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Richard Berquist: *From Human Dignity to Natural Law: An Introduction*. (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2019. Pp. xi, 230.)

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Richard Berquist's *From Human Dignity to Natural Law* is a clearly written introduction to the understanding of natural law in the Aristotelian-Thomistic (AT) tradition. The book opens with a discussion of human dignity. Knowing that his readers are modern people—steeped in many of the assumptions about law and rights that he later argues are contrary to AT natural law reasoning—Berquist begins by asking us to explore the question of what makes murder, which he defines as the intentional killing of an innocent human being, morally wrong. In asking this question, he seeks to draw in the skeptical reader who claims to reject AT natural law but nevertheless harbors many moral intuitions that are congruent with it, and which Berquist will further argue are better justified if they are grounded in it. If we are to believe that murder is intrinsically wrong—that there are no special circumstances or desirable ends that allow for the killing of the innocent, either by a third party or the person himself—then there is no utility or interest that could ever justify willing an innocent's death. This means, argues Berquist, that the human being possesses a dignity not possessed by any other creature. He defines human dignity "as the value of a human being as existing by nature for his own good as an ultimate end" (14). This ultimate end is happiness, which he defines in chapter 3 but elaborates more fully in chapter 10 when he discusses the contemplative life.

I was pleased to see in the latter chapter that Berquist explores the necessity of God in the search for happiness. Too often supporters of natural law present their view as if it were a kind of nonreligious answer to the public reason requirement of modern liberalism, since natural law arguments do not explicitly refer to claims of special revelation or ecclesial authority. There is, of course, a certain sense in which that is strategically wise; appeals to the natural law, and the arguments for its precepts, conclusions, and determinations, are often correctly described by its advocates as deliverances of unaided reason. On the other hand, AT natural law—as traditionally articulated by the Catholic Church and St. Thomas Aquinas—cannot in principle be a "freestanding view," as John Rawls would put it (see Rawls, *Political Liberalism* [Columbia University Press, 1996], 10). Natural law depends on the eternal law, the order of creation in the mind of God. Thus, the natural law is made for rational creatures with a nature ordered toward certain good ends, including the exercise of the virtues, which, when practiced well, leads to happiness. Berquist clearly recognizes all this, especially when he argues that without finality in nature, AT natural law collapses (chap. 2). But because this is a book of philosophy and not moral theology, he deftly suggests to the reader that ultimate happiness will not be acquired this side of eternity,

that the natural law can only take you so far, and that something like a divine disclosure can help point the way (173–74).

After introducing us to the concept of human dignity by way of his murder illustration, over the next four chapters Berquist explores the theoretical particulars in which human dignity must be embedded in order to make sense. He addresses finality in nature (chap. 2), happiness (chap. 3), virtue (chap. 4), and natural law (chap. 5). Although chapters 1–5 take up fewer than one hundred pages, Berquist is able within that space to explain, with remarkable clarity, many ideas central to AT natural law. There are, however, a few points he makes that even some of his fellow travelers would challenge. Because of space constraints, I will mention only one. In his discussion of natural teleology, he makes the same mistake some advocates of intelligent design theory make by suggesting that Darwinian evolution is a refutation of final causality. As I note in my own work, “for natural selection to work on random mutation, living beings must be ordered toward self-preservation and efficient reproduction. That is, without final causality, it is difficult to see how any scientific account of the origin of species, neo-Darwinian or otherwise, can even get off the ground. Any sort of randomness or chance presupposes an underlying order, since it involves material entities, things that have natures and thus have final causes, just as the result of a dice roll requires two cubed material objects of a certain nature” (Francis J. Beckwith, *Never Doubt Thomas: The Catholic Aquinas as Evangelical and Protestant* [Baylor University Press, 2019], 80). Berquist is certainly correct that final causality has been largely vanquished from modern scientific theory making (22–25), but it does not follow from that fact that *final causality*, as a matter of philosophical inference, has been vanquished as well. After all, even your Darwinian optometrist knows that your eyes are ordered toward the end of 20/20 vision, and that when she writes you a prescription for corrective lenses, she is not violating the so-called is/ought fallacy (which, by the way, Berquist impressively dispatches in chapter 5). The deeper question, of course, is whether such teleology implies a divine source. But the inference to this source, under an AT metaphysics, does not require the absence of natural causes, as Berquist seems to assume. Rather, the inference would follow from the contingent nature of the natural order and all its final, efficient, material, and formal causes, including natural selection and the organic matter on which it works.

Chapters 6–9 concern an application of the natural law to a variety of issues in applied ethics. Berquist divides them into “the life issues” and “sex, marriage, and family.” In these chapters he defends traditional natural law understandings on many questions including abortion, suicide, euthanasia, the death penalty, contraception, sexual conduct, marriage, divorce, monogamy, and adultery. Even if one finds oneself disagreeing with Berquist, one should admire his willingness to offer dispassionate and careful philosophical arguments that run contrary to the spirit of the age. In the book’s final three chapters, Berquist deals with questions on the contemplative life and modern social philosophy, including Lockeanism and the common good (chap. 10),

natural rights and the sorts of rights the state should protect in its laws (chap. 11), and natural law and its alternatives, including social contract theory, utilitarianism, and Kantianism (chap. 12).

This book is an ideal text for the nonspecialist who is unfamiliar with natural law reasoning. For this reason, I am sure it will prompt in such readers many questions that go beyond the author's stated purpose: "to sketch or outline a way to the natural law from human dignity" (1). But I suspect that is precisely the sort of conversation with his readers that Professor Berquist sought to initiate in the writing of this book.

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David Walsh: *The Priority of the Person: Political, Philosophical, and Historical Discoveries*. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2020. Pp. xii, 357.)

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Gloom pervades Catholic political theory. In his recent encyclical *Fratelli tutti*, Pope Francis expresses concerns about young people abandoning democracy. Patrick Deneen thinks liberalism has failed. In this "postliberal" moment, *Commonweal* and *First Things* debate young integralists reviving old arguments that political power should be subordinated to church authority. Even Charles Taylor, long attuned to the upside of the secular age for Catholics, now warns liberal democracy is in deep trouble.

David Walsh remains optimistic, though. The present slough of despond is not a crisis of liberalism, he thinks, but a crisis of liberal self-confidence. Respect for persons still energizes liberal activism. For Walsh, human rights are truncated expressions of the infinite dignity of persons, a belief with a Christian source. Liberal democracy is the "most adequate political expression of Christianity," Walsh argues, because liberal democratic regimes reflect the transcendent worth of all persons (49). *The Priority of the Person* defends these variably secularized Christian aspirations on philosophical grounds.

The book's "burden" is to show that liberal democracy is not only viable, but also validated by modern philosophy's profound and obscure insights about persons (31). It makes a companion volume to Walsh's 2016 study *The Politics of the Person as the Politics of Being* (University of Notre Dame Press). Its