

The Line Through the Heart

*Natural Law as Fact, Theory,
and Sign of Contradiction*

J. Budziszewski



Wilmington, Delaware

The Natural, the Connatural, and the Unnatural

I

Can the unnatural become natural to us?

I am not asking whether human nature can change; if it could, it wouldn't be our nature. Nor am I asking whether we can create a new morality to suit ourselves. Morality is something that obligates us whether we like it or not. If we can change it to suit ourselves, then it is not morality.

Yet from time to time we do hear someone say that something unnatural as such is "natural for me." What could this be about?

One of the strangest and most intriguing things about human nature is its openness to what Plato and subsequent philosophers have called "second nature."¹ We are designed in such a way that things which are not part of our design can become so habitual, so ingrained, that they seem as though they are. Another old-fashioned term for this phenomenon is "connaturality." Consider the grace of a classically trained ballerina. Human beings do not spontaneously move like that; she must learn that exquisite poise, that heartrending beauty in movement. To that end, she retrains every nerve, muscle, and reflex until clumsiness would take effort, artlessness would take art, and her very walking looks like dancing. It isn't that grace becomes effortless for her even then, although she makes it look as though it is. But her limbs have internalized the aesthetic of the

The Line Through the Heart

dance; beautiful movement, or at least beautiful movement of that kind, has become connatural. It is second nature to her.

Can something that goes *against* the grain also become ingrained? Can something in conflict with nature also become second nature?

In one sense, apparently, yes. Consider coffee. We naturally avoid bitter flavors, and I have never heard of anyone liking coffee at first taste. Yet it is possible to learn to enjoy that particular bitter flavor, even to savor it. For me, this happened on a cold day in Chicago in my eighteenth year, when black coffee was the only hot thing around. In fact, in this sense, every acquired discipline, including moral discipline, goes against our natural inclinations. Consider the ballerina again. The young dancer persists in unpleasant practice for the sake of an end which is so fascinating, delightful, and vitalizing that the boredom, pain, and exhaustion of the means are worth enduring. That is just how it is with the virtues. Initially, it is difficult to be good, to be brave, to be true—difficult and most unpleasant. Yet if, with the help of grace, one persists in this unpleasant discipline, then one can see a day coming from afar when it will be more difficult and unpleasant *not* to be good, honest, and true than to be that way. On that day, the actions that virtue requires will be second nature.

Anyone who knows the tradition of natural law will recognize something wrong with the claim that I have just made. I seem to have been saying that virtue is against nature—or, to turn it around, that something contrary to nature can still be good. Not really, but it is true that I have been playing a trick. There is an ambiguity in the way we use expressions like “nature” and “natural inclination,” and I have been playing on this double meaning. Each such expression has two meanings, not one, and the two meanings are nearly opposite.

According to what might be called the lower meaning, the natural is the spontaneous, the haphazard, the unimproved: Think of our first parents in the jungle, or for that matter, think of the jungle itself. From this point of view, a human being is at his most natural when he is driven by raw desires, “doing what comes naturally,” as we say. But according to what might be called the higher meaning, the natural is what perfects us, what unfolds the inbuilt purposes of our design, what unlocks our directed potentialities. This time think of our first parents not in the jungle but in the Garden, or for that matter, think of the Garden itself. From this point of view, a human being is most genuinely “doing what comes naturally” when he is at his best and bravest and truest—when he ful-

fills his creational design, when he “comes into his own.” The lower way of speaking makes nature and second nature enemies. The higher makes them friends, at least potentially.

Natural law thinkers use terms like “nature” and “natural inclination” in both senses, but they distinguish them. If you want to say that virtue conflicts with human nature in the lower sense but completes and perfects human nature in the higher sense, the natural lawyer cheers you; you have stated the matter correctly. He only asks you to remember that when he urges you to follow the natural law, he is talking about nature in the higher sense, not the lower. He is not encouraging you to let it all hang out. He is urging you to live up to your humanity, to come into your inheritance, to acquire that second nature which makes you *actually* what you already are potentially, though hindered by the Fall. By the way, the ambiguity of the term “nature” is not the only obstacle to clarity. Another such obstacle is that the expression “second nature” is a kind of oxymoron. Second nature isn’t *really* nature, just because it *is* second; it has to be acquired. Yet in another way, second nature does pertain to nature—first because our design is open to such acquisitions, and second because it requires them for its fulfillment.

We are now in a position to restate our original question. I asked whether the unnatural can become connatural, whether something that goes against the grain can become ingrained. Something that goes against the grain of lower nature can surely become ingrained, otherwise no one would drink coffee, become brave, or learn to dance. But can something that goes against the grain of higher nature become ingrained? To put the query another way, can the *radically* unnatural become connatural—is our design open, vulnerable, susceptible to what frustrates the purposes of our design?

Let us call this The Problem of Unnatural Connaturality.

II

Saint Thomas Aquinas speaks of connaturality in a variety of related meanings. Things or beings can be connatural *to each other* in the sense that they have the same nature. For example, Saint Thomas speaks of the connaturality and coeternity of the Divine Persons,² and remarks that because all men are of one species, they have one connatural mode of understanding.³

The Line Through the Heart

Relationships of connaturality can be asymmetrical as well. For example, one being can be the connatural *principle of being* of the other, as parents are to children. This means that the nature of the children stems from the nature of the parents. One thing can also be the connatural *principle of government* of others, as a country is to its citizens. This means that the population receive the nature of citizens through being constituted as a country under government.⁴

A being is said to be connatural *with a thing* in the sense that the thing is naturally suitable to the being, so that the being is by nature drawn to the thing. Thus Saint Thomas speaks of the appetitive subject's connaturality with the object of its appetite, and of a heavy body's connaturality for the center.⁵

Turning the idea around, a thing can also be called *connatural to a being* in several senses. One sense is that the thing is contained within the being's nature, as the intelligible species by which angelic intellects know things are contained within the angelic nature—they are neither acquired from the things themselves, nor adventitiously infused by God.⁶

Something can also be said to be connatural to a being in the sense that it is in accordance with the principles of that being's nature. This is the sense Saint Thomas has in mind when he says that it is connatural to the human intellect to know things by receiving knowledge from the senses—a mode of knowing very different than that of the angelic intellect.⁷ In the same sense he says that comparison of one thing with another “is the proper and connatural act of the reason,” that “it is connatural to us to proceed from the sensible to the intelligible,” and that the “connatural” way to acquire knowledge is discovery and instruction.⁸

Yet again, something can be said to be connatural to a being in the sense that it is the sort of object to which the natural principles of the being are adapted. This is the sense in which Saint Thomas is speaking when he says that the connatural object of the intellectual faculties of the human soul falls short of the excellence of separate substances.⁹ In the same sense, he says that the reason why activities that raise the soul above sensible things cause weariness is that “sensible goods are connatural to man.”¹⁰

In a closely related sense Saint Thomas speaks of a thing's *connatural end* (or connatural good). The connatural end or good is the end or good to which the thing tends in accordance with its nature—with which, in this sense, it is said to have “a certain conformity.”¹¹ The connatural end of human beings, for example, is that happiness to which we are adapted

by our own natural principles. A love, desire, passion, or pleasure which arises from this kind of connaturality can also be called connatural; thus Saint Thomas says, “Love of self-preservation, for the sake of which one shuns perils of death, is much more connatural than any pleasures whatever of food and sex which are directed to the preservation of life.”¹² By contrast, our supernatural end lies in happiness so radically disproportionate to our inbuilt powers that it can be achieved only by the grace of God in Christ.

Similarly, *connatural operation* is operation that, when unhindered and uninterrupted so that it achieves its proper object, is in accord with the nature of the agent which is acting, or of the principle which is in operation. In this sense Saint Thomas says that pleasure is the result of connatural operation; for example, an animal feels pleasure in the unobstructed attainment of the thing which its sensitive appetite perceives as good.¹³

III

Most of these meanings of connaturality are only casually related to our subject. The meaning most important for our purposes comes into view when Saint Thomas says that something can be connatural to a being insofar as it *becomes natural through habituation*, because “custom is a second nature.” What he has in mind here is the way that habits and customs—and, at another level, divine graces—fill in the blanks, so to speak, that the generalities of nature leave undetermined. The result is that we acquire new inclinations to certain things, and come to find pleasure in things in which we did not find pleasure before.¹⁴ There are all sorts of second-nature connaturality, for example the connaturality of the lover with the beloved, whereby our nature adapts itself to the thing that, or to the person whom, we love.¹⁵ In this sense a husband and wife are said to understand each other connaturally.

For purposes of this chapter, the kind of second-nature connaturality that interests us most is the way in which certain aspects of second nature—acquired habits or habitual graces—cooperate with our nature in the sense of completing or perfecting it. For example, a man may take pleasure in giving to others because he has acquired a habitual inclination to liberality.¹⁶ Certain such perfections may be infused by the Holy Spirit; thus Saint Thomas speaks of a “sympathy or connaturality for divine things” acquired through the gift of charity.¹⁷

The Line Through the Heart

The acquisition of second nature in this sense has sweeping effects on us. Saint Thomas thinks that it changes not only our doing—what we call these days our “behavior”—but our thinking and knowing too: what we believe, what we understand, how we judge. This is where we get to the marrow. Saint Thomas says that although man is *made* to be rightly disposed to the universal principles of action, he must *become* rightly disposed to the particular principles of action. The way man is made to be rightly disposed to the universal principles of action is that he has a natural habit, *synderesis*—what this book has called “deep conscience” to distinguish it from *conscientia* or “surface conscience.”¹⁸ But the way that man becomes rightly disposed to the particular principles of action is that the action of *conscientia* comes to be shaped by the acquired habits that we have been discussing. Once man has them, says Saint Thomas, “it becomes connatural . . . to judge rightly how actions should be ordered to the end.”¹⁹ Saint Thomas is reminding us that we need to distinguish the knowledge of the foundational precepts of good and evil from right judgment about the detailed corollaries of these precepts. We can’t not know the goodness of friendship—but we may well fail to know the detailed norms that are necessary to friendship. We can’t not know the goodness of loving our children—but we may well fail to know the detailed norms that are entailed by such love.

It is in this sense that Saint Thomas calls acts that are prompted by virtue “connatural to reason.”²⁰ Notice, though, which *aspect* of reason he is talking about: “judgment,” not “science.” In other words, although the man judges rightly, he may not be able to explain to you why his judgment is right. Yves R. Simon gives a fine example:

Suppose you are in business, and a would-be partner has a project beneficial to you, to him, and even to the community at large. Now when business projects are so wonderful there is usually something wrong with them. But you cannot see anything wrong, the project appears perfect. The fellow is very smart, it is probably not for the first time that he is telling that story. So you do not see the “gimmick,” but you can “smell” the fellow. Indeed, judgments by way of inclination are often expressed by this metaphor. “Are you going to make the deal?” “No.” “And why not?” “Because the fellow, excuse me, stinks.” There is an inclination in the honest conscience of a man trained in justice which makes him sensitive to the unjust even when he is completely unable to explain his judgment.²¹

The virtuous and experienced businessman in the story is unable to communicate the grounds of judgment, and yet he is right. It isn't that persons who lack the virtues and experience of an honest businessman don't have intuitions about such matters; it is only that their intuitions are unreliable. Another example came to me in a young father's remark that there are certain things about how to love his children that seem obvious now, but that he hadn't an inkling about before he actually had any children. No one could have taught them to him. Yet now that he had submitted to the disciplines of fatherhood they were as plain to him as the sum of two plus three. The virtue of fatherhood had become second nature. But although it was not part of first nature, it was anticipated by first nature, because it perfected, completed, and cooperated with his inbuilt procreative design; it made actual what formerly was merely latent.

This is all perfectly amazing. It works, but no one knows how it works. The young father and the honest businessman aren't simply generalizing on the model of "all crows are black." Nor are they drawing inferences from premises. On the contrary, they acquire some disposition to judge rightly what father-love or honest trade requires, even in novel situations to which their previous knowledge does not apply. It isn't just that judging the right way helps them feel the right way; feeling the right way also helps them judge the right way. We often malign feelings as irrational because we mistakenly view them solely as states of the body. They are more than states of the body; they are states of the practical intellect. Feelings *as such* can be irrational and treacherous, but feelings shaped by connaturality are dependable and reasonable.

Reality seems to require such "intuitive" judgments; as important as demonstrations are, there is something about judgment that "proofs" can never exhaust. I note in passing that this is true even in mathematics. Early in the twentieth century, the mathematician David Hilbert proposed that mathematicians develop an algorithm by which the truth or falsity of any theorem could be shown. Kurt Gödel proved that this is impossible—at least for any theory of numbers complex enough to allow for arithmetic. He showed that, given any set of axioms, however large, there will turn out to be some theorem which is true, but that cannot be demonstrated from the axioms themselves. One may add new axioms in order to prove that theorem, but then there will be some other true theorem that not even the expanded set of axioms suffices to prove. This amazing result cannot be defeated even by the addition of a countably infinite number of

The Line Through the Heart

axioms; one just has to *see* that certain theorems are true. The meaning of this result is that the recognition of truth is not the same thing as its demonstration. It follows, I think, that the intuition of truth which precedes the attempt at demonstration, and by which efforts to demonstrate are guided, is something more than a sense of how the truth in question *might* be demonstrated; in the domain of the intellect, intuition turns out to have certain rights of its own. If second nature is what makes intuitions reliable, then second nature is even more important than we thought.

The line of reasoning about connaturality that I have been developing may seem to make moral wisdom easy. Everything we know or judge about the good, whether foundational or detailed, turns out to be either first nature or second—either natural or connatural—either something we can't not know, or something that arises from an acquired disposition that cooperates with what we can't not know. Smooth sailing. Or is it?

IV

In fact, the sailing is rather rough. We asked earlier whether something that goes against the grain of higher nature can become ingrained; whether the radically unnatural can become connatural; whether our design is open to what frustrates the purposes of our design. Saint Thomas's answer is yes.

His first point is that something can become connatural to a being in a certain respect, even though it is not connatural absolutely. For example, a human being may be drawn to something, or take pleasure in it, not because of generic human nature, which is good, but because of a *corruption* of nature incident to that being in particular. As he explains,

[I]t happens that something which is not natural to man, either in regard to reason, or in regard to the preservation of the body, becomes connatural to this individual man, on account of there being some corruption of nature in him. And this corruption may be either on the part of the body—from some ailment; thus to a man suffering from fever, sweet things seem bitter, and vice versa—or from an evil temperament;²² thus some take pleasure in eating earth and coals and the like; or on the part of the soul; thus from custom some take pleasure in cannibalism or in the unnatural intercourse of man and beast, or other such things, which are not in accord with human nature.²³

Someone who does suffer such corruption will connaturally think and do and feel in a way that is radically contrary to his connatural good, even to the point of finding his anti-good lovable:

[W]henever [a man] uses [a] vicious habit he must needs sin through certain malice: because to anyone that has a habit, whatever is befitting to him in respect of that habit, has the aspect of something lovable, since it thereby becomes, in a way, connatural to him, according as custom and habit are a second nature.²⁴

And since passion soon passes, whereas a habit is “a disposition difficult to remove,” the result is that the incontinent man repents at once, as soon as the passion has passed; but not so the intemperate man; in fact he rejoices in having sinned, because the sinful act has become connatural to him by reason of his habit. Wherefore in reference to such persons it is written (Prov. 2:14) that “they are glad when they have done evil, and rejoice in most wicked things.”²⁵

Not only can a man come to love what opposes his connatural good—he can come to hate what promotes it. He can learn to loathe the very things that tend to the happiness we humans are fashioned to seek. Evil of some particular kind has become second nature to him even though it is contrary to first nature—but just because it has become second nature to him, he will have difficulty recognizing it as evil. Saint Thomas again:

Hatred of the evil that is contrary to one’s natural good, is the first of the soul’s passions, even as love of one’s natural good is. But hatred of one’s connatural good cannot be first, but is something last, because such like hatred is a proof of an already corrupted nature, even as love of an extraneous good.²⁶

Evil is twofold. One is a true evil, for the reason that it is incompatible with one’s natural good, and the hatred of such an evil may have priority over the other passions. There is, however, another which is not a true, but an apparent evil, which, namely, is a true and connatural good, and yet is reckoned evil on account of the corruption of nature: and the hatred of such an evil must needs come last. This hatred is vicious, but the former is not.²⁷

These reflections qualify the idea that the good is what all things seek. We naturally seek our good, we connaturally seek it even more perfectly, but through unnatural connaturality we may come to despise it. From a Thomistic point of view, when John Milton had his Satan say, “Evil,

The Line Through the Heart

be thou my good,” he was onto something. Does Satan’s speech exaggerate the depth of unnatural connaturality? I do not think so. For a single example, consider homosexuality, the first great wedge issue of the twenty-first-century culture wars.

Coffee drinking is unnatural in a trivial and nonnormative sense. To enjoy the stuff, you have to get over your initial innate aversion to the bitter taste. The aversion is functional, because bitter tastes often signal poisons, but the ability to get over it in particular cases is functional, too, because not everything bitter is a poison. By contrast, sodomitical acts are unnatural in a *non-trivial* and *normative* sense. Objectively, there is no way to “get over” sodomy’s contradiction of the inbuilt purposes of the sexual powers, or to get over its denial of the natural complementarity of male and female, that thrice-blessed counter to narcissism, which makes each sex know its lack. Yet for all this, sodomy may come to seem lovable, and its most destructive aspects may come to be loved the most. Andrew Sullivan, widely considered a “conservative” proponent of gay liaisons, says that he has never had a stable homosexual relationship, and defends what he calls “the beauty and mystery and spirituality of sex, *including anonymous sex*.”²⁸ One of the most disturbing contemporary trends among homosexual youth is the rise of what is called “bug chasing”—deliberately seeking out HIV-positive partners in hopes of becoming infected.²⁹ Some years ago in my home city of Austin, Texas, a homosexual performance artist advertised that he would consume human ashes on stage. The meaning of such a performance could hardly be more clear: “Death, I take you into me.”

Can *anything whatsoever* become second nature? This side of grace, has unnatural connaturality any limit?³⁰ Yes and no. On the “yes” side of the ledger is the fact that it is impossible to will evil *qua* evil. We can never will evil as such, but only particular evil, and we can never will it except for the sake of some good. Wrote Saint Thomas:

Evil is never loved except under the aspect of good, that is to say, in so far as it is good in some respect, and is considered as being good simply. And thus a certain love is evil, in so far as it tends to that which is not simply a true good. It is in this way that man “loves iniquity,” inasmuch as, by means of iniquity, some good is gained; pleasure, for instance, or money, or such like.³¹

On the “no” side of the ledger is the fact that so far as we can tell, *any* particular evil can be viewed under the aspect of some good. By tell-

ing himself that he deserves a car, Tom can view grand theft auto under the aspect of the good of justice; by telling herself that she is more truly Mark's wife than his legal wife is, Janet can view homewrecking under the aspect of the good of marriage; by telling himself that God is a tyrant, Chad can view alienation from his highest good under the aspect of the good of liberty. Saint Thomas puts the point succinctly:

[I]n order that the will tend to anything, it is requisite, not that this be good in very truth, but that it be apprehended as good.³²

Then again, on the "yes" side of the ledger, some particular evils are more difficult to view under the aspect of good than others; some rationalizations are harder to choke down. No doubt Carlos can view bug chasing under the aspect of the good of erotic intimacy, but surely this isn't easy for him. But on further consideration, no: A sufficiently perverse will may be more than willing to make the requisite effort. On the other hand, yes: The greater the effort required to choke down the rationalization, the greater the likelihood that the agent will suffer interior conflict afterwards. And yet, no: A will perverse enough to put forth such an effort may also be perverse enough to *deny* the resulting conflict. Finally, yes: If some act or way of life is sufficiently unnatural, then before enough time has passed for it to become second nature, it may simply kill the person who chooses it.³³

From the point of view of moral rightness, these observations are unproblematic. The fact that something radically unnatural has become connatural doesn't make it all right. From the point of view of moral knowledge, however, these observations pose a terrible problem. When something radically unnatural has become connatural, it is harder to *recognize* it as not-all-right, just because the faculties of reason have become disordered. Nor is it necessary to practice the unnatural deed personally in order to be confused about it; as there are perverse motives to perform certain acts, so there are perverse motives to entertain certain theories about them.

Even so, these disorders do not excuse us from blame, because we ourselves have introduced them into our reasoning faculties. We have *chosen* our rationalizations; we are the authors of our excuses, the devisers of the shams by which we take ourselves in. Even if we have heard them from others, nothing compels us to accept them. On this point, Saint Thomas is unmistakably clear:

The Line Through the Heart

Man does not choose of necessity. And this is because that which is possible not to be, is not of necessity. Now the reason why it is possible not to choose, or to choose, may be gathered from a twofold power in man. For man can will and not will, act and not act; again, he can will this or that, and do this or that. The reason of this is seated in the very power of the reason. For the will can tend to whatever the reason can apprehend as good.³⁴

As regards the commanded acts of the will, then, the will can suffer violence, in so far as violence can prevent the exterior members from executing the will's command. But as to the will's own proper act, violence cannot be done to the will.

The reason of this is that the act of the will is nothing else than an inclination proceeding from the interior principle of knowledge: just as the natural appetite is an inclination proceeding from an interior principle without knowledge.³⁵

In the case of a perverse will, the interior principle of knowledge from which the act of the will proceeds is itself distorted:

[A]ny . . . particular goods, in so far as they are lacking in some good, can be regarded as non-goods: and from this point of view, they can be set aside or approved by the will, which can tend to one and the same thing from various points of view.³⁶

In short, perverted knowledge beholds real objects—sometimes even real goods—but it views them in false perspective.

V

We have seen that unnatural connaturality introduces disorders into moral reasoning and knowledge. Insofar as it does so, we had better be clear about just what kind of disorders these are. Let us begin with the knowledge of the basics.

We “can’t not know” the moral basics; *synderesis* is ineradicable and indefectible. But there is a difference between saying that we can’t not know something and saying that we can’t deny it; this kind of thing happens often. Take abortion. Saint Thomas believes that the evil of deliberately taking innocent human life is so closely connected with first principles that it is one of those things that we can’t not know.³⁷ But I can pretend that I don’t know it. Or I can pretend that I don’t know that

abortion is deliberately taking innocent human life. Or I can admit that abortion is evil, but pretend not to know that evil may never be done. If I refuse to repent, then I acquire a motive to go on pretending, to make myself stupider yet. If I act on this motive, I succeed even better than I had planned. So far as one can judge, the process is not self-limiting. Its metastatic tendency—or shall I say *connaturally unnatural* tendency—is to spiral further and further out of control.³⁸

The disorder in the knowledge of moral details is more subtle, but it is no less grave. The arguments already presented might give the impression that if I have acquired the virtues, then I connaturally understand certain things, while if I haven't acquired them, then I simply don't. If only it were so simple. Actually, the alternative lies not between a virtuously formed personality and a completely unformed personality, but between a virtuously formed personality and a personality which is in some respect formed *contrary* to virtue. In the former case, yes, I connaturally possesses a certain disposition to right judgment. In the latter case, however, I do not simply *lack* this disposition; what I actually possess is a disposition to judge *wrongly*, with the result that I *possess* beliefs that aren't true. Unfortunately, such false beliefs are not self-correcting. In fact they will *seem* to be confirmed by experience, just because they will tend to bring about states of affairs that *make* them seem reasonable. Allow me to illustrate with another instance of unnatural connaturality concerning relations between the sexes.

I once worked in a building in which three late twenty-something, early thirty-something young women served as clerical staff. It so happened that I had to pass through their office quite often, and because of the volume and ceaselessness of their conversation, it was impossible not to notice what they talked about. Their topic was always the same: the fecklessness of men, with special reference to the men with whom they severally claimed acquaintance. These included a husband, at least one ex-husband, two boyfriends, and a string of ex-boyfriends. It amazed me how jaded, how bitter, how dystopian—how Darwinian, so to speak—their conversation was. That the natures of men and of women were essentially opposed, essentially at war, was something they took for granted. In their view, what women wanted was to get married, and as lures they doled out their favors. What men wanted was to enjoy the favors of women without getting married, or, if drawn by some mishap into marriage, to give back as little as possible. Considering the predatory nature of men, why women

The Line Through the Heart

would want to get married to them at all was a mystery. The conversation was dystopian in another way too. It soon became clear that the third member of the group—the young woman who was married—was not as deeply absorbed in the sexual ideology I have been describing as the two unmarried women were. At times it seemed that she might actually like her husband a little. Unfortunately, the other two young women had stronger personalities than she did, and in many little ways encouraged her to take the same view of her husband that they took of their boyfriends, ex-boyfriends, and ex-husband.

Let no one think that I tell this story against women. As a husband I am all too well aware of my flaws, and as a conscientious father of daughters I know too well the dangers of male predation. Yet the beliefs of the three young women were false. It isn't just that not all men are predators. The error is much deeper, because although the natures of men and women are opposed in their corrupted state, they are complementary in design and in essence. The sexes need each other. There is a kind of incompleteness in the nature of each, which only the other can supply; they are *naturally* connatural to each other. To be just, I must admit that somewhere far back in the three young women's minds, there must have been an idea of a different sort of relationship between the sexes, a relationship which was collaborative rather than predatory. If they had not conceived such a standard, they could never have seen how their real-life relationships fell short, and their bitterness would be inexplicable. But the beliefs in the fronts of their minds were very different, and unfortunately, they failed to see that these beliefs helped bring about the very state of affairs that they were supposed to be about. You cannot tell predators from nonpredators if you think that all men are predators. You cannot live in a world in which each successful marriage is an encouragement to all others if the specter of marriage so fills you with envy that you want to tear it down. If you act on the conviction that all relations between the sexes are predatory, you will end up in predatory relationships that seem to confirm your belief. So it is that unnatural connaturality feeds on itself.

VI

Perhaps I overstate my case. Consider again the three young women. Didn't I say just now that somewhere far back in their minds, there must have been an idea of a different sort of relationship between the sexes, an

idea that served them as a standard? Someone might argue that instead of merely making them bitter about the shortcomings of the relationships they have, this standard might goad them to do better—not only to have better relationships, but to submit to the disciplines that nonpredatory relationships demand and acquire their constitutive virtues.

By the grace of God, this is true. People do try to become whole; even when surrounded by darkness far more profound than what the three young women suffered, they grope toward light. Permit me another illustration. A twenty-year-old woman who said she had been “lesbian-identified” since age thirteen wrote me to say that after several years of being infuriated by publications in which I had argued for chaste and rightly ordered sexuality, she was “throwing in the towel.” To explain her change of heart she related the following anecdotes. (1) A lesbian friend had phoned to give her the news that her girlfriend had decided to have her breasts surgically removed. (2) She had visited the website of a lesbian magazine and found an article on how to use needles as an aid to sexual pleasure; the author recommended having benzalkonium chloride towlettes on hand to wipe up the blood. (3) A “straight” friend had written to her, “I have suddenly become sexually brazen, and it scares me a little. . . . I think that it’s about time, though, that I stop giving myself guilt trips about it.” My correspondent concluded, “When women want to cut off their female organs, when hurting each other with needles is considered a turn-on, and when promiscuous girls feel guilty about feeling guilty (as though they just aren’t liberated enough), something has gone terribly, terribly awry.”

Change of heart, then, is always a possibility. The difficulty is that moral reform is not simply a process of adding good qualities and subtracting bad ones. This picture is utterly false to human experience. One reason is that bad qualities depend on imperfectly good qualities for their vigor; the more a man imitates virtue, the more harm he can do with his remaining bad ones. Another reason is that we often try to manage our lesser vices by allowing some master vice to check them. If the master vice is weakened, then the lesser ones may run amuck, so we appear to become worse in some respects, even though we are becoming better in another.³⁹ Aristotle wasn’t *wrong* in claiming that there is a natural inclination to virtue; we really are attracted to it. What he overlooked was the difficulty of following this inclination, and the countervailing inclination to vice. Real moral development labors under terrible burdens and paradoxes.

The Line Through the Heart

On this point, Saint Thomas is sometimes misunderstood. I mentioned earlier his distinction between our connatural end, to which we are adapted by our natural principles, and our supernatural end, which requires the infusion of additional spiritual principles. A point which is often overlooked is that Saint Thomas regards divine assistance as necessary even for the attainment of our connatural end:

And because such happiness surpasses the capacity of human nature, man's natural principles which enable him to act well according to his capacity, do not suffice to direct man to this same happiness. Hence it is necessary for man to receive from God some additional principles, whereby he may be directed to supernatural happiness, even as he is directed to his connatural end, by means of his natural principles, albeit not without Divine assistance.⁴⁰

The key is the concluding phrase, “albeit not without divine assistance.” Saint Thomas is not distinguishing between a connatural end that we can achieve by ourselves and a supernatural end that can be achieved only with divine assistance; he is distinguishing between two different modes of divine assistance. To achieve our connatural end, we require divine assistance to *support* our natural principles; to achieve our supernatural end, we require divine assistance to *supplement* them so that they transcend their intrinsic limits. The need for extra help is charmingly conveyed by a parable in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. A man attempts to sweep a parlor, but his efforts merely drive the dust into the air, and the room is as dirty as before. After a maid has sprinkled the dust with water, he is able to gather the dust into a pile and get rid of it. Moral discipline is like the broom; divine grace is like the sprinkling of water.⁴¹ Bunyan himself, committed to an un-Thomistic antithesis between law and grace, intended the parable to convey the point that the broom is useless. But the parable is better than he knew. What actually happens is that although the broom is necessary, the sprinkling is also necessary so that the broom can achieve its end. That, I believe, is how Saint Thomas would view the matter.⁴²

Speaking of extra help, Saint Paul uses a phrase almost identical to “second nature”—“the new man”⁴³—but he means something quite different by it. Up to this section I have been speaking of *mere* connaturality, of the cooperation of nature with habit, of virtue acquired by human discipline. By contrast, Paul is referring to *super*-connaturality, of another kind of discipline, the cooperation of nature with habitual grace. When

Paul says that we must take off the old man and put on the new man, he means that the new man Jesus Christ must be transfused into us, like new blood, or rather that we must be grafted onto him: Our human life not destroyed, but saturated and transformed by the life of God. As Saint Peter puts it, we become “partakers of the divine nature.”⁴⁴

Such is the Christian hope. In our present condition, we are at war with our nature, connaturally out of joint with our own design. Our very minds are caught up in the dislocation, for not only do we do wrong, but we call it right. Too often scholars proceed as though the Fall made no difference to their intellectual work. Suffice it to say that it does, for like the redemption of the other goods of nature, the redemption of the intellect is won inch by inch. What would its full term be like? We hardly imagine it, yet we know what it requires: to be “transformed by the renewing of our minds, that we may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”⁴⁵

This might be called the divine connaturality, which disposes us not only to judge rightly, but to know as we are known. As Dante wrote, now our minds are but smoke, but one day the smoke will be fire.

The Line Through the Heart

much like the miracle by which Jesus turned water into wine. Wine is still water, but it is not mere water; it is water *plus*. Yet although wine exceeds the nature of water, it is not contrary to the nature of the water. And though water, by nature, could not have converted itself into wine, nevertheless water, by nature, is open to being converted into wine.

33. As Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange explains more precisely, human nature has been endowed by the Creator with “the obediential potency, by which the creature is capable of elevation to the supernatural order.” This potentiality is “passive,” a potentiality to receive the actuality in question, rather than “active,” a potentiality to produce it. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Reality—A Synthesis of Thomist Thought* (St. Louis: Herder, 1950), Chapter 55, “The Twenty-Four Thomistic Theses.” The text of the chapter is available on the internet at <http://www.thesumma.info/reality/reality56.php>. For the *locus classicus*, see Thomas Aquinas, ST, III, Q. 11, Art. 1.

34. Sociologist Mary Eberstadt holds that the common notion that religious people are more likely to marry and have children may have it backward; in fact, she writes, those who marry and have children are more likely to be religious. Richard John Neuhaus rightly remarks that her insight instantiates the saying that nature is a preparation for grace. Mary Eberstadt, “How the West Really Lost God,” *Policy Review* 143 (June/July 2007), <http://www.hoover.org/publications/policyreview/7827212.html>; Richard John Neuhaus, “The Public Square,” *First Things* 175 (August/September 2007): 71–72.

Chapter 4

1. Republic III, 395d: “Or have you not observed that imitations, if continued from youth far into life, settle down into habits and second nature in the body, the speech, and the thought?” Trans. Paul Shorey, in Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, eds., *The Collected Dialogues of Plato* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961), 640.
2. ST I, Q. 93, Art. 6, ad 3.
3. ST I, Q. 108, Art. 1, ad 3.
4. ST II–II, Q. 101, Art. 3.
5. ST I–II, Q. 26, Art. 1, cor., and ad 3. See also I–II, Q. 26, Art. 2 and I–II, Q. 31, Art. 8, ad 2. For a more subtle problem relating to the connatural inclinations of bodies, see Supp., Q. 84, Art. 3.
6. ST I, Q. 55, Art. 2, cor., and ad 2; I, Q. 57, Art. 1, ad 3; Q. 58, Art. 1; and I, Q. 94, Art. 3, obj. 1. Compare Supp., Q. 96, Art. 9.
7. ST I, 86, Art. 4, ad 2; and I–II, Q. 31, Art. 7, obj. 1.
8. ST I–II, Q. 32, Art. 8; II–II, Q. 84, Art. 2; and II–II, Q. 96, Art. 1. See also II–II, Q. 23, Art. 2; II–II, Q. 175, Art. 1; II–II, Q. 180, Art. 5, ad 2, and Art. 8, obj. 3; II–II, Q. 183, Art. 1, ad 1; and III, Q. 11, Art. 3, ad 3, Art. 5, and Art. 6.
9. ST I, Q. 94, Art. 2, ad 2. Compare I–II, Q. 28, Art. 3; and I–II, Q. 31, Art. 7, obj. 1.
10. ST II–II, Q. 168, Art. 2.
11. ST, Q. 62, Art. 3.

12. ST II-II, Q. 142, Art. 3, ad 2; see also II-II, Q. 150, Art. 3, ad 1; II-II, Q. 151, Art. 2, ad 2; II-II, Q. 153, Art. 4; II-II, Q. 155, Art. 2, ad 5; and II-II, Q. 162, Art. 6, ad 1.
13. ST I-II, Q. 31, Art. 1, ad 1; I-II, Q. 32, Art. 1, *sed contra* and ad 3; I-II, Q. 32, Art. 6, obj. 2; and Supp., Q. 70, Art. 3.
14. ST I-II, Q. 32, Art. 2, ad 3; I-II, Q. 32, Art. 8, ad 3.
15. ST I-II, Q. 32, Art. 3, ad 3.
16. ST I-II, Q. 32, Art. 6, resp.; see also II-II, Q. 139, Art. 1. For a more subtle question, involving pleasure in habitual acts of bravery, see II-II, Q. 123, Art. 8, obj. 1.
17. ST II-II, Q. 45, Art. 2; II-II, Q. 45, Art. 4; compare Supp., Q. 95, Art. 5.
18. *Synderesis*, or deep conscience, is the natural habit of knowing the first principles of practical reason; *conscientia*, or surface conscience, is the act of applying such knowledge to particular instances. Though surface conscience can err in particular cases, deep conscience is ineradicable and indefectible. See esp. ST I, Q. 79, Arts. 12 and 13; I-II, Q. 19, Arts. 5–6; I-II, Q. 94, Art. 1; I-II, Q. 96, Art. 4; II-II, Q. 47, Art. 6; and Supp., Q. 87, Arts. 1 and 2. See also *Disputed Questions on Truth*, Q. 16–17.
19. ST I-II, Q. 58, Art. 5; see also II-II, Q. 45, Art. 2; II-II, Q. 47, Art. 15.
20. ST I-II, Q. 70, Art. 4, ad 1.
21. Yves R. Simon, *The Tradition of Natural Law: A Philosopher's Reflections*, trans. Vukan Kuic, ed. Russell Hittinger (New York: Fordham University Press, 1965, 1992), 128.
22. That is, from an imbalance of humors.
23. ST I-II, Q. 31, Art. 7.
24. ST I-II, Q. 78, Art. 2. See also Q. 94, Art. 5, ad 1.
25. ST II-II, Q. 156, Art. 3.
26. ST II-II, Q. 34, Art. 5, ad 2.
27. *Ibid.*, ad 3.
28. Emphasis added. The remark is contained in a letter from Sullivan to *Salon* magazine, defending his book *Love Undetectable* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998) against criticisms by other gay-rights advocates. The letter, published on December 15, 1999, is available at www.salon.com/letters/1999/12/15/sullivan/index.html. Sullivan's reputation as a "conservative" defender of sodomy arises from the argument of his earlier book *Virtually Normal* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995) that the extreme instability of homosexual relationships is due to social disapproval; if only homosexuals could "marry," they would become more faithful to each other. But in his final chapter, he lets the cat out of the bag. It turns out that he doesn't expect gay "marriage" to change homosexual behavior so much as to change heterosexual behavior. According to Sullivan, social approval of homosexual liaisons would be good for straight culture because it would teach straights to accept infidelity: As he puts it, there is "more likely to be a greater understanding of the need for extramarital outlets between two men than between a man and a woman."
29. See Gregory A. Freeman, "Bug Chasers: The Men Who Long to Be HIV+," *Rolling Stone* 915, February 6, 2003. The opening sentences of Freeman's article are illuminating: "Carlos nonchalantly asks whether his drink was made with whole or skim milk. He takes a moment to slurp on his grande caffe mocha in a crowded Starbucks, and

The Line Through the Heart

then he gets back to explaining how much he wants HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. His eyes light up as he says that the actual moment of transmission, the instant he gets HIV, will be ‘the most erotic thing I can imagine.’” Freeman’s article has been widely criticized in the homosexual media for reporting an alleged statement by Bob Cabaj, director of behavioral-health services for San Francisco County and past president of both the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association and the Association of Gay and Lesbian Psychiatrists, to the effect that 25 percent of newly infected homosexual men fall into the category of bug chasers—a statement that Cabaj now denies making. But although activists and public-health professionals debate how prevalent the phenomenon may be, few deny its reality.

30. I am grateful to Lance Simmons for provoking me to address this question.

31. ST I–II, Q. 27, ad 1. See also ST I, Q. 100, Art. 2, “nothing is desired or loved but under the aspect of good.”

32. ST I–II, Q. 8, Art. 1.

33. I owe this last reminder to Michael Sherwin.

34. ST I–II, Q. 13, Art. 6.

35. ST I–II, Q. 6, Art. 4; see also I–II, Q. 13, Art. 6.

36. ST I–II, Q. 10, Art. 2.

37. More precisely, that we all have the “habit” of knowing; see note 18.

38. I discuss this aspect of the problem further in *What We Can’t Not Know: A Guide* (Dallas: Spence Publishing, 2003), Chapter 7.

39. Here I draw help from Saint Augustine, who wrote ten chapters about how the vice of glory could simulate virtue; see *The City of God*, Book V, Chapters 12–21. For further discussion, see J. Budziszewski, “Politics of Virtues, Government of Knaves, *First Things* 44 (1994): 38–44, reprinted as *The Revenge of Conscience: Politics and the Fall of Man* (Dallas: Spence Publishing, 1999), Chapter 4.

40. ST I–II, Q. 62, Art. 1.

41. John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, ed. J. B. Wharey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1928; first published 1678).

42. This provides another reason not to separate Saint Thomas’s philosophy from his theology. See esp. ST I–II, Q. 109, Art. 6., cor. and ad 2, Art. 8, and Art. 10; I–II, Q. 111, Art. 2; II–II, Q. 137, Art. 4.

43. Ephesians 4:22, 24, following the Greek, *kainon anthropon*.

44. ST, Q. 62, Art. 1, quoting 2 Peter 2:4; see also I–II, Q. 68, Art. 2; I–II, Q. 109, Art. 7, ad 3; and II–II, Q. 10, Art. 4, ad 2.

45. Romans 12:2, RSV.

Chapter 5

1. The idea of a divine authority behind the natural law is often misunderstood. Some people imagine that if God had ordained that we rape instead of marry, murder instead of cherish, hate Him instead of love Him, then such things would be right. The absurdity of this idea is considered an objection to God’s authority. What the objection overlooks is that a being capable of commanding such things would not be