to zero, always. It’s another law of nature. ... [And] if the universe adds up to nothing, then you don’t need a God to create it.⁸

If the universe ‘adds up to nothing’ ...! Obviously, Hawking’s venture beyond Physics into Philosophy has fallen into more than one fallacy of equivocation—the blur or slide of meanings of the little verb ‘adds up’ goes along with an unannounced shifting of the reference of the phrase ‘the mind of God’ from the beyond-Physics *What explains why there is a universe for the laws of nature to apply to?* to the intra-Physics *What is or contains the complete set of laws of nature?* And

⁷ *Ibid.*, 214 (emphasis added).

⁸ Hawking, *Brief Answers to the Big Questions*, 46.

from the law of Physics that negative and positive energy are always equal in amount Hawking deduces, fallaciously, that there is nothing at all that needs explaining—not the energy, not the universe, and not the intelligibility and operation of the law of Physics about negative and positive energy. That law or its operation he compares to a man digging a hole and thereby making a mound of soil, equal in volume to the hole. But his argument here treats the hole, the mound and indeed the man precisely as if none of them—indeed nothing at all—ever happened or existed.

That mishap of reasoning suggests a question, one that I'll consider not biographically or historically, but rather as a simple thought-experiment, for each of us: if the thought had occurred to Hawking (or now occurs to one of us) that *perhaps* that 2018 argument for atheism just won't do—is valueless because fallacious (even if some or many readers will never detect the fallacy)—*oughtn't* he (or anyone) to have reconsidered the argument and its conclusion before ever affirming it, or at least before reaffirming it? And *shouldn't* he (or any of us) have been willing to make the choice of abandoning the argument (however regretfully), and deleting the draft passage, even if that left the exposition of his views about divine creation just where they stood in 1988 (unless of course some quite different argument had meanwhile occurred to him—or to us)? *That* question—about the choice he *ought to* have made, a choice within the privacy of his own thinking and deliberating about what scientific and philosophical propositions to settle upon, write down, and publish, a question of the form *What should I think and write ...?*—brings us directly to what I was asked to talk about this evening. Can such an '*I ought ... oughtn't I?*'—such an affirmation of a normative proposition of (shall we say?) natural practical reason, morality, or natural moral law—be simply *true*? And if so, can it be derived from truths about human nature? Or from any other facts?

II

Notice that we have here three of four distinct kinds of normativity, that is, of directing of thought by 'oughts'. First there is the normativity of laws of nature—of the natural order of things that are what they are independently of our thought—laws or norms such as the one that Hawking pointed to in 2018: if there is positive energy in a

natural system there *must be* an equivalent quantum of negative energy somewhere in the system. Or again: it's nearly December here in Oxford, so a lot of trees around here should thus be leafless. The natural sciences seek to track and articulate this normativity.

Second, there is the normativity of logical analysis: equivocation and other fallacies *must be* avoided; the equivalence of positive and negative charges in an existing system must not be treated in thought as identical to the nullity, nothingness or non-existence of the system and its energy; to do so is fallacious, and fallacies must be avoided, not affirmed. This kind of normativity excludes choice: once one understands and judges ('decides') that a proposition or set of propositions is fallacious, one cannot believe it, cannot affirm it to oneself. Of course, anything can be *said*: jokes, parodies of logic, impostures, and foolish mistakes abound. And then again, much genuine reasoning about scientific and historical facts allows and demands conscientious and responsible choice between plausible alternatives, none of them excluded by logic.

For thinking that is not idle is a conscious activity in which choices can constantly arise. One may suspect that an argument one had chosen to trust and would like to affirm is, alas, fallacious, but not yet understand and decide (I mean *judge*) that it is; one is choosing not to think it through but instead to neglect the possibility that it is fallacious, allow oneself to press on towards affirming it, choose to affirm it to oneself, and if occasion arises, to others. The 'I should', 'I ought ...', which we began to reflect on a minute or two ago bears on such choices as they become possible in one's investigation of questions, one's inner debate, one's reaching a judgment, and then as they become possible in one's external activities of articulating one's judgments and arguments for communication to others. There is thus a third kind of normativity, which Aristotle and more clearly Aquinas treat as pertaining to the domain of practical reasoning and deliberation towards choice and morally significant action (*praxis*), as distinct from a fourth domain and kind of normativity, pertaining to each and every kind of technique, technology, game and other means or way of mastering matter for some specified goal. About this fourth kind of order and normativity I will say no more this evening, save that every human choice to deploy a technique *rather than to do something else* is (and initiates) *praxis* properly subject to norms of the

third order, whether or not it conforms or fails to conform fully to the relevant fourth-order norms of some relevant *technē*.

None of this distinguishing of kinds of normativity is a question of language. The normativity of deterministic laws of nature invites normative grammar just as easily as the choice-annihilating normativity of logical or epistemic argumentation or the choice-directing normativity of moral norms demanding care in one's thinking and both honesty and care in communicating one's thinking's results. Three sample assertions: (1) 'There is this much positive energy here, there should be/ought to be the same amount of negative energy there. (2) 'This 'adds up to zero' is not logically identical to 'amounts to nothing' and so my argument is fallacious and *cannot* succeed and I should abandon it. (3) I should hunt out a substitute argument for New Atheism, or I should revert to the (for me) open and for everyone genuine question about divine Creation as an indispensable cause of the existence of the universe and the operation of the laws of nature. The *oughts* and *shoulds* of this choice-addressing kind, which one becomes aware of when tempted to replace conscientious with careless or unscrupulous thinking, are *moral*. And that has two complementary explanations, which I will take one by one. My discussion this evening will be abstract and theoretical, in the sense that it will go nowhere near the multi-faceted and menacing crisis of violations of the norms of truth-seeking and truth-telling in the natural sciences, in Oxford as elsewhere, today (which I have touched upon recently, in Budapest).⁹

III

The first way in which *these* ought propositions are *moral*—not merely evaluative and practical—is because their precise subject-matter as practical evaluations is *a free choice* to act, a choice between understood alternative options that is *free* precisely because nothing inside or outside the choosing person *settles*, determines, what option he or she chooses—nothing except the choosing itself. 'I chose to omit sentence A and retain sentence B even though I understood B to be untrue, or probably untrue, or untrue unless qualified by A; I could have chosen not to do so ...' And we should be clear that while a sound

⁹ John Finnis, 'Natural Law Theory and Today's Problems: Nine Pools of Light', Mathias Corvinum Collegium, Budapest, 18-20 September 2024.

ethics, a sound moral theory, a sound natural law theory not merely presupposes but also builds on and builds in a truth about the universe (an ontological and metaphysical truth, a truth of what in *Lapis Philosophicus* or over a door in the Bodleian's Schools Quadrangle is called natural philosophy), there are some free choices, usually put more vaguely: human beings of sufficient health and maturity have free will, because (to repeat) they (we) sometimes (and under good conditions ordinarily and often) make choices that are free because nothing inside or outside the choosing person *settles*, or determines, what option one chooses—nothing except the choosing itself.

Most contemporary secular philosophers, it seems, hold that *either* this freedom of the will is illusory, *or* it is a freedom somehow compatible with the truth that everything in the universe is (as we heard Hawking put it) determined by the operation of the laws of nature. That there cannot in reality be any such compatibility of free will with universal determination by operation of natural causation according to scientific laws, and that our free choices are often not illusory but *real*—an amazing¹⁰ fact about this universe and *our* mode of existence within it—are propositions maintained by secular philosophers fewer in numbers but sounder in critical rationality. I shall mention just David Hodgson (a doctoral student of H. L. A. Hart's

¹⁰ Thus, philosophical objections to the thesis that there are some free choices typically amount to no more than observations that the occurrence of a choice that is in this sense free does have an explanation of the kind that other occurrences do. For example, Neil Levy, 'Critical Notice: Hodgson, David: Rationality + Consciousness = Free Will', *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 91.1 (2012), 183-192 at 187-88 argues (I annotate with labels): 'But precisely how does the agent make the choice between the options? The choice cannot itself be for reasons. The agent's reasons explain why these options are available to her; [a] they can't *also* explain why she chooses one option, from among those available to her ([b] that would be double-counting of reasons). ... If she is to choose one option from among those arrayed, she has to somehow give it a push, as it were, and since all her reasons are accounted for already, [c] this push cannot be made for a reason. She [d] must therefore select one option for no reason at all, and therefore arbitrarily. Either there are sufficient reasons to explain the agent's choice, and therefore it is false that her choice is metaphysically open in the manner [Hodgson] requires, or she lacks such sufficient reasons and [e] therefore she makes the final selection for no reason at all. If Hodgson's agent possesses libertarian free will, her choice is lucky for her.' Against Levy, I shall say: the claims I have labelled [a], [c], [d], and [e] all arbitrarily assume that a reason cannot count unless it determines (indeed 'metaphysically' determines); claim [b] arbitrarily assumes that there is something amiss in the 'double-counting' constituted by the agent's final preference for the reason she chooses to treat as decisive; and claim [d] is thus straightforwardly false. It is plain that the reality of free choice/free will is sufficient reason to treat the concepts of 'explain why' and 'sufficient reason' as more accommodative than Levy's question-begging argumentation does.

when I was): his two weighty OUP books, *The Mind Matters* and *Consciousness + Rationality = Free Will*, take on all the arguments of the scientists and naturalistic philosophers; Peter Hacker (long a Philosophy fellow of St. John's and another almost exactly contemporary doctoral student of Hart's), closely focused during the last decade on these issues;¹¹ Thomas Nagel (who takes Hodgson's arguments to be sufficient¹²); and Elizabeth Anscombe.¹³ In my *Fundamentals of Ethics* and my *Aquinas* book I foreground this foundational metaphysical basis of ethics but offer only a dialectical proof, namely, that it cannot be rationally argued against, because every attempt to form critical argumentation against it must acknowledge norms of argumentation, norms the normativity of which presupposes the real possibility of privily or brazenly choosing to violate them.¹⁴

If more is desired to defend the reality of human free will, it can and must be supplied by considerations such as Hodgson expounded with advanced scientific cognizance in his two books. And I would add, as he does not, that that reality makes best sense when we push on with critical enquiry and explanation, to affirm some further facts. The nature of our universe, including our nature—including our natural intelligence, understanding and power of reasoning—is given (we should reflectively conclude, as a matter of natural reason) by Creation, the originating action of a transcendent, divine mind and free choice. The unfolding of the created effects of that absolutely originating act of Creation (now understood as the Big Bang, the universe-initiating creation of energy in unimaginable quantity but formed and directed by the information it bears by transmission, and

¹¹ P. M. S. Hacker, 'Neuro-scientific Determinism, Freedom and Responsibility' in *The Moral Powers: A Study of Human Nature* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2021), 179–206.

¹² Thomas Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature is Almost Certainly False* (Oxford University Press, 2011), 115n.

¹³ G. E. M. Anscombe, *Philosophical Papers*, Vol. 2, *Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Mind* (Blackwell, 1981), 172: '... the soft determinist ... does think freedom compatible with physical impossibility ... since, being a determinist, he thinks that everything except what actually happened was always impossible ... I am at liberty to say that I believe a "can of freedom" which holds in face of physical impossibility is pure nonsense.'

¹⁴ The proof is elaborated in Joseph M. Boyle, Germain Grisez, and Olaf Tollefsen, 'Determinism, Freedom, and Self-Referential Arguments', *Review of Metaphysics* 26.1 (1972), 3–37; and their subsequent *Free Choice: A Self-Referential Argument* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1976); and summarized in John Finnis, *Fundamentals of Ethics* (Oxford University Press; Georgetown University Press, 1983), 137. On the logic and force of arguments from self-refutation, see John Finnis, *Collected Essays*, vol. 1: *Reason in Action* (Oxford University Press, 2011), 81–91.

transmits), an evolutionary unfolding over 12 or 20 billion years or more, may well from time to time have been informed by new information not given with the Big Bang but by a (from our creaturely perspective) *new* or further act of transcendent (divine) Creation. And such a further act can reasonably be judged to be part of the best explanation of the emergence of *life*, and later of the emergence of truly *intelligent* life in life forms capable of some free choices undetermined by the operation of the laws that in all other respects govern the entire cosmos.

So, I am focussing this lecture on the normativity that applies primarily to the internal operations of deliberation about and towards action, including (amongst countless others) such actions as doing Physics and doing Philosophy and writing books and lectures, or (as a child) staying focussed on the teacher's displays of data and argument in elementary geometry or physics. But whatever the subject-matter of our deliberations towards even pragmatic and humble free choices, our rational nature's capacity of making free choices makes us (as Aquinas the philosopher says in the first sentence of his thousand-page theological *Treatise on Ethics*) somewhat like the Creator, *as* having true mastery over our choices and actions and thus over ourselves.¹⁵ *This* conscious intelligence and conscious freedom to choose is the justification for thinking we have the *dignity* of being, just to that extent, 'images' of the Creator, dignity and imaging in a way that is not shared either with other animals or inanimate beings or with machines and other devices we can construct, however far these can imitate some aspects or effects of our understanding and some aspects of our performing of our choices. Reflections on sleep, anaesthesia, and the gradual awakening of one's mental capacity into experienced inclinations and conscious activity, all support the conclusion that there is a genuine and impressively stable *kind* of animal, a kind the *nature* of which is constituted biochemically and biologically by its genetic constitution, the whole organism being informed by a supra-material or if you prefer immaterial organizing principle the capacities of which (as *that* organism) are at its conception really present though only radically—that is, thoroughly undeveloped—and will in due course of each human being's development disclose that unique organizing principle which we can reflectively judge to

¹⁵ Aquinas, *Summa Theologia*, I-II.

be the explanatory source, the *sine qua non*, for the internally perceptible and transparent *consciousness*, *rationality* and *freedom-in-choosing* that justify us in recognising all human beings as sharing a radical *equality* of nature and radical capacity, and thus (as I said) of *dignity*, that is, superiority to all other animals and to all artefacts.

IV

That was a sketch of a first reason for calling the norms of conscientious thinking *moral* norms, morally directive. And the second reason is this. There are two levels of thinking about what to do with one's time. (i) There is thinking purposefully about what to do in order to bring about some purpose/end/desirable state of affairs that is or would be desirable for its own sake, whether or not it is also a means to something else and whether or not it also involves using some technique or technology, and whether or not it has implications for me or for other people. And (ii) there is deliberating about how my choosing and doing or obtaining *that* will affect other projects or interests of mine and/or the projects, interests and well-being of other people whom I am interested in or aware of as liable to be so affected. Deliberation—practical reasoning—about that sort of effect (on myself and/or others), that sort of intersection or collision of reasons, is moral thinking, and it is the subject-matter of practical moral thought—call it conscience—about what has been or is about to be or could in principle be chosen. On the first level, I am (for example) *curious* and want to find out about such-and-such cause or effect or state of the universe. On the second level, I need to consider the impact of investigating such-and-such on other possible or actual activities of mine, or of other people.

Thought at the *first* level has (or earlier in one's life had) its own complexity. Let us take a simplified but not unrealistic example. Before you or I or in principle anyone gets the concept of knowledge, we are curious and have an inclination to ask questions. We find that often our question gets an answer that we find satisfactory, even if it stimulates further questions. At some point we understand that answers to questions form a field of—*knowledge*, a concept new to us. The idea or proposition that *knowledge is possible* is an idea or proposition we did not reach by deduction or inference from any prior proposition or idea but rather by what Aristotle and John Case

would call a sort of induction: better, by an act of simple insight into, understanding of, the range of data constituted by our experience of getting our questions answered more or less illuminatingly.

And then by a further, logically distinct act of understanding and insight we regularly get the further, additional idea and proposition that *knowledge is*—at least in principle, or *ceteris paribus*—desirable, *a good*, just as such, whether or not it is also useful for some other purpose. Two insights, the latter usually following quickly on the former. First: knowledge is possible (a factual proposition). Second: knowledge, the state of moving (or having moved) from ignorance or superstition to true belief, is good, desirable, valuable, to some extent fulfilling; ignorance and muddle is defective, bad, to be avoided unless there is some special reason to prefer not being shocked or disconcerted or ‘untempted’. The step from the first insight to the second is the step from the grammar of fact to the grammar of value, from ‘is’ to an initial, not yet moral but really orientating evaluation and directive ‘ought’. This (‘evaluative’) insight is appropriate, effortless, and is as *originating* as the (‘factual’) insight that knowledge is possible, an applicable category, a feature of the world. In Aquinas’ language both insights, the factual one and the evaluative one, are *per se nota* (known by the meaning of their terms) and *indemonstrabilia*. That is: neither can be demonstrated, but neither of them needs demonstration to anyone who understands the terms in the proposition articulating the insight, and each can be defended by indirect arguments such as show that any argument against either will be self-refuting because it will presuppose what it is trying to deny. Each is a first principle, the earlier of descriptive or theoretical understanding, the later of practical understanding, though neither is the absolutely first principle in its order; each rather is one among a number of other underived first principles, not derived from any prior proposition though emerging on the basis of—by insight supervening upon—experience such as I have sketched a few moments ago.

And the reflective child who has just made this effortless transition from *knowledge of truth is possible* to *knowledge of truth is desirable*, good for its own sake, and a state of affairs one ought to prefer to ignorance and confusion and falsehood, will regularly, I believe, make the transition *back and forth*. Going *back*, so to speak, he or she

will easily and rightly think: ‘So, I am someone who has the capacity, the ability, the power to change myself, by my own questioning or by concentrating on the teacher’s information and explanations, from ignorant to informed. Indeed, I’m the sort of being who naturally can though rabbits can’t, and who finds in myself some inclination to do so, to do better than rabbits.’

So the child can have an at least inchoate, incipient, still vague understanding of the epistemological principle (or one can call it the heuristic) that dominates Aquinas’ work at all stages of his career: it is by getting to know a dynamic being’s capacities and powers that one can get to know its nature, but one cannot understand its capacities or potencies except by getting to know its acts, actions, activities, and one does not understand those acts, actions and activities except by understanding their objects, what they’re headed for. Knowledge of natures comes last. The principle, like each of its terms, applies analogically—that is, similarly but with systematic differences—to each of the main fields of human coming-to-know: the term ‘object’ for example has a reference and application that are different in the natural sciences from its reference and application in the operation of practical reason. The transition to modern natural science is made in principle by John Case’s slightly younger contemporary Francis Bacon, and in both principle and practice by Bacon’s contemporary, Galileo. But Bacon and Galileo each say: shelve both book learning out of Aristotle and traditional assumptions about end-states or objectives (teleology), and focus instead on measuring the movements of parts and elements, and identifying the mathematics of their activities and interactions. By this vastly important and efficacious move, Aristotle’s epistemological axiom, fore-grounding knowledge of *telos*, of ends and goods, is not negated so much as demoted or sidelined. And this is true for investigations of the physiological and biological makeup of human beings, too. But the domain of practical reasoning towards choice, the domain of ethics, is (as Aquinas says in his commentary on Aristotle’s *Ethics*¹⁶) quite distinct (though not separate: the human being exists in *all four* domains of investigation and discovery and normativity!), and here in thinking towards free choice and its carrying out in chosen actions, the epistemological axiom properly retains the kind of uncomplicated primacy it always had.

¹⁶ Aquinas, *In Eth.*, I.1, n. 1.

That primacy involves no sheer *intuiting* of human ends and goods. The child comes to understand the good of truth and knowledge only by experience and the insight that knowledge is possible, available. The experience includes the child's awareness of data, the child's consequent experienced urge to raise questions suggested by the data, the experience of getting a satisfactory answer, and so forth. The two insights, that knowledge is possible and that knowledge is good for its own sake, are nothing like data-less intuitions, yet they add to the data and the experience, and not by a deduction from premises.

And their implications both unfold by elementary reflection and are supplemented and enriched by practical engagement with the good. By elementary reflection one quickly understands that the principle one has understood—'knowledge is desirable, good, valuable and to-be-pursued and engaged with'—is not specified restrictively with a proper name but is true not only of me, I who just grasped it for the first time, but also and in principle equally of the boy or girl in the next desk and of anyone. And it holds good not just for the moment, or for the kind of questions I have thought of or kind of data I have experienced, but for whole horizons of subject-matter, past, present, and future. Some things are much more significant as knowledge than other items: 'the inclination with which the good of knowledge matches up [as the inclination's object] is the natural desire, not to know random facts, but to investigate, discover, and make oneself at home with things' deepest explanation[s].'¹⁷

In any case, it is the *object* of a capacity I find I have, and we all have in some measure if we are minimally fit and sufficiently grown; it is the object too of my activating that capacity in the simple operations of inquiry, investigation, attention to information and evidence and propositional claims offered as answers. I am, we are, beings of a kind that have that capacity: it's part of our nature as *rational* animals.

As I said but want to stress, we effortlessly and rightly swap the epistemological for the ontological, and *run the axiom in reverse*, because it easily occurs to us that we only have that capacity because we are already beings of this nature, this kind, and that without the

¹⁷ John Finnis, *Aquinas: Moral, Political, and Legal Theory* (Oxford University Press, 1998), 83.

capacity (and the nature!) we could not engage in the operation or activity of finding out and would not participate in the good we were after, the knowledge, nor be able to share it, undiminished, with the child nearby.¹⁸

‘I ought to ask more questions, get more knowledge, especially (if possible) more significant, more informative and/or explanatory knowledge, whether or not I can put the knowledge to some other use (which of course we often can).’ This *ought*, this directiveness of the practical principle which in its complete form says, ‘Knowledge is a good *to-be-pursued*’ in the sense of ‘is-to-be’ that means ‘ought to be’, is not yet a moral ought. But it is a primary source of moral oughts.

V

No one’s philosophical reflections on practical reasoning, not Plato’s, not Aristotle’s, not the Stoics’, really attended specifically to these first principles of practical reasoning until Aquinas did. He did it early¹⁹ and often and on the whole well, but as usual did it while doing many other things at the same time, and thus in passing, so to speak. There is only one passage where he tackles these first principles in anything like an extended fashion, and even here he had other balls in the air which have again and again distracted his readers and would-be followers. And no one seems to have systematically and critically pursued the enquiry Aquinas pursued in question 94, article 2 of the first part of the second part of his *Summa Theologiae*, until Germain Grisez did so in the mid-1960s, just short of seven hundred years later. There, Aquinas offers a short, expressly non-exhaustive inventory of such first principles, with a final item added (without closing the inventory) in the very next article. He structures the list not with a hierarchy of goodness or value but with a hierarchy of distribution. First, he points to goods that have a counterpart of some kind in all other beings—thus our life, health, fitness for action, and so forth. Then he points to goods that have a counterpart in all or at least very many other animals—thus human marriage (*conjunctio maris et foeminae et educatio liberorum*, conjoining of man and woman and bring-

¹⁸ Finnis, *Reason in Action*, 2–8.

¹⁹ Aquinas, *I Sent.* d. 48 q. 1 a. 4c. See Finnis, *Aquinas*, 79n83 (read 48 not 28), 81n 97.

ing up of their children—he’s quoting and paraphrasing right there the Roman jurist Ulpian’s definition of marriage, from the first page of Justinian’s *Digest*). Even though Aquinas seems to have impliedly adopted Ulpian’s remark about this being ‘shared with all animals’,²⁰ this good is not bare mating but marriage, rationally surpassing by far its counterpart of sorts in animal reproduction by mating. Thirdly he points to various goods that have no counterpart in any of the non-human beings of this world, which all save us lack the capacities or power of rationality. There is the good of knowledge (he there gives the example of knowledge about God, but earlier in the same volume [I-II q. 10 a. 1], giving a shorter list of basic human goods, had rightly named it knowledge of truth for its own sake). And then there is the good, for example, of living in fellowship or companionship (*in societate*) with others (like, we may add, the child in the next desk whom I help find the answer ... or perhaps who helps *me* find the answer). Finally, in the next article, q. 94 a. 3, he adds (implicitly²¹) the good of being reasonable (*bonum rationis*), which he there names the good of virtue and elsewhere often gives the name *prudentia* in the sense of Plato’s and Aristotle’s *phronēsis*, ‘practical reasonableness’ is our nearest idiom, though *good judgment* is also close, or *practical wisdom* directed by the moral wisdom that should be the main part of practical reasoning’s fruit of its integration of all its first principles.

To say it again: none of this is yet moral. All is nothing more (and nothing less) than the set of sources of all specifically moral

²⁰ A remark which Aquinas perhaps unluckily seems to be redeploying to organize his whole exposition of intrinsic goods in *Summa Theologiae* I-II q. 94 a. 2.

²¹ I-II q. 94 a. 3c (emphasis added) says: ‘It was said in a. 2 that there belongs to the law of nature everything [*omne illud*] to which man is inclined according to his nature. ... [Accordingly], there is in every man a natural inclination to act in line with reason (and this is to act in line with virtue).’ But this is a strongly condensed version of the relevant passage in a. 2, which was: ‘... with the result that: **all those things to be done or things to be avoided which practical reason naturally understands to be human goods** are subjects of precepts of the law of nature. And because *good* has the intelligibility of *end*, and *bad* an opposite intelligibility, it follows that **all those things to which man has a natural inclination, reason naturally understands to be goods**, and so as to be pursued in action, and the opposites as bads to be avoided ...’ It follows that a. 3, just quoted, means that acting according to reason is a **good that reason naturally understands**. And that good he has elsewhere called and will again call the *bonum rationis*: e.g. I-II q. 55 a. 4 ad 2; q. 59 a. 4c; q. 61 a. 2c; in *Eth.* II.3 n. 8; *de Caritate* [*Q.D. de Virtutibus* q. 2] a. 2c. The term in *Summa Theol.* I-II q. 94 a. 3, instead of *bonum rationis*, is its equivalent, *bonum virtutis*: the equivalence is plainly affirmed in *III Sent.* d. 33 q. 1 a. 2 sol. 1c, on which see my *Aquinas*, 84-5 n.114; on the whole matter *ibid.*, 83-85 and 99 endnote r.

practical thinking. Morality (virtues and so forth) comes into the picture, promptly and effortlessly enough, when—by direction of one of the first principles, the principle picking out and directing us to *practical reasonableness* as a good to be pursued *in* pursuing any or all of the others—one seeks to operationalize, so to speak, not just one of these basic human goods imagined to be the highest in rank or the most fundamental, not just one of the first principles of practical reasoning, not just one of the ends of the virtues and of a fully human existence, but *all* of them in due measure.

What measure? Roughly this: in line with the truth that each of the intrinsic goods is as intelligibly good in the life of others as it is in mine; and the truth that friendship in all its various strengths is one of the basic human goods and involves willing that one's friends (of every kind) participate in all the goods in due measure; and the truth that practical reasonableness, guided by nothing but these first principles and their implications as I have just instanced, must do its guiding, and its distinguishing between morally good and morally not-good, in contention with emotions of fear and desire that seek to make reason the slave of the passions.

In sober truth there are in our makeup emotions supportive of reasonable options and choices, in competition with emotions that tempt us away from right reason, that is, from the moral truth some main lines and directives or norms of which are becoming visible in principle in these lightning sketches. But even these helpful emotions are not at all the source of moral normativity, or of any practical normativity. That source is the set of first principles of practical thought, directing us to these basic intelligible goods.

VI

So, I can summarize the part of the sketches that concerns the problem I was asked to talk about: can we get to 'Ought' from 'Is'? Indeed, is that a problem at all? The summary I gave in 1987—when a well-known Belgian priest-philosopher asked that I talk about how (as he put it) Aquinas derives *Ought* from *Is*—was this (after displaying some of Aquinas' many relevant texts):

(A) Propositions about primary (*secundum se*) human goods are not derived from propositions about human nature or from any

other propositions of speculative reason; as Aquinas says with maximum clarity, and never wavers from saying, they are *per se nota* and *indemonstrabilia* (*ST* I–II q. 58 a. 4c and 5c; q. 91 a. 3c; q. 94 a. 2c; *In Eth.*, V. 12, n. 1018). For we come to know human nature by knowing its potentialities, and these we come to know by knowing their actuations, which in turn we know by knowing their objects—and the objects of the characteristically human *inclinatio* and *actus*, the will, are precisely the primary human goods. (So, if anything, an adequately full knowledge of human nature is derived from our practical [—I will come back to this shortly—] and underived (*per se notum*) knowledge of the human goods of which Aquinas speaks in I–II q. 94 a. 2.) In this sense, ‘ought’ is not derived from ‘is’.

But (B): if we shift from the epistemological to the ontological mode, the same methodological principle, in its application to human beings, presupposes and thus entails that the goodness of all human goods (and thus the appropriateness, the *convenientia*, of all human responsibilities) is derived from (i.e. depends upon) the nature which, by their goodness, those goods perfect [i.e. render *pro tanto* flourishing]. For those goods—which as ends are the *rationes* of practical norms or ‘oughts’—would not perfect that nature were it other than it is. So, ought ontologically depends on—and in that sense certainly may be said to be derived from—is.²²

VII

All this aroused intense suspicion and resistance among a number of more or less Thomistic late-twentieth century philosophers. I hope I will be forgiven, even at this late stage and even by everyone here this evening whose questions about the position I have sketched are not Thomistic, if I respond briefly to that resistance.

Starting vehemently in the 1980s, it later finds a graciously moderate form in an essay in 2013 by John Haldane. Called ‘Reasoning about the Human Good and the Role of the Public Philosopher’, the essay envisages a coexistence between on the one hand the approach to ‘fact and value’ I have been sketching and, on the other hand, what he calls ‘the Thomistic metaphysics of animate substance as I [Haldane] read and subscribe to it, suggesting how this leads to the derivation of statements of value from those of fact, or better how it

²² Finnis, *Reason in Action*, 147.

subverts the fact/value distinction.²³ He (unlike many hostile earlier critics) understands my account's reconciliation of the epistemological axiom with its ontological (metaphysical) mirroring. So his only *objection* to identifying basic human values or goods in the way I propose (and also argue is Aquinas' way) is that the concepts deployed in the first principles of practical reason so understood 'may be too thin or ambiguous to allow one to draw much from their deployment in the specification of human goods, or, relatedly, too uncertain to resolve debates about their interpretation and application. The looming charge is of an empty formalism.' But as part of my sketch this evening has suggested, the perhaps initially thin and uncertainly demarcated understanding of a basic human good is rapidly and easily enhanced, deepened, nuanced and made adequate for moral purposes by the child's, young person's, or adult's immersion in life, in family, school and other forms of society, and indeed in literary and historical explorations.²⁴

As for Haldane's counter-offer, of a 'derivation of value from fact' by inspection of the operations, capacities and nature of, say, cats, it goes surprisingly fast; the evaluative terms 'natural good', 'benefit', 'abuse', and 'prima facie wrong' emerge abruptly from the 'immanent teleology'; the account of tendencies, propensities, and inclinations; and even within the biology of subrational animals there loom questions about natural tendencies to aging and death; about the propensities some kinds of being have to perish in or as a result of their reproductive act; and about whether the relevant 'good' is that of the individual, the species, or the wider ecology in which (in innumerable ways) life for spider is death for fly. But beyond all such questions is a more pressing and searching problem: can the evaluations (and other normative predicates) that may be derived from true teleologi-

²³ John Haldane, 'Reasoning About the Human Good, and the Role of the Public Philosopher', in *Reason, Morality, and Law*, eds. I. J. Keown and R. P. George (Oxford University Press, 2013), 43.

²⁴ As is stated by Alasdair MacIntyre, 'First Principles, Final Ends, and Contemporary Philosophical Issues' in *The Tasks of Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 160: 'Those [principles] which are evident to all rational persons do indeed provide standards and direction from the outset, but only when and as conjoined with initial sketches of those first conceptions and principles towards an ultimately adequate formulation of which enquiry is directed.' He here instances no other first principle of practical reason than the absolutely first, 'Good is to be done and pursued'. His gradual progression towards a *de facto* acknowledgement of others, such as those Aquinas lists in the same place (*ST* I-II q. 94 a. 2), is traced below.

cal accounts of natural tendencies and inclinations be rightly considered directive ('intrinsically prescriptive'), that is, serviceable as evaluative/normative ('first', 'major') premises—principles—for *human deliberation towards free choice*, that is, for our practical *reason(ing)*? How can such appeals to natural teleology resist the challenge that one can formulate like this: Why should free human persons treat as foundationally directive for choice the natural goodness, or natural normativity, of the given-in-nature, even in 'human nature'? Why not strike out in new paths, and suppress or transform the immanent teleology, in ways perhaps cautious or perhaps far-reaching?²⁵ As my response to Haldane in 2013 went on:

Questions such as these cannot be pertinently answered, I believe (and am sure Aquinas believed), without referring directly to the intrinsic desirability not only of life and health, but also of knowledge for its own sake, harmony with one's fellow human persons, marital collaboration in procreation and education of new human persons, an appropriate relationship with one's creator, and of integrating one's inner life and outer action with the requirements of reasonableness. It is this desirability of the kinds of flourishing thus picked out that is the directly and foundationally relevant sort of evaluation, the sort that is inherently directive of a free and rational (intelligent and reasonable) acting person, by being serviceable as a first, major premise in such people's practical reasoning. Such first principles have the type of normativity, the type of ought which we need, and which has its developed, more specified form as the fully moral ought.²⁶

Bearing in mind the question (Why not suppress or transform the immanent teleology?), it would—perhaps surprisingly—have been helpful, had time permitted, to add hereabouts some consideration of the specific *moral norms against enslavement*, particularly of the subtle kind that is involved in choosing to set up a producer-product relationship between human persons, such as we see in one form in

²⁵ See further Sherif Girgis, 'Subjectivity Without Subjectivism: Revisiting the Is/Ought Gap', in *Subjectivity Ancient and Modern*, eds. S. F. McGuire and R.J. Snell (Lexington, 2016), 63–88; Christopher Tollefsen, 'First- and Third-Person Standpoints in the New Natural Law Theory', *ibid.*, 95–113; 'Aquinas's Four Orders, Normativity, and Human Nature', *Journal of Value Inquiry* 52 (2018), 243–56.

²⁶ John Finnis, 'Reflections and Responses' in *Reason, Morality, and Law*, 459–84, at 469.

the forms of artificial reproduction that I discussed in some detail very near here in 1984 in the paper ‘C.S. Lewis and Test-tube Babies’ (now in my third volume of essays, *Human Rights and Common Good*),²⁷ and such as we see envisaged in less cautious form in projects of non-therapeutic ‘trans-humanist’ subjection of embryonic human persons to radical transformation by integration with electronic devices. About which more needs to be thought out along these morally explanatory lines of practical reasoning.

The other resister/objector I should mention is Alasdair MacIntyre, whose responses to this question about the right way to understand practical reasoning’s grounds and normativity are very interesting and instructive. MacIntyre’s engagement with the specific argument I have been exploring this evening can be seen to have three phases.

In the first phase, exemplified in his 2000 essay ‘Theories of Natural Law in the Culture of Advanced Modernity’, he subscribed unambiguously to what he says Thomists maintain and Grisez and Finnis deny: that ‘Human nature’s essential and ordered inclinations are such-and-such; the achievement of so-and-so is a good for human nature; and therefore we ought to respect and achieve so-and-so.’²⁸ MacIntyre adds that he is following Jacques Maritain’s exposition of ‘the Thomistic account of the natural law’,²⁹ though MacIntyre cautiously hints that there could conceivably be a difference between Aquinas’ own standpoint and the way that standpoint has been understood by most modern Thomists.³⁰ Indeed!

The key thesis of Maritain that MacIntyre adopts is (in the latter’s words): ‘the precepts of the natural law are those rules of reason which a human being obeys, characteristically without formulating them, when that human being is functioning normally.’³¹ And when we are functioning normally, it is to the *common good* that we are inclined, and directed by the precepts of the natural law, which Marit-

²⁷ John Finnis, *Collected Essays*, vol. 3: *Human Rights and Common Good* (Oxford University Press, 2011), 273–81.

²⁸ Alasdair MacIntyre, ‘Theories of Natural Law in the Culture of Advanced Modernity’, in *Common Truths: New Perspectives on Natural Law*, ed. E. B. McLean (ISI Books, 2000), 107.

²⁹ MacIntyre, ‘Theories of Natural Law’, 108.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 105.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 108.

ain says is ‘the ideal formula of development of a given being’.³² Now at this point MacIntyre explicitly leaves behind Maritain, ‘although remaining close to Aquinas’ (he says), and sketches his own signature argument, one that is presented in all three of the successive discussions I am tracing: ‘I have to learn how to identify our individual and common goods correctly and adequately’, which is possible only if I ‘have relationships of adequate cooperative inquiry and learning’, relationships which are possible only if I can trust them and they can trust me, which in turn is possible only if we inquirers and learners ‘recognise [each other] as mutually bound by such precepts as those that enjoin that we *never* do violence of any sort to innocent human life, that we *always* refrain from theft and fraud, that we *always* tell each other the truth, and that we *always* uphold justice in all our relationships.’³³

This derivation of moral precepts from the conditions of rational cooperative inquiry is an attractive *tour de force*, which I think is substantially original to MacIntyre, is not part of Aquinas’ theory, and may not carry one as far as MacIntyre thinks. In the next essay, we find him doubling down, and expounding it as a ‘conceptual truth’,³⁴ but I need not say anything more about it this evening, where our question is not so much how to advance from the first principle or principles of practical reasoning to specifically moral precepts such as those we just heard MacIntyre recalling, but rather is the prior question whether one can and should begin from ‘an Aristotelian conception of essential human nature’ and its ‘normal functioning’.

In the second phase, in his 2009 essay ‘Intractable Moral Disagreements’, MacIntyre moves an appreciable distance towards our position; he starts right in with Aquinas’ account of the *goods* that

give expression to the first principle of practical reason: that good is to be done and pursued and evil to be avoided. The goods that we as human beings have it in us to pursue are threefold: the goods

³² *Ibid.*, 108–09.

³³ *Ibid.*, 109–10.

³⁴ Alasdair MacIntyre, ‘From Answers to Questions: A Response to the Responses’, in *Intractable Disputes About Natural Law: Alasdair MacIntyre and Critics*, ed. L. Cunningham (Notre Dame University Press, 2009), 313–352, at 316. For a different rendering of the argument, ascribing it imaginatively and without citations to Aquinas, see Alasdair MacIntyre, *God, Philosophy, Universities: A History of the Catholic Philosophical Tradition* (Bloomsbury, 2009), 90–91.

of our physical nature, that is, the goods of preserving our lives and health from dangers that threaten our continuing existence; the goods of our animal nature, including the good of sexuality and the goods to be achieved by educating and caring for our children; and the goods that belong to our nature as rational animals, the goods of knowledge, both of nature and of God, and the goods of a social life informed by the precepts of reason. ... Precepts that in this way give expression to the first principle of practical reason Aquinas calls primary precepts of the natural law. They are not derived from any more ultimate precept and therefore are known non-inferentially.³⁵

So ‘our nature’ is still there, quite properly of course—for the epistemological principle leads us from goods as the objects of intelligent action to the nature which is thereby illuminated and understood as the ontological source of the very possibility of intelligent action and flourishing. But now MacIntyre is acknowledging that the goods are known non-inferentially (as Aquinas and I have maintained), rather than—as he formerly held or seemed to hold—by observation of the normal functioning of a pre-understood ‘human nature’ or from some other theoretical premise or premises.

In the third phase, in his 2016 book *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, MacIntyre develops ‘an Aristotelian[-Thomist] account addressed to readers whose temper of mind is akin to that of ... [Bernard] Williams’, an account whose first element he presents as:

a matter of identifying a set of goods whose contribution to a good life, whatever one’s culture or social order, it would be difficult to deny. They are at least eightfold, beginning with good health and a standard of living – food, clothing, shelter – that frees one from destitution. Add to these good family relationships, sufficient education to make good use of opportunities to develop one’s powers, work that is productive and rewarding, and good friends. Add further time beyond one’s work for activities good in themselves, athletic, aesthetic, intellectual, and the ability of a rational agent

³⁵ MacIntyre, ‘Intractable Moral Disagreements’, in *Intractable Disputes About Natural Law*, 1-52, at 5–6. Later, at 24, MacIntyre assimilates these first practical principles with the more specified precepts against force and lying and so forth that he takes to be presuppositions of rational enquiry but again insists that these ‘first principles for practical reasoning ... cannot be justified by presenting them as conclusions inferred from premises’ and ‘are not findings or conclusions inferred from some antecedent set of judgments.’

to order one's life and to identify and learn from one's mistakes. Many excellent lives are so despite the absence from them of one or more of these. But the more of them that are absent the more resourceful an agent will have to be in coping with the difficulties that their absence causes ... [if one is to] achieve and enjoy the goods constitutive of the good life.³⁶

Thus, again the set of goods picked out—and their treatment as foundational—is essentially Aquinas', Grisez's, or mine.

I add that it is again slightly out of focus. In MacIntyre's 2009 inventory, the good of marriage appeared as 'the good of sexuality', and now in the third phase, the 2016 book, it is just 'good family relationships'. I have much sympathy for this blurring and discomfort, for in writing the first edition of *Natural Law and Natural Rights* I lacked the counter-cultural energy to find my way past the covert substitution, in the 1960s Latin-English edition of the *Summa*, of *commixtio* (sexual intercourse) in place of the authentic text's *conjunctio*, a suppression of Aquinas' reference to marriage rather than mere mating. But getting clear that the relevant first principle of practical reasoning is directing us to the dual-good basic good of marriage is a very notable improvement in understanding everything hereabouts—as I explain in detail across many pages of my book *Aquinas*.³⁷

VIII

I return, finally, to the question: can moral oughts be simply true? MacIntyre, as it happens, frequently entertains or suggests the thought that thinking which is concerned with truth is by definition a matter of *theoretical* (not practical) reason, and he quotes Aristotle and Aquinas seeming to say so.³⁸ But the passages quoted are abbreviations used while debating *other* matters. When the issue is directly raised, Aquinas is clear: theoretical thinking seeks truth for its own sake; practical (moral and pre-moral) thinking seeks to identify *and*

³⁶ Alasdair MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity: An Essay on Desire, Practical Reasoning, and Narrative* (Cambridge University Press, 2016), 216. For my own critique of Williams, see John Finnis, 'Bernard Williams on Truth's Values' in *Reason in Action*, 92–103.

³⁷ Finnis, *Aquinas*, 82, 97–8, 143–154, 181.

³⁸ MacIntyre, 'Intractable Moral Disagreements', 14–15.

do good actions, *but it does so under the guise* (the *ratio*) of truth.³⁹ And once or twice MacIntyre, it seems inconsistently but certainly rightly acknowledges that.⁴⁰

Practical truth is truth. Like non-practical truth it is found by critical attention to all relevant data and questions, coherence with all other truths, and correspondence, not to reality in the same sense as non-practical truth's correspondence (since practical principles and the propositions derived from them concern what is not yet real but might be made real by the actions they direct), but rather correspondence to human flourishing. That is, practical principles have their truth by anticipating—being in an intended anticipatory correspondence to—the fulfilment of all human beings so far as that, by the choice of the Creator, is possible through actions of individuals pursuing and conforming to those principles, having an openness to that common end at least implicitly in mind as the ultimate natural, reasonable, moral norm for all their choices.⁴¹

³⁹ Aquinas, ST I q. 79 a. 11 ad 2; likewise, q. 82 a. 3 ad 1; *In Eth.* VI.2 n.17; *De Veritate* q. 22 a.10 ad 2.

⁴⁰ MacIntyre, 'Intractable Moral Disagreements', 23–24.

⁴¹ Finnis, *Reason in Action*, 8 (and 2-8); *Aquinas*, 87, 99–100; also 124–129. For a sketch of the moral thought available to the child in continuity with the thinking sketched in this lecture, see John Finnis, *Collected Essays*, vol. IV: *Philosophy of Law* (Oxford University Press, 2011), 25–31.