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Gerard V. Bradley

Notre Dame Law School, gerard.v.bradley.16@nd.edu

Robert George

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THE NEW NATURAL LAW THEORY: A REPLY TO JEAN PORTER

GERARD V. BRADLEY

ROBERT GEORGE

The theory of practical reasoning and morality proposed by Germain Grisez, and developed by him in frequent collaboration with John Finnis and Joseph Boyle, is the most formidable presentation of natural law theory in this century. Although work by Finnis and others has brought this "new natural law theory" (NNLT) to the attention of secular philosophers, the theory is of particular interest to Catholic moralists. This is because NNLT provides resources for a fresh defense of traditional moral norms, including those forbidding abortion, euthanasia, and other forms of "direct" killing, as well as sexual immoralities such as fornication, sodomy, and masturbation. In part, no doubt, because it provides such resources, Catholics who dissent from the Church's teaching of these norms have criticized NNLT. Catholic moralists of unassailable orthodoxy (such as the Thomist philosopher Ralph McInerny) have also challenged the NNLT. Their disagreements are essentially interpretative. Grisez and his collaborators locate themselves within the broad framework of the Thomistic tradition, and have advanced interpretations of Thomistic texts in support of key claims. Redoubtable Thomists have challenged those interpretations and, more globally, NNLT's Thomistic credentials.

Other philosophers, including some non-Catholic natural law theorists, question NNLT's status as a theory of *natural law*. Because NNLT's proponents hold that moral norms cannot be deduced or inferred purely from antecedent facts about human nature, these critics say it cannot be a theory of *natural law*. Because its proponents eschew a voluntaristic account of moral obligation (and so speak not of a "lawgiver" but of the claims of reason), and because they (particularly Finnis) are critical of much natural law theorizing about the positive law, NNLT is not, critics say, a theory of *natural law*.

Professor Jean Porter's recent appraisal of NNLT¹ avoids all these familiar grounds of criticism. She challenges "proportionalism" by

1. J. Porter, "Basic Goods and the Human Good in Recent Catholic Moral Theology" 47 *The Thomist* (1993), p. 27.

the same arguments she advances against Grisez and Finnis.² She sketches an alternate position, which she considers broadly Thomistic, but engages no interpretative issue. Porter apparently rejects the claim that practical principles (such as moral norms) cannot be deduced or inferred from purely factual premises, but her disagreement with Grisez and his collaborators on this point is a minor feature of her critique. Although there is evidence that she rejects at least some of the tradition's moral norms, we must assume that this follows from her criticisms of NNLT, and is not a basis for them.

I.

Professor Porter advances two leading objections to NNLT. One is that NNLT rests on claims of "self-evidence" which are unwarranted by any considerations offered by Grisez and Finnis. The claims are, she says, arbitrary and untrue. The other objection is that NNLT provides a highly unsatisfactory account of the moral life. It does so for two reasons. First, Grisez/Finnis "hypostatize" the basic goods. These goods are therefore unrelated, or related very tenuously, to human persons. Second and partly as a result, Grisez/Finnis saddle themselves with "wildly improbable" and "fantastic" substantive moral positions. So, NNLT cannot be taken seriously as the effective guide to upright human choice, in the here and now, that it purports to be.

We are prepared to defend the Grisez/Finnis position against these criticisms, and are confident that we could successfully do so. We do not here attempt that defense, however, because Professor Porter scarcely engages NNLT. We shall show that at every major point she objects not to its proponents' position, but to a serious misunderstanding of it. Our aim, then, is not, strictly speaking, to offer counterarguments. Our task is more basic. We simply identify some of Porter's larger mistakes in presenting NNLT. In so doing, we restate the Grisez/Finnis position and, incidentally, detail how Porter's critical appraisal so misses the mark that it simply fails to contribute to the vigorous debate about Grisez' project.

2. Without explanation, Porter addresses Grisez and Finnis only, even though most commentators regard Joseph Boyle's contributions as an essential component of the theory, including the restatement in the *American Journal of Jurisprudence* which, along with Finnis' *Natural Law and Natural Rights* and Grisez's *Way of the Law Jesus: Christian Moral Principles*, Porter identifies as her sources.

II.

Porter claims that Grisez and Finnis hold that there are “self-evident basic goods.” Her article opens [27] by saying that they “have not made a convincing case” for them. She repeatedly refers to identification of “self-evident basic goods”. [28, 29, 34, etc.] But Grisez and Finnis do *not* hold that there are “self-evident basic goods.” Grisez has never spoken that way. Finnis on one occasion did as a kind of shorthand [*Natural Law and Natural Right* 64], but Porter does not cite it. Grisez and Finnis hold instead that the first principles of practical reason which direct choice and action toward intelligible purposes which provide noninstrumental reasons for action (i.e. toward basic human goods) are self-evident. The first principles are of the type, “knowledge” or “life” or such and such basic good “is to be pursued, protected, promoted.”

Porter’s mistake stems partly from careless handling of the relevant texts. Consider, for example, her use of page 33 of Finnis’ *Natural Law and Natural Rights*. Her excerpt of it follows:

[The basic human goods] are not inferred from facts. They are not inferred from metaphysical propositions about human nature, or about the nature of good and evil, or about ‘the function of a human being,’ nor are they inferred from a teleological conception of nature, or any other conception of nature. They are not inferred or derived from anything. They are underived (though not innate). Principles of right and wrong, too, are derived from these first, pre-moral principles of practical reasonableness, and not from any facts, whether metaphysical or otherwise. [29]

The excerpt is accurate, save that what Porter places in brackets “[t]he basic human goods” substitutes for “they” in Finnis’ text. What are “they”? Here is the entire preceding sentence from *Natural Law and Natural Rights*: “On the contrary, Aquinas asserts as plainly as possible that the first principles of natural law, which specify the basic forms of good and evil and which can be adequately grasped by anyone of the age of reason (and not just by metaphysicians), are *per se nota* (self-evident) and indemonstrable” [footnote omitted]. Clearly, Finnis is saying in the passage excerpted by Porter that the first principles, *not* the basic goods they specify, are self-evident.

Confidence in Porter’s handling of texts is further shaken on the same page of her article. She identifies “[t]he first principle of practical reasoning (FPPR) as ‘Good is to be done and evil is to be avoided.’” But the relevant expression of FPPR (in thirty years of Grisez’s writings and in the works of all the other principal defenders of NNLT) is “The good is to be done and pursued; the bad is to

be avoided.” On this point proponents of NNLT follow Aquinas exactly. (See *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 94, a.2.) Porter attributes to Grisez the position that this “is similarly self-evident to anyone who has experienced any sort of desire”. [30-31] She cites *Way*, p. 178. But neither there nor anywhere else does Grisez (or Finnis) say such a thing. Grisez’s position is well summarized on p. 180 of *Way*: The FPPR “articulates the intrinsic, necessary relationship between human goods and appropriate actions bearing upon them.” [180] Porter’s attribution of an epistemology of “desire” is flatly inconsistent with the passage from NLNR which she herself cited as an explanation of what “self-evident” means (even if she mistook the subjects of the claim).

III.

Because the self-evident first principles are pivotal to NNLT, and because NNLT’s reliance upon self-evidence has attracted much criticism, it is especially important for any commentator to treat the relevant texts scrupulously. But Porter compounds the errors already noted. She claims [34] that “each” of what Grisez calls “modes of responsibility” are “equally self-evident and equally important.” But Grisez makes no such claim. The modes are not self-evident, and Grisez does not say they are. Each of the modes is derived from the First Principle of Morality, which states: “In voluntarily acting for the human goods and avoiding what is opposed to them, one ought to choose and otherwise will those and only those possibilities whose willing is compatible with a will towards integral human fulfillment.” Having misrepresented Grisez as holding that the modes are self-evident, Porter ignores the arguments for each of the modes that appears in Chapter 8 of *Way*. Finally, because the modes have normative force in different ways, “equally important” (whatever that might precisely mean) does not describe them.

Porter ascribes [36] to Grisez and Finnis this further claim: it is “self-evident that it is always irrational, and therefore immoral, *to act in such a way* as to destroy or directly impede an instance of one of these [basic] goods” [my emphasis]. But Grisez and Finnis never make such a claim. The claim which Porter’s mistaken expression most closely resembles is actually the eighth mode of responsibility, which differs in a fundamental respect. Where Porter has “act in such a way,” Grisez has “choose to.” Later on she will capitalize on this substitution. Moreover, Grisez and Finnis manifestly do not hold that it is irrational—much less self-evidently irrational—to choose to destroy, damage, or impede a basic human good. On the contrary

they recognize that people will often have a reason (provided by an opportunity to instantiate another basic good or another instance of the same basic good) for such a choice. Their position is that such a choice (though rationally grounded) will nevertheless be *unreasonable* (though by no means irrational) because one's reason for it will always be defeated by a conclusive reason (provided by the moral norm against it) not to make that choice.³

Porter provides this summary of>NNLT's method for identifying the basic goods. "[I]f we reflect upon the sorts of reasons that persons give for their actions, we will be led ineluctably to acknowledge the self-evident moral force of the basic goods towards which those reasons point." [35] But Grisez and Finnis do not use the term "self-evident moral force," and it is hard to imagine what Porter means by it. Grisez and Finnis instead hold that if one pushes back in questioning someone's rational purpose, one will come to reasons that are primary.

IV.

Porter fares no better in presenting what Grisez and Finnis mean by "self-evident" than she did in attempting to identify what they hold to be self-evident. She says that the eighth mode of responsibility (her version again, not theirs) is *not* self-evident "in the sense that there is some obvious absurdity or self-contradiction involved in their denial". [36-37] But Grisez and Finnis do not hold otherwise. It is clear from the very passage she excerpts from *Natural Law and Natural Rights* that "self-evident" does *not* mean analytically true. Grisez and Finnis mean by *per se nota* that the truth is unmediated by more basic insights. It is known by knowing the realities to which the terms refer.

This is but one instance among many where Porter attributes to Grisez and Finnis a concept of self-evidence foreign to their enterprise.

3. In what Porter herself acknowledges as the major restatement of their theory cited in the preceding footnote, Grisez, Boyle, and Finnis explicitly distinguish irrational acts from acts which, while rationally-grounded (i.e., for a reason), are nevertheless practically unreasonable (i.e., immoral). In his original presentation of the theory fifteen years ago in *Natural Law and Natural Rights*, Finnis did speak at one point of the violations of what he called "the requirements of practical reasonableness" (modes of responsibility) as "irrational" (using the term as synonymous with "unreasonable"). Porter does not, however, cite Finnis' book on this point, nor could she legitimately do so. Since its publication, Finnis has in numerous writings made abundantly clear his concurrence with the view held by Grisez, Boyle, William E. May, Patrick Lee, and the authors of the current article that immoral acts are not necessarily irrational.

She says [29] that “once we have some experience of the basic goods, have felt their attractive power, so to speak, then it becomes evident to us that these goods are desirable in and of themselves.” This suggests that experience of the basic goods—feeling their attractive power, “so to speak”—makes it evident that they are desirable. She is here distorting the Grisez/Finnis story (which is basically the same as Aquinas’), about natural inclinations as bases for insight into first practical principles. In doing that, she mistakenly implies that the desires which correspond to the goods precede insight into them. They actually hold that the desires, which are volitions, specified by the basic human goods *presuppose* insight into them.

Porter, but not Grisez and Finnis, seems to assume something like the empiricist idea that desires are basic. That collapses the distinction between reason and emotion as motives for action. Keeping these different types of motivation analytically distinct is, to put it mildly, central to NNLT and any other cognitivist account of ethics. Porter unfortunately capitalizes upon her misattribution. She describes basic goods as categories of “what we desire” [41] and then criticizes Grisez/Finnis for arbitrarily excluding, in Porter’s words, “one obvious candidate for what is per se desirable . . . namely, physical pleasure.” But they do no such thing. Physical pleasure is not among the basic goods, because it does not provide an ultimate, intelligible *reason* for action. Where pleasure moves people to act it does so not by appealing to their practical intellectual grasp of a good to be realized, but rather by appealing to some sentient aspect of themselves. This does not mean that pleasure is intrinsically evil; it is only to say that pleasure is not a basic good—it does not provide an ultimate *reason* for acting.

Porter compounds *this* mistake. She speculates [42] about Grisez’s and Finnis’ failure to see physical pleasure in its proper relation to practical reasoning. Though now aimed at an illusory target, her reference in this diagnostic regard to Kant is particularly unfortunate. Grisez and Finnis owe their view of the relationship between reason and emotion almost entirely to Thomas, and not at all to Kant, whose notion of practical reason excludes anything like principles which direct choice and action toward basic human goods. Though Grisez and Finnis insist on analytically distinguishing reasons for action from emotional motives, they recognize their dynamic unity in human action. Here, too, they follow Thomas.

V.

Porter introduces her second main line of criticism by wondering about the “ontological/logical status” of the basic goods. Grisez and

Finnis, she contends, “tend to speak” as if the goods have an “independent existence, distinct from the individuals and states of affairs to which they are somehow tethered.” [37] They speak of “attacking an instance of the basic good of life” rather than of “harming someone by killing him.” [37-38] Porter characterizes—and criticizes—this as the “hypostatization” of the basic goods. [37]

Porter charges Grisez and Finnis with holding the view that “morality is not concerned with human life and nature as they exist here and now.” [31] But this is a caricature. The kernel of truth in her claim is this: Grisez/Finnis hold that moral truths bear upon what *is to be* done, and direct choice towards the goods that can be realized in human action. Practical reasoning is indeed powerless to alter the past, and is interested in what people *make* of the present through their choices.

Porter seems to suppose that this robs>NNLT of ontological grounding. She advocates as an alternative to>NNLT a moral theory grounded in “philosophical and theological anthropology.” The trouble with this is that (as Aquinas consistently held) one knows natures from their capacities, the capacities from acts, and the acts from their objects. So, if one is going to have any knowledge of specifically human nature, one must understand the objects of specifically human acts. Now, the objects of action are proposals which can be adopted by free choices, excluding one or more alternatives which could have been chosen. Such choices terminate deliberation, and deliberation is practical reasoning bearing on alternatives available for choice. So, to understand human nature, one must understand possible *reasons* for making choices. And, if some reasons are derivative, one will understand human nature only by understanding those reasons’ underived principles—the self-evident truths which refer to the basic human goods.

Porter also seems to think>NNLT’s acceptance of the is/ought distinction clears the ontological ground out from under Grisez/Finnis. She correctly reports that Grisez and Finnis accept the “familiar” argument that one cannot derive the moral “ought” from factual premises alone. [30-31] She does not pause to gainsay them here⁴ save to cite a few pages from MacIntyre’s *After Virtue*. But because Porter seems sympathetic to MacIntyre’s idea, which he takes to be Aristotle’s view that *man* is a functional concept, we note briefly that MacIntyre’s examples (and Porter’s by incorporation)—the watch and farmer— show only that some *evaluative* conclusions

4. Though her guiding concept of “integral human good” seems closer to MacIntyre than to Grisez.

may be entailed by factual premises. Grisez/Finnis do not deny that one can get nonmoral evaluative propositions from theoretical truths. But that is not to say that factual premises by themselves can entail moral conclusions, and they *do* deny *that*. In any event, it seems that MacIntyre's functional interpretation of the concept of man is *either* a covert appeal to basic human goods which explain the differentiation of roles (providers, teachers, child nurturers) that in fact turn up in every human society, *or* leads to an untenable relativism.

Porter says [30] that Grisez/Finnis insist on the distinction between speculative and practical reason *because* they accept the argument that no moral conclusions can be drawn from purely factual premises. There is no ground in their work for the "because" here. They insist on the distinction because without it morality would be reduced to nature and such reductionism is bad metaphysics which blocks understanding of morality. In particular, it is at odds with the truth that free choice is the principle of the *existence* of specifically moral realities—proper human acts, a communion of persons, and so on. They then *defend* the irreducibility of morality to nature by pointing to the logical irreducibility of moral ought to theoretical is.

Throughout the "hypostatization" discussion Porter mishandles the texts. In the same footnote (14) where she charges "hypostatization" of the basic goods, she quotes Grisez, *Way*, 122: "Basic human goods are thus greater than the particular things people do to participate in them." The quotation is accurate, but the context shows that she has distorted its meaning by asserting that it supports her "hypostatization" charge. In context, the quoted passage tends to *disprove* her charge. Grisez is talking there about the role basic goods play in the well-being of persons. He *criticizes* the view that they are *extrinsic* to the person. Basic human goods must instead be considered aspects of what one might call human full being. They are sought for themselves in the sense that they are judged to be humanly fulfilling. [*Way*, 122] Grisez envisions basic goods as shaping one's character by defining a commitment to, for example, peace and harmony, that transcends any particular episode of conflict resolutions. By the same token, the character of an upright physician, temporarily bereft of patients, is still shaped by his commitment to the goods of life and health.

Porter's second example of hypostatization misfires as well. She quotes a passage from the Grisez, Finnis, Boyle, May defense of the teaching of *Humanae Vitae*.⁵ That quotation establishes that there is

5. "Every Marital Act Ought to Be Open to New Life: Toward a Clearer Understanding," *52 Thomist* (1988), pp. 369-90.

at least this fundamental *difference* between homicide and contraception—the latter does not unjustly deprive someone of life because there is no existing person who is harmed in the basic good of life by the contraceptive act. But there is, the quotation makes clear, an essential similarity: each is a contralife act proceeding from and shaping a nonrationally-grounded contralife will. Porter uses the excerpt to support this proposition: Grisez and Finnis hold “the fantastic position that there is *no essential difference*” between the will of the murderer and the contraceptor. [38] That *is* fantastic. Neither Grisez nor Finnis holds it, as the footnote makes abundantly clear.

Porter may well consider the Grisez/Finnis defense of *Humanae Vitae* fantastic, but, if so, she must provide reasons for her judgment, or she is just begging the question. It seems from her discussion of “hypostatization” that absent “harm” “to another person,” it is “fantastic,” or at least ethereal or platonic, to condemn actions as immoral. Respectable moral theorists have held to some sort of “harm to others” test for morality, and Porter may wish to join their company.

Grisez and Finnis provide an alternative conception. They treat moral norms as guides for the rectification of the human will, the will of a person choosing what is to be done. The basic goods have an ethereal being, so to speak, only to the extent one thinks human will, choice, and character are ethereal.

For Grisez and Finnis, we can choose *immorally* without harming (in any noticeable way) anyone else. How so? Consider the daydreaming red-blooded male, fantasizing sexual relations with some movie star, whom he has never—and never will—meet. Our excited male might next imagine his “perfect ten” female, who is not *any* real person at all. This overexcited fellow has integrated his will around an immoral choice and so determined his character. He is, morally speaking, a fornicator, though no *act* of sexual intercourse has taken place, much less has any harm been done to anyone else.

Denial of the position held by Grisez and Finnis (and many others) entails that the professor who fantasizes intercourse with all his students, and who would proposition them all but for fear of punishment for harassment, stands outside the realm of morality. How would Porter, for instance, explain traditional condemnations of “victimless” sexual immoralities like masturbation? Consider another example. A couple uses a method of birth regulation which they know to be sometimes abortifacient, intending its effectiveness in this and other ways. In doing so, they will to kill newly conceived

human beings, even if, in their case, the method always happens to prevent conception.

In all these examples, *either* the choices are morally insignificant, *or* morally significant choices do not necessarily depend upon the concreteness Porter considers essential to avoid “fantastic” claims. Porter might well regard the condemnations as unjustified, but *that* they were widely condemned for millennia, and are still considered grave matters by the Church, suggests they are hardly “fantastic.”

If all this seems too ethereal to Porter, at least Grisez and Finnis may claim the company of an ancient Palestinian teacher who said, “I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

VI.

There are many other mistakes in Porter’s presentation of NNLT. These include but are not limited to: (1) referring twice [28, 29] to a pseudoproblem which has nothing to do with their theory: how to identify the “true” goods from among the seeming goods for which persons act. What she calls their answer is certainly not, in their minds, an answer to the question she poses; (2) attributing to Grisez and Finnis [34] the view that a “rational person will never act directly” against a basic good. But, if so, actions attacking basic goods would be irrational: they would not proceed from reasons at all. Grisez and Finnis hold that it is immoral (not that it is irrational) to choose to act directly against a basic human good. They recognize that one may have a *reason* so to choose, but argue that such a reason will be defeated by the moral norm which gives one a conclusive reason to respect every basic human good in every chosen action; (3) attributing [35] to Finnis a position expounded in *Natural Law and Natural Rights* which instead, is Finnis’ summary of Thomas (in reply to an objection by H.L.A. Hart); (4) saying [36] that Grisez and Finnis hold that the basic goods are “desirable in all circumstances.” On p. 28 she says they hold “that the (true) good . . . must be understood as that which is desirable, not only for this or that individual or in these special circumstances, but desirable *per se*, for every individual and in all situations.” They say no such thing. Grisez and Finnis hold that they will be must always be open to, and that one may never attack, basic goods. But she attributes to them the far different—and false—positions that (a) people always have open to them as options actions specified by each and every good, and (b) that persons always find all these options emotionally appealing, and so are interested in them; (5) implying that Grisez

and Finnis hold that truly basic goods “never function as instrumental goods.” [41] Their position is, in fact, precisely the contrary; (6) claiming [p. 38-39] that Grisez and Finnis appeal to basic goods as a device to block consequentialist arguments without answering them. This is, frankly, baffling. Porter acknowledges [45 n. 25] that Grisez uses the incommensurability argument against consequentialism, and she seems to regard it as telling.

VII.

With so many confusions in the presentation of NNLT, it is no wonder that what Porter apparently intends as the decisive refutations—a series of illustrations—are well off the mark. The botched job on “no essential difference” between homicide and contraception is one example. *That* one simply ignored the relevant texts. The next one ignores the centrally important distinction—drawn often (and carefully defended) by Grisez and Finnis but repeatedly effaced by Porter—between intention and side effect. Grisez and Finnis hold that no one may uprightly *choose* to destroy a basic good. She says, wrongly, that they hold that no one may “act in such a way” as to harm a basic good.

Porter imagines a bomb threat at the Super Bowl. “Can the police stop the game and evacuate the stadium?” She imagines their response:

If we apply the logic of the Grisez/Finnis analysis of morality, they cannot. The football game in progress is an instantiation of the basic good of a skilled performance, and as such, it cannot be destroyed or impeded, even to avert a threat to the basic good of life. I am not saying that Grisez and Finnis would draw this conclusion, but given their insistence that no instance of a basic good can be sacrificed, even to preserve another instance of a basic good, it is difficult to see how they could avoid it. [39]

In fact, it is easy to see how they would “avoid it.” True, the police have *a* reason not to interfere: one may not *choose* to destroy, impede or impair a skillful performance as such. But one may—here, *should*—choose to clear the stadium to protect people’s lives by moving them out of harm’s way. Their doing so incidentally disrupts play of the game, but that is no part of the proposal they adopt by choice. One can distinguish what is chosen—that which, whether as means or end, is part of one’s plan adopted by choice and thus integrated into one’s will—from what is accepted as side effect by asking: if presented an option in which the threat to life could be averted *without* the effect of halting play, where presented, would I choose it?

Porter offers a hypothetical reconstruction of the Grisez/Finnis position [39-40] to save them from the “wildly improbable” Super Bowl debacle. The reconstructed position scarcely resembles their view, but then Porter offers two counter examples to rebut it. One founders on her confusion between choosing for a basic good and thereby “acting in such a way” to permit harm to another. Porter offers the example of a terminally ill patient on the verge of a prolonged coma who decides against being “kept alive artificially.” [40] Porter notes “nothing obviously irrational” in that response, even if there is no prospect of pain or of survivors who would suffer from seeing a loved one in a comatose state.

Porter supposes this response to be contrary to the Grisez/Finnis claim that life is always a reason for action. Life *is* always a reason for action. So the patient has a reason to say “yes.” But he may well have reasons to say “no,” besides those mentioned by Porter. The patient may, for example, simply prefer that available resources be used on somebody else. There may be an emotional motive in the picture. Envisioning oneself in a comatose state, equipment chugging away, is hardly edifying. Grisez and Finnis would say there is no single uniquely correct answer, as far as the problem is described. One acts immorally if emotional revulsion causes one to *choose* death over life. But one could “act in such a way” that one died by choosing that the resources benefit another—and thus serve the good of their life or health—accepting as a side effect (perhaps even emotionally welcome side effect) one’s own death. Here, one’s death, though foreseeable, is not chosen as end or means. It is in no sense (unless one is merely deceiving oneself) the *object* of one’s choice, or the reason for one’s action.

The other example [40] puts you in the supermarket checkout with lots of time and nothing to do. A tabloid headline catches your eye: “Princess Di Is Having Affair With Michael Jackson!” You have no apparent reason *not* to read it. “Does it follow that you have a rationally compelling motive to act in order to obtain this bit of knowledge?” Porter says not. There is nothing “patently irrational” in so responding.

Indeed! Nothing in NNLT suggests otherwise. Porter suggests that according to Grisez and Finnis one is somehow obliged to *act* on every possible instantiation of each basic good, save when some (more compelling?) reason prevents it. Grisez and Finnis manifestly do *not* hold that view. They hold that besides a reason for action—a “bit of knowledge”—there must be some emotional motivation in any human action. The hypothetical supposes there is none, and the

action will simply *not* follow. That one has a reason for action is *not* a requirement that the action be performed.

CONCLUSION

Porter's critique of NNLT distorts the position of its principal exponents to the point of caricature. Where she supplies cogent reasons for rejecting certain positions, these are invariably positions that Grisez, Finnis, and other defenders of NNLT do not hold. Often, they are positions that these thinkers explicitly reject.

