

## QUESTION 3

### What Beatitude Is

Next we have to consider what beatitude is (question 3) and what is required for it (question 4).

On the first topic there are eight questions: (1) Is beatitude something uncreated? (2) If it is something created, is it an operation [i.e., an action]? (3) Is it an operation of the sentient part of the soul or of the intellective part? (4) If it is an operation of the intellective part of the soul, is it an operation of the intellect or of the will? (5) If it is an operation of the intellect, is it an operation of the speculative intellect or of the practical intellect? (6) If it is an operation of the speculative intellect, does it consist in a speculative act belonging to the speculative sciences? (7) Does it consist in a speculative act with respect to the separated substances, i.e., the angels? (8) Does it consist solely in a speculative act with respect to God by which He is seen through His essence?

#### Article 1

##### Is beatitude something uncreated?

It seems that beatitude is something uncreated:

**Objection 1:** In *De Consolatione Philosophiae* 3 Boethius says, “is necessary to confess that God is beatitude itself.”

**Objection 2:** Beatitude is the highest good. But it belongs God to be the highest good. Therefore, since there is no more than one highest good, it seems that beatitude is identical with God.

**Objection 3:** Beatitude is the ultimate end toward which the human will naturally tends. But the will ought to tend toward nothing other than God as an end. “He alone is to be enjoyed (*quo solo fruendum est*),” as Augustine puts it.

**But contrary to this:** Nothing that is made is uncreated. But man’s beatitude is something made, since, according to Augustine in *De Doctrina Christiana* 1, “Those things are to be enjoyed which make us blessed.” Therefore, beatitude is not something uncreated.

**I respond:** As was explained above (q. 1, a. 8 and q. 2, a. 7), ‘end’ has two senses: (a) *the thing itself* which we desire to attain, in the sense that *money* is an end to the avaricious man; and (b) attaining (*adeptio*) or possessing (*possessio*), i.e., having (*usus*) or enjoying (*fruitio*), that thing which is desired, in the sense that *having money* is said to be the avaricious man’s end, and *enjoying a pleasurable thing* is said to be the intemperate man’s end.

Therefore, in the first sense, man’s ultimate end is an uncreated good, viz., God, who alone is able to satisfy man’s will perfectly by His infinite goodness. But in the second sense, man’s ultimate end is something created which exists within him and which is nothing other than possessing or enjoying the ultimate end (cf. *ST* 1, q. 12, a. 5).

Therefore, if man’s beatitude is thought of with respect to its *cause or object*, then in this sense it is something uncreated, whereas if it is thought of with respect to the *very essence of beatitude*, then in this sense it is something created.

**Reply to objection 1:** God is beatitude through His essence, since He is blessed through His own essence and not by attaining, or participating in, something else. By contrast, as Boethius says in the same place, men are blessed through participation, just as they are said to be ‘gods’ through participation. And the participation in beatitude by virtue of which a man is called blessed is itself something created.

**Reply to objection 2:** The reason why beatitude is said to be man’s highest good is that it is an act of attaining or enjoying the highest good (*est adeptio vel fruitio summi boni*).

**Reply to objection 3:** Beatitude is called the ultimate end in the sense in which attaining an end is called the end.

## Article 2

### Is beatitude an operation [i.e., an action]?

It seems that beatitude is not an operation [or action]:

**Objection 1:** In Romans 6:22 the Apostle says, “You have your fruit unto sanctification, and as your end, life eternal.” But life is the very *esse* of living things and not an operation. Therefore, the ultimate end, i.e., beatitude, is not an operation.

**Objection 2:** In *De Consolatione Philosophiae* 3 Boethius says that beatitude is “a state made perfect by the aggregation of all goods.” But ‘state’ does not designate an operation. Therefore, beatitude is not an operation.

**Objection 3:** ‘Beatitude’ signifies something that exists within the one who is blessed, since it is a man’s ultimate perfection. But ‘operation’ does not signify a thing as *existing within* the one who operates; rather, it signifies it as *proceeding from* the one who operates. Therefore, beatitude is not an operation.

**Objection 4:** Beatitude remains permanently in the one who is blessed. But an operation is temporary and does not remain permanently (*non permanet sed transit*). Therefore, beatitude is not an operation.

**Objection 5:** A single beatitude belongs to a single man. But operations are multiple. Therefore, beatitude is not an operation.

**Objection 6:** Beatitude exists without interruption in the one who is blessed. But human operations are frequently interrupted, e.g., by sleep, or by some other occupation, or by rest. Therefore, beatitude is not an operation.

**But contrary to this:** In *Ethics* 1 the Philosopher says, “Happiness (*felicitas*) is an operation in accord with perfect virtue.”

**I respond:** In the sense in which a man’s beatitude is something created existing within him, one must claim that man’s beatitude is an operation.

For beatitude is a man’s ultimate perfection. But each thing is perfect to the extent that it is actual, since a potentiality is unperfected (*imperfecta*) in the absence of its [corresponding] actuality. Therefore, beatitude must consist in man’s ultimate actuality. But it is clear that an operation is the ultimate actuality of a thing that operates; this is why the operation is called “*second actuality*” by the Philosopher in *De Anima* 2. For it can be the case that what possesses a form is operating [only] in potentiality, in the way that someone who has knowledge might be thinking [only] in potentiality. Hence, in the case of other entities as well, each thing is said to exist *for the sake of* its operation, as *De Caelo* 2 says. Therefore, it must be the case that man’s beatitude is an operation.

**Reply to objection 1:** ‘Life’ has two senses.

In the first sense, what is called ‘life’ is the very *esse* of the living thing. In this sense, beatitude is not life. For it has been shown (q. 2, a. 5) that man’s *esse*, whatever it might be, is not man’s beatitude, since it is only God who is such that His beatitude is His *esse*.

In the second sense, what is called ‘life’ is an operation of a living thing by which a principle of life is made actual. It is in this sense that we talk about ‘the active life’ or ‘the contemplative life’ or ‘the pleasure-seeking life’. This is the sense in which the ultimate end is called ‘eternal life’. This is clear from what is said in John 17:3: “This is eternal life: that they may know you, the one true God.”

**Reply to objection 2:** In defining beatitude Boethius was thinking about the *general concept* of beatitude (*ipsam communem beatitudinis rationem*). For the general concept of beatitude is that it is a general and perfect good (*bonum commune perfectum*). And this is what he meant when he said that beatitude is “a state made perfect by the aggregation of all goods”—which means nothing other than that one who is blessed is in a state of the perfect good (*in statu boni perfecti*).

Aristotle, on the other hand, expressed the very *essence* of beatitude when he showed what it is through which a man is in such a state, viz., through a certain operation. And in *Ethics* 1 he himself also showed that beatitude is a perfect good.

**Reply to objection 3:** As *Metaphysics* 9 says, there are two sorts of actions.

The first sort, e.g., burning or cutting, proceeds from the thing that is operating into an exterior matter. Beatitude cannot be this sort of action, since, as it says in the same place, such an operation is more the action and perfection of the patient and not of the agent.

The second sort of action, e.g., sensing, intellectual understanding, or willing, is an action that remains within the agent itself. This sort of action is a perfection and act of the agent. This is the sort of operation that it is possible for beatitude to be.

**Reply to objection 4:** Since ‘beatitude’ expresses a certain ultimate perfection, ‘beatitude’ must have different senses because the diverse things capable of beatitude are able to attain diverse grades of perfection.

For instance, in God there is beatitude through His essence, since His very *esse* is His operation—an operation by which He has enjoyment of Himself and not of anything else.

On the other hand, in the blessed angels there is ultimate perfection through an operation by which they are joined to the uncreated good. And this operation is a single everlasting operation in them.

By contrast, in men who are in the state of the present life, the ultimate perfection is through an operation by which a man is joined to God, but this operation cannot be continuous and, as a result, it cannot be a single operation, either, since an operation is multiplied by being divided. For this reason, in the state of the present life a man cannot have perfect beatitude. Hence, in *Ethics* 1 the Philosopher, in positing beatitude for man in this life, says that it is imperfect, and after much discussion he concludes that “we call men blessed, but as men.”

However, God has promised us perfect beatitude, when we will be “like the angels in heaven,” as Matthew 22:30 says. Therefore, when applied to this perfect beatitude, the objection loses its force. For in this state of beatitude man’s mind will be joined to God by a single operation that is continuous and everlasting.

By contrast, in the present life we fall short of perfect beatitude to the extent that we fall short of the oneness and continuity of such an operation. Yet there is some participation in beatitude, and this participation is greater to the extent that this operation is able to be more continuous and unified. And so in the *active life*, which is occupied with many things, there is less of the character of beatitude than there is in the *contemplative life*, which is centered on one thing, viz., the contemplation of truth. And even if at times the man is not actually engaging in the sort of operation in question, still, because he is always ready to engage in it, and because he orders even the very cessation of the operation, e.g., sleep or some natural occupation, toward the operation in question, the operation seems like it is continuous.

**Reply to objection 5 and objection 6:** The replies to the fifth and sixth objections are clear from what has just been said.

### Article 3

#### Does beatitude consist in an operation of the sentient part of the soul or only in an operation of the intellectual part?

It seems that beatitude consists in an operation of the sentient part of the soul as well [as in an operation of the intellectual part]:

**Objection 1:** Outside of an intellectual operation, there is no operation in man more noble than a sentient operation. But in us an intellectual operation depends on a sentient operation, since, as *De*

*Anima* 3 says, “we are unable to have intellectual understanding without a phantasm.” Therefore, beatitude consists in a sentient operation as well.

**Objection 2:** In *De Consolatione Philosophiae* 3 Boethius says that beatitude is “a state made perfect by the aggregation of all goods.” But some goods are sensible goods, which we attain through the operation of the sensory power. Therefore, it seems that an operation of the sensory power is required for beatitude.

**Objection 3:** As is proved in *Ethics* 1, beatitude is a perfect good—which would not be the case if a man were not perfected by it with respect to all of his parts. But certain parts of the soul are perfected through sentient operations. Therefore, a sentient operation is required for beatitude.

**But contrary to this:** Sentient operations are common both to us and to brute animals, but beatitude is not common to us and to brute animals. Therefore, beatitude does not consist in a sentient operation.

**I respond:** There are three ways in which something can pertain to beatitude: (a) *essentially* (*essentialiter*), (b) *as an antecedent* (*antecedenter*), and (c) *as a consequence* (*consequenter*).

No operation of the sensory power can pertain *essentially* to beatitude. For man’s beatitude consists essentially in his being joined to an uncreated good, which, as was shown above (a. 1 and q. 2, a. 8), is the ultimate end and such that a man cannot be joined to it through an operation of the sensory power. Similarly, as has been shown (q. 2, a. 5), man’s beatitude does not lie in corporeal goods, which are all that we attain to through the operation of the sensory power.

However, the operations of the sensory power can pertain to beatitude both *as an antecedent* and *as a consequence*:

They pertain *as an antecedent* to the sort of imperfect beatitude that can be had in the present life. For the operation of the intellect has as a prerequisite (*praeexigit*) the operation of the sensory power.

They pertain *as a consequence* to the perfect beatitude that we await in heaven, because, after the resurrection, as Augustine says in his letter *Ad Dioscorum*, “from the very beatitude of the soul there will be a certain overflow (*refluentia*) into the body and into the bodily senses, in order that they might be perfected in their operations.” This will become clearer below, when we talk about the resurrection. However, the operation by which the human mind is joined to God will not in that state (*tunc*) depend on the sensory power.

**Reply to objection 1:** This objection proves that the operation of the sensory power is required as an antecedent for the sort of imperfect beatitude that can be had in this life.

**Reply to objection 2:** The sort of perfect beatitude that an angel has is such that it is an “aggregation of all goods” through his being joined to the font of all good—and not such that it requires every single particular good (*non quod indigeat singulis particularibus bonis*).

By contrast, in the imperfect beatitude of the present life (*in hac beatitudine imperfecta*), what is required is an aggregation of goods that are sufficient for the most perfect operation possible in this life.

**Reply to objection 3:** In perfect beatitude the whole man is perfected, but he is perfected in his lower part through an overflow (*per redundanitam*) from his higher part. By contrast, in the imperfect beatitude of the present life, it goes, conversely, from the perfection of the lower part to the perfection of the higher part.

#### Article 4

##### Does beatitude consist in an act of the will?

It seems that beatitude consists in an act of the will:

**Objection 1:** In *De Civitate Dei* 19 Augustine says that man’s beatitude lies in peace; hence,

Psalm 147:3 says, “He has placed peace within your borders.” But peace has to do with the will. Therefore, man’s beatitude consists in an act of will (*in voluntate*).

**Objection 2:** Beatitude is the highest good. But the good is the object of the will. Therefore, beatitude consists in an operation of the will.

**Objection 3:** The ultimate end corresponds to the first mover, in the way that the ultimate end of the army as a whole is victory, which is the end of the leader who moves everyone. But the first mover in the case of an operation is the will, since, as will be explained below (q. 9, a. 1), the will moves the other powers. Therefore, beatitude has to do with the will.

**Objection 4:** If beatitude is an operation, it must be man’s most noble operation. But as is clear from the Apostle in 1 Corinthians 13, loving God (*dilectio Dei*), which is an act of the will, is a more noble operation than knowing God (*cognitio Dei*), which is an operation of the intellect. Therefore, it seems that beatitude consists in an act of the will.

**Objection 5:** In *De Trinitate* 13 Augustine says, “The blessed man is such that (a) he has everything that he wills and (b) he wills nothing badly.” And a little later he adds, “Someone is close to being blessed if he wills well whatever he wills. For good things make him blessed, and he already has something of those goods, viz., a good will itself.” Therefore, beatitude consists in an act of the will.

**But contrary to this:** In John 17:3 our Lord says, “This is eternal life: that they know you, the one true God.” But as has been explained (a. 2), eternal life is the ultimate end. Therefore, man’s beatitude consists in a cognition of God, and this is an act of the intellect.

**I respond:** As was explained above (q. 2, a. 6), two things are required for beatitude: (a) the *essence* of beatitude and (b) its *per se accident*, as it were, viz., the delight adjoined to it.

Thus, I claim that as regards what beatitude is in its essence (*essentialiter*), it is impossible for it to consist in an act of the will. For it is clear from what was said above (aa. 1-2 and q. 2, a. 7) that beatitude is the attainment of the ultimate end. But attaining an end does not consist in an act of the will. For the will is directed toward the end—an *absent* end when the will *desires* it, and a *present* end when it *delights* while reposing in it. But it is clear that an act of desiring an end (*desiderium finis*) is not itself an act of attaining the end (*ipsum desiderium finis non est consecutio finis*); rather, it is a movement toward the end. Moreover, an act of delighting comes to the will because the end is present, whereas it is not the case, conversely, that something is present because the will delights in it. Therefore, there must be something other than the act of the will (*oportet aliquid aliud esse quam actum voluntatis*) such that through it the end itself becomes present to the one who wills.

This is manifestly obvious in the case of sensible ends. For if acquiring money (*consequi pecuniam*) occurred through an act of the will, then the covetous man would acquire the money right from the start, when he willed to have it. But, of course, it is absent from him at the beginning, and he acquires it by taking it with his hand or in some other such way; and it is *then* that he delights in the money now possessed.

Therefore, the same thing happens with an intelligible end, too. For at the beginning we will to attain some intelligible end. But we attain it by the fact that it becomes present to us through an act of the intellect. And then our delighted will comes to rest in the end now attained.

So, then, the essence of beatitude consists in an act of the intellect, whereas what pertains to the will is an act of delighting that is consequent to this beatitude. Accordingly, in *Confessiones* 10 Augustine says that beatitude is “rejoicing in the truth” (*gaudium de veritate*), because the act of rejoicing is the consummation of beatitude.

**Reply to objection 1:** Peace is relevant to man’s ultimate end not in the sense that it is beatitude itself in its essence, but in the sense that it is related to beatitude as an antecedent and as a consequence. *As an antecedent*, to the extent that all the troubles or obstacles (*perturbantia et impediencia*) associated with the ultimate end have already been removed; *as a consequence*, to the extent that a man, having attained his ultimate end, remains at peace (*remanet pacatus*) now that his desire has been put to rest.

**Reply to objection 2:** The will's first object is not its own act—just as the first object of the power of sight is not the act of seeing itself, but the visible thing. Hence, from the very fact that beatitude is the will's first object it follows that beatitude is not the will's very act.

**Reply to objection 3:** It is the intellect, rather than the will, that first apprehends an end, whereas the movement toward the end begins in the will. And so what is due to the will is what ultimately follows upon the attainment of the end, viz., an act of delighting or enjoying (*delectation vel fruitio*).

**Reply to objection 4:** Loving (*dilectio*) is preeminent over knowing (*cognitio*) as far as effecting movement [toward the end] is concerned, but knowing precedes loving in the attainment [of the end]. For as Augustine says in *De Trinitate* 10, "A thing is not loved unless it is known." And so we first attain an intelligible end through an action of the intellect, just as we first attain a sensible end through an action of the sensory power.

**Reply to objection 5:** He who has everything that he wills is blessed because he *has* the things that he wills—and this having is through something other than an act of the will.

On the other hand, to will nothing badly is a requirement for beatitude in the sense of being an appropriate disposition (*debita dispositio*) for beatitude.

Now a good will counts as one of the goods that make a man blessed insofar as it is a certain inclination in the will [toward beatitude]—just as a movement is assigned to the genus of its terminus, as, e.g., an alteration is assigned to the genus *quality*.

## Article 5

### Does beatitude consist in an operation of the speculative intellective or of the practical intellect?

It seems that beatitude consists in an operation of the practical intellect:

**Objection 1:** The ultimate end of any creature consists in its becoming similar to God (*in assimilatione ad Deum*). But man is more similar to God through his practical intellect, which is a cause of things that are understood intellectually, than through his speculative intellect, whose knowledge is taken from the things. Therefore, man's beatitude consists in an operation of the practical intellect rather than in an operation of the speculative intellect.

**Objection 2:** Beatitude is man's perfect good. But the practical intellect is more ordered toward the good than is the speculative intellect, which is ordered toward the true. Hence, it is because of the perfection of the practical intellect that we are called 'good', and not because of the perfection of the speculative intellect. Rather, we are called 'knowledgeable' or 'intelligent' because of the perfection of the speculative intellect. Therefore, man's beatitude consists in an act of the practical intellect rather than in an act of the speculative intellect.

**Objection 3:** Beatitude is a certain good that belongs to a man himself. But the speculative intellect is occupied more with things that lie outside of a man, whereas the practical intellect is occupied with things that belong to the man himself, such as his operations and his passions. Therefore, man's beatitude consists in an operation of the practical intellect rather than in an operation of the speculative intellect.

**But contrary to this:** In *De Trinitate* 1 Augustine says, "Contemplation is promised to us as the end of all our actions and the eternal perfection of our joys."

**I respond:** Beatitude consists in an operation of the speculative intellect rather than in an operation of the practical intellect. This is clear from three considerations:

First, if man's beatitude is an operation, it must be man's best operation. But man's best operation is the operation that belongs to the best power with respect to the best object. Now the best power is the intellect and its best object is the divine good, which is an object of the speculative intellect and not of

the practical intellect. Hence, beatitude consists especially in this operation, i.e., in an act of contemplating divine things (*in contemplatione divinorum*). And since, as *Ethics* 9 and 10 say, “Each thing seems to be that which is best in it,” this operation is especially proper to man and especially delightful to him.

The same point is clear from the fact that contemplation is especially sought after for its own sake. By contrast, an act of the practical intellect is sought after not for its own sake, but for the sake of an action. And the actions themselves are likewise ordered toward some end. This is why it is clear that the ultimate end cannot consist in the active life, which is associated with the practical intellect.

Third, the same point is clear from the fact that the contemplative life is common to both man and higher beings, viz., God and the angels, to whom man is assimilated through beatitude. By contrast, as regards those things that pertain to the active life, even the other animals in some sense have them in common with man, albeit imperfectly. And so the ultimate and perfect beatitude which we wait for in the future life consists as a whole in contemplation. By contrast, as *Ethics* 9 says, the sort of imperfect beatitude that can be had in this life (*qualis hic haberi potest*) consists first and principally in contemplation, but secondarily in the operation of the practical intellect, which orders human actions and passions.

**Reply to objection 1:** The proposed similarity of the practical intellect to God is a proportional likeness (*secundum proportionalitatem*); that is, the practical intellect is related to what it has cognition of (*ad suum cognitum*) in the way that God is related to what He has cognition of (*ad suum*). By contrast, the speculative intellect’s assimilation to God is through its being united to and informed by [Him] (*secundum unionem et informationem*)—which is a much greater similarity (cf. ST 1, q. 12, a. 5).

Still, one could also reply that with respect to the principal thing that He knows, viz., His own essence, God has only speculative cognition and not practical cognition.

**Reply to objection 2:** The practical intellect is ordered toward a good outside of itself, whereas the speculative intellect has its own good within itself, viz., the act of contemplating the truth. And if this good is perfect, then the whole man is perfected and made good by it. The practical intellect does not have this good, but instead orders things toward it.

**Reply to objection 3:** This argument would go through if a man himself were his own ultimate end, since in that case his beatitude would consist in his thinking about and ordering his actions and passions. But since man’s ultimate end is in fact an extrinsic good, viz., God, whom we attain through an operation of the speculative intellect, it follows that beatitude consists in an operation of the speculative intellect rather than in an operation of the practical intellect.

## Article 6

### Does man’s beatitude consist in the sort of thinking that belongs to the speculative sciences?

It seems that man’s beatitude consists in the sort of thinking that belongs to the speculative sciences (*in consideratione scientiarum speculativarum*):

**Objection 1:** In the *Ethics* the Philosopher says that happiness (*felicitas*) is an operation in accord with perfect virtue. And in distinguishing the virtues, he posits just three speculative virtues, viz., scientific knowledge (*scientia*), wisdom (*sapientia*), and understanding [of principles] (*intellectus*), all of which have to do with the sort of thinking that belongs to the speculative sciences. Therefore, man’s ultimate beatitude consists in the sort of thinking that belongs to the speculative sciences.

**Objection 2:** Ultimate human beatitude seems to be what is naturally desired for its own sake by everyone. But the sort of thinking that belongs to the speculative sciences is like this; for *Metaphysics* 1 says, “All men by nature desire to know,” and a little later it adds that the speculative sciences are sought

for their own sake. Therefore, beatitude consists in the sort of thinking that belongs to the speculative sciences.

**Objection 3:** Beatitude is ultimate human perfection, and each thing is perfected by being brought from potentiality to actuality. But the human intellect is brought to actuality by the sort of thinking that belongs to the speculative sciences. Therefore, it seems that man's ultimate beatitude consists in thinking of this sort.

**But contrary to this:** Jeremiah 9:23 says, "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom," and it is speaking about the wisdom of the speculative sciences. Therefore, man's ultimate beatitude does not consist in the sort of thinking that belongs to these sciences.

**I respond:** As was explained above (a. 2), there are two types of human beatitude, the one *perfect* and the other *imperfect*. Perfect beatitude has to be thought of as attaining to the true nature of beatitude (*atingit ad veram beatitudinis rationem*), whereas imperfect beatitude has to be thought of as not attaining to the true nature of beatitude, but instead as participating in a certain particular likeness of beatitude—in the way that perfect prudence is found in man, who has reason with respect to his actions, whereas imperfect prudence exists in some brute animals in whom there are particular instincts for certain actions that are similar to acts of prudence.

Perfect beatitude cannot consist essentially in the sort of thinking that belongs to the speculative sciences. To see this clearly, note that the sort of thinking that belongs to a speculative science does not extend beyond the strength of that science's principles, since the whole of a science is virtually contained in the principles of that science. Now as is clear from the Philosopher at the beginning of the *Metaphysics* and at the end of the *Posterior Analytics*, the first principles of the speculative sciences are received through the sensory power. Hence, the sort of thinking that belongs to the speculative sciences cannot as a whole extend further than the cognition of sensible things can lead one. But man's ultimate beatitude, which is his ultimate perfection, cannot consist in the cognition of sensible things. For nothing is perfected by something lower than itself unless the lower thing has some participation in a higher thing. But it is clear that the form of a rock—or the form of any sensible thing—is lower than a man. Hence, the human intellect is perfected by the form of a rock not insofar as it is a form of that sort, but rather insofar as it participates in some likeness of what is above the human intellect, viz., the intelligible light or something of that sort. But whatever exists through another (*per aliud*) is traced back to something that exists in its own right (*per se*); hence, man's ultimate perfection must come through the cognition of something that lies beyond the human intellect. But it has been shown (*ST* 1, q. 88, a. 2) that one cannot arrive at the cognition of separated substances, which lie beyond the human intellect, through sensible things. Hence, it follows that man's ultimate beatitude cannot lie in the sort of thinking that belongs to the speculative sciences.

However, just as sensible forms have a participated likeness to higher substances, so the sort of thinking that belongs to the speculative sciences is a certain participation in true and perfect beatitude.

**Reply to objection 1:** As was explained above (a. 2), in the *Ethics* the Philosopher is talking about the sort of imperfect happiness (*de felicitate imperfecta*) that can be had in this life.

**Reply to objection 2:** What is desired naturally is not just perfect beatitude, but also any sort of likeness of it or participation in it.

**Reply to objection 3:** Through the sort of thinking that belongs to the speculative sciences our intellect is brought in some sense to actuality, but not to its ultimate and complete actuality.

## Article 7

### Does man's beatitude consist in the cognition of the separated substances, i.e., the angels?

It seems that man's beatitude consists in the cognition of the separated substances, i.e., angels:

**Objection 1:** In a homily Gregory says, "It does not at all avail us to take part in the feasts of men, if we fail to take part in the feasts of the angels"—by which he means final beatitude. But we can take part in the feasts of the angels by contemplating them. Therefore, it seems that man's ultimate beatitude consists in contemplating the angels.

**Objection 2:** Each thing's ultimate perfection lies in its being joined to its source (*coniungatur suo principio*); thus, the circle is said to be a perfect figure because its source is the same as its end. But as Dionysius says in *De Caelesti Hierarchia*, chap. 4, the source of human cognition is from the angels themselves, by whom men are illuminated. Therefore, the perfection of the human intellect lies in contemplating the angels.

**Objection 3:** Each nature is perfected when it is joined to a higher nature; for instance, a body's ultimate perfection is to be joined to a spiritual nature. But in the order of nature the angels are higher than the human intellect. Therefore, the ultimate perfection of the human intellect is to be joined to the angels themselves by means of contemplation.

**But contrary to this:** Jeremiah 9:24 says, "But let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows me." Therefore, man's ultimate glory or beatitude consists only in the cognition of God.

**I respond:** As has been explained (a. 6), man's perfect beatitude does not consist in the perfecting of his intellect through any sort of participation; rather, it lies in what is such-and-such through its essence (*est per essentiam tale*). But it is clear that to the extent that any given thing constitutes the perfection of a power, it is such that the concept of that power's proper object applies to it. But the proper object of the intellect is the true. Therefore, whatever has participated truth does not, when contemplated, make the intellect perfect with its ultimate perfection.

Now since, as *Metaphysics 2* says, entities have the same relation to *esse* that they have to truth, anything that is a being by participation is true by participation. But angels have participated being (*esse participatum*), since, as was shown in the First Part (*ST 1*, q. 44, a. 1), it is only in the case of God that His *esse* is His essence. Hence, it follows that God alone is truth through His essence, and that God alone is such that contemplating Him makes one perfectly blessed.

On the other hand, nothing prevents a sort of imperfect beatitude from accompanying the contemplation of the angels; and this is a beatitude even higher than that found in the sort of thinking that belongs to the speculative sciences.

**Reply to objection 1:** We "take part in the feasts of the angels" by contemplating not only the angels but God along with them.

**Reply to objection 2:** According to those who claim that human souls are created by the angels, it seems appropriate enough that man's beatitude should lie in contemplating the angels and in being joined in this way to his source. However, as was explained in the First Part (*ST 1*, q. 90, a. 3), this view is erroneous. Hence, man's ultimate perfection comes through his being joined to God, who is the first source (*principium*) both of the creation of the soul and of its illumination.

Now as was explained in the First Part (*ST 1*, q. 111, a. 2), an angel does illuminate as a minister. Hence, by his ministry an angel helps a man to reach beatitude, but he is not the object of human beatitude.

**Reply to objection 3:** There are two possible ways to understand what it is for a higher nature to be reached (*atingi*) by a lower nature.

The first sense has to do with reaching the level of a participated power, and in this sense a man's

ultimate perfection will lie in the man's reaching the point of contemplating in the way that the angels contemplate.

The second sense has to do with a power's reaching its object, and in this sense the ultimate perfection of any power is to reach the thing in which the nature of the power's object is fully realized (*in quo plene invenitur ratio sui obiecti*).

## Article 8

### Does man's beatitude lie in his seeing God's very essence?

It seems that man's beatitude does not lie in his seeing God's very essence (*in visione ipsius divinae essentiae*):

**Objection 1:** In *Mystica Theologia*, chap. 1, Dionysius says that through the highest possible understanding, man is joined to God as to something altogether unknown. But what is seen through its essence is not altogether unknown. Therefore, the ultimate perfection of the intellect, viz., beatitude, does not consist in God's being seen through His essence.

**Objection 2:** To a higher nature belongs a higher perfection. But to see His own essence is a perfection peculiar to God's intellect (*perfectio divini intellectus propria*). Therefore, the human intellect's highest perfection does not reach this point, but stops somewhere short of it (*sed infra subsistit*).

**But contrary to this:** 1 John 3:2 says, "When He appears, we shall be like Him, and we shall see Him as He is."

**I respond:** There cannot be ultimate and perfect beatitude except in seeing God's essence. To see this clearly, there are two points that must be taken into account: the first is that a man is not perfectly happy as long as something remains to be desired and sought after; the second is that the perfection of any given power is in accord with the nature of its object.

Now as *De Anima* 3 says, an intellect's object is the 'what-ness', i.e., the essence, of a thing (*quod quid est, idest essentia rei*). Hence, an intellect's perfection goes as far as does its cognition of the essence of a thing. Therefore, if some intellect has a cognition of the essence of some *effect* but cannot thereby have a cognition of that effect's *cause*—i.e., a cognition by which the cause's 'what-ness' might be known—then that intellect is not said to have attained to the cause absolutely speaking (*non dicitur attingere ad causam simpliciter*), even though it is able, through the effect, to have a cognition of the cause's existence (*cognoscere possit de cause an sit*). And so when a man has a cognition of an effect and knows that it has a cause, there remains in him by nature a desire to know the 'what-ness' of the cause as well. And as the beginning of the *Metaphysics* says, this desire has its source in wonder (*illud desiderium est admirationis*) and leads to inquiry. For instance, if someone has a cognition of an eclipse of the sun, he realizes that it proceeds from some cause, which he wonders about because he does not know what it is, and in his wonder he makes an inquiry. And this inquiry is not put to rest until he arrives at a cognition of the essence of the cause.

Therefore, if the human intellect, knowing the essence of some created effect, knows of God only that He exists, then the intellect's perfection has not yet, absolutely speaking, reached the first cause; instead, there still remains in it a natural desire to make an inquiry into that cause. Hence, that intellect is not yet perfectly blessed.

Therefore, what is required for perfect beatitude is that the intellect should reach the very essence of the first cause. And so it will have its perfection by being united to God as its object, and, as was explained above (q. 2, a. 8), this alone is what man's beatitude consists in.

**Reply to objection 1:** Dionysius is talking about the cognition had by those who are still in this

life (*qui sunt in via*) and tending toward beatitude.

**Reply to objection 2:** As was explained above (q. 1, a. 8), there are two possible senses of ‘end’.

One of them has to do with the very thing which is desired, and in this sense the end of the higher nature is the same as the end of the lower nature—and, indeed, of all things, as was said above.

The other sense has to do with attaining this thing, and in this sense the end of the higher nature is different from the end of the lower nature in light of their diverse relations to the sort of thing in question. In this sense, then, God’s beatitude in comprehending His own essence is higher than the beatitude of a man or an angel who sees God but does not comprehend Him (cf. q. 4, a. 3 and *ST* 1, q. 12, a. 7).