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THE INFLUENCE OF THOMAS AQUINAS' CONCEPT OF CREATEDNESS  
ON JOSEF PIEPER'S MORAL PHILOSOPHY

A Thesis

Submitted to the McAnulty Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Master of Arts

By

Sarah Slater

August 2020

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Sarah Slater

2020

THE INFLUENCE OF THOMAS AQUINAS' CONCEPT OF CREATEDNESS  
ON JOSEF PIEPER'S MORAL PHILOSOPHY

By

Sarah Slater

Approved June 29, 2020

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## ABSTRACT

### THE INFLUENCE OF THOMAS AQUINAS' CONCEPT OF CREATEDNESS ON JOSEF PIEPER'S MORAL PHILOSOPHY

By

Sarah Slater

August 2020

Thesis supervised by Professor Daniel P. Scheid, Ph.D.

Josef Pieper's practical moral philosophy can be best understood by reference to the theology of Thomas Aquinas, and specifically Aquinas' concept of the created human person. Pieper uses Aquinas' theological anthropology to argue for three actions which respond to the reality of being created: giving assent to having been brought into existence by God, perceiving God and created reality, and pursuing of the end of human life through the practice of the virtues in order to receive beatitude.

Pieper's well-known works on the seven virtues, on leisure, and on festivity rely on the same concepts from Aquinas which Pieper examines in depth in his works of speculative philosophy. By providing context for each of the selected works, this thesis demonstrates the unity of Pieper's speculative and practical moral philosophy as well as his conception of the ideal human life in a society which allows both contemplation and divine worship.

## DEDICATION

Dedicated to Ndunge Kiiti, who introduced me to the academic life, and to Benjamin Lipscomb, who introduced me to the pleasures of philosophy.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank the professors of the East Meets West program at Houghton College, whose treatment of the history, theology, and literature of the Balkans in the context of Christianity showed the futility of wholly separating fields of study kept apart in the modern university.

I would also like to thank the Theology Faculty at Duquesne University for challenging me in a way that few professors have. Special acknowledgement must also be given to Thérèse Bonin, whose treatment of Saint Thomas Aquinas' *Treatise on Man* deeply informed my reading of him in this work.

Finally, thank you to my mother, for always supporting my pursuit of knowledge, and for tolerating my lamentations whenever I wrote at her house.

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## CHAPTER 1:

### JOSEF PIEPER'S LIFE AND PHILOSOPHY

Josef Pieper was a moral philosopher whose life and work spanned the twentieth century. Born in Germany, Pieper studied philosophy and law during the massive upheavals that accompanied the aftermath of World War I and the interwar period and began his professional life in the lead up to the second World War. In this context of rapid change in his society, Pieper wrote essays which opposed his culture's prevailing views of work, virtue, and leisure. Pieper's primary project was an effort to consider anew the Western philosophical tradition and challenge his social context to grapple with the truths contained within it. During his life, Pieper both opposed false conceptions of human nature and proposed ways for each person to become more humane by living in accordance with what human nature truly is.

To understand the work of Josef Pieper, it is crucial to understand the concepts that underlie his work. Pieper adopted Saint Thomas Aquinas' position that humans were created with the capacity to attend to the created world; consequently, a person who rejects this createdness is unable to fully perceive reality, and ultimately unable to act in accordance with the virtues. Thus, Aquinas' metaphysics of creation provides necessary context for Pieper's practical works of moral philosophy. Several of Pieper's best-known works, those on the seven virtues as well as *In Tune with the World: A Theory of Festivity* and *Leisure, the Basis of Culture*, do not detail Pieper's views on human createdness, so it is possible to misunderstand his arguments by reading those works in isolation from his speculative moral philosophy and work on Aquinas. This thesis proposes a framework based on Aquinas' doctrine of creation through which to read the work of Josef Pieper

about moral action in the world.

### *BIOGRAPHY*

Josef Pieper's boyhood, and much of the rest of his life, was spent living in and around the city of Munster, Germany. He was raised Catholic and remained a practicing Catholic through the end of his life. Through a former Dominican who taught at his secondary school, Pieper first encountered the writing of Thomas Aquinas.<sup>1</sup> Pieper was involved with the German youth movement immediately after the end of the first World War. In 1924, at an event sponsored by the youth movement, he heard a lecture by Romano Guardini which spurred him to study Aquinas seriously as a philosopher.<sup>2</sup> Pieper matriculated at the University of Munich in the faculty of theology but switched to philosophy in order to answer questions about the place of the person within creation, to "[fix] his mind's eye on the totality of being, the world."<sup>3</sup>

During graduate school, Pieper studied seriously under Erich Przywara at a series of summer seminars; these will be addressed in more detail below. In this period, Pieper also encountered people who would later be recognized as significant figures in twentieth century Catholicism, including Hans Urs von Balthasar, Edith Stein, and Marc Sangnier. He notes in his autobiography that during his secular education in philosophy in pre-WWII Germany, there was very little interest in studying anything written before the modern era, and much of his familiarity with the theologians and philosophers he frequently cites (Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Augustine, and so on) was acquired either in

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<sup>1</sup> Josef Pieper, *No One Could Have Known, An Autobiography: The Early Years 1904-1945* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987). 46.

<sup>2</sup> Pieper, *No One Could Have Known*. 62.

<sup>3</sup> Josef Pieper, "The Philosophical Act," in *Leisure the Basis of Culture* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2009). 106.

secondary school or at his own initiative.<sup>4</sup> After graduating with his doctorate in philosophy, Pieper was employed for a period by a sociological institute; he resigned from that position coinciding nearly with, though not because of, the rise of the National Socialist party to power in Germany.<sup>5</sup> After his resignation in 1933 and until the end of World War II, he worked as a freelance writer because he was unable to be employed at a university under the Nazi regime. During the war, he had a position in the Luftwaffe as an examining psychologist, to which he was appointed because of his training in sociology. In general, Pieper was regarded by the Nazi regime as potentially disloyal, both because of the ideas he espoused, and because his wife's brother had married a Jewish woman.<sup>6</sup>

Immediately after the war, and for many years afterwards, he supported himself by lecturing at the University of Munster and at a teacher training college in Essen, Germany.<sup>7</sup> Although offered professorships at multiple institutions including at Munster, Gottingen, Cologne, and Munich,<sup>8</sup> Pieper refused these offers for more than a decade, preferring to continue teaching and lecturing to non-specialists rather than those in training for degrees in philosophy.<sup>9</sup> He also lectured and traveled widely in Europe. In 1950, he began to take semester-long teaching positions at various American institutions such as the University of Notre Dame and Stanford University.<sup>10</sup> Pieper also travelled and lectured in a number of Asian countries; one specific trip will be discussed later. Pieper did eventually accept a full professorship at the University of Munster. Pieper had several

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<sup>4</sup> Pieper, *No One Could Have Known*. 65.

<sup>5</sup> Pieper, *No One Could Have Known*. 87.

<sup>6</sup> Pieper, *No One Could Have Known*. 127, 157, 161.

<sup>7</sup> Josef Pieper, *Not Yet the Twilight: An Autobiography 1945-1964* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2015). 11; 14.

<sup>8</sup> Pieper, *Not Yet the Twilight*. 28, 175, 182.

<sup>9</sup> Pieper, *Not Yet the Twilight*. 30-1.

<sup>10</sup> Pieper, *Not Yet the Twilight*. 75, 154.

reasons for remaining a lecturer and writer to general audiences well into his forties. He desired to provide “an academic education for the people... converting the multilingual existence of the Western intellectual tradition into the living form of the German language.”<sup>11</sup> He was also interested in the attempt to “make [himself] comprehensible, in [his] philosophizing, to the ordinary listener” and to always keep in mind the question “What does it mean?” rather than resorting to “technical language” when possible.<sup>12</sup>

### *PIEPER’S PHILOSOPHY*

Pieper resisted attempts to class him as a theologian for considering “pre-philosophical data”<sup>13</sup> within his work. It is notable that later in his career, Pieper references Aristotle and Plato, especially Plato, at least as much as Christian theologians.<sup>14</sup> He also typically cites the Christian Bible to illustrate various cultures rather than as an authority to justify his position. Pieper intentionally does not base his arguments upon divine revelation, which is also Aquinas’ distinction between philosophy and theology.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, Pieper’s moral philosophy does engage deeply with Christian revelation and should be identified with the Christian philosophical tradition because one of Pieper’s first principles is that the human person has been created by the Christian God. Many of his works conclude that the end of human existence is to know

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<sup>11</sup> Pieper, *Not Yet the Twilight*. 176.

<sup>12</sup> Pieper, *Not Yet the Twilight*. 177.

<sup>13</sup> Bernard N. Schumacher, "The Twofold Discipleship of the Philosopher: Faith and Reason in the Thought of Josef Pieper," in *A Cosmopolitan Hermit: Modernity and Tradition in the Philosophy of Josef Pieper*, ed. Bernard N. Schumacher (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009). 199.

<sup>14</sup> Juan F. Franck, "The Platonic Inspiration of Pieper's Philosophy," in *A Cosmopolitan Hermit: Modernity and Tradition in the Philosophy of Josef Pieper*, ed. Bernard N. Schumacher (Washington, DC.: CUA Press, 2009). 251.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas Aquinas, "Summa Theologiae," ed. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benzinger Bros., 1947). I, 3, resp.

and contemplate God, following from the Catholic Christian foundation for Pieper's moral philosophy. Rather than reading Pieper in the context of modern philosophy, which even when practiced by Christians maintains a secular character, Pieper ought to be read as a philosopher in the tradition of pre-modern philosophy. His moral philosophy provides a model for engagement with both the historical Christian tradition as well as with one's contemporary context. More specifically, Pieper's philosophical work provides a foundation for identifying issues relevant to contemporary theology.

By tracing three themes related to human createdness—assent to being, perception of reality, and pursuit of the end of human life—in Pieper's speculative philosophy and identifying their use in Aquinas' thought, it is possible to better understand Pieper's works on the virtuous life. Despite discussion in the literature of the Pieper's understanding of these three ideas, there have been few attempts to systematically trace any of these three themes through multiple of Pieper's essays. In addition, Pieper's works are typically read individually, rather than in context. Many essays primarily reference *Leisure, the Basis of Culture* or his works on Aquinas, and connections between his works have been less studied than his contemporaries.

Almost as soon as he began to write, Pieper was translated and read across the world, particularly by those influenced by Thomas Aquinas. For example, his autobiography reports that his works on the four cardinal virtues were in the library of Pope John XXIII.<sup>16</sup> A list of those who have often cited, written about, or introduced Pieper's works includes many of the luminaries of twentieth century theology, philosophy, and ethics, although as Wald notes, Pieper has been often referenced but

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<sup>16</sup> Pieper, *Not Yet the Twilight*. 263.

infrequently engaged at great depth.<sup>17</sup> Ralph McInerny, a Thomist whose tenure at Notre Dame spanned more than a half a century, was instrumental in seeing many of Pieper's works translated into English.

Gilbert Meilaender describes Pieper's essays on the virtues as an early example of the return to Aristotelian and Platonic moral philosophy which occurred in the twentieth century. In the Anglophone world, this can be seen in the works of Iris Murdoch, G.E.M. Anscombe, Alasdair MacIntyre, and the virtue ethics tradition in general.<sup>18</sup> However, despite the similarity in themes between English-language virtue ethicists and Pieper, a review of the literature shows almost no engagement in either direction. Pieper responds directly to primarily German philosophers, although he did read English writers and was deeply influenced by Saint John Henry Cardinal Newman. A review of the works of major virtue ethicists show little to no awareness of Pieper. A fruitful direction for further research would be to compare Pieper's essays on specific virtues with major accounts of the virtues put forth by Anglophone virtue ethicists. One of the few essays to situate Pieper in the context of twentieth century philosophy was written by Berthold Wald for *A Cosmopolitan Hermit*. In the essay, Wald compares Pieper's work to major figures in the virtue ethics tradition, including Alasdair MacIntyre, Elizabeth Anscombe, and Richard Hare.<sup>19</sup> He argues that where there are differences between Pieper and contemporary virtue ethicists, that difference is often rooted in Pieper's Catholic anthropology.<sup>20</sup>

Bernard Schumacher's introductory essay to *A Cosmopolitan Hermit*, the only

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<sup>17</sup> Berthold Wald, "Josef Pieper in the Context of Modern Philosophy," in *A Cosmopolitan Hermit: Modernity and Tradition in the Philosophy of Josef Pieper*, ed. Bernard N. Schumacher (Washington, DC.: CUA Press, 2009). 24.

<sup>18</sup> Gilbert Meilaender, "Josef Pieper: Explorations in the Thought of a Philosopher of Virtue," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 11, no. 1 (1983).

<sup>19</sup> Wald, "Josef Pieper in the Context of Modern Philosophy."

<sup>20</sup> Wald, "Josef Pieper in the Context of Modern Philosophy." 60-61.

comprehensive academic treatment of Josef Pieper's thought, provides an overview of major themes in Pieper's work. Schumacher refers to the metaphysics of creation as the "secret key" to Pieper's philosophy,<sup>21</sup> and points out essential elements of his reliance on the concept. At the beginning of his career, Pieper was influenced by Plato, Aquinas, and Romano Guardini, writing his thesis and habilitation on "the basis for moral human action and the truth of things"<sup>22</sup> which is the existence of reality outside the human self. Pieper's argument is that "every good moral human action has its first origin in the silent contemplation of the truth of things."<sup>23</sup> While studying under Erich Przywara, Pieper began to argue that "the real cannot be enclosed within any system of thought," which influenced his resistance to regarding scholasticism as a closed system. Pieper's works on the virtues are based on an anthropology of man "on the way."<sup>24</sup> After being hired as a lecturer in 1946, Pieper began to reflect on topics including education, culture, the rising totalitarian culture of work, and "the philosophical act" which is not useful, although not lacking in purpose or meaning.<sup>25</sup>

Throughout his work, Pieper addresses two related but separate relationships between the virtues. The first relationship is between the natural virtues as they are practiced by any individual Christian person; does a Christian necessarily experience conflict between the natural form of fortitude and the grace-infused form of fortitude? More generally, do the natural virtues necessarily conflict with the theological virtues? The second relationship is between the virtues in general: are all the virtues related in

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<sup>21</sup> Bernard N. Schumacher, "A Cosmopolitan Hermit: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Josef Pieper," in *A cosmopolitan hermit: Modernity and tradition in the philosophy of Josef Pieper*, ed. Bernard N. Schumacher (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009), 14.

<sup>22</sup> Schumacher, "Cosmopolitan Hermit." 4.

<sup>23</sup> Schumacher, "Cosmopolitan Hermit." 6.

<sup>24</sup> Schumacher, "Cosmopolitan Hermit." 11.

<sup>25</sup> Schumacher, "Cosmopolitan Hermit." 17.

some fundamental which gives them some sort of unified quality?<sup>26</sup> The ethicist Gilbert Meilaender addressed the first question at some length in his work *The Theory and Practice of Virtue*. While the second question will be addressed throughout this work, Meilaender's *Theory and Practice* is most useful for addressing the first question. Meilaender argues that Pieper only sometimes makes clear whether he believes that the theological virtues are in some way opposed to the natural virtues.<sup>27</sup> He notes that Pieper most clearly discusses this relationship in his essays on prudence and charity. Both prudence and charity are continuous in the sense that they operate in the same manner in their natural and grace-infused forms, yet they can conflict because their objects are often opposed and usually different.<sup>28</sup> Meilaender's fundamental criticism of Pieper is that Pieper pays insufficient attention to the reality of sin in the world and the problem of competing goods in the moral life.<sup>29</sup> However, Meilaender also notes that Pieper's goal was not to theorize but "to transmit and revitalize a Thomist vision of the virtuous life."<sup>30</sup>

As noted above, existing scholarship on Pieper sometimes focuses narrowly on individual essays. For example, Aquinas Guilbeau, O.P. published an enlightening essay on the relationship between fortitude and leisure: leisure can only be attained through the practice of the virtue of fortitude.<sup>31</sup> Guilbeau argues that in Pieper's work on leisure, the focus on the will and intellect minimizes the need for formation in the virtues,

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<sup>26</sup> The second question will be addressed throughout the rest of the work, but it is important to raise since the relationship between all the virtues and the relationship between the natural and theological virtues are

<sup>27</sup> Gilbert Meilaender, *The Theory and Practice of Virtue* (South Bend, IN.: Notre Dame Press, 1984). 28.

<sup>28</sup> Meilaender, *Theory and Practice*. 35-40.

<sup>29</sup> Meilaender, *Theory and Practice*. 35.

<sup>30</sup> Meilaender, "Josef Pieper: Explorations in the Thought of a Philosopher of Virtue."

<sup>31</sup> O.P. Guilbeau, Aquinas, "The Courage to Rest: Thomas Aquinas on the Soul of Leisure," Article, 16, no. 1 (2018).

particularly magnanimity and humility, which allow for the pursuit of leisure by ordering the passions.<sup>32</sup> By primarily reading *Leisure, the Basis of Culture*, Guilbeau neglects other works by Pieper which address the issue he raises more directly. It is true Pieper does not discuss the virtues that allow for the achievement of leisure to the degree Guilbeau would like to see in *Leisure*. However, Pieper's essays *On Fortitude* and *On Hope* both contain extended discussions of the virtues of humility and magnanimity and their relationship to leisure, with reference to the specific questions Guilbeau faults Pieper for not referencing.

Though the scholarly literature on Pieper is thin compared to the literature discussing many of his contemporaries, Pieper has attracted more attention in recent years, particularly from younger scholars. The essay collection referenced above, *A Cosmpolitan Hermit*, contains a number of technical articles about Pieper's philosophy. Other essays and reviews of Pieper's work often note his insistence that leisure and contemplation are necessary (and, in the modern world, absent) for a humane life. For example, Nathaniel Warne has considered how prudence and Pieper's idea of negative philosophy can improve the study and practice of science.<sup>33</sup> Vincent Wargo has also addressed Pieper's works on the virtues and his theory of history.<sup>34</sup> Yet as a whole, the secondary literature on Josef Pieper is narrow in scope or concerned with other themes than the topic of this work. Excepting a number of other essays by the authors listed above and two doctoral theses which are unavailable except by application to the authors,

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<sup>32</sup> Guilbeau, "The Courage to Rest: Thomas Aquinas on the Soul of Leisure." 40, 43.

<sup>33</sup> Nathaniel A. Warne, "Learning to See the World Again: Josef Pieper on Philosophy, Prudence, and the University.," *Moral Education* 47, no. 3 (2018). "Of All Things, Seen and Unseen: Josef Pieper's Negative Philosophy, Science, and Hope.," *Theological Studies* 79, no. 2 (2018).

<sup>34</sup> "Vincent Wargo, "Festivity, tradition, and hope: Josef Pieper and the historical meaning of human praxis," *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought & Culture* 21, no. 4 (2018). "Josef Pieper on the nature of philosophy and the philosophical act," *The Modern Schoolman* 80, no. 2 (2003).

Pieper's corpus has not been addressed as a unified body of work. Much remains to be said about his conception of the world.

Pieper deeply engaged with the “Western tradition” particularly as found in Aquinas’ writings, frequently returning to Aquinas because of his charity to his interlocutors and openness to seeking the truth wherever it could be found.<sup>35</sup> Pieper regarded himself as a true philosopher rather than a historian of philosophy, who aimed to discover the “truth of things”; he was thus open to engagement with existential and nihilist philosophers, as well as with Christian contemporaries and predecessors. This openness can serve as a model for the theologian or philosopher willing to engaging with the problems identified by the modern and post-modern worlds, while remaining rooted in a specific tradition. Both Pieper and Aquinas shared this orientation toward truth which allowed for philosophers who might not have otherwise been considered acceptable to the Catholic “Western tradition” to be appropriated for discussion. This makes Pieper an important resource for encountering our pluralistic world.

Assent to reality, perception of reality, and the pursuit of the end are the three structuring ideas from Aquinas’ metaphysics of creation which I have identified as crucial to Pieper’s thought. The second chapter will discuss the meaning of these three key concepts as understood by Pieper, to orient the reader to his use of the concepts. This will be followed by an analysis of the relationship between leisure and festivity, because of the importance of those elements in Pieper’s idea of the end of human life as it can be experienced on earth. The third chapter will look more closely at how Aquinas discusses

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<sup>35</sup> Josef Pieper, "On Thomas Aquinas," in *The Silence of St. Thomas: Three Essays* (South Bend: St. Augustine Press, 1999). 20, 32. "Preface," in *The Four Cardinal Virtues* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1965). xii.

the concepts of being, perception, and end. This chapter will draw out texts which give context for Aquinas' idea of creation. The final chapter will address three areas of Pieper's work on the moral life, examining them in the context of the proposed framework. After sections introducing Pieper's seven essays on the virtues, *Leisure, the Basis of Culture*, a polemic against the modern tendency to order life to work rather than rest, will be examined for insight on the way that assent to human createdness creates the space to pursue leisure. Then, Pieper's idea of the possibility of experiencing the end of human life during life on earth will be examined through a reading of *A Theory of Festivity*, which is a positive vision for the recovery of the divine festival in public life. These discussions will be followed by a conclusion which discusses the radical nature of Pieper's assessment of modern life, and what the reader of Pieper ought to take away from the encounter with his work on the virtues, festivity, and leisure as a created person.

## CHAPTER 2:

### FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING PIEPER

Before discussing Thomas Aquinas' metaphysics of creation and the end of human existence, it is important to understand how Pieper understands these concepts. Pieper's use of Aquinas' thought enables Pieper to link his proposals for how to live a virtuous life to the objective, real world which exists independent of the perceiving person. This chapter will provide a framework for understanding Pieper's practical moral philosophy based on Aquinas' metaphysics of creation, by discussing how human perception of reality, and the ultimate purpose and destination of all creation, relates to moral action. For Pieper, these two elements—perception and end—are deeply interrelated aspects of existence. Because these concepts are discussed more in Pieper's speculative philosophy and commentary on Aquinas than in his practical moral philosophy, Pieper's works *Happiness and Contemplation* and *The Silence of St. Thomas*, will be referenced. After discussing Pieper's understanding of Aquinas' metaphysics of creation, the next chapter will explore these concepts in context. Then, this framework will be applied to Pieper's practical moral philosophy.

Pieper's works on the virtuous life consistently propose the same actions in response to the order of the created universe.<sup>1</sup> The proper response to being is to *assent* to being. The response to truth is to *perceive* the truth of reality. The response to the desire

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this paper, this includes Pieper's seven essays on the virtues, *Leisure, the Basis of Culture*, and *In Tune with the World: A Theory of Festivity*. Pieper did write other essays in addition to these which could be said also address the virtuous life, including additional essays on some of the virtues, such as *Hope and History*.

for goodness is to *pursue* goodness by seeking the end toward which human nature is aimed. Pieper thus argues that the virtuous life is lived by acting in accordance with the realities of being, truth, and goodness as are understood according to the western Christian tradition, and principally Aquinas. These responses are not a linear progression but build upon and reinforce each other. For example, by pursuing goodness through the practice of the virtue of love in particular ways, over time a person is able to affirm the goodness of a particular person more fully and concretely. Because Pieper holds to the ultimate unity of the seven classical virtues of Western philosophy, each virtue must share some characteristics of all the other virtues.<sup>2</sup> The practice of the virtues over time enables a person to act more fully in accord with human nature.

#### *ASSENTING TO CREATEDNESS*

Pieper's understanding of Aquinas was not initially well received in Germany, but it has lasting relevance for the interpretation of Pieper's own work. In his essay on

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<sup>2</sup> The theory that the virtues have an underlying unity has not been accepted without controversy in the twentieth century. Two important accounts are given by Vlastos and Langan. Vlastos proposes that Socrates' Protogoras is a coherent articulation of the unity of the virtues, arguing a single thesis in three stages. That thesis is that "having any virtue entails having every virtue ... by saying that what names each names all, and that they are all cogeners, all alike." Vlastos reads Socrates as arguing that to have a virtue a person must necessarily possess wisdom (Gregory Vlastos, "The Unity of the Virtues in the 'Protogoras'," *The Review of Metaphysics* 25, no. 3 (1972). 425.) Virtues are to be interpreted as unified not as universals but as "coextensive classes", and individual virtuous acts necessarily possess the qualities of the other virtues (Vlastos, "Protogoras." 436, 439.) Langan, following Penner, finds that the underlying "unity" of the virtues is best understood as a "motive force" or "principle of action" which underlies all virtuous acts (John P. Langan, "Augustine on the Unity and the Interconnection of the Virtues," *The Harvard Theological Review* 72, no. 1/2. 83.) The virtue Augustine identifies as "the explanatory entity that accounts for, and so is effectively present in, the cardinal virtues" is charity (Langan, "Augustine." 91.) Augustine, however, in identifying the source of the unity of the virtues as charity makes it difficult or impossible to ascribe virtue to non-Christians (Langan, "Augustine." 93.) Langan's understanding of a virtue as a "motive force" accords with Aquinas' understanding of a virtue as a habit, an understanding to which Pieper subscribes. Vlastos' reading of Socrates similarly accords with Aquinas, for whom virtues are connected because any virtue must be accompanied by prudence (Aquinas, "ST." I-II, 65, 1). Overall, Pieper's conception of the unity of the virtue is more closely aligned with Socrates,' since in Pieper's moral philosophy, prudence serves the function Socrates ascribes to wisdom.

Aquinas' negative philosophy—that is, philosophy which works by elimination of what is unknown, rather than by assertion of what is known—Pieper argues that Aquinas conceives of creation not in the abstract, but very concretely in the sense of “created things.” Pieper also adopts Aquinas' division of everything that can be known into “*creatura* or Creator.”<sup>3</sup> Pieper says that Aquinas' idea that all things which have existence exist as created underlies “nearly all the basic concepts in St. Thomas's philosophy of being.” This means that all that exists or has reality has been created by the Creator, God.

Furthermore, everything that exists as created has an internal structure or nature which has been deliberately designed to conform to a certain plan.<sup>4</sup> *Creaturae* “have been fashioned by thought”—God's thought—and designed to exist according to this nature. They can be described as true insofar as they conform to that design.<sup>5</sup> (In fact, whether an object has been made by man, an *artifact*, or created by God: every object, animal, spirit, and person has a given nature.)<sup>6</sup> That things exist because they are created by God is not only a statement about the Creator but also about creation: “things exist because God sees them”; all things “are formed after an archetypal pattern which dwells in the mind of God.”<sup>7</sup> It is also a statement about the human ability to have contact with any other *creatura*, “something that has ‘flamed up’ directly from God.”<sup>8</sup> In his acceptance of created human nature, Pieper explicitly rejects philosophers who deny there is such a

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<sup>3</sup> Pieper, “The Negative Element in the Philosophy of St. Thomas.” 49.

<sup>4</sup> Pieper, “Negative Philosophy.” 51.

<sup>5</sup> Pieper, “Negative Philosophy.” 53.

<sup>6</sup> Christian theology typically affirms that this is in an analogous way true of God. God is His will and His intellect; God is identical with his being. Although God has not been created or fashioned by anything else, God does have a nature which is stable.

<sup>7</sup> Josef Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*, trans. Clara and Richard Winston (South Bend: St. Augustine's Press, 1998). 61.

<sup>8</sup> Josef Pieper, *Guide to Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Clara and Richard Winston (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991).

thing.<sup>9</sup> Pieper specifically positions himself in direct opposition to Sartre's atheistic existentialism by affirming the doctrine of creation, but views his project as a consistent interpretation of the world, insofar as Sartre argues from the position that there is no God.<sup>10</sup>

For Pieper, human desire is only satisfied by things that really exist outside the person. The human desire for happiness is oriented entirely toward the "real universe"; "man desires satiation by reality."<sup>11</sup> But before individual created things can be affirmed as good, assent to the goodness of creation in general must be given.<sup>12</sup> Pieper notes that our response to any good created thing tends to universalize; we affirm more than the specific good alone. Characteristically interested in alternate witnesses to the human search for the truth, Pieper references love poetry as pointing to the universal human desire for what is good.<sup>13</sup> Although God is not a part of the world but within and outside it, Pieper asserts that we can also reach God because we have been created to be able to communicate with him.<sup>14</sup>

Pieper identifies Aquinas' interest in Aristotle as deriving from Aristotle's "affirmation of the concrete and sensuous reality of the world" which allowed him to develop a more robust "Christian affirmation of Creation."<sup>15</sup> This orientation toward external, created reality can be identified as "worldliness" but that was not Aquinas'

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<sup>9</sup> Pieper, "Negative Philosophy." 53.

<sup>10</sup> Pieper, "Negative Philosophy." 52.

<sup>11</sup> Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 64.

<sup>12</sup> Although it need not be explicitly thought, it must be at least subconsciously affirmed. Josef Pieper, *In Tune with the World: A Theory of Festivity* (South Bend: St. Augustine's Press, 1999). 26.

<sup>13</sup> Pieper, *Festivity*. 27.

<sup>14</sup> Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 79.

<sup>15</sup> Pieper, *Guide to Thomas Aquinas*. 49.

intent. The goal of Aquinas' inclusion of philosophical approaches to "natural reality as a whole... visible, sense-perceived... material things [as well as] the natural cognitive power of reason"<sup>16</sup> in his theology rather than simply appealing to Christian revelation was his conviction that secular truth, insofar as it reflects reality, also has bearing on the experience of the Christian person in the world. To attend only to revelation risks a heretical devaluation of the created world and the embodied human person as well. Instead, Aquinas refers to the exterior created world as "the standard" or measure with which the person must reckon in order to ensure that her idea of reality is in accordance with reality as it exists.<sup>17</sup> This idea will be returned to in the next section. It was Aquinas' "all-inclusive, fearless strength of his affirmation, his generous acceptance of the whole of reality" which enabled Aquinas to affirm truth wherever it could be found in the world, including in the works of those with whom he disagreed. Pieper proposes that this affirming and welcoming attitude must be adopted in order to fully behold the truth of the world.<sup>18</sup>

### *PERCEIVING REALITY*

What is reality? As discussed above, Pieper follows Aquinas in arguing reality is anything that has been is "creatively thought by God."<sup>19</sup> The perception of reality is, for Pieper, really possible by virtue of our created nature and the nature of the created world. Not only can we perceive reality, we can also to some extent perceive God. But the perception of both of these is limited; the same nature which allows us to perceive reality

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<sup>16</sup> Pieper, *Guide to Thomas Aquinas*. 118.

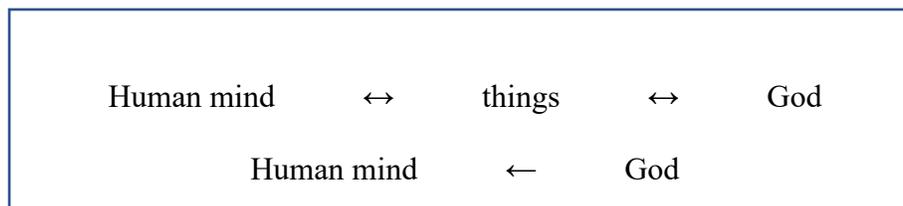
<sup>17</sup> Pieper, *Guide to Thomas Aquinas*. 123.

<sup>18</sup> Pieper, "The Timeliness of Thomism." 103-104.

<sup>19</sup> Pieper, "Negative Philosophy." 60.

also limits our perception of creatura and the Creator. Does this inability to see in whole mean that we therefore give up the search to know at all? No—because although we cannot see fully, we can still see in part; it is only because we see in part that we can discover that we cannot see in full.<sup>20</sup>

Perception, an interior act of the intellect, is primarily directed to the real, exterior world. Furthermore, certain created things, including human beings, have the capability to perceive the material world because they have been created with that ability by God. Pieper argues that we can be confident that the world is real and able to be perceived if we assent to the proposition that we are created with that ability. While this perception is limited by our finitude it is real, despite reality surpassing our ability to understand it totally. The human mind is only able to know things because of the existence of God, who created human nature with this capacity for perception.<sup>21</sup>



Similarly, humanity is able to know other creaturae because the creatively knowing mind of God has created things such that they are knowable.<sup>22</sup> To the extent that a thing has been designed by a human person, it can be fully known by others in its ideal form; but to the extent that it exists as creatura, human knowledge is unable to completely

<sup>20</sup> Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 68.

<sup>21</sup> Pieper, "Negative Philosophy." 55.

<sup>22</sup> Pieper, "Negative Philosophy." 56.

uncover the mystery of the thing, insofar as every creatura is rooted in the infinite depths of the mind of God.<sup>23</sup> The conception of reality as the ‘measure’ or the shaping standard of the human mind is, for Pieper, a very important aspect of the relationship between created reality and the human mind.<sup>24</sup> Aquinas notes that while human minds can ‘measure’ things we make, our minds can neither measure other created things, nor fully perceive God. Furthermore, we can only know God through the mediation of things. God, however, both knows created things and knows individual people directly.<sup>25</sup> Pieper describes this relation:

“we know the copy, but not the relation of the copy to the archetype, the correspondence between what has been designed and its first design. To repeat, we have no power of perceiving this correspondence by which the formal truth of things is constituted.”<sup>26</sup>

It is not possible for us to fully understand the relationship between a thing and God.

For Aquinas, the unknowability of creatura exists because of the weakness of our ability to know, not because the thing itself is unknowable. Pieper examines this idea at length in his brief essay on the *Negative Element in Philosophy of St. Thomas*. “Because Being is created, that is to say creatively thought by God, it is therefore 'in itself' light, radiant, and revealing” Pieper argues, because it partakes of the infinitely ordered and self-revealing nature of God. Any created object can never be fully known since as an element of its createdness, Pieper says, it is

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<sup>23</sup> Pieper, "Negative Philosophy." 58.

<sup>24</sup> To measure something is to enable a person or rational being to conceive of something before it exists in such a way that it can be shaped according to an idea. For example, a carpenter gives measure to a bench according to the idea of the bench she created in her mind before cutting and assembling wood into the bench. For more on Pieper’s conception of reality as a measure, see Pieper’s *The Truth of All Things*.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas Aquinas, "Disputed Questions on Truth," (Intellex Past Masters Database). I, 1, 2.

<sup>26</sup> Pieper, "Negative Philosophy." 59.

“something that has so much light that a particular finite faculty of knowledge cannot absorb it all... it is part of the very nature of things that their knowability can never be wholly exhausted by any finite intellect *because* these things are creatures, which means that the very element which makes them known must necessarily be at the same time the reason things are unfathomable.”<sup>27</sup>

Because the essence of any creatura emerges from God, we cannot see the full depths of its being. A given kind of thing, or form, is knowable through the copies that exist; the originating idea contained within the mind of God is not knowable in full.<sup>28</sup> “We have no proper means of knowing the distinctive element in things... [or] the essence of things.”<sup>29</sup> We can know the exemplar (an actualized thing) but not the type (the form or idea of a thing).

To return to what was noted above: because we cannot know things wholly, we also cannot know God fully through things—because any finite created thing cannot perfectly represent the infinite God; and also because the human mind as creatura is “too crude and obtuse (*imbicilitas intellectus nostri*) to read in things even that information concerning God which they really contain.”<sup>30</sup> Further, for Aquinas, “the special manner in which the Divine Perfection is imitated is what constitutes the special essence of a thing.” Thus, it is not possible for humans to fully grasp an essence, insofar as it is impossible for us to grasp the Divine.<sup>31</sup> For Pieper, this double affirmation—that creaturae exist as ‘seeable,’ and that humans as creaturae are unable to see other creaturae or the Creator in full—is necessary in order to understand how Aquinas is not an agnostic or a pure

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<sup>27</sup> Pieper, "Negative Philosophy." 60.

<sup>28</sup> Pieper, "Negative Philosophy." 63.

<sup>29</sup> Pieper, "Negative Philosophy." 65.

<sup>30</sup> Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 66.

<sup>31</sup> Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 66-67.

rationalist.<sup>32</sup> The human quest for knowledge cannot be complete but it is also not futile; it is, like human life, *in status viator* and characterized by “hope” in the context of “an embracing affirmation” which continually seeks to know more fully.<sup>33</sup>

The perception of reality through cognition is the only way in which the exterior world is totally taken into the person.<sup>34</sup> In fact, we have no way to have contact with the real world which is outside ourselves except through cognition. This is not to say that all forms of cognition are this perfect taking-in of reality. But the perfect form of taking-in-reality, which Pieper describes using the terms “seeing, intuition, contemplation,” is a mode of cognition.<sup>35</sup> Perception of reality is in itself a good we desire; “we want to know the truth at any cost, even if the truth should be frightful.”<sup>36</sup> Once again—although we cannot see in full, we have been created to see, and we require the ability to know in order to be happy.

### *PERCEIVING THE GOOD*

Having argued that created persons can perceive created reality, Pieper argues that it is also possible to perceive what is good. Virtuous actions are those actions which, having perceived the good, make it possible to attain the good which is the goal of human life. Before touching on virtuous action more specifically, it is important to understand

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<sup>32</sup> Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 69.

<sup>33</sup> Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 70.

<sup>34</sup> Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 66.

<sup>35</sup> Note: Pieper does not give a theory of the forms of cognition in his shorter essays. His tendency is to elaborate on individual ideas without venturing into the extensive categorization present in other works on Aquinas. In *Reality and the Good*, Pieper presents his theory of cognition in more detail but does not develop a technical language to describe the various kinds of cognition. In general, he simply adopts Aquinas’ concepts. Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 69.

<sup>36</sup> Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 49.

what goodness is. Pieper most explicitly addresses his idea of goodness and the end in his work *Happiness and Contemplation*, so that text will be examined in detail in this section. As in most of his works, Pieper begins by examining the language he will use. Pieper considers and rejects the use of *eudaimonia* to describe the kind of happiness he describes. Seen the context of twentieth century virtue ethics, where the virtues are practiced to achieve *eudaimonia*, that is, “to flourish or live well,”<sup>37</sup> Pieper’s rejection of *eudaimonia* is interesting.<sup>38</sup> He instead adopts *makarios*, or its Latin equivalent *beatus*, in order to echo Aquinas’ use of “beatitude” and the use of *makarios* in the original Greek of the New Testament. Pieper selects these words for their suggestion of “men’s share in the untrammelled happiness of the gods.”<sup>39</sup> Translations of Pieper’s work follow this preference and often use *beatitude* or *blessedness* where other philosophers might talk of human flourishing. The following review of his idea of happiness should be read in this light, that is, that Pieper defines human happiness as participation in divine happiness.

Pieper, following Aquinas, argues from the position that that human nature desires happiness, and has no ability to not desire happiness.<sup>40</sup> In contrast to his contemporaries, Pieper explicitly opposes this acknowledgment of the unchosen human longing for happiness to Kant’s idea of the supremacy of the will, referencing his *Critique of Practical Reason* and *Foundations of the Metaphysic of Ethics*.<sup>41</sup> “Only if we understand man as a created being to the very depths of his spiritual existence can we meaningfully

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<sup>37</sup> Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2000). 167.

<sup>38</sup> As noted above, it is unclear how familiar Pieper was with twentieth century virtue ethics and the available literature in English does not answer the question. Pieper was, however, very well-versed in Aristotle and cites him extensively, so his use of beatitude or blessedness can be assumed to be deliberate.

<sup>39</sup> Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 15.

<sup>40</sup> Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 20-1.

<sup>41</sup> Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 21.

conceive that the will has not the power to not want happiness.”<sup>42</sup> As has been discussed, the denial of createdness is also the denial of human nature.

Happiness, in order to be ultimate happiness, must be attainable and must not exclude the dimensions of human happiness which make happiness identifiable *as* happiness—that is, it is not legitimate to re-define happiness to the extent that it is unrecognizable.<sup>43</sup> Yet the emotions of joy and pleasure themselves are not happiness; they are signs that an exterior good exists and has been possessed in some way.<sup>44</sup> “Joy is the response of a lover receiving what he loves.”<sup>45</sup> What can produce this kind of ultimate happiness? The will’s infinite desire has been noted above: it is not love of any created good that can satisfy the will’s desire. Ultimately, the whole created world is insufficient to satisfy human desire:

“Man as he is constituted, endowed as he is with a thirst for happiness, cannot have his thirst quenched in the finite realm; and if he thinks or behaves as if that were possible, he is misunderstanding himself, he is acting contrary to his own nature.”<sup>46</sup>

It is impossible for creation to satisfy the desire within man, because as a spirit, the soul must be able to encounter and take into itself everything in the universe; and yet that “means that the finite spirit by virtue of its essence is unquenchable and insatiable—unless it partakes of God.”<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 23.

<sup>43</sup> Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 18.

<sup>44</sup> Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 46.

<sup>45</sup> Pieper, *Festivity*. 23.

<sup>46</sup> Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 39.

<sup>47</sup> Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 41.

For his definition of happiness Pieper takes as his starting point Thomas Aquinas' dictum in the *Summa Contra Gentiles* that "man's ultimate happiness consists in contemplation."<sup>48</sup> It is not intuitive that the intellectual act of contemplation provides happiness; yet the normal sources of pleasure people seek are not capable of providing final and complete satisfaction.<sup>49</sup> Human nature has the ability, *capacitas*, to aim at an external reality as an object, even if that object is beyond our ability to take in in its entirety.<sup>50</sup> It is assent to reality and the perception of reality which allow us to grasp goodness, the goal of human life. The ultimate end of human life is the attainment of perfect happiness, which is perfect union with God through contemplation. This partaking of God, "the utmost perfection to which man may attain, the fulfillment of his being, is *visio beatificia*."<sup>51</sup> This end can be variously thought of as a terminus (the end of the earthly journey), a goal, or as the ultimate satisfaction of human desires. Pieper argues that every person, not only philosophers, has the potential to achieve this "eternal contemplative happiness with God."<sup>52</sup>

Why is happiness contemplation of God specifically, and not another kind of earthly pleasure or joy? Only an infinite God can satisfy the will's desire for endless goodness. And only through cognition can something exterior to the person be brought into the person.<sup>53</sup> Through perception of reality, which requires assent to human createdness and assent to the existence of the Creator, humanity is able to contemplate

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<sup>48</sup> Thomas Aquinas, "Summa Contra Gentiles" (Intellex Past Masters Database). 3, 37.

<sup>49</sup> Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 17.

<sup>50</sup> Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 42.

<sup>51</sup> Pieper, *Festivity*. 15.

<sup>52</sup> Ralph McNerny, "Introduction," in *Happiness and Contemplation* (South Bend: St. Augustine's Press, 1998). 11.

<sup>53</sup> Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 57.

God, the source of goodness.<sup>54</sup> Only if God has created humanity with the ability to reach out to God can there be a possibility for communication with God. Without accepting createdness, Pieper sees no possibility of ultimate happiness in the sense of beatitude, being filled with all possible goodness.

Pieper suggests that perception is most perfect when what is beheld is loved by the person who sees. “There are things which the lover alone observes... the lover partakes of goods which are withheld from all others.”<sup>55</sup> There is a kind of awareness which can only be attained by a person who loves. That loving is contemplation, “intuition of the beloved object.”<sup>56</sup> Pieper identifies three elements to contemplation. First, it is “silent perception of reality”, intuiting what is present.<sup>57</sup> Second, it is not arrived at by a process of reasoning but through reception or intuition alone; here Pieper borrows the distinction used by Aquinas between *ratio* or discursive reasoning and *intellectus* or simple intuition.<sup>58</sup> Pieper almost exclusively uses ‘seeing’ to denote that immediate perception which is intuition. Third, Pieper notes that the traditional definition of contemplation has included amazement, which is specifically the reaction of a created, finite soul to something that has been revealed.<sup>59</sup> Contemplation can take different forms. While all are characterized by “the loving, yearning, affirming bent toward that happiness which is the same as God Himself,”<sup>60</sup> contemplation is often a loving affirmation of earthly things. Contemplation looks to the heart of created realities and sees the reflected

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<sup>54</sup> Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 79.

<sup>55</sup> Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 70.

<sup>56</sup> Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 71.

<sup>57</sup> Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 73.

<sup>58</sup> Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 74.

<sup>59</sup> Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 75.

<sup>60</sup> Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 81.

glory of God there.<sup>61</sup>

Since, Pieper argues, the highest form of happiness is contemplation of God, is happiness possible on earth? It is absolutely true that the most perfect satisfaction of this desire takes place in heaven, but Western Christianity has consistently affirmed that within “historical existence” it is possible to experience this “focusing of an inner gaze” on something which can be imperfectly seen, but seen in some capacity, nonetheless.<sup>62</sup> What is seen through earthly contemplation is, in part, the revelation that there is a deeper kind of perception than earthly contemplation. Yet though earthly contemplation leaves a person longing, it “is able to quench man's thirst more than anything else because it affords a direct perception of the presence of God.”<sup>63</sup> As it has been established above, contemplation is direct perception or intuition, not discursive reasoning or 'thinking' proper. Objection to contemplation as the highest happiness is rooted in a rejection of the world as either fundamentally good or as a creation. “Neither happiness nor contemplation is possible without consent to the world as a whole... [even when] granted amid tears and the extremes of horror.”<sup>64</sup> Pieper affirms that despite the circumstances of the world, not only the *act* of happiness (contemplation) but also “the object of that act, that drink called happiness” is available on earth.

It is worth emphasizing that while happiness must be achieved through the act of contemplation, it is not earned but only ever granted as a gift.<sup>65</sup> Pieper makes the distinction that human striving can attain *eudaimonia*, that is, the possession of goods and

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<sup>61</sup> Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 88.

<sup>62</sup> Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 77.

<sup>63</sup> Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 78.

<sup>64</sup> Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 106.

<sup>65</sup> Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 25.

wealth, but *makarios*, man's participation in the blessedness of the gods, is beyond our ability to acquire.<sup>66</sup> “No one can obtain felicity by pursuit... we cannot make ourselves happy.”<sup>67</sup> Without divine assistance, the search for happiness is a “blind seeking” for something which we cannot properly identify or understand how to obtain.<sup>68</sup>

Nevertheless, Pieper argues that earthly happiness is within the reach of each person. This happiness is a gift, but there are actions that can be taken to prepare to receive the gift. These actions are the virtues.

#### *ACTING IN RESPONSE TO CREATEDNESS*

Pieper's essays on practical virtue are written from the perspective of being ‘on-the-way,’ *status viatoris*, seeking the beatific vision. There are three actions that dominate Pieper's work in relation to the end: pursuing the end *through virtuous acts*; resting in the end or a foretaste of the end *through leisure and contemplation*; and celebrating the attainment or partial attainment of the end *through festivity*. (Only the first of these actions is typically addressed in works on the virtues, but for Pieper, leisure and festivity are the marks of a virtuous society.) Each of these actions is made possible because of the recognition that the world is good, springing from what Berthold Wald calls a “theologically founded worldliness,” which is a term also used in certain of Pieper's essays to describe Aquinas' project of accepting the good in Aristotelian philosophy.

Pieper's essays offer suggestions for how to think about the meaning of the Christian virtues. The seven virtues, leisure, and festivity are proposed as a corrective to

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<sup>66</sup> Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 15, 26.

<sup>67</sup> Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 26.

<sup>68</sup> Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 25.

modernity, which in rejecting the ideas of creation from nonexistence, the goodness of created existence, and the existence of the Creator from whom the world emerges, also rejects the Christian vision of the well-lived life.<sup>69</sup> In brief, Pieper's idea of virtue can be summarized as follows. Because of the createdness of humanity, there are ways in which it is proper to the nature of the person to act; this is virtue. As a philosopher who relies heavily on Aristotle and Plato, Pieper acknowledges the ability of those outside the church to practice the natural virtues. However, virtue can only be present to its highest degree in the Christian who has access through baptism to grace unavailable to those outside the church.

The goodness of creation pervades Pieper's treatment of the virtues. Pieper adopted Aquinas' summary of a fundamental theme within revelation, "Everything created by God is good."<sup>70</sup> Starting, then, from the goodness of creation, Pieper makes human nature a central part of his arguments in each of the virtues. Pieper insists that the practice of virtuous living is a human practice. The human person is not a good spirit attached to an evil body which corrupts the soul, but human body-and-soul. Therefore, virtue regulates both the body and the soul, and in fact an act is virtuous only when both body and soul are rightly ordered. Furthermore, as Meilaender notes, for Pieper the virtues require possession of the other virtues, since no action can be virtuous when directed toward a bad end.<sup>71</sup> Because the virtuous life is a unity, this entails the practice of all the virtues. However, the virtue of prudence is especially important because it is by

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<sup>69</sup> Wald, "Josef Pieper in the Context of Modern Philosophy." 39.

<sup>70</sup> Josef Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1965). 154.

<sup>71</sup> Meilaender, "Josef Pieper: Explorations in the Thought of a Philosopher of Virtue." 118.

prudence that a person is able to perceive the createdness of the world.<sup>72</sup> Thus, in the treatment of the virtues below, while the separate essays are treated individually this is in some ways an artificial division. Certain of Pieper's works are written to illuminate how a share in beatitude is possible in this life—this idea is addressed in *Leisure, the Basis of Culture* and *In Tune with the World: A Theory of Festivity*.<sup>73</sup> *Leisure* and *Festivity* address the kinds of false rest and false worship the contemporary societies practice, as well as defining what true worship and true rest are. To seek the wrong kind of happiness by misidentifying the good will, over time, not only fail to satisfy but also will distort the will and pull the seeker of happiness further from God.

Pieper devotes several works to these ideas because he contends that “it is peculiar to our time that we may conceive of festivity itself as being expressly repudiated.”<sup>74</sup> Pieper notes that both happiness and contemplation “demand eternity;” that is, they put us in contact with what eternity is like because we can 'stand' to be happy for a long time. We are “capable of remaining longer without fatigue or distraction than in any other activity.”<sup>75</sup> In contrast, contemporary societies flatten reality to deny the supernatural dimension which is necessary for happiness. In *A Theory of Festivity*, Pieper acknowledges that other societies throughout history have also lacked the ability to achieve festivity. In particular, he references the Baroque period in European history, and acknowledges that some the ancient Greeks sometimes found their own festivals “empty

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<sup>72</sup> Meilaender, "Josef Pieper: Explorations in the Thought of a Philosopher of Virtue." 120-1.

<sup>73</sup> Note that the virtues themselves are not happiness. Pieper notes that the virtues are oriented toward creating a certain kind of life, and it is a circular argument to say that one creates a certain kind of life in order to create a certain kind of life. Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 92.

<sup>74</sup> Pieper, *Festivity*. 14.

<sup>75</sup> Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 101.

and wearisome pomp.”<sup>76</sup> The question of festival is an eternal problem intensified by the radically anti-human world of modern work which confronted Pieper. Just as the Church has historically defined dogma in response to the challenge of heresy, Pieper sets himself the task of explicitly defining festivity and leisure in order to defend them. In the process, he relates the two concepts to the virtues and outlines a theory of their practice in a rightly ordered human society.

Most briefly stated, *leisure* is a rest in the contemplation of God, while *festival* is a celebration of the good. Leisure often takes place in silence or alone, while a festival necessarily takes place in a social context. (One can have a festive attitude when alone, although perhaps it makes more sense to say that one may participate in the celebration of a feast alone.) The primary aspect of leisure is contemplation and openness to created reality. When leisure overflows into celebration, it is called festivity. Each includes the other, yet it makes sense to talk about them as individual phenomena because while festival is an aspect of leisure, leisure is not exclusively festive. And a festival contains other elements than leisure alone—most importantly worship, but also acted expression of celebration, which have a special significance of their own. An essential element of festivity is an abundance of joy, although that joy may be expressed as sorrow over the absence of a joy. On the other hand, leisure is frequently something other than pure worship or the creation of art, though those two elements may also be found in leisure. Festivity also has a necessarily communal aspect which is not necessary for leisure. These two concepts will be addressed in much more depth in the final chapter. The most

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<sup>76</sup> Pieper, *Festivity*. 4.

crucial distinction is that festivity in its most intense form is leisure. Two other concepts which are important (and have already been discussed) are contemplation and ultimate happiness. The chart below summarizes the relationships between these four primary concepts in Pieper's writing:

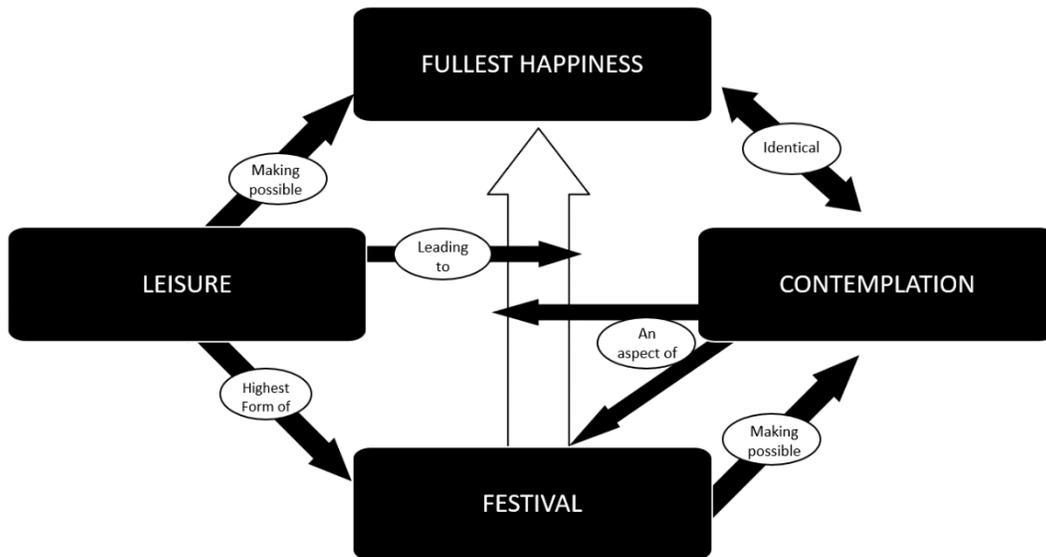


Figure 1: Relationships between core concepts in Pieper. Figure created by the author.

Leisure leads to contemplation and contemplation is an aspect of leisure. Festival is an element of leisure. Leisure makes possible fullest happiness. A festival directly expresses a community's approach to fullest happiness. Contemplation is identical to ultimate happiness. And finally, though not reflected on this diagram, both contemplation and fullest happiness are *acts* in the sense that they are actions of the *intellectus* as the person strives to take exterior reality into the interior of the person.

Only when a person acknowledges the exterior world as created can it be conceived of as real, and only when the human person is created to be able to have a

reliable perception of the real world through the senses can there be a possibility for real cognition of the world. Human desire seeks fulfillment in created reality but is ultimately satisfied by union with God in contemplation. Contemplation of God is most perfectly fulfilled in the life which comes to the person after death, but it is also possible on earth through actions the human person takes. Without perception of the real world, there is no possibility for human happiness on earth. Pieper relies on these concepts in order to structure many of his works, but especially his works on the virtuous life, which will be addressed at the end of this essay. In certain cases, Pieper does not go into detail about the specifics of his proposals for the virtuous life, but that is not his intent: Pieper strives to provide a philosophical grounding for certain intuitions about the disorder of modern life. However, before addressing Pieper, it is useful to turn to Aquinas in order to understand the context for Pieper's essays. As will be discussed, Aquinas was a particularly important influence on the shape of Pieper's works, and Aquinas' work on the metaphysics of creation must be understood in order to fully grasp what Pieper intends.

## CHAPTER 3:

### AQUINAS ON ASSENT, PERCEPTION, AND END

In 1924, a lecture by Romano Guardini on the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas inspired an intuition which served as the thesis for Pieper's doctoral dissertation and continued to influence Pieper's philosophy for the rest of his life. As he expresses it in his autobiography, this intuition was that:

“Every *ought* is grounded in an *is*; the good is what corresponds to reality. If anyone wants to know and do good, he must direct his gaze to the objective world of being; not to his own mind, not to his own conscience, not to values, nor to ideals or paradigms he has himself drawn up. He must look away from his own act and toward reality.”<sup>1</sup>

This orientation toward “objective reality” as the precondition for knowledge of the good was Pieper’s basis for reading Aquinas.<sup>2</sup> Pieper’s reliance on Aquinas’ metaphysics of creation has been recognized as crucial to understand Pieper’s work by Bernard Schumacher.<sup>3</sup> This holds true where Pieper cites Aquinas extensively for support, such as *Happiness and Contemplation*, as well as when Aquinas is cited only rarely, for example in Pieper’s *In Tune with the World: A Theory of Festivity* or in his many works intended for non-specialists. But before looking at the specific contexts where Pieper references these ideas, it is first necessary to review Thomas Aquinas' metaphysics of creation, theory of knowledge, and perception of reality.

Pieper cites Aquinas as an example of the wisdom of humanity as expressed in the Catholic Church, but by no means the only source of wisdom: “[h]e is intended as the

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<sup>1</sup> Pieper’s doctoral thesis has been published in a revised form in English as *Reality and the Good*. Pieper, *No One Could Have Known*. 63.

<sup>2</sup> Schumacher, "Cosmopolitan Hermit." 15.

<sup>3</sup> Schumacher, "Cosmopolitan Hermit." 14.

witness for that tradition.”<sup>4</sup> Pieper came to this tradition by an unusual route. While theologians in Pieper’s time would have been very familiar with Aquinas, Pieper was not trained as a theologian. As an undergraduate, Pieper studied law and philosophy; moreover, his philosophy advisor concentrated his own work in animal psychology.<sup>5</sup> In consequence, Pieper’s study of Aquinas, though influenced by teachers such as a former Dominican at his secondary school, Erich Przywara, and Romano Guardini, was self-motivated and largely took place outside his formal university education, until he decided to write his doctoral thesis on Aquinas.<sup>6</sup>

Pieper received significant training in the works of Aquinas under Erich Przywara during summer college courses over a period of three years.<sup>7</sup> Przywara also taught notable twentieth century theologians including Hans Urs Von Balthasar, Edith Stein, and others.<sup>8</sup> Przywara’s Thomism emphasized Aquinas’ work on the distinction between essence and existence, his *theologia negativa*, and is characterized by a “method of immanent historical understanding that aimed at an objective synthesis,” as he describes. Przywara opposed this method to contemporary neo-scholastics and neo-Thomists, particularly those heavily influenced by the tradition of manuals and commentaries.<sup>9</sup> Przywara was interested in conversation with modern philosophies like idealism and existentialism, but refused to distort Thomism to be palatable to those philosophies; nor,

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<sup>4</sup> Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 14.

<sup>5</sup> Pieper, *No One Could Have Known*. 69-70.

<sup>6</sup> Pieper, *No One Could Have Known*. 46, 62, 67.

<sup>7</sup> Pieper, *No One Could Have Known*. 62.

<sup>8</sup> John Betz, "Translator's Preface," in *Analogia Entis: Metaphysics, Original Structure and Universal Rhythm* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012). xi, xv.

<sup>9</sup> Erich Przywara, "Preface to the First Edition of *Analogia Entis* I, 1932," in *Analogia Entis: Metaphysics, Original Structure and Universal Rhythm* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012).

however, would he keep Aquinas from any contact with modern philosophy.<sup>10</sup>

Following Erich Przywara, who similarly “was never a pure neo-scholastic”<sup>11</sup> Pieper engaged in dialogue with contemporary philosophers insofar as he thought they provided insight into what is true. Pieper’s criticisms of Thomists seem directed sometimes at neo-scholastics and rigid neo-Thomists, though he also cites commentaries including Suarez and Cajetan. At other times his criticisms seem to be directed at the Transcendental Thomists,<sup>12</sup> who sought to answer questions posed by Kantian metaphysics with reference to Aquinas. While O’Meara argues that the Transcendental Thomists did not “mix or compromise Aquinas with Kant,”<sup>13</sup> Pieper describes their project in a decidedly negative tone as one which “refers back to him [Aquinas] and claims to bring his doctrine up to date.”<sup>14</sup> Pieper’s reading of Aquinas was much more influenced by historical-theological readings of Aquinas, including Etienne Gilson, Marie-Dominique Chenu, and Fernand van Steenberghen, all of whom he appreciates because of their “determination... to go beyond mere scholarliness and to ask and answer the question of the truth of things.”<sup>15</sup> Pieper did however dialogue with Kantian metaphysics, as an instance of his disagreement with modern philosophy.

Because Pieper’s corpus is so large and because he published extensively on Thomas, this chapter concentrates on the concepts within Aquinas which Pieper refers to the most frequently: the world’s createdness and its relationship to the Creator; and the

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<sup>10</sup> Thomas F. O’Meara O.P., *Thomas Aquinas Theologian* (Notre Dame, IN: UND Press, 1997). 186.

<sup>11</sup> Betz, "Translator's Preface." 14.

<sup>12</sup> Gerald A. McCool, "Neo-Thomism and the Tradition of St. Thomas," Article, *Thought* 62, no. 245 (1987).

<sup>13</sup> O’Meara O.P., *Thomas Aquinas Theologian*. 188.

<sup>14</sup> Pieper, *Guide to Thomas Aquinas*. 105.

<sup>15</sup> Pieper, *Guide to Thomas Aquinas*. xi, 8.

fact that goodness is rooted in external, objective reality.<sup>16</sup> Pieper explicitly identifies these themes as important to understanding Aquinas' philosophy, and frequently returns to them. Although not explicitly stated by Pieper in reference to his own work, I argue that they are also crucial for understanding Pieper. By entering more fully into the themes discussed above in their original context, Aquinas' thought will provide context for Pieper's application of them in his works of practical moral philosophy.

### *AQUINAS ON CREATION AND BEING*

As discussed in the first chapter, Aquinas argues that God accounts for the existence of reality.<sup>17</sup> Not only does God have the power to create, "we must hold firmly that God can and does make things *from nothing*" (emphasis added.)<sup>18</sup> Finally, God has created everything that exists.<sup>19</sup> While other spirits, angels, and creatures with material bodies have the power to re-arrange matter and generate new life through natural processes, this is not true creation. For Pieper, this is key to understanding the work of Aquinas. Not only is it true that "nothing exists which is not creatura, except the Creator Himself," it is also the case that "this createdness determines entirely and all-pervasively the inner structure of the creature."<sup>20</sup> For example, Aquinas notes that it is not possible to understand the "being which is in creatures... except as derived from the divine being."<sup>21</sup>

The concept of "being" in Aquinas necessarily requires assent to several

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<sup>16</sup> For the fullest presentation of Pieper's thoughts on these ideas, see his works *Reality and the Good* and *The Truth of All Things*, usually together published in the United States as *Living the Truth*.

<sup>17</sup> Brian Davies, *Thomas Aquinas's Summa Contra Gentiles: A Guide and Commentary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016). 55.

<sup>18</sup> Thomas Aquinas, "Disputed Questions on the Power of God," ed. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Intellex Past Masters Database). 3, 1.

<sup>19</sup> Aquinas, "On the Power of God." 3, 4.

<sup>20</sup> Pieper, "Negative Philosophy." 47.

<sup>21</sup> Aquinas, "On the Power of God." 3, 5.

interrelated propositions about the nature of creation, creatures, and God. For example, Aquinas argues that since all things have an essence or nature, this necessarily implies that they were created.<sup>22</sup> Yet this assumes a number of points—the existence of God being foremost among them, but also that things have a nature at all, something which is not at all obvious to the contemporary world. So, in order to understand this very different picture of the world which has relevance both to understanding Aquinas as well as Pieper’s work, the relationship of creation to God in Aquinas’ *Disputed Questions on the Power of God* will be examined. Createdness, the quality creaturae have of existing as created, is addressed at length in *On the Power of God* because God’s relationship to the universe He creates and sustains in being is of primary concern when considering God’s power.

In “On the Preservation of Things by God” in *On the Power of God* Aquinas affirms that God has power over everything but emphasizes that God also respects the essential natures of created things. God creates and holds everything in existence, and if that action of creating and holding ever ceased, everything would return to the state of nothing from which it was created.<sup>23</sup> Although God has the power to annihilate, Aquinas argues that since God “fashioned each nature in such a way as not to deprive it of its property” he will not cease to uphold any creatura whose nature is to endure—although not everything is intended to last forever.<sup>24</sup> In a beautiful passage, Aquinas suggests that the purpose for which the stars move is the filling of the kingdom of God, and when they

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<sup>22</sup> Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 61.

<sup>23</sup> Aquinas, "On the Power of God." 5, 1.

<sup>24</sup> Aquinas, "On the Power of God." 5, 3, 5, 9.

have reached that end, the heavens will come to rest. Yet it is simultaneously true that the universe “exists for the sake of existing, wherein it is like God”—it has an inherent dignity to itself. Its integrity as creatura is respected, even while it is subject to God’s will.<sup>25</sup> In a discussion about the final destination of the elements of the universe, Aquinas argues that they will be transformed: “the elements will remain in their substance and natural qualities.” Though their movement and “corruption” will cease, their essential qualities will be preserved.<sup>26</sup> In all of these parts of the created world, God preserves their natures as he has created them. Each of the parts of creation considered fulfill their role in the universe by “[existing] for the sake of existing,” and each individual creatura acts according to its end.<sup>27</sup>

Aquinas draws these threads together in the final article of the question which considers the fate of the human body. Unlike the other parts of the material world Aquinas considers, human beings are composed of both material body and immaterial rational soul. Aquinas argues against those who posit that the body will pass away and the soul alone will be united to God.<sup>28</sup> Aquinas states that since Christ “never did and never will put aside the body which once for all he reassumed in his resurrection” neither will the saints, after the resurrection of the body, put aside their corporeal bodies.<sup>29</sup> Aquinas presents two reasons to support this argument: first, because it is human nature to be both spirit and body. If the body passed away, the person would no longer be in accordance with God’s design for the perfected human. The human body is not “accidental” to the

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<sup>25</sup> Aquinas, "On the Power of God." 5, 5.

<sup>26</sup> Aquinas, "On the Power of God." 5, 7.

<sup>27</sup> Aquinas, "On the Power of God." 5, 5.

<sup>28</sup> Aquinas, "On the Power of God." 5, 10, obj. 3; obj. 5.

<sup>29</sup> Aquinas, "On the Power of God." 5, 10, s.c.

person, but an essential element of the person.<sup>30</sup> The second reason follows from the preceding articles of the question, which can be distilled to asking what in creation will remain when the world is transformed. Everything will be radically changed, and some of the parts of the universe will be ended. But everything in the universe, even including the elements, will be preserved and raised up to fulfill its potential by the redemption of the human soul and God's redemption of the restored body. "By its perfect union with God the soul will have complete sway over the body: so that although matter, if left to itself, is corruptible, it will acquire incorruption by the power of the soul."<sup>31</sup> Humanity, as created, is subject to how it has been created to be by nature. Aquinas believes that as such, God affirms human nature by redeeming and fulfilling it, not changing it.

It is important to note in the preceding discussion that, both for the created world in general and human beings specifically, God preserves and affirms the natures of what He has made. For Pieper, Aquinas' affirmation of the goodness of creation is intended to emphasize that "created things are good because they were created by God... [including] the reality of creation in man... [and] all the powers of his being."<sup>32</sup> Pieper argued that this affirmation of creation stems from Aquinas' "reverence for the reality of the Incarnation of God."<sup>33</sup> Practically, this requires assent to createdness by each person, because by rejecting createdness, one rejects the fundamentally good character of God. Instead, affirmation of created things should result in love of what God has created. Love is, in part, an act of the will, because "to confirm and affirm something that is already

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<sup>30</sup> Aquinas, "On the Power of God." 5, 10, resp.

<sup>31</sup> Aquinas, "On the Power of God." 5, 10, resp.; ad 3.

<sup>32</sup> Pieper, "On Thomas Aquinas." 33.

<sup>33</sup> Pieper, "On Thomas Aquinas." 30.

accomplished” is an act of the will.<sup>34</sup> The affirmation of being, acknowledging that existence is good, is the first principle upon all reason is based. Affirming or “assenting” to existence itself is necessary to real perception of reality.<sup>35</sup> This assent to human createdness, creation, and the Creator must be given in order to encounter the world.

### *AQUINAS ON PERCEPTION OF REALITY*

There are two necessary conditions to be met in order to be able to perceive reality. First, the perceiving subject must have the capacity to perceive in general. How does Aquinas know that humanity can perceive the world? Returning to the concept of human createdness as discussed above, Aquinas believed that humans are endowed by God with a nature that has the power to perceive created things. Against the Augustinians, who claimed that spiritual knowledge was not related to the use of the senses, Aquinas affirmed that all knowledge is “somehow dependent upon sense perception.”<sup>36</sup> Perception of reality through the senses is what allows us to form universal ideas or concepts within our intellect.<sup>37</sup> Our intellects take sense impressions and abstract them into immaterial forms which can be understood by the mind, and then acted upon.<sup>38</sup> Second, the perceived object must exist. As Davies discusses in reference to the second book of the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Aquinas opposed those who doubted the existence of the external world assuming “that it is obvious that we live among physical things that act on us as we act upon them.”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. 165.

<sup>35</sup> Aquinas, "ST." I.II, 94, 2.

<sup>36</sup> Pieper, "On Thomas Aquinas." 29.

<sup>37</sup> Aquinas, "ST." I, 78, 4 ad. 5.

<sup>38</sup> Aquinas, "ST." I, 84, 2.

<sup>39</sup> Davies, *Thomas Aquinas's Summa Contra Gentiles: A Guide and Commentary*. 180.

The mode of perception used by human persons is the reason,<sup>40</sup> which for Aquinas includes both *ratio* and *intellectus*.<sup>41</sup> *Ratio* is discursive reasoning, or the ability to connect premises, things, or concepts; sometimes this entails the use of logic, but not necessarily in the formal sense. *Ratio* is the part of the reason which examines things presented to the senses and creates a likeness of those things in order that they can be understood by the human mind. *Intellectus* is the form of reason which intuitively perceives reality or imagines what could be. It is passive in the technical sense used by Aquinas because it operates by moving from the potential to understand to actual understanding without effort.<sup>42</sup> The *intellectus* is receptive to sense impressions, and it is the form of reason which understands first principles. First principles are directly understood by the *intellectus*. This is unlike *ratio* which actively strives to move, sometimes painfully, from one idea to one which can be connected to that first idea in some way. The *ratio* constructs ideas about the world through a process of discursive reasoning. These two parts of reason are part of “the same” reason, but act in different ways upon the same objects.<sup>43</sup> It is the *intellectus* which contemplates.

While these two elements of the reason relate to the world in different ways, each depends on the correct operation of the other. If the senses are impaired due to the heat of

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<sup>40</sup> Human reason is unique to humanity. It is superior to the “cognitive power” possessed by animals, which can only comprehend individual objects. Animals do not possess a *ratio*; although they are able to perform some of the same operations we do, they operate according to instinct, not human reason (Aquinas, “SCG.” 2, 201-2.) Similarly, Aquinas notes that angels, having no body, directly perceive reality in a different manner than humans do. (Aquinas, “ST.” I, 85, 1.)

<sup>41</sup> *Ratio* and *intellectus* are translated using different terms by different authors. In general, *ratio* will be discussed using the term “discursive reasoning” while *intellectus* is discussed using “contemplation” or “intuitive perception.” The power of the mind to think in general will be referred to as “reason.” The translation of Aquinas used for the *Past Masters Database* typically uses “reason” to refer to *ratio* and “understanding” to indicate *intellectus*.

<sup>42</sup> Aquinas, “ST.” I, 79, 3.

<sup>43</sup> Aquinas, “On Truth.” 15, 1, s.c.

anger, the operation of the ratio is hindered—it is not as easy to logically discuss one’s obligation to a group after suffering harm from them. Yet so is the intellectus, which depends on the ratio to reason from direct perception to new ideas.<sup>44</sup> Insofar as a person wilfully refuses to practice temperance, the hindrance of the reason may be attributable to a sin like lust or gluttony.<sup>45</sup> The ratio, on the other hand, depends for its ability to reason upon certain principles which can only be learned through direct illumination of the mind. An example of a foundational principle is the principle of non-contradiction, that a thing cannot be itself and not itself. Though Aquinas admits the possibility that the senses may sometimes be impaired by the body, he assumes that it is generally possible to know the world through sense impression.<sup>46</sup>

Human perception relies on the existence of God who created people able to perceive: “a natural thing is placed between two knowing subjects”—knowing subjects being the knowing person and God.<sup>47</sup> Josef Pieper found Aquinas’ discussion of this double relationship of knowledge in *On Truth* important enough to return to in multiple works, so it is worth spending time to consider it. In the first question of *On Truth*, two kinds of truth are considered, truth as it exists in a thing and truth as it exists in the mind. For human persons, truth is in the intellect as the intellect judges the conformity of a mind’s idea of an object to the object itself.<sup>48</sup> The standard for truth is the created object; whether the idea in the mind conforms to that object determines whether truth is in the intellect. However, the same thing is given shape by its Creator, God. In relation to God,

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<sup>44</sup> Aquinas, "ST." I.II, 47, 3; I, 76, 3.

<sup>45</sup> Aquinas, "ST." II.II, 15, 2

<sup>46</sup> Aquinas, "ST." I.II, 28, 5.

<sup>47</sup> Aquinas, "Disputed Questions on Truth." Cited in Pieper, "Negative Philosophy." 53.

<sup>48</sup> Aquinas, "On Truth." 1, 2, s.c.

“these things are themselves measured” and a given creatura can be called true if it “fulfills the end to which it was ordained by the divine intellect.”<sup>49</sup> In this way, a given thing is “placed between two knowing subjects,” one of which it measures and by Whom it is measured.

God knows individual created things directly,<sup>50</sup> but the human mind is only able to know God through the knowledge of created things:

“...all different things imitate God in different ways; and, according to different forms, they represent the one simple form of God, since in His form are found perfectly united all the perfections that are found, distinct and multiple, among creatures.”<sup>51</sup>

The light which enables our minds to know individual things is the divine light.<sup>52</sup> This divine light is a gift; being created to perceive is a gift; the perceivability of created things is a gift. Every aspect of our ability to know and be known is a divine gift.<sup>53</sup>

Because God sustains and creates the world through His thought, humans can know.<sup>54</sup> As explained above, God’s sustaining of the world takes place through a creative thought which summons the world into and upholds the world’s continued existence. Creatura “cannot exist except by reason of the divine intellect which keeps bringing them into being.”<sup>55</sup> We are able to know the truth of things “secondarily” rather than primarily. God is the cause of truth in creatura; in contrast, truth is an “effect” of the human intellect’s perception of a thing “in the sense that the latter receives its knowledge from

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<sup>49</sup> Aquinas, "On Truth." 1, 2, resp.

<sup>50</sup> Aquinas, "On Truth." 2, 5.

<sup>51</sup> Aquinas, "On Truth." 2, 1.

<sup>52</sup> Aquinas, "On Truth." 1, 4, s.c.; 6, 1.

<sup>53</sup> Aquinas, "ST." I, 21, 4.

<sup>54</sup> Aquinas, "On Truth." 1, 2.

<sup>55</sup> Aquinas, "On Truth." 1, 4, resp.

things.”<sup>56</sup> It is important to note, however, that *creatura* can be known because we are able to “receive knowledge” from them. This quality of ‘self-revelation’ is found in any created thing: “in the degree in which a thing has being, in that degree it is capable of being proportioned to intellect.”<sup>57</sup> What this means is that anything that exists can be understood, to some degree, by the human mind. The ability to be understood is a property of existence itself.

Our perception of reality is limited not by reality's unknowability but by the human incapacity to comprehend all of God: “we cannot give God a name that defines or includes or equals his essence: since we do not know to that extent what God is.”<sup>58</sup> Aquinas notes that human knowledge about God is highly circumscribed; through reason, we can only know what God is not, not what he is.<sup>59</sup> God creates and measures all things; God is not given measure by anything because this would put God in a lesser position to His measurer. Schumacher summarizes Pieper’s position that Aquinas’ metaphysics of creation necessarily entails an “impossibility of arriving at a final understanding of anything” because the essential natures of each *creatura* come from their being creatively thought by God, who alone can fully comprehend the essence of each thing.<sup>60</sup> Each being’s essence was created by God, who is not able to be known by the finite human mind. To a lesser extent, the essence of each created thing expresses that same unknowability. Created and shaped by an infinite God, were a thing to be totally knowable to the created person it would no longer partake even in some small way of the

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<sup>56</sup> Aquinas, "On Truth." 1, 4, resp.

<sup>57</sup> Aquinas, "On Truth." 1, 1, ad. 5.

<sup>58</sup> Aquinas, "On the Power of God." 7, 5 ad 6.

<sup>59</sup> Pieper, "On Thomas Aquinas." 37. Aquinas, "On the Power of God." 7, 5 ad 14.

<sup>60</sup> Schumacher, "*Cosmopolitan Hermit.*" 14.

vastness of God. Yet although God is infinitely greater than the human mind can grasp, it is also true that “our intellect is led... to the divine knowledge so as to know about God that He is, and other such truths....”<sup>61</sup> To look intently at reality is to realize the extent of the mystery which confronts us.

To summarize, human perception takes place through the working of the reason, which is given to humans as a capacity within human nature. Among the capacities of creaturae in general is to both give measure (to the human intellect) and to be measured (by the divine intellect). Human knowledge is measured by God and by the created world; the only category of things that humans measure is things that have been invented or made by people.<sup>62</sup> Truth “resides, in its primary aspect, in the intellect... truth is defined by the conformity of intellect and thing; and hence to know this conformity is to know truth.”<sup>63</sup> For a human person to accurately perceive the world requires that the ideas about the world present in their intellect be conformed to reality which has been created by God.

#### *AQUINAS ON THE HIGHEST GOOD AND ULTIMATE END*

For Aquinas, the ultimate end of human life, the only thing which can satisfy human desire, is union with God. There is nothing else which can fulfill the human desire for happiness. Aquinas argues that this is because God, the “source and goal” of human life, has created human nature to find “fulfillment, but not replacement or rejection” in the final union with Himself which is—as noted above—human destiny.<sup>64</sup> This is the end

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<sup>61</sup> Aquinas, "SCG." I, 3.

<sup>62</sup> Aquinas, "ST." I, 21, 2.

<sup>63</sup> Aquinas, "ST." I 16, 2.

<sup>64</sup> O'Meara O.P., *Thomas Aquinas Theologian*. 149-150.

for which all human striving seeks. It is helpful, however, to dwell more closely on a few themes which come up in Pieper's works on the moral life, specifically how the person achieves this union with God. It is the mind, the means by which a person comprehends reality, which is the means the person uses to seek the good. Furthermore, it is an act of the intellect by which good is taken into the person. What is the good for which the person should seek? That one thing that will produce "final and perfect happiness": "nothing else than the vision of the Divine Essence" Aquinas says, "... thus it will have its perfection through union with God."<sup>65</sup>

Western philosophy of mind, including Aquinas, has historically taught that it is not possible to separate human nature from the mind and that the will is a part of the created soul.<sup>66</sup> In humans, "the one principle and root of all [willing] is love."<sup>67</sup> Love of some good is the motivation for every action. Every act of the will is oriented toward some good, because every act of the will is motivated by love of some good whether positively (a desire to seek it out) or negatively (a desire to avoid it). "For nobody desires anything nor rejoices in anything, except as a good that is loved..."<sup>68</sup> As the person seeks good in the world, reality is "simply" perceived by the intellectus. In addition, the:

"good' is the first thing that falls under the apprehension of the practical reason, which is directed to action: since every agent acts for an end under the aspect of good. Consequently, the first principle of practical reason is one founded on the notion of good, viz. that "good is that which all things seek after."<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Aquinas, "ST." I.II 3, 8. As noted in the first chapter, this identification of the end of human life as beatitude is distinct from contemporary virtue ethics, which argues for eudaimonia as the end of human life.

<sup>66</sup> Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 22.

<sup>67</sup> Aquinas, "SCG." IV, 19.

<sup>68</sup> Aquinas, "ST." I, 20, 1.

<sup>69</sup> Aquinas, "ST." I.II 94, 2.

Thus, the mind naturally moves from a passive perception of “what reality is” to an active attempt to identify what is good in reality and a striving to obtain what is desired by the will—the good.

“The essence of happiness consists in an act of the intellect.”<sup>70</sup> Pieper comments that for Aquinas, the most perfect satisfaction of human longing

“takes place in the manner in which we become aware of reality; the whole energy of our being is ultimately directed toward attainment of insight. The perfectly happy person...is one who sees.”<sup>71</sup>

Aquinas does not allow for exceptions; any happiness that any person experiences is an act of the intellect, as the object of happiness is brought into the person through the operation of the intellect. Knowledge precedes the movement of the will in loving, because one must perceive what is loved before the will can be inclined toward it.<sup>72</sup> One objection to this picture of happiness considered by Aquinas is that happiness is “he who has whatever he desires, and desires nothing amiss.”<sup>73</sup> Aquinas acknowledges this to be a condition for happiness but he argues that while a happy person is satisfied when she has what she desires, “having, however, takes place by something other than an act of will.”<sup>74</sup> As Pieper summarizes it: “having” or “possession of the beloved... takes place in an act of cognition, in seeing, in intuition, in contemplation.”<sup>75</sup>

By happiness, Aquinas means the happiness which, having been attained, is so

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<sup>70</sup> Aquinas, "ST." I.II 3, 4. See Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 58.

<sup>71</sup> Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 58.

<sup>72</sup> Aquinas, "ST." I.II 3, 4 ad. 4.

<sup>73</sup> Aquinas, "ST." I.II 3, 4 obj. 4.

<sup>74</sup> Aquinas, "ST." I.II 3, 4 ad 5. See also Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 62.

<sup>75</sup> Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 32.

satisfying that a person cannot desire anything else. The desire of the will for happiness is infinite; there is no end to the appetite for diversion.<sup>76</sup> Nothing created can satisfy the desire for happiness, because the soul is by nature is formed so that it can take in the entire universe. Yet if nothing can satisfy the desire for happiness, was humanity created to suffer without satisfaction of this desire for the good? Aquinas answers by stating that nothing suffices to satisfy the will of man other than the “whole of all goodness”, which is not able to be found in any individual created thing or even every created thing; the person is only able to find it in God, because the goodness of God surpasses all else.<sup>77</sup>

Aquinas argues that the “vision of the Divine Essence” is the source of happiness.<sup>78</sup> As noted in the first chapter, contemplation of God can seem like a cold substitute for whatever one conceives happiness to be, but Aquinas notes that happiness includes emotions. Thus, according to Aquinas, it is possible to find perfect emotional happiness in God.<sup>79</sup> It is human nature for a person to love God more than anything else, including her own self. While God, who created the human will to desire happiness, is the ultimate source of that desire, the will nonetheless desires happiness freely.<sup>80</sup> Note, though, the difference between human *nature* and what each person does. While many people do love themselves more than God, because “God is the universal good” and good is what is eternally sought by the will, to love anything more than God is to work against human nature.<sup>81</sup> For Aquinas, by knowing and contemplating God, our mind is oriented

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<sup>76</sup> Aquinas, "ST." I.II 2, 1 ad 3.

<sup>77</sup> Aquinas, "ST." I.II 2, 8.

<sup>78</sup> Aquinas, "ST." I.II 3, 8.

<sup>79</sup> Aquinas, "ST." I.II 4, 5 ad 5.

<sup>80</sup> Aquinas, "ST." I.II 6, 1 ad. 3.

<sup>81</sup> Aquinas, "ST." I, 60, 5.

toward the source of happiness and our will's desire for happiness is satisfied.

Pieper's identification of the centrality of Aquinas' metaphysics of creation to Aquinas' work resulted in a frequent return to the view of the world as "created" within Pieper's own writing. His argument that the human desire for happiness can only be fulfilled by contact with something outside ourselves which surpasses our ability to master it becomes easier to understand by reading Aquinas, who notes that the human person is created to be fulfilled in union with God. Aquinas' insistence that God preserves and affirms the natures of what He has created is the reason for the high regard in which Pieper holds created reality. Createdness is also relevant to understanding Aquinas' theory of perception. Pieper relies on the double relationship between the human mind and the Divine mind for confidence that the human reason operates accurately. Pieper agrees with Aquinas that without assenting to the existence of the Creator, it is impossible to be confident that the human mind truly is perceiving what exists in the world. To understand Pieper, one must recall his adherence to Aquinas' answer to what can satisfy the human desire for happiness. Only union with God is the destination and fulfillment of human life, and the goal of the moral life is to live in such a way that union with God can be attained. Having discussed Pieper's approach to the three concepts discussed—assent to createdness, perception of reality, and the final end of human life—and having surveyed some of Aquinas' thoughts on these topics, the main section of this thesis will analyze select works of Pieper's moral philosophy, in which he discusses living the humane life, through the lens of these ideas. Without this understanding of Aquinas' work on createdness, Pieper's arguments lack necessary context.

## CHAPTER 4:

### CREATEDNESS IN PIEPER'S WORKS ON THE VIRTUES, LEISURE, AND REST

In Pieper's seven essays on the virtues, *Leisure, the Basis of Culture*, and *In Tune with the World: A Theory of Festivity*, Pieper uses the concepts of assent to createdness, perception of reality, and pursuit of the end of human life to affirm the necessity of specific practices. These practices include the seven virtues, as well as other activities which lead to rest and celebration. For Pieper, human virtues are neither abstract concepts nor emotions, nor attitudes, but specific practices necessarily embodied and concretely acted in a manner that accords with human nature and leads to the end of human life. In the preface to *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, Pieper states that "the doctrine of virtue... speaks both of the kind of being which is his when he enters the world, as a consequence of his createdness, and the kind of being he ought to strive toward and attain to—by being prudent, just, brave, and temperate."<sup>1</sup>

Though not always discussed in the language used above, the three themes under consideration help the reader understand Pieper's moral philosophy, so there is value in identifying how these themes are present in specific works. The goal of this analysis is not to explicitly identify instances where Pieper uses the language of this framework—as the framework is not Pieper's, but the author's—but to demonstrate how the ideas underlying the framework are expressed in Pieper's idea of the virtuous life. I argue that this is the case in both Pieper's essays on the seven virtues as well as two of his works which are not generally grouped with the virtues: *Leisure, the Basis of Culture* and *A*

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<sup>1</sup> Pieper, "Preface." xii.

*Theory of Festivity*. The latter two work are especially significant to this analysis because they present a more holistic picture of the ideal human life, rather than isolating a virtue from the kind of life to which it ought to lead.

### *THE CARDINAL VIRTUES*

Pieper's moral philosophy prioritized the practice of the virtues because he saw it as freer than a moral philosophy more concerned with "commandments or duties" than an orientation toward the end of human existence.<sup>2</sup> As noted above, Pieper began his university studies in the faculty of theology but quickly moved to philosophy; he thus would probably have had some limited experience with the German 20<sup>th</sup> century manualists such as those discussed by Keenan.<sup>3</sup> Pieper primarily read philosophers in addition to patristic and scholastic theologians, rather than casuists or manualists, the latter of whom were the primary source of moral theology at the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>4</sup> Pieper's moral philosophy was also shaped by the debates on the "sources of Christian ethics" occurring in Germany in the first three decades of the twentieth century.<sup>5</sup> Lottin critiques the manualists and, like Pieper, notes Aquinas' identification of the centrality of prudence in ethics and advocates for a turn to the

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<sup>2</sup> Pieper, "Preface." xii.

<sup>3</sup> James F. Keenan, *History of Catholic Moral Theology in the Twentieth Century: From Confessing Sins to Liberating Consciences* (London: London : Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010). 9. Heribert Jone, discussed by Keenan, was teaching in Munster while Pieper was attending university there, although Pieper was not in the faculty of theology at that time. 25.

<sup>4</sup> Keenan, *History of Catholic Moral Theology in the Twentieth Century: From Confessing Sins to Liberating Consciences*. 12-13; 20. Keenan provides a history a history of moral theology among Pieper's contemporaries and immediate predecessors, focused on the English-speaking world but not exclusive to it. For a thematic history of moral theology in Roman Catholicism, with particular attention to the Augustinian and Thomistic traditions as expressed in moral theology, see John. Mahoney, *The Making of Moral Theology: A Study of the Roman Catholic Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).

<sup>5</sup> Keenan, *History of Catholic Moral Theology in the Twentieth Century: From Confessing Sins to Liberating Consciences*. 36.

“person” in ethical reflection.<sup>6</sup> Pieper also has some similarity to Bernard Häring’s early work.<sup>7</sup> Pieper follows the division of the virtues into the natural, or cardinal virtues, which Pieper argues can be somewhat attained by the non-Christian person; and the theological virtues, which are infused into the human soul by supernatural grace. Despite his interest in theology, Pieper writes as a philosopher when—although he acknowledges that some contemporary theologians had criticized the system of the virtues which he uses as “too philosophical and not scriptural enough”—he defends his use of the traditional list of the seven virtues because of its awareness of human “createdness.”<sup>8</sup>

Pieper’s works on the virtues reflect on properly human action, actions that accord with human nature, in an imperfect world. His essays reviewed in this section were written over a span of thirty-eight years, and consequently vary in style, maturity, and focus.<sup>9</sup> Although Pieper did not begin *On Fortitude* intending to write on each of the virtues systematically, by the publication of *On Love* in 1972 common themes can be discerned in the essays. Pieper’s essays situate the created person in the world, which is especially important to understanding *temperance*. Temperance directs a person to choose the amount of a good which will preserve peace within a person. Acknowledgment of our createdness is related to our journey to God, an important aspect of *faith*. Perception of reality is especially discussed in the context of *prudence*, *justice*, and *love*. Justice is the virtue that directs the person to choose the good owed to another person in order to

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<sup>6</sup> Keenan, *History of Catholic Moral Theology in the Twentieth Century: From Confessing Sins to Liberating Consciences*. 43.

<sup>7</sup> James M. Gustafson, "Context versus Principles: A Misplaced Debate in Christian Ethics," *The Harvard Theological Review* 58, 2 (1965). 172. Both *The Law of Christ*, by Häring, and Pieper’s *On Prudence* are works that show influences of the ‘situationist’ movement—ethics which consider the person as she exists in a specific situation—but nonetheless adhere to the traditional idea of the natural law.

<sup>8</sup> Pieper, "Preface." xi.

<sup>9</sup> Josef Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012). 9.

restore an external order of peace. *Fortitude* directs a person to choose a great good despite difficulty. The pursuit of the good and knowledge of our end in God is especially important to the practice of fortitude as well as *hope*, both of which stem from desire for happiness and a rejection of everything not oriented toward the good. For Pieper, the practice of each of the virtues depends on understanding and pursuing the final end of human existence—contemplation of and unity with God.

Following Aquinas, Pieper argues that prudence is the crown of the virtues because it is “the cause of other virtues’ being virtues at all.”<sup>10</sup> Prudence is “a habit of choosing, i.e. making us choose well” and choosing the good is necessary for the practice of any other virtue.<sup>11</sup> If a person cannot perceive the good, even actions which appear virtuous will not be virtuous actions; to risk danger to kill an innocent person is not a virtuous action.<sup>12</sup> The virtue of prudence is the habit of perceiving reality in order to identify which concrete act should be taken to pursue the good. Prudence primarily relates to two aspects of being created: the perception of reality and the identification of the good as it is present in a specific circumstance. The aspect of prudence which Pieper argues is crucial to understand the virtue is its ability to aid a person’s perception of reality. Prudence is “the perfected ability to make right decisions.”<sup>13</sup> In the context of prudence, the ‘realization of the good’ is achieved by performing the actions that accord with what is “appropriate to the real situation.” Without clear perception of reality, or contact with the “objective world of being,” it is impossible to act in accordance with

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<sup>10</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. 6.

<sup>11</sup> Aquinas, "ST." I.II 58, 4.

<sup>12</sup> Meilaender, "Josef Pieper: Explorations in the Thought of a Philosopher of Virtue." 118.

<sup>13</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. 7.

what is real.<sup>14</sup> Prudence operates using the reason which observes and is measured by reality outside the person. Prudence receives the “revelation of reality” through the intellectus and operates to judge whether an action is in accordance with the good that is held in the mind. To be prudent, a person must be oriented toward reality.

Although knowledge of ultimate goodness is necessary to practice prudence in its highest form, prudence on a practical level is primarily concerned with making sure “the means to the end” is good.<sup>15</sup> The prudent action can only be determined within the context of actual situations, and only the person involved can decide what the truly prudent action is.<sup>16</sup> In his essay on fortitude, Pieper distinguishes prudence from the modern “slyness” or “discretion” which is “conjured up by the coward to... be able to shirk the test.”<sup>17</sup> This is an important point because in Pieper’s moral calculus, any unjust action, lie, or other sin is imprudent as well as a failure to practice another virtue; this accords with Pieper’s understanding of the unity of the virtues. Obstacles to prudence include thoughtless actions, hesitation, and irresoluteness.<sup>18</sup> A person can also fail to act prudently when their action is directed toward imperfect ends, or regard “tactics” as more important than goodness.<sup>19</sup> Prudence militates against an ethic which sacrifices right means in favor of a perceived greater good, because unjust means also affect reality, and reality must always be considered when choosing to act. Prudential actions are those in which “not only the end of human action but also the means for its realization” are “in

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<sup>14</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. 7.

<sup>15</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. 11.

<sup>16</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. 27.

<sup>17</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. 123.

<sup>18</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. 13.

<sup>19</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. 20.

keeping with the truth of real things.”<sup>20</sup> Prudence is perfected on the natural level when a person is able to understand whether an action will lead to the realization of the good.<sup>21</sup>

Prudence, more than any other cardinal virtue, fulfills human potential by enabling the person to live according to human nature in concrete circumstances. Prudence ultimately directs the will to act in accordance with the truth of createdness—both the acting person’s createdness, as well as that of everything else in the world.<sup>22</sup> As discussed above, for Aquinas the final end for which all people seek, knowingly or not, is the beatific vision found in union with God. The purpose of prudence, then, is to discover the actions which lead each individual person to closer to beatitude.<sup>23</sup> Prudence enables a person to approach goodness by revealing which individual actions will lead to the ultimate good.<sup>24</sup> The role of prudence is to understand the concrete situation of an individual and enable the person to respond in such a way that they can draw closer to God through their actions.<sup>25</sup>

Justice is the virtue which enables a person to will the good for another.<sup>26</sup> Justice as a natural virtue recognizes what goods are owed to other created persons by virtue of their createdness.<sup>27</sup> Fundamentally, to act justly is “to owe something and to pay the

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<sup>20</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. 20.

<sup>21</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. 18.

<sup>22</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. 9.

<sup>23</sup> Again, as noted in the preceding chapters, Pieper’s idea of virtue is one which is oriented toward beatitude and a perfected soul, rather than human flourishing or eudaimonia. However, as will be noted in the sections examining *Leisure, the Basis of Culture* and *A Theory of Festivity*, Pieper’s idea of virtue also requires right action in society.

<sup>24</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. 34-5.

<sup>25</sup> Meilaender, "Josef Pieper: Explorations in the Thought of a Philosopher of Virtue." 120.

<sup>26</sup> As noted in his biographical sketch, Pieper studied law in the German Weimar Republic. His treatise on justice reflects this personal experience of learning law in a context where the state’s justice system used to legitimize the destruction of part of the body of citizens.

<sup>27</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. 54.

debt.”<sup>28</sup> Having recognized the reality of another person, the role of justice is to enable a person to act for the good of another person and for society. Pieper’s understanding of justice as related to created human nature is most clearly revealed where he discusses unpayable debts of justice. These debts are unpayable, not because of an unjust action or a disregard for the restoration of justice, but as a consequence of human createdness. In order to acknowledge the debt of justice it is also necessary to recognize that, as Aquinas emphasizes, existence “for the sake of existing” is a good because it is a participation in the kind of existence God has.<sup>29</sup>

Certain debts cannot be repaid because the gift given—existence—is of infinitely greater value than any action taken to repay the gift. These two unpayable debts of justice are the debt the created person owes to the Creator; and the debts a person owes to her parents. When that debt cannot be repaid, the “limits” of justice because of the nature of created order can be clearly perceived.<sup>30</sup> A totally just order cannot be achieved simply because not everything that is owed can be repaid.<sup>31</sup> This injustice, however, ought not be the kind of injustice which accepts wrongs; it is an injustice founded on the inability to repay a good, which nevertheless requires the repayment of the debt insofar as it can be paid.

A person’s debt to her parents and her country is not able to be fully satisfied.<sup>32</sup> There can be no justice between a person and her parent, because it is impossible to repay

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<sup>28</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. 57.

<sup>29</sup> Aquinas, "On the Power of God." 5, 5.

<sup>30</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. 104.

<sup>31</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. 104.

<sup>32</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. 108.

the gift of being given life. “The relation of children to parents [ought to be] experienced by the children as an obligation beyond the scope of full restitution.”<sup>33</sup> Justice between a parent and a child is not predicated on equality, and therefore their relationship is not one of strict justice but, as Aquinas describes, paternal justice.<sup>34</sup> This is a humbling realization which requires the acceptance of human existence as limited and finite. Similarly, but to an infinitely more intense degree, there can be no full repayment of the debt between a created being and the Creator. The Creator bestows on each person a right to justice which cannot be taken away.<sup>35</sup> Each person is given absolute, “inalienable rights” because of their created nature.<sup>36</sup> “Now a created thing begins to have something of its own by creation.”<sup>37</sup> This inalienable right to justice is ours by virtue of our createdness.

Although neither debt cannot be repaid, the endowment of the person with existence also creates moral obligations in addition to rights. Every person has an absolute duty to fulfill their moral obligations. Yet there can be no adequate recompense for the gift of being created.<sup>38</sup> One cannot ever get “even” with God because God has gifted us with our being. The relation of the person to the Creator is therefore one of absolute obligation. Yet although “we cannot offer God an equal return” each person is obligated to “repay God as much as he can, by subjecting his mind to Him entirely.”<sup>39</sup> Pieper identifies this unpayable obligation of justice as the foundation as our duty to

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<sup>33</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. 108.

<sup>34</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. 93.

<sup>35</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. 46.

<sup>36</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. 51.

<sup>37</sup> Aquinas, "SCG." II, 28.

<sup>38</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. 76.

<sup>39</sup> Aquinas, "ST." II.II, 56, 1, ad 3.

worship, a duty which will be returned to later in the chapter.<sup>40</sup> This obligation to God is also fulfilled, in part, by the practice of good works within society insofar as those acts are directed to God.<sup>41</sup> The virtue of justice is therefore totally dependent on recognition of our createdness. Having been given existence, each person must practice justice because of the debt owed to God and to society. As a created being, each person also has the right to be treated justly by others.

Each of the virtues serves to conform a person's acts to the structure of reality.<sup>42</sup> Fortitude is expressed when acting in accordance with reality requires taking action which may endanger a person's own life, because she esteems some good (often justice) more than life itself.<sup>43</sup> Fortitude is most characteristically expressed in that moment when a human person is "placed in a position to be injured or killed for the realization of the good" when "evil considered in terms of this world... [appears] as an overwhelming power" and yet, they choose to realize the good by enduring the evil.<sup>44</sup> Fortitude presumes the possibility of injury to the acting person and yet the brave person acts regardless.<sup>45</sup> Fortitude does not depend on the possibility of earthly victory; it esteems the good it seeks more highly than public vindication.<sup>46</sup> Paraphrasing Aquinas, Pieper states that the truest expression of fortitude is the refusal to submit to evil even when all action

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<sup>40</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. 105-6.

<sup>41</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. 89. Aquinas, "ST." II.II 81, 8.

<sup>42</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. 124.

<sup>43</sup> Aquinas, "ST." II.II 123, 12.

<sup>44</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. 128.

<sup>45</sup> In Daniel Coogan's translation of *Vom Sinn der Tapferkeit*, published as "On Fortitude" in *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, bravery and fortitude are used interchangeably to refer to the same virtue.

<sup>46</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. 137.

has been taken away. Thus, the highest expression of Christian fortitude is the willingness to be martyred.<sup>47</sup>

The virtue of fortitude is shaped by the created nature of the human person—it is only ever necessary because of the vulnerability of the human person to harm, danger, and death.<sup>48</sup> A body able to be endangered is required for fortitude; only embodied souls can consider the good and act rationally to pursue the good while endangering their bodies. Animals can endanger their bodies yet not rationally consider the good; disembodied spirits can consider the good yet do not have mortal lives to endanger. For Aquinas, fortitude also serves to “safeguard” the operation of the *ratio* “because fear of danger of death has the greatest power to make man recede from the good of reason.”<sup>49</sup>

Fortitude presupposes knowledge of the good, acquired through the “direct cognition” of prudence.<sup>50</sup> The brave person is not simply foolhardy or rash but understands what is truly good in the world, as well as to what specific danger they are exposing themselves.<sup>51</sup> Although a person may not value their own life more than some good pursued, the brave person must value their life appropriately, or else their action is suicidal rather than motivated by bravery.<sup>52</sup> The opposition to suicide requires a more subtle appreciation of the good of created existence, and an acknowledgment, as Aquinas draws out in *On The Power of God*, of the specific goodness of “[existing] for the sake of

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<sup>47</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. 118.

<sup>48</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. 117.

<sup>49</sup> Aquinas, "ST." II.II 123, 12.

<sup>50</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. 125.

<sup>51</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. 124.

<sup>52</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. 126.

existing.”<sup>53</sup> The joys of human life are not to be “[tossed] aside and [esteemed] but lightly—unless, indeed, to preserve higher goods, the loss of which would injure more deeply the inmost core of human existence.”<sup>54</sup> Christian fortitude always hopes to achieve—and confidently looks for heavenly—victory but as Pieper notes, it is not the “effort” but the “end” which is the goal of fortitude.<sup>55</sup>

Pieper describes temperance as the “discipline of... selfless self-preservation,” which is a habitual orientation toward the self to preserve a person’s life by guarding against “selfish perversion of the inner order.”<sup>56</sup> Because temperance is so intimately related to the passions of the body, Pieper argues that intemperance is usually rooted in “a misconceived view of created reality.”<sup>57</sup> The various aspects of temperance which Pieper discusses show that it serves to enable the person to clearly perceive reality by ordering the soul. Virtues which Pieper associates with temperance include “chastity, continence, humility, gentleness, mildness, *studiositas*”<sup>58</sup>—each of which is an opposite to some vice. Temperance is a difficult virtue to master because the temptations associated with the body are fundamental desires related to the preservation of life.

Temperance recognizes that the human person is not equal to the Creator. Thus, the virtue of humility is essential to the practice of temperance because humility “looks to first God” in order to perceive the limitations inherent in the human body and moderate

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<sup>53</sup> Aquinas, "On the Power of God." 5, 5, resp.

<sup>54</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. 120.

<sup>55</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. 141.

<sup>56</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. 150.

<sup>57</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. 151-2.

<sup>58</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. 151.

the passions.<sup>59</sup> Yet humility does not denigrate the human body. While pride asserts a lie against the truth of reality, humility allows the person to perceive what “by reason of God’s will, really *is*.”<sup>60</sup> Pieper’s approach to temperance is derived from Aquinas’ affirmation of the goodness of existence; and specifically, Aquinas’ regard for the Incarnation of Christ. The human body has been redeemed through the action in which “human nature in Christ was assumed into a oneness of person” (that oneness of person being Christ’s divine personhood) “in order to repair it.”<sup>61</sup> For all those living after the Incarnation, the human body is no longer necessarily evil but subject to God’s redeeming action.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, the human body is used in the practice of the virtues and the pursuit of the end of human life. The temperate person therefore recognizes the lowliness of the human person as compared to the Creator without falsely regarding it as irredeemable and necessarily evil.

What all the virtues associated with the cardinal virtue of temperance have in common is their purpose: to joyfully “relinquish the created for the sake of the Creator.”<sup>63</sup> The most characteristic form of temperance is chastity<sup>64</sup> as unchastity more than any other form of immoderation “begets a blindness of spirit... [and] splits the power of decision,” Pieper says.<sup>65</sup> In chastity, Pieper reads Aquinas as affirming that sexual intercourse is created by God and therefore like the rest of creation is potentially

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<sup>59</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. 191. Aquinas, "ST." II.II 161, 4.

<sup>60</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. 191.

<sup>61</sup> Thomas Aquinas, "Commentary on St. John," (Intellex Past Masters Database). Cap. I Lect. 7.

<sup>62</sup> This is an instance where it is evident that Pieper’s philosophy is specifically Christian.

<sup>63</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. 188.

<sup>64</sup> As an aside, Pieper believed Aquinas’ personal practice of chastity must be understood in order to understand him as a man and thinker. Pieper highly valued Aquinas’ “ascetic approach to knowledge” and argues that “we have lost the awareness of the close bond that links the knowing of truth to the condition of purity.” Pieper, "On Thomas Aquinas." 18-20.

<sup>65</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. 160.

good—if fallen—rather than intrinsically evil.<sup>66</sup> Despite the difficulty of becoming temperate, once achieved temperance “extends its ordering mastery down to the fountainhead from which the figure of moral man springs up unceasingly.”<sup>67</sup> The temperate person lives a clear, measured, and peaceful life.

Aquinas’ treatment of the disciplines which fall under temperance follow from a view of the human person which is a sober evaluation of the reality of sin. Each discipline guards against some misuse of the human desires and passions. Any kind of exaggerated desire for bodily pleasure such as attachment to food and drink will eventually lead to *hebetudo sensus*, a “dulling of the inner sense.”<sup>68</sup> Each of these kinds of intemperance are a distorted desire for something good.<sup>69</sup> These other desires are ultimately the prioritization of some other good over the ultimate end of human life, union with God. For Pieper, beatitude can only be received by a person whose soul has been preserved from disorder by temperance.

### *THE THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES*

Pieper believed that the cardinal virtues could be achieved to some extent by any person. Because Pieper has a strong sense of the continuity of the natural virtues with their supernatural forms, in his essays Pieper also discusses each cardinal virtue as it exists in its grace-infused, Christian form. Each of the cardinal virtues in a Christian can be reoriented from whatever good the person seeks to the ultimate good. In contrast, the

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<sup>66</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. 154.

<sup>67</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. 187.

<sup>68</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. 184.

<sup>69</sup> It is important to note that following this principle, abstention from eating and abstention from sexual intercourse, if avoided because of hatred of the body, can be equally disordered as overindulgence or wrongly timed indulgence, and equally dulling to the inner sense.

theological virtues—faith, hope, and love—are specifically Christian virtues granted by an infusion of God’s grace. In their natural forms, these virtues can be directed toward any desired object and therefore are not virtues under Aquinas’ definition of the virtues as habits which cannot be directed toward evil. Faith, hope, and love can be directed to evil ends; thus, only by infused grace are they virtues.<sup>70</sup> The origin of each theological virtue is grace, and the end of each is happiness in God.<sup>71</sup>

While the cardinal virtues relate primarily to actions which can be perceived by external observers, hope, faith, and love have an interior character which can be difficult to perceive in another person. Moreover, in contemporary usage they are often understood to be emotions. While Pieper does not dismiss the emotional dimension of the three theological virtues, he argues that they are better understood as acts. Pieper expresses the relationship between the three in this way: faith perceives the “reality of God... Love affirms the Highest Good... Hope is the confidently patient expectation of eternal beatitude.”<sup>72</sup> Pieper describes the theological virtues in terms which make it clear that they rely on the operation of the intellectus, rather than the faculty of discursive reasoning, the ratio.

In his essay on faith, Pieper argues that faith is not only a virtue but is also necessary to assent to Christianity in the modern world. Pieper agrees with Karl Rahner that contemporary Christian theologians have provided “few intellectual tools” to respond to the crisis of faith in his contemporaries. In particular, advances in the sciences have

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<sup>70</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 100.

<sup>71</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 100.

<sup>72</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 103.

made it more difficult to conceive of God in the way pre-modern Christians did.<sup>73</sup> Yet if, as Christianity asserts, we live in a world which is more than material and goodness is more than material; and if, for life to be complete, we must know the good; then, because our senses are limited, we must take an assertion of what goodness is on faith. Our natural, material knowledge will not satisfy our longing for the good.<sup>74</sup> The solution to this crisis of knowledge of the spiritual world is belief. Faith carries us past the operation of the *ratio* into the realm of the *intellectus*, in which belief can be affirmed even where there is a lack of empirically verifiable evidence for that belief. Pieper defines ‘belief’ as “an unrestricted, unreserved, unconditional assent.”<sup>75</sup> When a person has faith, he affirms that some statement reflects “real, objectively existent” reality,<sup>76</sup> “[grasping] out of his own knowledge” what the statement means, and yet acknowledging that he is without the ability to “prove it.”<sup>77</sup> Faith requires affirming specific witnesses to the truth as trustworthy and accepting the limitation of empirical knowledge in the realm of the spirit. Aquinas’ idea of revelation as the divine light which illuminates the intellect is a helpful way to frame Pieper’s discussion of this topic.

For Pieper, faith is embodied in personal relationships. Faith originates in the will, which, since the will is always directed toward the love of some good, is oriented toward the “person of the witness,” affirming and “loving” them.<sup>78</sup> A separate phenomenon often confused for faith is a conviction of the truth of a statement based on witnesses, *scientia*

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<sup>73</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 74.

<sup>74</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 60.

<sup>75</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 28.

<sup>76</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 24.

<sup>77</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 25.

<sup>78</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 39. This section of *On Faith* is deeply indebted to *A Grammar of Assent* by John Henry Cardinal Newman.

*testimonialis*. This is not truly ‘belief’ but a reasoned conclusion which takes the witnesses as evidence.<sup>79</sup> Pure belief rests on the acceptance of what a person states is true “for the sole reason that the person says so.”<sup>80</sup> Belief is therefore impossible to separate from the relationship between the witness and the person who has faith; faith is necessarily present in individuals. The virtue of Christian faith requires belief in what the Christian Church teaches about God. While God is the only one capable of revealing the whole truth about reality, that truth is ordinarily communicated through the tradition of the Church. Pieper argues that faith in God must be able to be attained by every Christian,<sup>81</sup> but there is not usually direct contact between an individual and God. So, every person who has faith, has faith in God through the mediation of the Church.

“*Fides implicita* can enable the simplest mind, the one farthest removed from the original light, as well as the one only half-instructed, to 'belong' and have a share in the revealed truth—by virtue of his believing tie to one who knows at first hand... the Author [God]...”<sup>82</sup>

This affirmation of belief in a person’s witness is the basis for faith.

Pieper argues that there are four conditions that must be met before being able to acknowledge that revelation is indeed trustworthy. First, there must be acknowledgement that humanity is created. Second, acceptance of revelation requires maintaining a posture of “openness” and “receptivity” to the nature of the universe. Third, revelation requires welcoming the insights of others. Fourth, acceptance of revelation demands acknowledgment that there are forms of insight which are valid and which “have great

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<sup>79</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 30.

<sup>80</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 32.

<sup>81</sup> Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. 18.

<sup>82</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 78.

weight for certain persons while they may mean nothing to others.”<sup>83</sup> These forms of insight can only be perceived by the intellectus, not deduced through logic. The intellectus looks to another person to discern their trustworthiness in the specific mode of intuition: “a rapid, penetrating and direct cognition of a unique kind.”<sup>84</sup> Acceptance of revelation ultimately depends on a person’s willingness to accept another person as a source of knowledge. Acknowledging the insights of others and receptivity to alternate kinds of knowing open us to the kind of knowledge that comes by the grace of faith, which is a clearer perception of God than that available to the natural reason.<sup>85</sup>

Pieper proposes a retrieval of Aquinas’ description of revelation as the divine light which enables the intellect to perceive realities of the world which would be otherwise hidden in darkness.<sup>86</sup> The divine light “enables the intellect to understand in the same way as a habit makes a power abler to act.”<sup>87</sup> As noted above, belief in Christian revelation depends on personal involvement. Revelation is not a neutral “fact” which has no consequences for the internal life; rather, the Christian “in accepting the message of the self-revealing God, actually partakes of the divine life therein announced.”<sup>88</sup> The relational character of faith means that a statement cannot be extracted from the context in which it is spoken by a person, who must be judged as trustworthy in order for another person to have belief in the statement.<sup>89</sup> In the context of Christian faith, this means that belief in God by way of belief in testimony about the divine life has a transformational

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<sup>83</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 80.

<sup>84</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 48.

<sup>85</sup> Aquinas, "ST." I, 13, 12.

<sup>86</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 76. Discussing Aquinas, "SCG." 3, 154.

<sup>87</sup> Aquinas, "ST." I, 12, 5.

<sup>88</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 85.

<sup>89</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 84.

effect which creates a different reality in the believing person. “If God has really spoken, then it is not only good to believe him; rather the act of believing generates those things that in fact are goodness and perfection for man.”<sup>90</sup>

Hope is the virtue which looks to the final end of human life, which cannot be achieved during life on earth. As a Christian virtue, hope pursues union with God and renewed creation. Because the object of hope will not be completely attained before death, hope is the virtue of the Christian life as it exists ‘on-the-way.’ The created person is always existing as incomplete in life and will remain incomplete until death.<sup>91</sup> Hope responds to the incomplete satisfaction of the accomplishment of any earthly striving by affirming the goodness of created reality and humbly responding to God. Yet while this satisfaction is incomplete, it is still real. The “existential uncertainty” of human life should result in an understanding of man’s “finite nature that does not have being from himself and therefore does not possess himself... that takes refuge in the merciful power of God’s decrees.”<sup>92</sup> Through grace, the Christian affirms that Christ is both the foundation and the fulfilment of hope.<sup>93</sup>

The end the person looks for is beatitude, the state of perfect union which fulfills the longing for good which is the characteristic desire of human nature. Pieper cites Aquinas’ *On the Power of God* to affirm that being is by nature “directed toward a good [existence].”<sup>94</sup> The human will desires to be satisfied by goodness, and will not rest until

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<sup>90</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 85.

<sup>91</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 94.

<sup>92</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 129.

<sup>93</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 106.

<sup>94</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 97.

that fulfillment is attained.<sup>95</sup> The hope of beatitude affirms truths about human nature, that the person is directed toward good, against the empirical evidence that the human body ends in death. Only through the perception through hope that human life is created for “fulfillment beyond time” can the person understand that the end of the body in death is not the meaning of human existence, nor even the final terminus of the body.<sup>96</sup> Through an understanding of createdness and through the virtue of hope, it is possible to see beatitude as “the fulfilment objectively appropriate to our nature.”<sup>97</sup> Hope recognizes the end for which human nature was designed, and anticipates satisfaction in God.<sup>98</sup>

Natural hope does not assent to created human nature, and therefore fails to correctly perceive reality by seeking an imperfect good. Natural hope aims at the satisfaction of human desires with created things, which can never totally satisfy the infinite longing of the will. The person who relies on natural hope fails to perceive the limited way in which creation can satisfy the human desire for happiness. Natural hope aims at the greatest things which can be achieved by humanity, which are the object of the virtue of magnanimity. Since natural hope is founded on the “vigor” of the natural body, natural hope inevitably disappoints when the body fails. When a person can no longer work to achieve whatever they hope for, because of illness or age, they lose their ability to satisfy their longings for created goods.<sup>99</sup> Presumption and despair are more subtle failures to hope for beatitude. Both anticipate a person’s judgment by God; despair anticipates damnation, and presumption anticipates the attainment of beatitude. The

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<sup>95</sup> Aquinas, "ST." I, 20, 1.

<sup>96</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 95. Aquinas, "ST." I.II, 4, 5.

<sup>97</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 92.

<sup>98</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 104-5.

<sup>99</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 110.

particular failure they express is a failure to assent to createdness, as both presumption and despair arrogate the role of the Creator, who gives measure to the created person.<sup>100</sup>

The Christian understanding of hope stands in sharp opposition to this materialistic understanding of the universe which rejects the Christian understanding of created human nature. Humility characterizes Christian hope by affirming the distance between the Creator and the creature. By assenting to created human nature, humility preserves the person from aiming at the “sham” greatest things and instead aims at what is really good.<sup>101</sup> Unlike the manner in which the person presumes to pass judgment on her own soul, Pieper argues that Christian hope retains the separation between the Creator and creatura. Christian hope, above all, seeks the source of goodness, God.<sup>102</sup>

In the introduction to the volume of his essays on the theological virtues, Pieper acknowledges the difficult task of writing a treatise on the varieties of love, showing “the real basis for this identity” while maintaining their distinctions.<sup>103</sup> In consequence, *On Love* is the longest of Pieper’s essays on the virtues. Pieper seeks to “grasp as much as [he] can of the multiplicity of the phenomenon we call ‘love.’”<sup>104</sup> Love is sometimes chosen, sometimes undergone; it evaluates, and it can be costly.<sup>105</sup> Love has an element of creation. Love requires “a preexistent relation between the lover and the beloved” yet it also “yields and creates unity.”<sup>106</sup> One must be receptive to love, for love has an

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<sup>100</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 113.

<sup>101</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 102.

<sup>102</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 100.

<sup>103</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 12.

<sup>104</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 151.

<sup>105</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 153-4.

<sup>106</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 159.

essential kind of “approving contemplation” which must be present in the lover.<sup>107</sup> The common element between each variety of love Pieper addresses—love for family, for food, for God, for friend, for lover—is affirmation of the good present in the beloved.

Pieper’s essay on love relies on his ideas of assent to createdness and the necessity to recognize the reality of the beloved person. For Pieper, it is impossible to define love without reference to human nature, which is “what man possesses and brings into the world with him by birth.”<sup>108</sup> This nature has been given to the human person. Pieper argues that the human person is always the subject in the act of love, having agency and love of her own.<sup>109</sup> The human person also has real and meaningful existence as *creatura*, “existence that is our own—God-given...to us to be truly our own.”<sup>110</sup> Human love is driven by our natures which are driven by desire for goodness; we are “by nature a totally needful being.” Moreover, we have no power to “change nor, certainly, destroy” this given nature, which is truly capable of giving love.<sup>111</sup> All love is “grounded in the real” and refers to an existing person who is separate from the lover. Love requires some recognition of beauty and goodness in another.<sup>112</sup> Drawing on Aquinas, Pieper argues that love for others, things, and God perceives something which is truly present in them.<sup>113</sup> Human love is an affirmation and imitation of God’s ultimate affirmation.<sup>114</sup> Love signifies a fundamental approval which says to the beloved “It’s good that you

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<sup>107</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 161.

<sup>108</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 209.

<sup>109</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 217.

<sup>110</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 218.

<sup>111</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 220.

<sup>112</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 221.

<sup>113</sup> Aquinas, “ST.” II.II 26, 13.

<sup>114</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 171.

exist; it's good that you are in this world."<sup>115</sup> The will must "assent to what already is" in the beloved in order to love them. The lover contemplates the beloved, as Aquinas describes it, "loving what it already possesses and rejoicing in that."<sup>116</sup> When we love people, we affirm their existence and wish that they might be "in God."<sup>117</sup>

Pieper argues with Aquinas that desire is not "human weakness" but "the indisputable beginning of all perfection in love."<sup>118</sup> The desire for happiness is a desire for "the happiness of love."<sup>119</sup> Pieper argues that what we need is not just existence but "to be loved by another person," starting with our mothers, parents, and families, and extending throughout life into the world. We experience God's loving affirmation of the goodness of our existence almost exclusively through the actions of others.<sup>120</sup> But this action of others is, as noted above, rooted in the reality that all people have been individually "creatively conceived... willed and affirmed" by the Creator.<sup>121</sup> The lover, whether human or Divine, recognizes that the beloved is not what they could be, but the true lover must perceive the end of the beloved and the good which the beloved could achieve, and love them into the fulfillment of that end.<sup>122</sup> In turn, the beloved must be willing to accept love as a gift which is unearned and undeserving.<sup>123</sup>

The common elements which underlie Pieper's essays on the virtues are a focus on the need to assent to the createdness of the human person and the created world and to

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<sup>115</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 164.

<sup>116</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 165. Pieper quotes Aquinas, "On the Power of God." 3, 15 ad. 14.

<sup>117</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 193.

<sup>118</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 223.

<sup>119</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 226.

<sup>120</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 174-6.

<sup>121</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 177.

<sup>122</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 182-3; 227.

<sup>123</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*. 186.

perceive the shape of reality in order to pursue the end of human life, which is union with God. Each discussion of a specific virtue is brought into clearer focus by at least one of these themes. *On Prudence* discusses the perception of reality as it is necessary to act in pursuit of the end of human life. In *On Justice*, Pieper argues that the rights and obligations which shape our common life are bestowed on us by virtue of our created nature. *On Fortitude* considers how a person ought to pursue good, despite the human vulnerability to harm, and discusses what that good is. *On Temperance* discusses the ways in which the person must act in order to order their soul to seek the good. *On Faith* argues for the role of faith in perception of reality. *On Hope* relies on humility in order to place the created person in proper relationship to the Creator. Finally, *On Love* argues that love essentially is an affirmation of the goodness of some beloved thing or being.

In his works on the seven virtues, Pieper gives a definition of these virtues which is contextualized by the themes considered in this thesis, but for Pieper the virtuous life is not complete without a movement from the practice of the specific virtues to an attainment of the end of the virtues. In *Leisure the Basis of Culture* and *In Tune with the World: A Theory of Festivity*, Pieper's focus is the attainment of the goal of the virtues. *Leisure* and *Festivity* discuss the possibility of happiness on earth and consider how it can be attained—by practicing the virtues and by acknowledging the duties that come with created human nature.

#### *LEISURE, THE BASIS OF CULTURE*

Pieper's discussion of leisure was written immediately after World War II, during the reconstruction of Germany after the defeat of the Nazi regime. He writes in response to an attitude among his contemporaries which found the meaning of life in work, rather

than (like pre-modern cultures) leisure.<sup>124</sup> Modern work, Pieper proposes, had colonized culture to become “the whole of human activity and even of human life.” This ideology of “total work,” which Pieper describes as “totalitarian,” is on every point opposed to Pieper’s idea of human nature.<sup>125</sup> Pieper poses the question to his readers: why must a society establish opportunities for leisure? His answer is that every healthy culture is founded on communal public worship, which makes life “truly human” and allows for a clear perception of reality.<sup>126</sup> Life without culture has no meaning; it is both caused by and results in despair.

At its foundation, total work relies solely on ratio—observation, judging, and discursive reasoning—rather than allowing for the priority of receptive perception and contemplation, intellectus. As discussed above, Aquinas presents a distinction between parts of the reason. The reason is comprised of both ratio, the “properly human” form of reason, and the *simplex intuitus* or simple vision which makes up the intellectus, the form of reason which is most similar to superhuman intelligences (the angels and God).<sup>127</sup> For Pieper, “the process of knowing is the action of the two together.”<sup>128</sup> In contrast, the modern world (Pieper references Kant as representative) denies either that the form of reason known as intellectus exists or that it has intellectual validity.<sup>129</sup> Any knowledge achieved is earned by intellectual labor; nothing is gifted. Intellectual work is characterized by discursive reasoning, difficulty, and is oriented toward filling a specific

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<sup>124</sup> Pieper, "Leisure the Basis of Culture." 20-21.

<sup>125</sup> Pieper, "Leisure." 22.

<sup>126</sup> Pieper, "Leisure." 16.

<sup>127</sup> Pieper, "Leisure." 28, 30.

<sup>128</sup> Pieper, "Leisure." 30.

<sup>129</sup> Pieper, "Leisure." 26.

place in the “social system.”<sup>130</sup> The pursuit of knowledge is only good insofar as it is oriented toward a specific need; the liberal arts are redefined to serve a utilitarian purpose. While the pre-modern world would speak of leisure and “not-leisure” (*otium* vs. *negotium* in Latin), the modern world of work reverses that: life is work or “not-work.” In contrast to the ideology of total work, Pieper cites Aquinas, who believed that it is necessary for the good of the whole society that there be those whose lives be devoted to contemplation.<sup>131</sup> Pieper argues that to deny the existence of intellectus is to deny the possibility of philosophical reflection in the ancient sense, making any act of reason work.

Total work distorts human nature because it springs from acedia, the vice opposed to hope. Pieper identifies acedia as a widespread modern habit which is ultimately a rejection of human personhood, a denial of humanity as creatura, and a refusal “to be as God wants him to be,” a non-assent to “what he really, fundamentally *is*.”<sup>132</sup> This rejection of createdness results in a person unable to be at peace internally or externally, unable to reconcile one with oneself. Vices which follow from acedia are restless activity because a person cannot tolerate silence; <sup>133</sup> idleness stemming from a “deep-seated lack of calm;”<sup>134</sup> and despair. Acedia results in a rejection of peace, whether that is expressed in frantic activity or paralysis. Pieper compares sleeplessness to idleness; neither fosters peace.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Pieper, "Leisure." 36.

<sup>131</sup> Aquinas in the *Commentary on Proverbs*, cited in Pieper, "Leisure." 41.

<sup>132</sup> Pieper, "Leisure." 44.

<sup>133</sup> Pieper, "Leisure." 44.

<sup>134</sup> Pieper, "Leisure." 45.

<sup>135</sup> Pieper, "Leisure." 46.

Leisure as a positive act is absent from the ideology of total work. It can only be regarded as a cessation of work. “Leisure... appears as something wholly... without rhyme or reason, and, morally speaking, unseemly.”<sup>136</sup> It is identified with unwillingness to work or the incapacity to accomplish anything. Pieper argues to the contrary that those characteristics are the fruit of *acedia*. Leisure, instead, results in internal peace which enables the silent apprehension of reality.<sup>137</sup> Like contemplation, leisure is a kind of internal act which entails welcoming the mystery of creation into one’s being.<sup>138</sup> “Leisure is a resting in which one takes contemplative delight at being and in being.”<sup>139</sup> Leisure is made possible by a fundamental “consent” given to a person’s own createdness and all creation, the entire universe. “It is like the tranquil silence of lovers, which draws its strength from concord.”<sup>140</sup> This aspect of love and affirmation can overflow into celebration and even the most heightened form of affirmation—the festival. Unlike ordered daily work, which has some aspect of difficulty, or disordered total work, which revels in its own difficulty, leisure is experienced as restorative.<sup>141</sup> Like contemplation, the restorative nature of leisure is attained by gift alone. Unlike “days off” which are granted in order to restore the worker to be able to continue working, leisure cannot be instrumentalized to serve an end other than itself; leisure is its own end.<sup>142</sup>

Leisure is not a “social function”—it is a practice that operates on a totally different plane of existence than the working life. It is not a pause in work—it is an

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<sup>136</sup> Pieper, "Leisure." 43.

<sup>137</sup> Pieper, "Leisure." 46.

<sup>138</sup> Pieper, "Leisure." 47.

<sup>139</sup> Guilbeau, "The Courage to Rest: Thomas Aquinas on the Soul of Leisure." 42.

<sup>140</sup> Pieper, "Leisure." 48.

<sup>141</sup> Pieper, "Leisure." 49.

<sup>142</sup> Pieper, "Leisure." 51.

expression of the fully human life. Because it is open to all, leisure provides a way for every person to pass from the life of activity into the active silence of contemplation. Every person needs the space to enter into leisure. The ideology of total work, Pieper believes, presents a real threat to “the preserve of freedom, of education and culture, and that undiminished humanity which views the world as a whole.”<sup>143</sup> The Soviets, who Pieper encountered in East Berlin and East Germany before the Berlin Wall was built, attempted to “obliterate a contrast... between the classes” by bringing everyone to the same level and proscribing unapproved cultural expressions.<sup>144</sup> This resulted in the entire society being engulfed in the ideology of total work in which all activities in society were required to meet a societal need.<sup>145</sup>

Leisure ultimately requires a rejection of the claim which the ideology of total work makes to possess all of existence and reaffirms divine sovereignty over all creation. As Pieper remarks:

“There can be no such thing in the world of ‘total labor’ as space which is not used *on principle*; no such thing as a plot of ground, or a period of time withdrawn from use. There is in fact no *room* in the world of ‘total labor’ either for divine worship or for a feast: because the ‘worker’s’ world, the world of ‘labor’ rests solely on the principle of rational utilization.”<sup>146</sup>

Without the justification of divine worship, Pieper argues that there is no reason to not use everything ‘rationally.’ The original “days of rest” in Western culture—in Greek and Roman society as well as Jewish and Christian societies—were set aside for worship. Both festivity and leisure find their “possibility [and] ultimate justification... in divine

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<sup>143</sup> Pieper, "Leisure." 53.

<sup>144</sup> Pieper, *Not Yet the Twilight*. For examples, see 66, 70. Pieper, "Leisure." 56.

<sup>145</sup> Pieper, "Leisure." 57.

<sup>146</sup> Pieper, "Leisure." 67.

worship.”<sup>147</sup> Pieper argues that a society conducive to humane life would allow for space, money, and time for each individual to pursue activity, leisure, “which cannot be put at the disposal of useful ends.”<sup>148</sup>

#### *IN TUNE WITH THE WORLD: A THEORY OF FESTIVITY*

*A Theory of Festivity* is a recapitulation and intensification of the argument made in *Leisure the Basis of Culture*, written nearly fifteen years later. Rather than concentrate attention on the world of work, which is opposed to leisure, *Festivity* discusses the attitude which allows for reception of the gift of celebration. All of Josef Pieper’s works on the virtues, and even *Leisure, the Basis of Culture*, orient the person to receive the gift of festivity in different ways. Certain virtues assist the person to assent to her own createdness; other virtues help the person to perceive the world; still other virtues are necessary to build a social order which is oriented to the final end of the human person. Leisure itself is expressed, in its highest form, as a virtue. In *A Theory of Festivity* Pieper combines these various ideas to show how festivity enables the person to become fully human by bringing earthly life in contact with eternity. Although in *A Theory of Festivity*, Pieper cites Aquinas significantly less than most of his other works, the ideas which are present in it rest on a similar response to the world: assent to human createdness, perception of reality; and pursuit of the highest good of human existence, which is union with God.

Immediately prior to the composition of *Festivity*, Pieper had spent several months travelling through Asia, visiting cities in India including Calcutta where he

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<sup>147</sup> Pieper, "Leisure." 67.

<sup>148</sup> Pieper, "Leisure." 60.

experienced the Durga festival; he visited Darjeeling; he saw the ceremonies surrounding death in Banaras as well as a “living goddess” in Nepal; and he encountered Hindus worshipping at a shrine of St. Anthony in Madras. During his time in India, he had the chance to have academic discussions with both Hindus and Buddhists but found the worship and ritual he encountered “much more exciting and also more convincing,” being “always fascinated anew when religious feelings are lived out.”<sup>149</sup> Shortly before the trip to India, Pieper visited Mexico where he was struck by the intensity of devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico.<sup>150</sup> Pieper’s reactions to these experiences varied but in general, he was more sympathetic (if not necessarily approving of) what had arisen within the older traditions. Interestingly, possibly his strongest negative reaction was during his encounter with followers of Ramakrishna, who struck him as artificial.<sup>151</sup> In his autobiography, Pieper discusses the central concept of *Festivity*, which he describes as “consent to the world.” The composition of *Festivity*, Pieper notes, was strongly influenced by the multiple Hindu festivals he had encountered during his time in India.<sup>152</sup>

The inner experience of festivity is “barred to non-initiates”—it is impossible to understand what the essence of a festival is unless you have experienced it.<sup>153</sup> In *Festivity*, Pieper therefore draws from the festivities he has experienced, which are primarily Christian festivals. For Christians, there are two primary festivals—Sunday, and Easter. Sunday is a festival which commemorates the divine rest and that “God himself” by

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<sup>149</sup> Pieper, *Not Yet the Twilight*. 251.

<sup>150</sup> Pieper, *Not Yet the Twilight*. Calcutta, 211. Banaras, 252. Madras, 241. Darjeeling, 221. Nepal, 248. Mexico, 200, 204.

<sup>151</sup> Pieper, *Not Yet the Twilight*. 226.

<sup>152</sup> Pieper, *Not Yet the Twilight*. 260.

<sup>153</sup> Pieper, *Festivity*. 45.

creating the world “affirms and loves” every created thing “all of them without exception.”<sup>154</sup> Easter is the characteristic Christian festival, for the resurrection celebrates a stronger, eternal re-affirmation of God’s creating love.<sup>155</sup> Pieper’s discussion of the Christian festivals is intended to contrast with the pseudo-festivals he gives as counter-examples—festivals celebrated during the French Revolution, in Nazi Germany, and in the Soviet Union.<sup>156</sup> Pieper’s objection to these festivals is that by expressing an incorrect view of reality—one which crowns labor as the sole source of meaning in life—they do not succeed in their purpose of celebration. To be true festivity, it must reveal something of the true face of reality.

Festivity is, like the virtues, necessarily practiced by embodied human persons. For Pieper, a basic characteristic of festivity is rest from useful work—festivity is in fact the most heightened form of leisure, described above. Rest is necessary for the created person, and it is essential that a festival day be a pause from work.<sup>157</sup> Festivity also brings with it an obligation to worship or give some recognition to the Creator, as discussed in the section on justice. Pieper identifies the meaning at the heart of festivity as worship of God, or a god, through assent to the goodness of creation. Some token of the goodness of creation is offered back in every festival. This characteristic of festivity is present in every human celebration; for example, the festivals of the ancient Greeks and Romans were seen as “holy time” necessarily involving some kind of ritual sacrifice.<sup>158</sup> Unlike the claims which total work makes, this sacrifice is not imprudent or intemperate; it is the

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<sup>154</sup> Pieper, *Festivity*. 47.

<sup>155</sup> Pieper, *Festivity*. 49.

<sup>156</sup> Pieper, *Festivity*. 78.

<sup>157</sup> Pieper, *Festivity*. 8.

<sup>158</sup> Pieper, *Festivity*. 37.

just response to createdness. Yet the texts of the Catholic mass (Pieper here is discussing the pre-conciliar texts of the Roman canon of the mass) also explicitly offer praise, thanksgiving, petition, and sacrifice to God.<sup>159</sup> The reason for worship, in both cases, is hope that through these rites the people “will be vouchsafed a share in the superhuman abundance of life” which is a “hoped-for gift,” not anything that can be purchased or even reliably procured.<sup>160</sup> The arts are also usually present as the medium through which the senses can perceive the spirit of festival.<sup>161</sup>

Festivity, like leisure, engages the intellectus not the ratio, enabling the person to achieve a higher degree of openness to reality than is generally present in daily life. True festivity arises from looking “upon reality whole” while simultaneously pausing from work oriented toward a practical end.<sup>162</sup> The element of contemplation in festivity is a “relaxation of the strenuous fixation of the eye” on the daily life of work.<sup>163</sup> Festivity allows for peaceful, open perception of all of reality. Those who assent to the world can celebrate any particular occasion; those whose response to the world is negation can never rejoice. Pieper defines festivity directly in terms of affirmation.

“To celebrate a festival means: to live out, for some special occasion and in an uncommon manner, the universal assent to the world as a whole.”

The existence of a great good which is able to be taken into the person elicits a response—joy.<sup>164</sup> Thus, festivals of birth and marriage are celebrated because existence itself is affirmed as good. “Underlying all festive joy... there has to be an absolutely

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<sup>159</sup> Pieper, *Festivity*. 38.

<sup>160</sup> Pieper, *Festivity*. 40.

<sup>161</sup> Pieper, *Festivity*. 53.

<sup>162</sup> Pieper, *Festivity*. 6.

<sup>163</sup> Pieper, *Festivity*. 17.

<sup>164</sup> Pieper, *Festivity*. 23.

universal affirmation extending to the world as a whole, to the reality of all things and the existence of man himself.”<sup>165</sup> Festivity affirms the world as good even in the face of the tragic. In fact, festivity is most truly moving when the celebrants look at the whole of reality and “[offer] the response of joy”—that response can itself be a sacrifice.<sup>166</sup> Even those festivals (Pieper mentions Good Friday) which remember the dead are celebrated when there is an affirming sense that “grief, sorrow, death are accepted and therefore affirmed, as meaningful in spite of everything.”<sup>167</sup> Those who resist this affirmation are unable to find rest, contemplation, or festivity.

Yet festivity is not a binary opposite to work or a hatred of daily life.<sup>168</sup> It requires that the ordered round of daily work exist, for “a festival can arise only out of the foundation of a life whose ordinary shape is given by the working day.”<sup>169</sup> Lack of a purpose in life precludes both festivity and meaningful work.<sup>170</sup> Work has meaning when it provides some concrete good to the world or produces the goods which are used at the celebration.<sup>171</sup> Festivity requires the sacrifice of time which could be devoted to work and of the goods produced by work. It requires time because festivity requires time be set aside for the celebration, and it requires goods—both the goods used in the celebration and those which would have been produced in the time spent working. “A festival is essentially a phenomenon of wealth... of existential richness.”<sup>172</sup> These goods are renounced for profitable use because of love of a greater good.

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<sup>165</sup> Pieper, *Festivity*. 26.

<sup>166</sup> Pieper, *Festivity*. 29.

<sup>167</sup> Pieper, *Festivity*. 28.

<sup>168</sup> Pieper, *Festivity*. 5.

<sup>169</sup> Pieper, *Festivity*. 4.

<sup>170</sup> Pieper, *Festivity*. 4.

<sup>171</sup> Pieper, *Festivity*. 18.

<sup>172</sup> Pieper, *Festivity*. 19.

Negation of the world is expressed in acedia, the vice opposed to hope. Acedia stems from a rejection of the goodness of the world, which makes festivity impossible. Thus, hope is a virtue necessary to combat the temptation to negate the goodness of existence because of “historical evil” and the many kinds of horrors present in the world.<sup>173</sup> A different kind of negation exists when “artificial holidays” are celebrated. Pseudo-festivals occur when people, rather than accepting the happiness of being created as a gift, arrogate the power over creation which rightly belongs to God, and refuse God praise.<sup>174</sup> This is a failure of prudence and an inability to see the world as it is. Some pseudo-festivals relatively harmless—local memorials and parades. Others are deliberately conceived to compete with or replace traditional festivals; for example, the created “holidays” of the French Revolution which parodied Catholic worship; or the pseudo-festivals of Nazi Germany.<sup>175</sup> These pseudo-festivals were celebrated because festivity was recognized as necessary for human life, yet they were false because they celebrated human happiness as already having been achieved by human effort, and participation was coerced, rather than spontaneous.<sup>176</sup>

While false festivals suppress affirmation of the real world, a true festival allows for true perception of reality and therefore affirmation of the goodness of the world. It necessarily includes worship of the Creator. Crucially, festivity opposes a world of total work. A festival is celebrated when a society refuses to see the world as solely given over to productive use, deliberately sacrificing the products of work for the feast. This

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<sup>173</sup> Pieper, *Festivity*. 26.

<sup>174</sup> Pieper, *Festivity*. 62.

<sup>175</sup> Pieper, *Festivity*. 63.

<sup>176</sup> Pieper, *Festivity*. 70.

sacrifice places the duty of divine worship at the center of human life and denies that created goods can satisfy human desire. Festivals require and reorient the human gaze to perceive

“the goodness of reality taken as a whole which validates all other particular goods and which man himself can never produce nor simply translate into social or individual welfare. He truly receives it only when he accepts it as pure gift. The only fitting way to respond to such gift is: by praising God.”<sup>177</sup>

Celebration always ends with praise. It is only through feast that the end of human life, unity with God, is made present for a time on earth. At a true festival, “man passes beyond the barriers of this present life on earth” and into divine time.<sup>178</sup> This is a mysterious statement, drawn from the early Church. By this, Pieper asserts that festivity is a way that the person is able to be drawn up into God, through the gift of an experience of festivity. “In regarding man and world as creatura we imply that our own existence, as well as that of things, is founded upon the non-temporal, non-successive, and therefore still continuing act of creation.... Not that we can, by our power and volition, ‘step out of time.’ Nevertheless, to do so remains among our real potentialities.” This experience is pure gift, not at all an earned or even expected accompaniment to the festival. Yet it is through festival that this experience can be attained.<sup>179</sup>

The parallels between Pieper’s conception of leisure and festivity are obvious and intentional. Leisure and festivity require the individual and societal practice of the virtues. They require prudence to identify the nature of reality and select the correct course of action. They require justice to determine what each person, as well as God, is

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<sup>177</sup> Pieper, *Festivity*. 71.

<sup>178</sup> Pieper, *Festivity*. 43.

<sup>179</sup> Pieper, *Festivity*. 41.

owed. They require fortitude to reject false conceptions of reality even in the face of martyrdom—as those who rejected Nazi pseudo-festivals faced. They require temperance, the virtue which orders the life of each person. For the Christian, leisure and festivity also require faith that the God will provide for needs, even when work is deliberately relegated to a part of life. They require hope that the beatitude sought through festivity is real. And they require love of God and desire to worship him before every other created good. Because festivity is an intensification of leisure, their origin, opposite, and meaning are ultimately the same. The affirmation of goodness practiced by those who take time to rest and celebrate is an expression of love of the world and ultimately of God.

## CONCLUSION

Josef Pieper's life was dedicated to seeking the truth that can be found through the pursuit of philosophy. From an early age, he was dedicated to understanding the world through philosophy as well as the arts. For Pieper, the western Christian tradition in which he primarily situated his work was expressed in an exemplary form in the work of Thomas Aquinas. In particular, Aquinas' conception of what it means to be a created person had a lasting impact on Pieper's moral philosophy. His work was situated in an area unpopular with his contemporaries, frequently touching on the meaning of being created by God as it relates to philosophy rather than theology. Josef Pieper knew the potential consequences of living a virtuous life in a disordered society. His work was colored by his experience of life in Germany before and during the second World War, which convinced him of the necessity of the well-ordered life of virtue. His opposition to the modern world's fetishization of work above all other goods was rooted in an acknowledgment of human createdness including the limitations inherent in a physical body. Yet Pieper's work is fundamentally hopeful. Drawing on Aquinas' vision of beatitude, Pieper consistently argued that every person has the ability to seek and find ultimate happiness.

While best known for his work *Leisure, the Basis of Culture*, Pieper's other works deserve to be more widely known and studied. Recently, scholars have begun to relate important concepts within individual works to others; notably, Warne, Wargo, and Guilbeau have written essays on specific connecting themes between works. Bernard Schumacher also deserves recognition for his identification of the importance of Aquinas' metaphysics of creation, which asserts that the human person and all that exists is either

creation or the Creator, to Pieper's philosophy. However, each of these works is somewhat limited in scope and Pieper's work deserves to be studied in greater depth. In particular, similarities between virtue ethics and Pieper's thought should be identified and studied.

Drawing on Schumacher's insight, this paper has identified three instances of this application of Aquinas thought in Pieper's essays. First, Pieper constantly emphasizes the necessity of human assent to being fashioned by a creating God. Second, he argues that the perception of reality is enabled by the human reason which is an unchangeable part of created human nature. Third, for Pieper, the meaning and purpose of human life is fulfilled in the end of human existence, which is to contemplate God. These specific ideas allow for the reading of Pieper's works in the context of Aquinas' metaphysics of creation. Without understanding this context, Pieper's work cannot be understood in the way he meant it to be. Moreover, Pieper's repeated return to these ideas in his works on ethics and practical morality demonstrates the essential unity of Pieper's practical and speculative philosophy.

As discussed in the first two chapters of this thesis, certain aspects of Aquinas' thought play such an important role in Pieper's work that he cannot be understood without considering them. First, the reader of Pieper must understand his position that the person must assent to her own existence as a created person in the world. This requires an acceptance of human nature as having been created by the measuring thought of God, as discussed in the first section of the first chapter. Pieper appropriates Aquinas' theological and anthropological insights to support a Christian ethic of the virtuous human life. Second, the reader of Pieper must understand that human perception of

reality is enabled by the mind of God, the origin of all that is. While we cannot know reality in a complete and all-encompassing way, by nature we are created to truly know it, albeit in a limited way. This knowledge is further made possible by the nature of other created things, which echo God in the way that they reveal their own existence. Third, each human life, having emerged from God, is intended to end in union with God. The goodness which the human person longs for is first identified in the longing for happiness that the human soul cannot help but experience. Pieper argues that this happiness is only totally satisfied in the beatific vision, attained as a gift but made possible through the contemplation of God.

What is at stake in Pieper's vision of the world? If Pieper is correct, our philosophy and theology of work and leisure in the modern world is often seriously incorrect about human nature, the virtues, and the ultimate meaning of life. Pieper proposes a radical solution to the ills of modern society: the retrieval of the Christian philosophical tradition in order to reorder society around the necessity for rest and leisure. Pieper himself took his proposal seriously—rather than teach in a prestigious position at one of the university faculties he was invited to join, Pieper deliberately chose to teach teachers and non-specialists in order to reach as many people as possible. Pieper's goal was to popularize certain teachings of the western Christian tradition which had been neglected by his society. Pieper argues for a return to a society which prioritized divine worship over human achievement, a way of life which has primarily been written off as outdated or irrelevant.

Pieper challenges the modern academy in method as well as content. While many Catholic theologians retain admiration for the "wisdom of the ancients," Pieper's

prioritization of teaching outside the academy is rare, and poses the question: is it appropriate for more philosophers and theologians to direct efforts outside the academy? Even in Catholic institutions, there can be a disconnect between the priorities of the dioceses and the academic theologians. Massimo Faggioli, at the 2019 meeting of the Catholic Theological Society of America Annual Meeting, addressed this point in blunt words. After describing the relations between academic theologians and the Catholic hierarchy as one of “mutual estrangement and alienation,” he argues that this alienation threatens Catholic academic theology more than it does the hierarchy, and warns: “There is no detachment from the institutional church that does not entail also some detachment from the real people of God.”<sup>1</sup> Faggioli’s argument is that a Catholic theology that operates in isolation from the Catholic Church risks losing its identity as Catholic. This is a sobering challenge. Pieper perhaps can serve as a model for a re-engagement with the wider Church.

Fundamentally, Pieper was a philosopher who was concerned with finding the truth and teaching it to others. Like Thomas Aquinas, from whom he gained so much inspiration, Josef Pieper sought to clearly perceive reality in order to communicate that truth. Pieper’s works were deeply steeped in the works of Aquinas; to understand Pieper, it is necessary to appreciate the ways Aquinas had a deep impact on Pieper’s thought. In Pieper’s essays on the virtuous life, it is particularly important to understand certain concepts related to Aquinas’ metaphysics of creation. Pieper’s moral philosophy argues that the human person must acknowledge her own createdness and so also the existence

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<sup>1</sup> Massimo Faggioli, "Address" (paper presented at the Catholic Theological Society of America, Pittsburgh, PA, 2019).

of the Creator. Assenting to createdness reveals the limitations of created nature. Through a patient, welcoming attention to the exterior created world, it is possible to perceive reality and take the right actions in response. This enables the practice of the virtues. Through the virtuous life, the human person is conformed to ideal human nature and thus understands and acknowledges the good which they are created to desire, beatitude. When each of these steps is taken, it is possible to receive the gift of leisure and festivity.

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