Does Suffering Defeat Eudaimonic Practical Reasoning?[[1]](#endnote-1)

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This paper seeks to counter the argument that since Aquinas’s natural law obligations necessarily presuppose the ability of practical reason to prescribe and proscribe for the sake of eudaimonia, it is irrational in cases of inescapable suffering to characterize any natural law obligation as indefeasible. Four possible rebuttals of this argument from suffering are examined; but only three are judged successful. Their key premises are that, as Aristotle and Aquinas pointed out, this life’s eudaimonia is defined in terms of human nature and not in terms of individual psychological conditions, e.g., suffering; that suffering does not negate the rationality of hoping for attaining eudaimonia in the future; and that suffering necessarily precludes neither the virtuous acts that per se constitute this life’s eudaimonia nor the love that enables one to experience eudaimonic joy.

Introduction: The Eudaimonic Teleology of Practical Reason, Indefeasibility and the Argument from Suffering

For Aquinas, practical reason prescribes what is necessary for attaining ends and proscribes what frustrates those ends. The obligatoriness of those prescriptions and proscriptions is set by the necessity of the end.[[2]](#endnote-2) Since there is only one absolutely necessary end, the only indefeasible obligations are those pertaining to that end, which Aristotle called eudaimonia and Aquinas called beatitudo or happiness.[[3]](#endnote-3) Eudaimonic teleology thus characterizes the indefeasible obligations of natural law.[[4]](#endnote-4)

The eudaimonic teleology of Aquinas’s natural law raises the question of whether an inability to achieve eudaimonia would nullify moral obligations and make assisted suicide, for instance, morally permissible. These questions have become pressing with the increased popularity of utilitarianism and the belief that suffering precludes happiness. Here then is the argument from suffering.[[5]](#endnote-5) Indefeasible obligations are based on the eudaimonic necessity; but since this necessity presupposes the possibility of attaining eudaimonia; there can be no indefeasible obligations when suffering makes attaining eudaimonia impossible.

There are four generic ways of mounting a rebuttal. One could argue that suffering does not undermine moral obligations, because these are not based on eudaimonia but on some other good or goods. Or, one could argue that moral necessity arises from a type of eudaimonia unaffected by suffering. Or, one could argue that although suffering precludes eudaimonia here and now, the hope of attaining eudaimonia in the future suffices for moral necessity. Or, one could argue that suffering does not preclude attaining eudaimonia here and now. Let us consider these four possible rebuttals in succession.

First Possible Rebuttal: Alternative Principles of Indefeasible Obligations

One could attempt to preserve the insight that the necessity of obligations arise from the necessity of their ends, by arguing that the argument from suffering does not undermine the indefeasibility of moral obligations, because the necessity of natural law obligations arises from ends other than eudaimonia. Since these ends cannot be contingent or instrumental without eliminating the necessity that gives rise to indefeasible obligations, there are only two possibilities, namely, the inclinational goods that are the ends of the natural inclinations that are other than the will’s eudaimonic inclination to perfect good, and the good of adhering to God’s will as expressed through the goodness of Creation. The first possibility is taken by biologism or by what I call inclinational voluntarism; the second by what I call divine prescriptivism.[[6]](#endnote-6) Francisco Suarez is perhaps the most well-known proponent of divine prescriptivism.[[7]](#endnote-7)

The problem with identifying noneudaimonic inclinational goods as the source of indefeasibility is that although they are particular goods that facilitate human life, as their contraries are particular evils that harm human life, they lack sufficient necessity as ends, considered individually or collectively, to bind the will with indefeasible obligations: ultimately, only perfect goodness possesses indefeasible necessity.[[8]](#endnote-8) For this reason, David Hume was able to deal natural law a near fatal blow simply by pointing out that descriptions of particular goods do not generate moral obligations.[[9]](#endnote-9)

Natural law can attempt to defuse Hume’s attack either by restoring eudaimonic teleology to practical reason or by concurring with Suarez and other divine prescriptivists that nature becomes morally obligatory only after it is known to reflect God’s will. The latter option identifies God’s will as the source of moral indefeasibility. Although this divine source of indefeasibility is especially attractive to believers in God, it would mean that indefeasible obligations would be knowable only to believers in God. Consequently, identifying God as the source of natural law’s indefeasibility would transform natural law into a religious morality that either binds only believers in God or binds all by holding nonbelievers culpable for their lack of belief and for their lack of adherence to every religious norm. The first possible conflation of the obligations of natural law and religion would make natural law narrowly sectarian and leave inexplicable the universal indefeasibility that characterizes some moral obligations, e.g., to avoid murder. The second possible conflation would obliterate the distinction between religious morality and natural law that is presupposed by the right to religious freedom.[[10]](#endnote-10) Divine prescriptivism thus either unduly restricts the scope of natural law and renders the universality of indefeasibility inexplicable, or unduly expands the scope of natural law and nullifies the right to religious freedom.

Furthermore, equating natural law with a religious morality based on knowing God’s will transforms all moral disputes into religious disputes that cannot be rationally adjudicated until all share the same faith. I, for one, think that this cost is too high.

Second Possible Rebuttal: Eudaimonia and Moral Necessity is Unaffected by Suffering

If one assumes that eudaimonia requires activities that can be precluded by intense suffering, it may seem that the argument from suffering suffices to prove that those people who intensely suffer not only enter a “morally free zone” where they are not culpable for any wrong-doing, but also where they have no moral obligations. From this it would follow not only that they would incur no culpability for committing suicide but also that they—and their agents—would violate no moral norm were they to do so. This argument, however, works only on the mistaken supposition that it is not human nature but individual psychological conditions that set the requirements for eudaimonia and moral obligations. However, if this supposition were true, then the absence of culpability would also mean the absence of obligation. And if such were the case, it would make no sense to excuse an individual for failing in a moral duty under psychological duress, because he never would have had that obligation to be excused from in the first place.

Let me illustrate this point with a true story. A friend of a colleague moved to California and intended to will the good of others during earthquakes. He wanted to be the person who made sure that all got out safely. But as it happened, during his first earthquake he was talking to his boss who was standing between him and the door. The floor shook, the walls swayed, and the next thing that he knew he was outside; and his boss was not. He had no memory of how he got outside and worried that he had flung his boss aside in his panic to get out. Did he have an obligation not to harm his boss? Yes. Was he culpable for harming her—if he did indeed push her aside? No. It was his first earthquake; hence, his unanticipated panic excused any culpability for any untoward behavior—without, however, also eliminating his obligation to avoid harming the boss. Indeed, it is because he had this obligation and could not fulfill it that he incurred the additional obligation to learn how to alleviate future panic, so that he can fulfill his obligation not to harm others during earthquakes. His panic did not dispense with his obligation not to harm, but only excused his unanticipated behavior.

Obligations based on eudaimonic necessity must be set by human nature and not by the uniqueness of one’s psychological state. For if the identity of eudaimonia would vary according to the individual’s psychological state, then eudaimonia would not only cease to be that which all must seek in order to achieve fulfillment, but would also lack the absolute necessity required for explaining the indefeasibility that characterizes moral experiences. The identity of eudaimonia cannot thus be set by individual psychological states, but must be set by human nature. Accordingly, the inability to perform an activity does not mean that nature has ceased to be ordered towards that activity. For instance, blindness does not eliminate a person’s orientation to sight. Consequently, since suffering does not change one’s nature, it neither removes eudaimonia as the end of practical reason nor nullifies indefeasible eudaimonic obligations. Accordingly, anyone incapable of attaining eudaimonia would still be bound by eudaimonic necessity and the resulting moral obligations. Indeed, if there be any such persons, the frustration of their nature would add to their sufferings.

Therefore, any individual psychological state—such as intense suffering—that excuses one’s actions or omissions, excuses without also eliminating moral duties. So while it is possible that suffering can be so intense that one “loses one’s mind”—and the possibility of culpability; it is not the case that suffering places the sufferer in a morally free zone without obligations. This means that while suffering may excuse a suicide from culpability, it does not make suicide morally permissible. For suffering does not alter human nature and the conditions for eudaimonia. Consequently, those who suffer remain the neighbor in need to whom one owes the care that benevolence demands. Euthanasia is thus never morally permissible—not even if one has been “authorized” by contract or civil law to do so (as is possible, for instance, in the state of Oregon[[11]](#endnote-11)). For office cannot dispense the obligations based on human nature’s eudaimonic requirements. If, then, those who are intensely suffering---and their agents---are still bound by moral obligations, the argument from suffering fails. It is not then the case that suffering suffices to preclude moral obligations from being based on eudaimonic necessity.

This argument from human nature has assumed (not necessarily, but for the sake of argument) that it is possible for suffering to preclude eudaimonia, either now or in the future; the next two arguments challenge this assumption.

Third Possible Rebuttal: Hope and the Possibility of Future Eudaimonia

The argument from suffering presupposes that suffering dispenses with eudaimonic norms because eudaimonia is no longer possible—either now or in the future. And this is to suppose that suffering can make it irrational to hope for eudaimonic compensation. For instance, a mother of young children may well choose to suffer from ever more painful chemotherapy treatments in the hope of surviving her cancer or in the hope of buying some extra time. When these hopes die, so does the rationality of pursuing what has become futile chemotherapy. But in such cases does it also become rational to commit suicide or to recruit an agent to assist in one’s future suicide? Suicide or assisted suicide seems to be rational only if there is nothing left to hope. But does suffering make it rational to surrender the hope of attaining eudaimonia?

On this question hangs the balance of good and evil. For given the ubiquity of suffering, if it were the case that suffering suffices to eliminate the possibility of eudaimonia, evil would triumph over good. Yet, if evil were to triumph over good, then the world would lack the intelligibility that comes from the good and that makes science and metaphysics possible—even for atheists. Ayn Rand, for instance, pointed out that if it were not the case that good usually triumphs over evil, insurance companies could not make fortunes.[[12]](#endnote-12) Neither would it be the case that the body has restorative powers able to heal cuts and scrapes, nor the case that ecosystems devastated by fires are not forever left bereft of vegetation and wildlife. The metaphysics of good entailed by the intelligibility of being and the ability for good to triumph over evil thus makes it reasonable to hope that suffering need not eliminate the possibility of attaining eudaimonia.

The rationality of such hope increases when one considers that the metaphysics of good and being shows the rational necessity of an omnipotent and beneficent first cause.[[13]](#endnote-13) The God thus required by the metaphysics of good and being can permit evil only as long as evil does not triumph. But evil would triumph, if undeserved suffering would necessarily preclude eudaimonia.[[14]](#endnote-14) The metaphysics of good and being, thus, make it also rational to believe in God, and to entrust oneself and one’s suffering to His generosity and goodness. For, since suffering does not erase the objective truths about goodness, metaphysics, and God, it is rational to hope that suffering—even when fatal—does not make eudaimonia impossible. Socrates, the paradigmatic philosopher, said we are to “look forward to death with confidence and fix [our] minds on this one belief, which is certain, [namely], that nothing can harm a good man either in life or after death, and his fortunes are not a matter of indifference to the gods.”[[15]](#endnote-15)

It is the failure to hope for eudaimonic compensation that enables suffering to derail practical reason and make one not care about adhering to the moral truths that one knows. This means that suffering challenges us to remain morally motivated. And since ultimately only goodness motivates, suffering challenges one to find a good able to overcome the evil of suffering.[[16]](#endnote-16) For instance, it is the love of the child that motivates the mother to suffer through pregnancy and childbirth. Great suffering requires even greater goods to remain morally motivated. Perhaps some suffering is so awful that only God Himself can be adequate compensation. If so, there are situations where only a believer in God could remain motivated to act morally. Whether or not this is the case, the absence of moral motivation in the presence of intense suffering and despair does not rewire human nature away from its eudaimonic fulfillment, eviscerate the metaphysics of good and being, destroy the soul’s immortality, or vaporize God. Suffering cannot then destroy the rationality of hoping for eventually attaining eudaimonia. In brief, since human nature establishes the identity of eudaimonia and sets the objective parameters of morality, these do not change as long as there are human beings. Consequently, any impossibility of achieving eudaimonia here and now neither makes the hope for attaining eudaimonia in the future irrational nor vitiates moral obligations based on eudaimonic necessity. The argument from suffering thus fails.

Fourth Possible Rebuttal: The Compatibility of Suffering and Eudaimonia

At first glance, it seems to make sense that eudaimonia eludes those who are suffering: after all, how can those suffering be happy? It may accordingly seem rational for those who are intensely suffering to use any means at their disposal to escape their agony—including suicide or recruiting others to assist them in committing suicide. An Aristotelian analysis of eudaimonia, moreover, may seem to confirm the ability of suffering to preclude eudaimonia in so far as suffering preoccupies the mind and the primary form of eudaimonia requires one “to strain every nerve”[[17]](#endnote-17) to contemplate through philosophical wisdom what the gods contemplate.

But eudaimonia, as this life’s chief good, is also predicated, albeit analogously and secondarily, of virtuous activities; and these are not precluded by suffering. Indeed, suffering increases the opportunity for virtuous activity—even when suffering is fatal. For evidence we need look no further than the Nazi concentration camp. In that horror, some despaired and committed suicide. But not all. Not those who intended, according to Viktor Frankl in his Man’s Search for Meaning, to die well. What constitutes dying well? Frankl describes two ways of dying well. One of these ways requires one to recognize dying as an opportunity to be faithful and not to betray what one knows is true—as put by Frankl:

The way in which a man accepts his fate and all the suffering it entails, the way in which he takes up his cross, gives him ample opportunity—even under the most difficult circumstances—to add a deeper meaning to his life. It may remain brave, dignified and unselfish. Or in the bitter fight for self-preservation he may forget his human dignity and become no more than an animal. Here lies the chance for a man either to make use of or to forgo the opportunities of attaining the moral values that a difficult situation may afford him.[[18]](#endnote-18)

To realize while dying the moral values that guided one’s living is to make dying eudaimonic—even when painful. Indeed, to act for sake of goodness—when suffering precludes any possibility of feeling happy—is a true test of one’s character. After all, as Plato once argued,[[19]](#endnote-19) ultimately something is not good because it enables one to feel good, but it enables one to feel good because it is good. Eudaimonia as the ultimate good is thus not dependent on feelings but rather the reverse.

Consequently, it is not unusual for those suffering for the sake of some good to speak of joy.[[20]](#endnote-20) For instance, countless parents suffer for the sake of their young children, just as countless children suffer for the sake of their elderly and vulnerable parents. Such people say that they are glad that their suffering spares the ones they love. Love thus makes suffering bearable. For this reason, Frankl described the second way of dying well, as being aware that how one dies matters to others-–as put by Frankl:

[T]he hopelessness of our struggle did not detract from its dignity and its meaning. . . . someone looks down on each of us in difficult hours—a friend, a wife, somebody alive or dead, or a God—and he would not expect us to disappoint him. He would hope to find us suffering proudly—not miserably—knowing how to die.[[21]](#endnote-21)

Surely it is a great gift to those who love us to die well: it comforts them in their loss, confirms their belief in moral truths, wins their admiration, and strengthens their resolve to remain kind and good amidst their own suffering. Perhaps, ordinary mortals can make no greater gift to others than to confirm—in the face of death–the value of truth, goodness and love by remaining virtuous. Not only is such faithfulness a key eudaimonic habit, but such loving concern for others while suffering, and even dying, instantiates the love of neighbor that best embodies eudaimonic virtue.[[22]](#endnote-22) Thus, dying well with all of its suffering is not only compatible with eudaimonia but, as the morally virtuous act completing one’s life, is eudaimonic—albeit in a secondary sense.

This compatibility of eudaimonia and suffering suffices to disprove the argument from suffering: suffering neither necessarily precludes eudaimonia nor the moral obligations born of eudaimonic necessity. For as long as morally virtuous acts remain possible so does eudaimonia.

The argument from suffering also fails because the contemplation of God that constitutes this life’s primary form of eudaimonia need not be accomplished through philosophical acts that become more difficult when one is suffering. For even though Aristotle identified eudaimonia with the most excellent activities of reason, he also identified these activities as contemplating God and acting virtuously. And, these are the acts of a love that need not be compromised by suffering and that can be other than Christian charity.[[23]](#endnote-23) Eudaimonic acts are acts of love for three reasons.

First, Aristotle defined eudaimonia in terms of acts so desired for their own sake that they leave nothing else desired.[[24]](#endnote-24) Aquinas clarified that only perfect goodness can satisfy the will and its love.[[25]](#endnote-25) Since contentment occurs when love attains its object, contentment is a part of eudaimonia—not as its defining act—but as the effect of attaining what is loved by the will, namely, the perfect good.[[26]](#endnote-26) This means that without the contentment of love, eudaimonic acts would fail to be experienced as eudaimonic.[[27]](#endnote-27) Without contented love, eudaimonia would not be happiness.[[28]](#endnote-28) Eudaimonic acts are thus acts of love in so far as they are happiness, that is, in so far as they fulfill love’s desire.

Second, the activities of reason are undertaken when chosen by the will as ends. And, as Aquinas noted,[[29]](#endnote-29) ends are not sought unless loved. So unless God and moral virtue are loved, they cannot be ends of human action and choice. Indeed, given the goodness of God and the goodness of moral virtue, [[30]](#endnote-31) the eudaimonic activities of contemplating God and morally virtuous action can be re-described as the activities that properly respond to the goodness of God and to moral goodness. As such, they are acts of love.[[31]](#endnote-33) Thus, eudaimonic acts are acts of love in so far as love motivates the virtuous acts that are per se eudaimonic and rejoices in their attainment.[[32]](#endnote-34)

Love’s role in eudaimonia, moreover, explains why those who refuse to love devolve into misery and vice. And it explains why Aquinas identified the obligations of love as basic moral obligations and foundational moral principles.[[33]](#endnote-35)

The third reason why eudaimonic acts are acts of love, although not essentially so, is that none can be properly related to God and to one’s fellow human beings without love and such relatedness is the point of virtuous acts.[[34]](#endnote-36) If this were not the case, then not only would loving God above all and loving your neighbor as yourself not be foundational moral principles,[[35]](#endnote-37) but justice would not be an indispensable moral virtue. Indeed, Aristotle was right to argue that eudaimonia cannot be solitary, “since,” as put by Aristotle, “man is born for citizenship”[[36]](#endnote-38) and since the excellence of practical reason is found in the building and sustaining of communities,[[37]](#endnote-39) understood as nothing other than the friendly union of those who share a love both for the common good and for those who love that common good.[[38]](#endnote-40) Shared love is not only essential to establishing communities---or any kind of relatedness, but is also structured by the moral acts whereby community members act virtuously towards others and themselves. For instance, without temperance, one mistreats oneself and those relying on oneself. To act morally is to will good to others and to oneself.[[39]](#endnote-41) And, this is to love as Aquinas pointed out.[[40]](#endnote-42) Thus to act morally is to love oneself and others properly; it is to love God above all and neighbors as oneself.

To so love neighbors presupposes that they are like the self due to a shared love and justice (Aristotle[[41]](#endnote-43)), a shared humanity (Aquinas[[42]](#endnote-44)), or being a person (Wojytla[[43]](#endnote-45)). Whatever the basis for properly loving neighbors, the eudaimonic joy of being virtuous can be defeated by loneliness. This is not to say that virtuous action lacks its own intrinsic joy but that that joy does not suffice to counter the loneliness of being alone amongst knaves and cutthroats. [[44]](#endnote-46) And this is to say that one best experiences the eudaimonic joy of virtuous action through unions of love whereby one loves and is loved. In other words, the joy of moral virtue lays not only in the joy of being good and doing good, but also in the joy of being related to virtuous persons. After all, if eudaimonic joy could exist apart from belonging to community of two (or, more), human beings would be like islands, self-sufficient unto themselves without the need to achieve fulfillment by entering into relationships where self-fulfillment is attained not only through the gift of self to others but also through receiving the other’s gift of self.[[45]](#endnote-47) Consequently, the eudaimonic joy of virtue cannot be experienced unless, at the very least, one other person reciprocates our virtuous acts and joins with us in co-creating a virtuous, interpersonal communion. In other words, without reciprocation, love cannot unify; and, without virtuous unions of genuine love, loneliness kills happiness. Being united to another through virtuous love thus enables one to experience the eudaimonic joy of moral virtue.

Likewise, the happiness of contemplating God in this life is not merely the joy of understanding the universe in terms of its ultimate cause and the joy of knowing that the ultimate cause of oneself is the living God (rather than some impersonal force of nature), but also the joy of knowing God as a personal being of supreme intelligence and goodness ---as even Aristotle recognized. [[46]](#endnote-49) Hence, the primary form of eudaimonic contemplation cannot be properly understood as the cold appreciation for a well-constructed philosophical argument about God, or as the self-congratulatory acknowledgment that one is smart enough to identify the ultimate cause of the universe. Rather the superiority of eudaimonic contemplation lays only somewhat in the superiority of the contemplative act over discursive acts but mostly in the superiority of its object, which is none other than the living God. [[47]](#endnote-50) Consequently, the highest virtuous act of speculative reason is eudaimonic because it excels in connecting one to God. And since to contemplate is to gaze lovingly upon, there would be no contemplation of God apart from the love of God. And it is this love that brings joy to the eudaimonic act; it is the love of God that makes contemplating Him joyful.[[48]](#endnote-51)

Love, therefore, not only motivates the contemplating of God and the morally virtuous acts that build and sustain interpersonal connections, but also rejoices in being properly related to God and neighbors. For, it is the love of God and the love of neighbor that brings joy to this life’s eudaimonia. In other words, love connects us to God and neighbors, and thereby enables contemplative and morally virtuous acts to be experienced as happiness. The love of God and neighbors, accordingly, enables one to experience happiness, while also preserving Aristotle’s and Aquinas’s insight that reason’s speculative and practical virtuous activities are the per se eudaimonic acts of this life.[[49]](#endnote-53)

The joy that love brings to eudaimonia, moreover, makes it possible to predicate, analogously, eudaimonia of virtuous activities in this life—even though none of them can fully satisfy our heart and minds. For as we each know—or will eventually discover, in this life, no human being however virtuous can fully satisfy the yearning of the heart. And no God can be fully understood through His effects, no matter how thorough the contemplation.[[50]](#endnote-54) These inadequacies would leave us in torment and despair, if it were the case that the primary form of eudaimonia in this life, namely, the eudaimonic union with God, required perfect knowledge. But since love also unites,[[51]](#endnote-55) without presupposing perfect knowledge, [[52]](#endnote-56) it is the love of God that enables the contemplation of God to be experienced as somewhat eudaimonic in this life, rather than as an ache that only intensifies as increased contemplation of God increases the desire to know Him as He really is.[[53]](#endnote-58)

Furthermore, since love is not handicapped by imperfect knowledge, it is possible to love God even when it is impossible for one to follow a complex discussion of His existence and attributes. The limitations of reason are not also those of the will and love. The love of God only requires knowing that the ultimate cause of being and goodness is the living God.[[54]](#endnote-59) This causal knowledge need not be attained through philosophical argument; for instance, it can be given by seeing the goodness and beauty of nature as God’s gift.[[55]](#endnote-60) For this reason, the Akans say, “none can show God to a child.”[[56]](#endnote-61)

It is thus possible to know and love God even when philosophical argument is beyond one’s ability. For instance, Dr. Oliver Sacks described the case of a patient, Jimmy, whose alcoholism had destroyed his ability to know that he was no longer nineteen years old living in 1945.[[57]](#endnote-62) Although Jimmy could not remember anything for more than a few moments,[[58]](#endnote-63) he was able to spiritually concentrate and pray during Mass.[[59]](#endnote-64) Dr. Sacks also described the case of a woman, Rebecca, who “fully understood [and loved] the Orthodox service,” without also being able to use a key to open a door or to figure out that she was “jamming a hand or a foot into the wrong glove or shoe.”[[60]](#endnote-65) In these cases, religious belief compensated for a lack of philosophical ability and enabled God to be contemplated. Hence, it is not the case that the inability to deliberate or to grasp complex arguments precludes loving and contemplating God. Consequently, those suffering from certain cases of mental incapacitation who can still know and love God are capable of eudaimonic activity. And the argument from suffering fails yet again.

The argument from suffering also fails when suffering compromises one’s ability to engage in moral deliberation. For although moral deliberation is necessary in complex moral situations, it is not always necessary for establishing the loving unions of which eudaimonia may be analogously predicated. For ultimately there is only one act of genuine love: namely, the act of making love by affirming the other, whether by benevolence, by beneficence, or by manifesting appreciation for the other’s being.[[61]](#endnote-66) None of these necessarily requires complex moral deliberations, as shown, for instance, by the quick smile of appreciation. As a result, love remains possible even in those cases of intense suffering that reduces one to the state of only being able to thank care givers for their kindnesses. In such cases, the expression of appreciation undertaken to affirm the comforter may be the only virtuous act possible for the sufferer. As such, it is an eudaimonic act uniting the comforter and the sufferer in love. For this reason, joy and peace can permeate the most tragic sick rooms.

The unification of persons that occurs through love is not only what makes the giving of comfort a joy, but is also what enables one to bear the sight of suffering long enough and perceptively enough to give real comfort. Only love permits the personal presence so essential to comfort. Only love fears not the vulnerabilities unmasked, within the other—and oneself—by suffering. This unmasking, moreover, simplifies the affirmation of the other as a person, whether given with the bestowal or the reception of comfort, and unites, for that moment, the giver and the sufferer into love’s eudaimonic relationship. In no other case (shy of mystical union) is love’s eudaimonic unification so simple: there is no mistaking the reality of comfort, the giver’s goodwill, and the sufferer’s appreciation for the giver.

Suffering thus facilitates eudaimonic relationships. And, once again, the argument from suffering fails: it is not the case that suffering necessarily precludes this life’s eudaimonia and nullifies indefeasible eudaimonic obligations.

Conclusion:

The argument from suffering charges natural law with the incoherence of grounding morality’s indefeasibility on that which is not always attainable, namely, eudaimonia. I have argued that the attempt to counter this argument by basing indefeasibility on a good other than eudaimonia either renders the universality of moral indefeasibility inexplicable or compromises the right to religious freedom by conflating natural law and religious morality. The other rebuttals, unlike the first one, succeed. They show that the argument from suffering fails because eudaimonia is defined according to human nature rather than according to the individual’s psychological state, and because hope for attaining eudaimonia in the future remains rational for those who suffer, and because suffering is here and now compatible with the virtuous acts constitutive of love and this life’s eudaimonia. Consequently, suffering does not eliminate the indefeasibility of moral obligations based on eudaimonia.

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Endnotes

1. . I wish to thank my convention interlocutors for their helpful comments and challenges, especially Edward Houser and my commentator Colleen McCluskey. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. . S.T. I-II.99.1c: "Since a precept of law is binding, it is about something which must be done: and, that a thing must be done, arises from the necessity of some end. Hence it is evident that a precept implies, in its very idea, relation to an end, insofar as a thing is commanded as being necessary or expedient to an end." Summa Theologica, Translated by English Dominicans, 3 vols (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947. (Hereafter S.T.). [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. . Aquinas, like Aristotle, predicated eudaimonia or happiness analogously. De Veritate q. 14, 2c: "Man, however, has a twofold final good, which first moves the will as a final end. The first of these is proportionate to human nature since natural powers are capable of attaining it. This is the happiness about which the philosophers speak, either as contemplative, which consists in the act of wisdom, or active, which consists first of all in the act of prudence, and in the acts of the other moral virtues as they depend on prudence. The other is the good which is out of all proportion with man's nature because his natural powers are not enough to attain to it either in thought or desire.” The Disputed Questions on Truth, trans. James V. McGlynn, S.J. (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1953), Vol. II.

   It is controversial whether this life’s happiness underpins the moral obligations of natural law. I have argued that it does; see my "Rediscovering Eudaimonistic Teleology," The Monist. 75, 1 (January 1992): 71-83. For arguments to the contrary see, for instance, Denis J. M. Bradley, Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good: Reason and Human Happiness in Aquinas's Moral Science, (Washington, D. C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1992). [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. . I argue this point extensively from the perspective of Aquinas’s natural law in Obligations, Personalist Natural Law, and Global Morality: Ultimate Foundations, (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, forthcoming), Chapters 2, 6, and 7. (Hereafter Ultimate Foundations). Also see , under my maiden name, R. Mary Hayden, “Love and the First Principles of St. Thomas’s Natural Law.” University Microfilm International, 1988. (Hereafter “Love”). [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. . I am grateful to my colleagues Sandra Menssen and Thomas D. Sullivan for bringing my attention to the challenge that suffering poses indefeasible obligations. They argue that God alone suffices as the basis for these obligations in their book The Agnostic Inquirer: Revelation from a Philosophical Standpoint (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 270. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. For an in-depth discussion see Ultimate Foundationschapters one and two. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. . Francisco Suarez, On Laws and God the Lawgiver, Book Two, Chapter Six, n. 8, line 123, p.192. Also at 194: “God has complete providence over men; therefore, it becomes Him, as the supreme Governor of nature, to prohibit evil and prescribe that which is good; hence, although the natural reason reveals what is good and what is bad to rational nature, nevertheless God, as the Author and Governor of that nature, commands that certain actions shall be performed or avoided, in accordance with the dictates of reason.” Cited from A Treatise on Laws and God the Lawgiver. [De Legibus Ac Deo Legislatore)] in Sections from Three Works of Francisco Suarez, S.J., Ed. James Brown Scott, Trans. Gwladys L. Williams, Ammi Brown, John Waldron, Henry Davis, S.J., Introduction by James Brown Scott, The Classics of International Law, Ed. James Brown Scott (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1944). [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. . See R. Mary Hayden, “Natural Inclinations and Moral Absolutes: A Mediated Correspondence for Aquinas," American Catholic Philosophical Proceedings LXIV (l990): 130-50. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. . Treatise of Human Nature. Bk Three “Of Morals,” part 1, section 1 (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1992), 469-70. “I cannot forbear adding to these reasonings an observation, which may, perhaps, be found of some importance. In every system of morality, which I have hitherto met with, I have always remark’d, that the author proceeds for some time in the ordinary way of reasoning, and establishes the being of a God, or makes observations concerning human affairs; when of a sudden I am surpriz’d to find, that instead of the usual copulations of propositions, is, and is not, I meet with no proposition that is not connected with an ought , or an ought not. This change is imperceptible; but is, however, of the last consequence. For as this ought, or ought not, expresses some new relation or affirmation, ‘tis necessary that it shou’d be observ’d and explain’d; and at the same time that a reason should be given, for what seems altogether inconceivable, how this new relation can be a deduction from others, which are entirely different from it. But as authors do not commonly use this precaution, I shall presume to recommend it to the readers; and am persuaded, that this small attention wou’d subvert all the vulgar systems of morality, and let us see, that the distinction of vice and virtue is not founded merely on the relations of objects, nor is perceiv’d by reason.” [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. The right to religious freedom presumes that religious faith imposes obligations that are beyond the scope of natural law, e.g., kosher laws or the mandate to attend Mass on Sunday. Aquinas, for instance, argued in S.T. I-II.100.3 ad 2 that the divinely revealed commandment to keep holy the Sabbath has two components, namely, the natural law prescription to honor God and the religious obligation to set aside a certain day to do so. This distinction between religious and natural law obligations enabled 18th century Americans to abandon the colonial conflation of religious morality and natural law’s public morality while preserving their conviction that religious morality takes precedence over public law---hence, the Constitution’s first amendment. See Michael W. McConnell, “The Origins and Historical Understanding of Free Exercise of Religion,” Harvard Law Review 103 #7 (1990): 1409-1517, especially pp. 1422-1427; Sandford H. Cobb, The Rise of Religious Liberty in America: A History (New York and London: MacMillan Company, 1902); Benjamin Hart, Faith and Freedom: The Christian Roots of American Liberty, (Here’s Life Publishers, 1988); and, my “Tolerance, Society, and the First Amendment: Reconsiderations,” University of St. Thomas Law Journal Vol. 3 #1 (2005): 75-91. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. By permitting suicide, the state of Oregon, in effect, denies that human life is intrinsically good. It thereby attacks American jurisprudence as based on natural law. See, for instance, my “Compassion and the Personalism of American Jurisprudence: Bioethical Entailments” in Bioethics with Liberty and Justice: Themes in the Work of Joseph M. Boyle (New York, Springer, forthcoming); and my “Suffering and Transcendence,” Suffering and Hope Conference, (Houston: University of St. Thomas, 2005), available on-line at http://www.stthom.edu/Schools\_Centers\_of\_Excellence/Centers\_of\_Excellence/Center\_for\_Thomistic\_Studies/Resources\_Achievements/Suffering\_and\_Hope\_Conference.aqf [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. . Ayn Rand, “The Ethics of Emergencies,” 43-49, in The Virtue of Selfishness, (New American Library, 1964), 49. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. . Contingent being would not exist, if it were not for the causality exercised by a necessary being. For an in-depth treatment of metaphysical arguments for the existence of God see Dennis Bonnette, Aquinas' Proofs for God's Existence: St.Thomas Aquinas on `The Per Accidens necessarily implies the Per Se,' (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1972). [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. . If suffering is deserved, it is a punishment that promotes the good or defends it. Either way, evil is being subordinated to the good. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Plato, Apology 41d. Transl. Hugh Tredennick pp. 3-26 in The Collected Dialogues of Plato Including the Letters. Eds. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns. Bollingen Series LXXI (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961). [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. For a discussion of the spiritual goods attainable through suffering, see Eleonore Stump, Aquinas (New York: Routledge, 2003): 455-479. (Hereafter Aquinas). Also see Louis Evely, Suffering. Tr. Marie-Claude Thompson (Garden City: Image Books, 1974). John Paul II connects suffering to salvific love. See, for instance, Dives in Misericordia (14.3) and Dominum et Vivificantem (40.1-40.4) in The Encyclicals of John Paul II, Tr. Vatican Press. Ed. J. Michael Miller, C.S.B. (Huntington: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, 1996), pages 110-150 and 268-339 respectively. (Hereafter Dives in Misericordia and Dominum et Vivificantem). [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. . Nicomachean Ethics 10.7 (1178a1). Tr. W. D. Ross. In Richard McKeon, ed., Introduction to Aristotle, Modern Library College Editions (New York: Random House, 1947). (Hereafter N.E.) [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. . Man’s Search for Meaning (New York: Pocket Books, 1985), 88. (Hereafter Man’s Search). [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. . Euthyphro, 10e. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. The joy possible amidst suffering is neither a pleasure nor a bubbly delight. For joy is volitional rather than a psychosomatic feeling. Joy arises from the presence of a good known by reason and loved by the will. See S.T. I-II.31.3 and S.T. II-II.28.1. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. . Man’s Search, p. 104. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. See Ultimate Foundations, ch. 6, 7, 13. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. Aquinas defines Christian charity as divinely bestowed friendship with God. See S.T.I-II.65.5c: “ Charity signifies not only the love of God, but also a certain friendship with Him; which implies, besides love, a certain mutual return of love, together with mutual communion.” Also see S.T. II-II.23.1c: “Accordingly, since there is a communication between man and God, inasmuch as He communicates His happiness to us, some kind of friendship must needs be based on this same communication, of which it is written (1 Corinthians 1:9): ‘God is faithful, by Whom you are called unto the fellowship of His Son.’ The love which is based on this communication, is charity.” Besides Christian charity, there is also a natural love whereby God is loved above all. See S.T. I.60.5c: “[F]rom natural love angel and man alike love God before themselves and with a greater love. Otherwise, if either of them loved self more than God, it would follow that natural love would be perverse, and that it would not be perfected but destroyed by charity.” The natural love of God and Christian charity are analogous. They are alike in being directed to God; different in how God is known and loved. See S.T. I-II.109.3 ad 1: “Charity loves God above all in a higher way than nature does. For nature loves God above all things inasmuch as He is the beginning and the end of natural good; whereas charity loves Him, as He is the object of beatitude, and inasmuch as man has a spiritual fellowship with God.” For an in-depth discussion see “Love.” [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. . N.E, I.7 (1097b15-17): “[T]he self-sufficient we now define as that which when isolated makes life desirable and lacking in nothing; and such we think happiness to be; and further we think it most desirable of all things.” [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. . S.T. I-II.5.8c: "I answer that, Happiness can be considered in two ways. First according to the general notion of happiness: and thus, of necessity, every man desires happiness. For the general notion of happiness consists in the perfect good, as stated above (3,4). But since good is the object of the will, the perfect good of a man is that which entirely satisfies his will. Consequently to desire happiness is nothing else than to desire that one's will be satisfied. And this everyone desires. Secondly we may speak of Happiness according to its specific notion, as to that in which it consists. And thus all do not know Happiness; because they know not in what thing the general notion of happiness is found. And consequently, in this respect, not all desire it.” [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. S.T. 1-11.2.7 ad 2: “[H]appiness is loved above all, as the good desired.” [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. S.T. I-II.1.8c: “[T]he end is twofold,---the end for which and the end by which; viz., the thing itself . . . and the use or acquisition of that thing.” S.T. I-II.2.7c: “Therefore the thing itself which is desired as end, is that which constitutes happiness; but the attainment of this thing is called happiness.” [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. S.T. I-II.4.1c: “[D]elight is necessary for happiness. For it is caused by the appetite being at rest in the good attained.” [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. . See, for instance, S. T. I-II.28.6c: "Every agent acts for an end . . . Now the end is the good desired and loved by each one. Wherefore it is evident that every agent, whatever it be, does every action from love of some kind." [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. . Aristotle argued that it is the goodness of God that enables Him to be the unmoved mover in so far as His goodness attracts the love of the heavenly moved movers. See Metaphysics, 12.6 (1072b5): “The final cause, then, produces motion as being loved, but all other things move by being moved.” Trans. W. D. Ross, The Basic Works of Aristotle, Ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941). (Hereafter Meta.) [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
31. In S.T. I-II.56 ad 1, Aquinas refined Augustine’s claim that virtue is love by noting that virtue depends on love “insofar as it depends on the will, whose first movement consists in love.” Also see S.T. I-II.61.2c: “[T]he formal principle of . . . virtue . . . is good as defined by reason.” [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
32. If eudaimonia were constituted per se by love, then eudaimonia would be an act of the will. But this cannot be, as Aquinas argued (S.T. I-II.3.4c): “(H)appiness is the attainment of the last end. But the attainment of the end does not consist in the very act of the will. For the will is directed to the end, both absent when it desires it; and present, when it is delighted by resting there.” [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
33. . S.T. I-II.100.3 ad 1: “Thus in response to the first [objection] it must be said that those two precepts [Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and Thou shalt love thy neighbor, Matt. xxii. 37, 39] are the first and common precepts of natural law, that are self-evident to human reason, either through nature or through faith. Wherefore all the precepts of the Decalogue are referred to these as conclusions to common principles.” (Translation mine). "Ad primum ergo dicendum quod illa duo praecepta [obj. one: 'Diliges Dominum tuum, et Diliges proximum tuum, ut habetur Matt. 22'] sunt prima et communia praecepta legis naturae, quae sunt per se nota rationi humanae, vel per naturam vel per fidem. Et ideo omnia praecepta decalogi ad illa duo referuntur sicut conclusiones ad principia communia." (Marietti, l950).

    Aquinas's identification of the prescriptions to love God above all and to love neighbors as oneself as the first principles of the decalogue and thereby of eudaimonic morality makes sense: he was specifying not only the raison d'etre for the acts which are eudaimonic, but also the inner inspiration for any virtuous act, namely, that it is done for love. After all, to love is to will good. [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
34. See Ultimate Foundations esp. ch 19. And see S.T. I-II. 57.1 ad 2: “Virtue is about certain things in two ways. In the first place a virtue is about its object. . . . Secondly, a virtue is . . . about its acts.” S.T.I-II. 28.4 ad 2: “Good is loved in as much as it can be communicated to the lover.” [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
35. Establishing that the love of God and neighbor can be other than Christian charity while also being the foundational principles of natural law has been argued by me since 1988. See “Love;” , especially ch. 6-9 The foundational importance of love for natural law has also been argued by John Finnis, Aquinas: Moral, Political, and Legal Theory.(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), esp. 126; and Jean Porter, Natural and Divine Law: Reclaiming the Tradition for Christian Ethics (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co. 1999). Finnis, however, restricts his discussion to neighborly love; and, Porter places her discussion in the context of divine law. [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
36. . N.E., I.7 (1097b11). N.B. Citizenship can be religious as well legal, as shown by St. Augustine’s City of God. [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
37. . N.E. I.2 (1094a17-1094b11): “If, then, there is some end . . . which we desire for its own sake . . . this must be the good and the chief good. . . . It would seem to belong to . . . politics. . . . [T]his end must be the good for man. For even if the end is the same for a single man and for a state . . . it is finer and more godlike to attain it for a nation.” N.E.I. 4 (1094b15): “[P]olitical science aims at . . . what is the highest of all goods achievable by action.” [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
38. . For a fuller discussion of how the mutual commitment to the common good establishes civic friendship, see Michael Pakaluk. "Political Friendship," in Leroy S. Rouner, Ed., The Changing Face of Friendship, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 197-212. [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
39. . S.T. II-II.47.6c: "The end of moral virtues is human good." [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
40. . S. T. I-II.29.4c: ". . . to love a man is to will good to him." Also see S. T. II-II.23.1c; I-II.46.2c; and, S. T. II-II.27.2c. Aquinas was not the first to hold that goodwill is rooted in love; see, for instance, Cicero's De Amicitia, c. 8, n. 26: "For it is love (amor), from which the word ‘friendship’ is derived, that leads to the establishing of goodwill." For an in-depth treatment see Ultimate Foundations, esp. ch. 7; or, “Love.” [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
41. . N.E. 7.11 (1161a34-1161b7): “For where there is nothing common . . . , there is not friendship either, since there is not justice. . . . [T]here seems to be some justice between any man and any other who can share in a system of law or be a party to an agreement; therefore there can also be a friendship with him in so far as he is man.” [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
42. . S.T. I-II.27.3c: “Accordingly . . . likeness causes love of friendship or well-being. For the very fact that two men are alike, having, as it were, one form, makes them to be, in a manner, one in that form: thus two men are one thing in the species of humanity, and two white men are one thing in whiteness. Hence the affections of one tend to the other, as being one with him; and he wishes good to him as to himself.” [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
43. . Love and Responsibility, Karol Wojtyla. Tr. H.T. Willetts (New York: Farrar-Straus-Giroux, 1981): 41: “[A]nd the personalistic norm says: ‘A person is an entity of a sort to which the only proper and adequate way to relate is love.’” (Hereafter L.R.). [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
44. Neither Aristotle nor Aquinas treated the problems caused by being lonely in one’s virtue. They did not then consider whether this life’s eudaimonia requires having best friends or simply virtuous friends; and, if the latter, whether being in a virtuous community---albeit without confidants---would also suffice for this life’s eudaimonic joy. See N.E. ix.9 (1170b14-19): “If, then, being is in itself desirable for the supremely happy man (since it is by its nature good and pleasant), and that of his friends is very much the same, a friend will be one of the things that are desirable. Now that which is desirable for him he must have, or he will be deficient in this respect. The man who is to be happy will therefore need virtuous friends.” And see, S.T. I-II.4.8c: “If we speak of the happiness of this life, the happy man needs friends, as the Philosopher says (Ethic. ix.9) not, indeed, to make use of them, since he suffices himself; nor to delight in them, since he possesses perfect delight in the operation of virtue; but for the purpose of good operation, viz. that he may do good to them; that he may delight in seeing them do good; and again that he may be helped by them in his good work.”

    Aquinas’s argument in this text, however, is somewhat ambiguous: would “perfect delight in the operation of virtue” occur even if one were surrounded by knaves and cutthroats, and bereft of a compensatory relationship to God? If so, human beings would not fundamentally be social animals. Our need to connect with others is so vital that Aristotle even builds it into his understanding of eudaimonia. See N.E. I.vii (8-11): “[T]he final good is thought to be self-sufficient. Now by self-sufficient we do not mean that which is sufficient for man by himself, for one who lives a solitary life, but also for parents, children, wife, and in general for his friends and fellow citizens, since man is born for citizenship.” Regardless of how these texts ought to be interpreted, it seems to me that since virtuous acts require one to love, at least to some degree, the recipient of one’s virtuous deeds, the joy of acting virtuously would increase as one’s love for the recipient increases and become maximized when in the context of virtuous friendship. [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
45. Karol Wojtyla (L.R., 126) called the need to attain self-fulfillment through the gift of self, the law of ekstasis. Wojtyla (L.R., 85) also argued that unrequited love dries up and perishes. Love’s unification is thereby lost. Although the need for reciprocity was made in the context of romantic love, it applies to all loves: reciprocation not only keeps them alive and determines the identity of the mutual love, but also enables unification to occur (L.R. 84-88). Indeed this fact can be used to argue for the existence of the Christian God: if He did not reciprocate love for love, the hermit could not endure his solitude. John Paul II, moreover, applied the circle of giving and receiving love to Christian mercy. See Dives in Misericordia (14.2): “In reciprocal relationships between persons merciful love is never a unilateral act or process. . . . [I]n reality the one who gives is always also a beneficiary.” (14.3): “An act of merciful love is only really such when we are deeply convinced at the moment that we perform it that we are at the same time receiving mercy from the people who are accepting it from us.” [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
46. That God is living, thinking, and good was argued by Aristotle, Meta. 12.7 (1072a25-28): “And life also belongs to God; for the actuality of thought is life, and God is that actuality; and God’s self-dependent actuality is life most good and eternal. We say therefore that God is a living being, eternal, most good.” [↑](#endnote-ref-49)
47. . S.T. II-II.180.7 ad 3: "Yet, though the contemplation of Divine things which is to be had by wayfarers is imperfect, it is more delightful than all other contemplation however perfect, on account of the excellence of that which is contemplated.” [↑](#endnote-ref-50)
48. . S.T. II-II.180.7c: "[C]ontemplation may be delightful on the part of its object, in so far as one contemplates that which one loves; even as bodily vision gives pleasure, not only because to see is pleasurable in itself, but because one sees a person whom one loves.” [↑](#endnote-ref-51)
49. . See S.T. I-II.5.5c: “Imperfect happiness that can be had in this life, can be acquired by man by his natural powers, in the same way as virtue, in whose operation it consists.” Also see S.T. I-II.3.5c: “But imperfect happiness, such as can be had here, consists first and principally in contemplation, but secondarily, in an operation of the practical intellect directing human actions and possessions.” [↑](#endnote-ref-53)
50. . S.T. I-II.5.3 ad 2. “The imperfection of participated happiness is due to one of two causes. First, on the part of the object of happiness, which is not seen in Its Essence: and this imperfection destroys the nature of true happiness. Secondly, the imperfection may be on the part of the participator, who indeed attains the object of happiness, in itself, namely, God: imperfectly, however, in comparison with the way in which God enjoys Himself. This imperfection does not destroy the true nature of happiness; because, since happiness is an operation, as stated above (Question 3, Article 2) the true nature of happiness is taken from the object, which specifies the act, and not from the subject.” Also see S.T. I-II.3.8. [↑](#endnote-ref-54)
51. [↑](#endnote-ref-55)
52. . S.T. I-II.27.2 ad 2: “Something is required for the perfection of knowledge, that is not requisite for the perfection of love. For knowledge belongs to the reason, whose function it is to distinguish things which in reality are united, and to unite together, after a fashion, things that are distinct, by comparing one with another. Consequently the perfection of knowledge requires that man should know distinctly all that is in a thing, such as its parts, powers, and properties. On the other hand, love is in the appetitive power, which regards a thing as it is in itself: wherefore it suffices, for the perfection of love, that a thing be loved according as it is known in itself. Hence it is, therefore, that a thing is loved more than it is known; since it can be loved perfectly, even without being perfectly known. This . . . applies to the love of God.” [↑](#endnote-ref-56)
53. The ache that exists until the essence of God is known is the reason why Aquinas argued that only the heavenly vision of God can fully satisfy human desire. See S.T. I-II.3.8c. [↑](#endnote-ref-58)
54. . S.T. I.12.12c: From God’s sensible effects, “we can be led from them so far as to know of God whether He exists and to know of Him what must necessarily belong to Him as the first cause of all things.” [↑](#endnote-ref-59)
55. . Archibald Routledge argued that the beauty of the nature does not contribute to human survival but rather to the awareness of God’s love; see Peace in the Heart (Garden City, Doubleday Doran Co, 1930). [↑](#endnote-ref-60)
56. . Kwasi Wiredu, “An Akan Perspective on Human Rights,” in Human Rights in Africa: Cross Cultural Perspectives. (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institute Press, 1970), 157-171, at 167. [↑](#endnote-ref-61)
57. . Oliver Sacks, The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat and Other Clinical Tales, Touchstone Edition (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998), 25. I am grateful to Eleonore Stump for bringing to my attention, through her Aquinas, the relevance of Dr. Sack’s clinical experiences for capturing the range of contemplative acts. [↑](#endnote-ref-62)
58. . Ibid., p. 27. [↑](#endnote-ref-63)
59. . Ibid.*,* p. 37-39. [↑](#endnote-ref-64)
60. . Ibid.*,* pp. 178-9. [↑](#endnote-ref-65)
61. Cf. L.R. (123): “[T]he fundamental ethical characteristic of love [is that] it is an affirmation of the person or else it is not love at all. . . . Love as a virtue is oriented by the will towards the value of the person.” [↑](#endnote-ref-66)