

## Servais Pinckaers: Returning to a Thomistic Morality of Happiness and Beatitude

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The twentieth-century saw an energetic revival of interest in the works of St. Thomas Aquinas in a daring attempt to rediscover and renew the original insight of his thought. Moral theology in particular laid the working ground for many exciting contemporary theologians<sup>1</sup> to uncover the original inspiration of the Angelic Doctor and so to propose a refreshing return to his method and insight. One such author is the Belgian-born Dominican theologian Servais Pinckaers. In his own attempt to rediscover the thought of Aquinas he formulates a complete moral theology founded upon a principal thread which he believes is woven throughout the whole body of Aquinas' treatise on morality. Pinckaers' compelling insight offers a complete systematization of Christian ethics according to the belief that virtue, alongside the New Law of the Gospel, stands at the root and centre of the entire moral life. This presupposition, the internal unifying principle of his entire moral system, has given rise to a new school of thought which has become known simply as virtue ethics. In fact, virtue, according to Pinckaers, is the point of departure for St. Thomas' whole ethical teaching and so must regain its rightful place in contemporary Thomist interpretations. This school proposes little that is new or original but rather is a faithful and renewed interpretation of Thomas' initial treatment of the subject. This is not, however, the only insight Pinckaers has to offer. Crucially, by presenting the functional necessity of virtue in the moral life, he is also able to carefully re-establish the principle motivator of all human action which is a

natural and primordial desire for happiness. Since the virtues are directed towards the fulfilment of this higher supernatural goal, man is given the real possibility of achieving both his own natural happiness and fulfilment, and ultimate communion with God through beatitude. This is precisely what Pinckaers attempts to show by linking the functional operations of moral judgement and moral action to their proper end which is ultimate happiness or beatitude. Furthermore, Pinckaers shows that the primordial desire for happiness must remain the root cause of morally upright action, and not, at least primarily, external moral prescriptions or casuistic models. The individual should be inspired to action above all by the New Law of grace, and not the demands of lesser, exterior laws. He focuses his attention on the interior dynamism which ought to guide moral discernment and instruct concrete action. In this process, he shows the need to be governed by the objective voice of truth which is presented through practical reason, informed by the virtues and perfected by prudence. He argues for the need to develop the moral personality, and above all authentic human freedom, through a deliberate and lifelong formation. In this way, Pinckaers presents a complete and convincing Christian approach which not only fulfils man's primordial desire for natural happiness, but sets him on course to attain a type of happiness which lies far beyond the logical grasp of his own limited nature, that is, ultimate beatitude.

*Pinckaers' Virtue Theory in Context*

Pinckaers' efforts to renew contemporary Christian ethics come at a significant time of global renewal and refreshment within the Catholic Church owing to the extensive achievements of the Second Vatican Council. In fact, some of the key insights of the Council Fathers occupy a central place in much of Pinckaers' work, thus providing a glimpse of the general atmosphere of openness and renewal which characterized theological debate at that time. Among the key concerns of the period is the re-establishment of Revelation as the primary source of theology and doctrine, a return to key patristic sources, especially St. Augustine, and finally a universal endorsement of the lasting value of Aquinas' method and insight, an insight which also makes recourse to non-Christian, Hellenized wisdom sources. These are all crucial energies which likewise underpin the virtue theory of Pinckaers and form the theological and ecclesial context from which his thought emerges. However, it is also vital to recognise the powerful social influences of his day, influences which undoubtedly have a role to play in his desire to abandon particular moralities which appear to be divorced from the human impulse for lasting happiness. A general lack of orientation within the new contemporary social order and the crisis of post-war morality are all trends which, according to Pinckaers, demonstrate a fundamental flaw in the conceptual organization and structure of ethics. In this sense, morality appears to have lost its beating heart, a fact which, he says, has led to a profound impoverishment in the appreciation of the greatness for which man was created: no less than unity with God.

If, then, this is the immediate context of Pinckaers, where is he placed historically in the wider context of moral theological speculation and development? To answer this question it is necessary to refer to the school of nominalism

and its profound influence upon later moralities of obligation and ethical legalism which dominated the later manualist period. Pinckaers acknowledges the powerful but ultimately futile forces of this school which moulded Catholic moral teaching and pastoral instruction from the time of the scholastic period onwards. He also has first-hand experience of the residual and debilitating effects of these approaches in our own day, unattached as they are from the primary interior motivation of charity. Ironically, however, he also acknowledges that he and Ockham, the renowned father of nominalism, both make claim to the same eminent source, the ethics of Aquinas, in constructing their respective moralities, even though both depart in radically different directions. Pinckaers intends to provide a truer, more faithful interpretation of Aquinas which, he argues, has always relied on particular principles which are curiously and critically absent from Ockham's approach. He defends happiness as the unifying hermeneutic upon which ethics must be constructed, and asserts beatitude as both the inspiration and end (particular and final) of all moral action. He also insists upon the priority of the internal conscience which imposes itself upon moral judgement, and relegates the external forces of law and obligation to a lesser, subordinate role which had otherwise enjoyed a place of prominence in moralities constructed upon the earlier schools of nominalism and Kantian idealism. According to this new unifying concept of beatitude, Pinckaers is able to renew the treatment of the key faculties and instruments of moral action, such as conscience, moral judgement, law and casuistry. He also argues for the necessity of forming a virtue-*habitus*, particularly of prudence, when acting towards the particular and final ends.

*Pinckaers' Sources*

Pinckaers relies overwhelmingly on the ethics of St. Thomas Aquinas as the primary

source of his virtue ethics approach, with a particular focus upon the moral sections of the *secunda pars* of the *Summa Theologiae*. However, his sources implicitly include a wider range of thinkers, owing to Aquinas' own reliance on the foundational thought of other key thinkers or authorities from the world of Greek philosophy and Greco-Roman culture,<sup>2</sup> particularly Aristotle. Pinckaers does point out the real limitations in relying upon philosophical sources, especially when dealing with "questions about our final end and beatitude, which constitute the backbone of the entire Thomistic moral theology",<sup>3</sup> yet he is not reluctant to endorse Aquinas' frequent recourse to Greek wisdom where he identifies a useful overlap in their simultaneous treatment of theology and philosophy<sup>4</sup> and their diligent preoccupation with "the great question of happiness"<sup>5</sup>, both primary concerns which the Greeks and later Christian schools have in common. Pinckaers recognises that Aquinas is keen to exploit this shared preoccupation<sup>6</sup> and so draws from these unconventional sources in order to build upon and Christianize the secular quest for true and lasting happiness. Nonetheless, in order to give a definitive theological and specifically Christian orientation to questions of this nature, Pinckaers endorses Aquinas' extensive use of the great works of the Church Fathers of the patristic period, among which St. Augustine has a particular pre-eminence. Pinckaers also acknowledges the necessity to cite the most prominent thinkers of the early scholastic period, including figures such as Peter Lombard and others, who would prove to be decisive in the systematic re-organization of moral theology which profoundly impacted upon Aquinas' own structuring of moral theology.<sup>7</sup> However, above all, he commits himself to the principle works of Aquinas in forming his virtue theory which, as we have said, is itself moulded by a rich pattern of the most reliable and eminent sources:

A speculative examination of his [Thomas'] work is rounded out by a historical

consideration that reveals the genesis and unfolding of his thought, helping us to perceive better its vitality and richness. Such a study also aids us in discovering the timelessness of a teaching nourished by the great scriptural and patristic traditions.<sup>8</sup>

Hermeneutically, Pinckaers follows the example of both the patristic Fathers and the early Scholastics<sup>9</sup> who "distinguish different levels among the authors they cite, according to their degree of authority, their capacity to communicate knowledge, and manifest truth, or, in a word, their luminosity".<sup>10</sup> According to these criteria Pinckaers, like Aquinas, places the wisdom of Divine Revelation, with a particular dependency on the Sermon on the Mount, at the summit of his hierarchy of sources. He also consults with the moral instruction contained in the Letters of St. Paul,<sup>11</sup> and in so doing endorses for himself a definite Pauline methodology when considering general moral problems. Consistent with this approach, he re-affirms that primacy be given to the internal Evangelical Law in deciding upon the right course of moral action and designates a restricted, merely formative role, to external juridical law in the moral sphere.

As Pinckaers' sources and methodology demonstrate, he is keen to exploit the point of unity and communion which he finds in many traditions, including those which make use of non-Christian, secular wisdom sources. By identifying happiness as a common concern and a constant reference point throughout human history, he is able to demonstrate the universal inclination towards this seismic question and thus place it rightly at the heart of his moral structure. It is from this point of departure that he is able to build his entire moral system. For this reason, it is necessary for us to provide a detailed analysis of the question of happiness and so articulate the solid basis for Pinckaers' virtue theory. In setting-out to tackle this question, he is in no doubt that his principle authority is Aquinas, who is himself

formed in the rich tradition of scripture and patristic scholarship. This solid basis grounds Pinckaers' virtue theory within a multi-disciplinary theological environment, enriched by the organic tradition of Catholic thought. Despite this fact, however, he is keen to engage with authorities outside the scope of Christian tradition. This tendency in Pinckaers' thought necessarily redirects his focus on the central theme of happiness, and opens it up to a much wider audience, beyond the confines of strictly Catholic theological sciences. Man's quest for happiness, attained through the action of virtue, is shown to be deeply practical and intuitive. It is capable of moving him beyond the conceptual world of theoretical beatitude and gives him the very real and concrete possibility of attaining such a reality through the moral agency of judgement and concrete action.

#### *Happiness at the Centre of the Moral Question*

Pinckaers' moral theory is both complex and intricate and therefore it is necessary to follow his line of thought both systematically and thoroughly. We begin by deferring to the first theme treated methodologically by his greatest influence.<sup>12</sup> Aquinas begins his doctrine of Christian ethics with a treatise on happiness, or more specifically, particular happiness and final beatitude. A brief consideration of this theme is of paramount importance since "the entire structure of the second part of the *Summa* depends directly on the answer to the question of happiness discussed in the first treatise";<sup>13</sup> it is the "keystone of his moral theory", his "architectonic plan".<sup>14</sup> In this section Pinckaers' canonizes Aquinas' own treatise and the currents of thought preceding him. He argues that Aquinas was heavily influenced in his treatment of happiness by Aristotle and the Greek and Latin Fathers, especially Augustine. This deliberate recourse to influential philosophical and Christian traditions results from their own concern for the question of happiness or "the good life".<sup>15</sup> Whilst Aristotle

devotes the first and last books of his *Nicomachean Ethics* to the subject and elsewhere develops his concept of friendship,<sup>16</sup> Augustine writes extensively on the commonality of this primordial human desire.<sup>17</sup> Pinckaers also notes that this is not merely a question which puzzles and stirs the greatest authorities of religious traditions, but merits the attention of ordinary people of every generation, "for the ancients, Christians and pagans alike".<sup>18</sup> Armed with this knowledge, he attempts to construct a Christian response to a primordial and global concern.<sup>19</sup> He follows the ancients in an attempt to restore the centrality of this question as the guiding force of all morality. By this re-organization he attempts to redefine ethics as "the science of ways leading to true happiness".<sup>20</sup>

Despite Pinckaers' allying himself with the great authoritative sources, in the mainline tradition of Aquinas, philosophical or ancient wisdom authorities do not form the only sources for his treatment of happiness. For both writers, Christian Revelation is unambiguously identified as the primary source of authority. Aquinas "was fully conscious of the irreducible newness of the Gospel, its difference, indeed its opposition to secular morality".<sup>21</sup> Likewise, Pinckaers argues for a resurgence of scriptural support for recentralising the question of happiness in Christian ethics. "A moral system that addresses the question of happiness easily finds answers in Scripture" deriving most notably from "the Beatitudes with their corresponding promises, the teaching of the Gospels and St. Paul on the virtues, the Wisdom literature".<sup>22</sup> These Christian sources will occupy the most crucial position in providing a particularly Christian response to the universal question of happiness.

Pinckaers' careful analysis of Aquinas' treatment of happiness through beatitude convincingly demonstrates its necessity at the heart of his moral system. By endorsing the wisdom of secular sources, especially Aristotle,

and presenting beatitude as the particular response to a universal problem, he faces the recurring charge, like Aquinas, of overstating the overlap between secular and religious spheres. He also has to answer his critics who argue that his approach is ultimately hedonistic.<sup>23</sup> Yet, as Pinckaers knows, it is precisely the intention of Aquinas to make sense of the question about “the good life” in light of the Gospel and its corresponding precepts. Such an approach is far from hedonistic, since it places one at the service of beatitude, and seeks this prized gift for all those who journey in this common endeavour. It is a desire which is at once uniquely mine, and yet intimately connected to and emanating from the desire of the human community. In this regard, he may be said to have one foot in both camps, both religious and secular, but that his over-riding intention is to provide a Christian response to the recurring conundrum concerning human happiness.

Pinckaers’ analysis demonstrates that the journey towards happiness possesses a profoundly evangelical character in Aquinas’ system. Ultimate beatitude is granted to the one who focuses on God alone, “in the vision of God promised to the pure in heart, beyond the sentiments and ideas of human and angelic beings, beyond every creature”.<sup>24</sup> It is likewise shown to be contemplative and mystical, in as much as it is also “a way of spiritual ascent through detachment of mind and heart”.<sup>25</sup> Here, we are given another insight to Pinckaers’ intention; to rediscover the profound overlap between theological science and mysticism and spirituality which was largely lost in the reclassification of theology during the period of the manuals. This fracture in theology, says Pinckaers, has resulted in a profound impoverishment of the results which theological sciences achieve, since they lose their crucial connection to the lived Christian experience of prayer and contemplation.

Pinckaers’ response is also found to be deeply practical; one which recognises, in a refreshingly positive light, the life-giving

influence of natural human desire and inclinations. Whilst certainly teaching that true happiness is to be found in the higher activity of contemplation of God alone, the genius of Aquinas is that he also recognises the legitimate role of human action in ascending to these great heights of beatitude; that even our human actions have within them a natural, primordial and subjective finality which is happiness. This type of happiness transcends the natural order because it originates in the ultimate Good, and yet one which does not destroy the autonomy of the moral personality, especially freedom. This particular insight is quite unique in the work of Aquinas, and it will change the whole structure of his treatise on the moral life, where human action is given its own unique organization and given a pivotal role in the communication of beatitude, as a foretaste and promise of the ultimate beatitude which is still to come. This insight marks Aquinas’ moral theory as profoundly practical since it seeks coherence in the supernatural order of beatitude, and so also grace, by partially relying on the natural order of human existence. Naturally, such a bold statement requires an unambiguous clarification to maintain the distinct and superior order of grace over nature. Beatitude must, of course, remain a free gift communicated from the heart of divine life, but God’s method of communication is through the medium of free human action; this is his chosen fertile-ground for the flowering of the blessed life. It is through concrete human action, in other words, that the objective and subjective dimensions of beatitude are given the opportunity to meet. Armed with this knowledge, it is easy to understand the need for a detailed analysis of the nature of human moral action as well as the influences which impose upon these. For this reason, there is a need to re-interpret the functional value of law, a potent and often misunderstood influence upon the moral character of human action and upon the free moral character itself.

*Law & Casuistry*

Happiness, and particularly a desire for ultimate happiness through God's gift of beatitude, has been uncovered by Pinckaers as the kernel to understanding the Thomistic moral system. However, he also maintains that it is not enough to fixate our attention solely on the end point of moral action, without giving any attention to the means and concrete attainment of this goal. For Pinckaers, in the mainstream tradition of Aquinas, morality is a deeply practical sphere which has the capacity of elevating the individual to possess the riches of the supernatural order. Moral action, therefore, is of unique importance within this dynamic movement, opening an individual up to the gifts of beatitude. Among the many tools which lead us to this higher order of happiness and beatitude is law, the legislative ordering of the moral life through its many different forms. This order is of particular importance in the moral theory of Pinckaers, but conforms to a character which differs radically from the former obligation theorists. He designates a particular importance to the "internal law"; so that the external, formative law only supports this Evangelical Law, formed by the precepts of the Beatitudes. A closer look at these different forms of law, and crucially, how they interact, provides a clearer understanding of how happiness is achieved through a dynamic communication of both divine and human action.

Pinckaers apparently more subjective system has, perhaps unsurprisingly, had to defend itself from the charges of moral relativism. Some argue that this approach "leads to arbitrariness of individual freedom in the forming of moral judgements, as might be feared from the viewpoint of moralities of obligation"<sup>26</sup> because of the central role he ascribes to the working of the New Law and his notable distrust of casuistic models. However, this charge does not appear convincing, since to deny the priority given to personal moral

judgement would mean no less than a denial of man's natural capacity to experience the light of objective truth and goodness through *synderesis*. The communication of moral truths must demand, first and foremost, an internal movement, whilst accepting the necessary, though subordinate, role of external influences of casuistic models and prescriptive morals. This approach, argues Pinckaers, promotes the growth of true freedom so that "the more moral freedom grows in this sense, thanks to the virtues, the more it is protected from the arbitrary, rejecting it so as to move toward what it loves in truth".<sup>27</sup> The autonomy which the virtues grant to the moral subject is rooted in a love of true goodness, a tendency which later expresses itself through the operation of moral judgement in the realm of particulars.<sup>28</sup> This virtue centred approach, therefore, solves the question at hand so that it "can truly assure a connection between the universality of principles and the particularity of human action".<sup>29</sup> These universal principles are extrapolated, in the first place, from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. The New Law of the Beatitudes, argues Pinckaers, allows for this movement from universal to particulars because its precepts are closest to human action and they desire expression and fulfilment in the environment of concrete human action. According to their nature and their instructive composition, they seek localized and particular action. In this sense, they will always supersede their conceptual counterparts found in obligation ethics, which remain undeveloped and ultimately frustrated on the purely theoretical and universal plain. For this reason, Pinckaers argues for the priority of the New Law of grace in forming the moral personality, and so he relegates the role of obligation from the primary position of influence in the mature, autonomous and free moral subject. Ready-made solutions cannot simply be transplanted into complex life scenarios through the application of casuistic models, and moral dilemmas cannot be neutralised without a moral discernment which is both personal and

autonomous, and yet also radically dependant on the light and inspiration which emanates from the law of Christ.

*Practical Reason and the Virtues*

The New Law is understood by Pinckaers to be the principle prescriptive component in the formation of moral judgement and in the movement towards concrete moral action. However, he also recognises other powerful influences in this deliberative process. These, too, have a fundamental role in forming and educating the moral personality of the acting subject. By highlighting the judgement of practical reason and the role of virtue in human action, and especially the perfecting influence of prudence, he shows that, guided and compelled by the precepts of the New Law, obligations and external influences must give way to internal, autonomous discernment. Pinckaers' analysis demonstrates the correlation between exterior, concrete action and the complex interior movements of moral discernment which brings action to fulfillment.

The judgement of practical reason is endowed with the special power of assessing the moral truth value of a given hypothesis, linked as it is to objective truth and moral goodness by *synderesis*. This is crucially the faculty which joins universal precepts with concrete action. However, in this task it requires the assistance of developed virtues, or a *habitus* of virtue, in guiding correct moral judgement from the theoretical plane to concrete moral action. It is helped in this movement, above all, by the virtue of prudence which, after considering the specific conditions and applying advisory discretion and deliberation, issues the command to act.

In this analysis, Pinckaers demonstrates the nuanced distinctions proper to the functions of prudence and conscience. It is true that any serious analysis of the faculties of prudence and conscience in Aquinas demonstrates that

simple equivalence is not possible owing to the fact that particular functionality is "located on two different levels".<sup>30</sup> However, Pinckaers is also keen to assert areas of operational convergence, above all, the concretization of universal norms within the particular and localized environment of moral action. There is undoubtedly a sizeable operational overlap, especially in regard to the task of judgement.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, it is reasonable to hypothesize, as Pinckaers does, that Aquinas is skilfully finding a centre-point between two preceding traditions. On the one hand he inherits a theory of conscience which is rooted in the concept of obligation to the law, and on the other a prudence theory which seeks excellence and perfection in moral virtue.<sup>32</sup> Both are developed and unified in the virtue theory. The virtue of prudence endeavours to render the concrete moral act perfect,<sup>33</sup> while conscience decides for the particular course of action because of the imposing obligation attached to it. Therefore, it is vital to understand the object of prudence which, assisted by the moral virtues which operate in the will-appetite, "helps us to see why we should love this particular good, rather than simply obey it".<sup>34</sup> In this sense, the dual operation of prudence and the moral virtues is shown to be founded upon an overwhelming love and attraction for the good and the true, as opposed to pure servitude and obedience to the moral law.<sup>35</sup> The interconnectedness of the virtues, on a functional level further demonstrates that the moral conscience is also influenced by a desire for the good and true at the level of particulars.

*Freedom for Excellence*

A re-assessment of the role of human freedom is undoubtedly one of the prime considerations for Pinckaers; as such, he is reacting to the post-Ockham crisis of freedom which, he claims, infects the role of moral discernment even in contemporary moral systems. As Pinckaers himself writes:

Ultimately...the question of freedom confronts us with a choice here and now that will be a determining factor in the coming renewal of Christian moral theology.<sup>36</sup>

As a complementary analysis to his treatment of happiness and man's natural desire for the good and true, Pinckaers creates important links with freedom, in its strictly classical meaning, so as not simply to reduce it to the choice between contraries.<sup>37</sup> He will conclude this analysis with a treatment of the ultimate and particular *finis* of true personal freedom. A proper understanding of his doctrine of freedom is therefore fundamental to creating a point of unity between beatitude and concrete action. He argues that it is precisely through genuinely free human action that happiness, and therefore beatitude, may be attained and he details the tripartite process of forming personal freedom through disciplined education.

Pinckaers confidently locates moral freedom at the centre of his moral theory, as the unifier and key to understanding the complex workings of other moral components. By endorsing a classical understanding of human freedom, as synthesised by Aquinas, Pinckaers posits freedom's absolute reliance on a natural desire for the good, both universal and particular goods. Yet, he is also practical enough to admit to the gap which exists between natural inclination and concrete action in the realm of particulars. He therefore does not insist on the necessary apprehension of particular goods in moral action owing to appetitive defects and sin. Morally good actions are said to be done freely and actively, and so this faculty deliberately sets man on a course beyond particular goods towards a universal good which is beatitude. This is a uniquely positive reading of human nature and natural inclination, understood to be the vehicles that not only permit the apprehension of particular goods which in themselves bring

happiness, but also drive the individual upwards and beyond the particular sphere into the path towards ultimate and lasting fulfilment. This type of appreciation for human freedom is therefore said to seek excellence, but only after a period of education. The first stage in this type of formation necessitates the involvement of law and discipline and imposes prescriptions; the second stage sees the flowering of initiative and free enterprise and fresh beginnings in the ownership of actions and a personal desire to strive for excellence. Lastly, at the third stage, the individual is capable of freely performing perfect actions with a creative and dynamic spirit which brings lasting personal fulfilment and also opens the individual up to a world beyond the solitary personality.

In this analysis, which admittedly relies on what are often stretched linguistic and theoretical constructs, Pinckaers convincingly demonstrates the progression and development of the moral personality and the lasting results of reaching the state of 'perfection', or at least a moral perfection relative to human nature.

#### *Pinckaers' Legacy for Moral Theology*

Servais Pinckaers' virtue theory provides many convincing answers to the anomalies which contemporary ethics have either created or inherited. He plumbs the depths of complex scholastic concepts with unparalleled precision and intricacy to create a convincingly coherent and complete system. He provides a fresh and positive response to moral theories which rely overwhelmingly on the weight of obligation and external prescriptions to ensure correct moral conduct. Pinckaers is convinced of the futility of such an approach which dangerously lessens moral autonomy and tears the dynamism and beauty from Christian discipleship, wrenching from the heart of moral living the potent spiritual and mystical drives which inspire an individual to live by what is good and true. By drawing

from eminent sources, and the authority of Aquinas, Pinckaers successfully argues for the need for greater autonomy on the part of the moral agent. A human being is not merely the receiver of a static and prescriptive law, nor is he intended to be a morally passive character in the world, remaining forever bound by the imposing forces of duty, obligation and discipline. Rather, he is created with a nature and the tools to actively attain the happiness he so desires. He is endowed with a nature which is naturally inclined to completely fulfil this primordial desire. The happiness that he apprehends in the world of particulars is a constant and powerful reminder of the possibility of this final felicity. The inherent goodness and truth which can be obtained through particular action in the world is a sure sign of the hope man has of achieving lasting goodness and truth beyond this life. This is the prevailing truth which dominates the moral theory of Pinckaers. It brilliantly demonstrates that man's primordial desire for happiness and ultimate beatitude is not in vain, but that he is invited to work with grace towards these goals, assisted as he is by the light of truth and with the gifts of his own human nature. In this way, happiness can be achieved by means of

concrete human action. Virtuous living is shown to be the necessary foundation in man's life-long journey towards the now eminently possible attainment of ultimate beatitude beyond this life. Pinckaers' legacy, therefore, really lies in his tremendous ability to bring to life again this fundamental truth, that human co-operation and divine gifting fuse in the realm of moral action, a truth already articulated and defended by Thomas centuries earlier. His genius lies in his ability to purify Thomas' moral theory and to strip away dangerous interpretations regarding the role of law and virtue in the moral life, and to re-integrate both influences as Thomas originally intended. The New Law of grace, with its reliance on the flowering of personal virtue, cannot operate on a collision course with external, punitive law without creating a seriously flawed, disintegrated and hopeless philosophical impression of man and his supernatural ambitions. This makes Servais Pinckaers' work both a refreshing and theologically sound addition to serious contemporary moral debate, and undoubtedly marks him out as one of the great twentieth-century Thomist revivalists.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Servais Pinckaers; Alasdair MacIntyre; Josef Pieper; William Spohn; Romano Cessario; Joseph Ratzinger.

<sup>2</sup> Servais Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., trans. Mary Thomas Noble (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001), 220, "It is an extraordinary production, containing within itself the main themes of earlier traditions, enhanced by a new arrangement and the resolution of innumerable problems".

<sup>3</sup> Servais Pinckaers, "The Sources of the Ethics of St. Thomas Aquinas," trans. Mary Thomas Noble. In *The Pinckaers Reader: Renewing Thomistic Moral Theology*, ed. John Berkman and Craig Steven Titus (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 15.

<sup>4</sup> Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, 204-205.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.

<sup>6</sup> Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, 222, "St. Thomas even sees in the desire for happiness the beginning of a convergence of all men toward God and a

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basis of solidarity with the rest of creation, even that which is insentient".

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, 219. Among which the greatest influence was St. Aquinas' teacher St. Albert the Great whose commentary on Aristotle's *Ethics* was described by Pinckaers as the very "instrument Thomas needed for the future construction of the moral section of his theology".

<sup>8</sup> Servais Pinckaers, *The Pinckaers Reader: Renewing Thomistic Moral Theology* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 3. Originally published in *The Ethics of St. Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Stephen Pope (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002). Translated by Sister Mary Thomas Noble, O.P., with the assistance of Father Michael Sherwin, O.P. Edited for publication in *The Pinckaers Reader* by Steven Titus.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, 216-218. The Scholastic method is said to have two essential characteristics: the acceptance of 'authorities' as dependable wisdom knowledge, and the extensive use of dialectic in reasoning.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Col 3:11; Rom 12:14-21; Eph 4:4; Cor 13:4.

<sup>12</sup> Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, 6.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 222.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>16</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 8, “[Friendship] is absolutely indispensable: even though possessed of every other good thing, without friends a person would have no desire to live”.

<sup>17</sup> *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae*, Bibliothèque Augustinienne, vol. I, trans. B. Roland (Paris: Gosselin, 1936), 3-4, “A person engages in philosophy only in order to be happy”; also, *De Civitate Dei*, 19. I, “Everyone wants to be happy. There is no one who will not agree with me on this almost before the words are out of my mouth”.

<sup>18</sup> Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, 18.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 189.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>23</sup> Pinckaers, “The Sources of the Ethics of St. Thomas Aquinas,” In *The Pinckaers Reader*, 20-21.

<sup>24</sup> Pinckaers, “Aquinas’ Pursuit of Beatitude,” In *The Pinckaers Reader*, 111.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Pinckaers, “Aquinas and Agency,” In *The Pinckaers Reader*, 183-4.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 184.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Pinckaers, “The Role of Virtue in Moral Theology,” In *The Pinckaers Reader*, 298.

<sup>30</sup> Pinckaers, “Conscience, Truth and Prudence,” 90.

<sup>31</sup> CCC, no. 1806, “It is prudence that immediately guides the judgement of conscience”.

<sup>32</sup> Pinckaers, “Conscience, Truth and Prudence,” 90. The bringing together of law and virtue in Aquinas’ thinking means that conscience and prudence can now be appreciated together, rather than prudence rendering conscience a redundant concept.

<sup>33</sup> Pinckaers, “Conscience, Truth and Prudence,” 90.

<sup>34</sup> Chalmers, *Conscience in Context*, Romae: [s.n.], 2008, 294.

<sup>35</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 34, “Only one who previously and simultaneously *loves* and *wants* the good can be prudent; but only one who is previously prudent can *do* good. Since, however, love of the good in its turn grows by doing good, the foundations of prudence are sunk deeper and firmer to the extent that prudence bears fruit in action” (emphasis found in original text).

<sup>36</sup> Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, 330.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 357. ‘Freedom of indifference opposed natural inclinations in order to dominate them. Here, on the contrary, we find a freedom that presupposes natural

inclinations and takes root in them so as to draw forth the strength needed for their development’.