



Research Article

Anthropological Argument for a Personal and Loving God

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ABSTRACT

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SUBJECT & OBJECTIVES: Using an anthropological approach in the philosophy of religion, this study explores whether divine personal attributes and love can be inferred from the existential structure of the human being. It asks how natural human desires for truth, goodness, and happiness can lead to the necessity of a personal and loving God, and aims to address the limitations of purely cosmological arguments in moving from a "necessary being" to a "personal God".

METHOD & FINDING: Using an analytical–argumentative method grounded in philosophical anthropology, the study analyzes concepts such as personhood, human dignity, and natural desires for truth, goodness, and happiness. Relying on the principle that no natural desire is in vain, it argues that these inclinations point to a corresponding ultimate end. The findings suggest that human happiness is only fully realized in a reciprocal relationship based on knowledge and love; therefore, the ultimate end must be an aware, free, and love-capable being.

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CONCLUSION: Human intrinsic desires for truth, goodness, and happiness imply not only an absolute end but also divine personality and love. A personal and loving God is thus presented as the most coherent explanation for human dignity and ultimate fulfillment, bridging the gap between the concept of a "necessary being" and that of a "personal and beloved God".



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Introduction

The question of whether the existence of God can be established from the structure and experience of human existence has occupied an important place in the philosophy of religion. Human beings are characterized not only by biological existence but also by rationality, freedom, moral awareness, and the capacity to seek truth, goodness, and happiness. These dimensions of human existence have provided a basis for philosophical approaches that begin not from the external world or from purely abstract metaphysical concepts, but from the human person and the fundamental orientations embedded in human nature. In this context, philosophical anthropology can provide a distinctive framework for examining whether the structure of human existence points beyond itself toward an ultimate end.

Classical arguments for the existence of God, particularly cosmological and ontological arguments, have primarily sought to establish God as a first cause, necessary being, or ultimate ground of reality. Although such arguments may provide a basis for affirming an ultimate reality, an important philosophical question remains concerning the transition from a necessary or ultimate being to a personal God who possesses knowledge, will, and the capacity for a meaningful relationship with human

beings. The present study addresses this issue by shifting the point of departure from the structure of the external world to the existential structure of the human person.

The central premise of this study is that human beings possess fundamental natural desires directed toward truth, goodness, and complete happiness. These desires are understood not as merely contingent psychological preferences or culturally acquired inclinations, but as orientations rooted in the rational and volitional structure of the human person. If such natural desires are genuinely constitutive of human nature, the question arises whether they have a corresponding ultimate object capable of fulfilling them. The principle that nature does not act in vain provides the principal teleological basis for examining this question. On this basis, the study investigates whether the ultimate fulfillment of these desires requires not merely an absolute or necessary reality, but an ultimate end possessing personal attributes.

The distinctive aim of the present research is therefore to examine whether an anthropological argument based on natural human desires can contribute to establishing the personality and love of God. More specifically, it explores whether the desire for truth, goodness, and happiness, when considered in relation

to human dignity and the relational structure of personhood, can provide a rational basis for moving from the necessity of an ultimate end to the necessity of a personal and loving God. In this respect, the study seeks to complement classical theistic arguments rather than simply replace them.

Accordingly, the main research question is: How can the analysis of natural human desires for truth, goodness, and happiness provide a basis for establishing the necessity of a personal God capable of love and relational concern for human beings? To address this question, the study employs an analytical–argumentative method within the framework of philosophical anthropology and philosophy of religion. It first clarifies the relevant concepts and theoretical foundations, including personhood, human dignity, natural desire, happiness, personal God, and divine love. It then examines the teleological principle underlying the non-vacuity of natural desires and analyzes the relationship between these desires and the ultimate end of human existence. Finally, it considers whether the fulfillment of human personhood and beatitude requires an ultimate end characterized by consciousness, will, personality, and love.

The significance of the argument lies particularly in its attempt to address the transition from the

concept of a “Necessary Being” to that of a “personal and loving God.” By grounding this transition in the existential structure of the human person and in the natural orientation toward truth, goodness, and happiness, the study seeks to develop an anthropological argument for divine personality and love.

Conceptual Framework

1. Personhood and Human Dignity

In the philosophical tradition, a person is generally understood as a being endowed with self-awareness, rationality, free will, and moral responsibility. Human beings are therefore more than biological organisms or individual members of a natural species; they possess personhood, which constitutes the basis of their unique moral and metaphysical status. Human dignity arises from this personal status rather than merely from biological existence. It refers to the intrinsic and unconditional worth possessed by every person in virtue of being a rational and free subject, capable of self-determination, moral judgment, and interpersonal communion. Accordingly, dignity is not an acquired social value or a contingent legal status, but an inherent characteristic of personhood itself. Because of this intrinsic worth, every person must always be regarded as an end in himself or herself and never merely as a means to the ends of others.

This understanding of dignity is deeply rooted in both the Kantian conception of persons as ends in themselves and the natural-law tradition represented by thinkers such as Jacques Maritain, who grounds human dignity in the ontological reality of the human person rather than in social recognition or utility (Mohammadrezaei, 2010, p. 135; Maritain, 1943, pp. 5–7).

Within this framework, reason, freedom, and love constitute the three principal dimensions of human personhood. Reason naturally seeks truth, the will is oriented toward the good, and the capacity for love seeks reciprocal and meaningful communion with another person. Consequently, any adequate account of the ultimate end of the human being must provide fulfillment for these three constitutive dimensions of personhood.

2. Human Nature

In the tradition of divine religions and in Islamic philosophy, the human being is not regarded as an independent or self-subsisting entity; rather, his existential reality is defined through his relation and dependence on God. From this perspective, the human being is created by the Almighty God and receives his existence, continuation, and perfections from Him. Therefore, all cognitive, moral, and existential capacities of the human being are interpreted in light of his relation to

the source of being (Islaminasab & Moridian, 2023, p. 69).

According to this view, the human being possesses potentials and capacities that prepare him for the perception of truth, inclination toward goodness, and pursuit of happiness. These capacities are not merely biological or psychological features; rather, they are rooted in the existential structure of the human being and arise from his relation to the transcendent source. The deeper this existential relation becomes, the greater the actualization of these capacities.

Although this research, in its argumentative phase, examines the existence of God through the analysis of natural human desires, this understanding of the human being forms one of the key foundations of religious anthropology and Islamic philosophy, showing that human tendencies toward truth, goodness, and happiness are understood within a teleological ontology.

3. Natural and Intrinsic Desire

A natural desire refers to an inclination rooted in the essence and existential structure of the human being and, unlike acquired desires, is not dependent on culture, education, or specific historical conditions (Finnis, 2011, p.34).

Within the Aristotelian–Thomistic tradition, a fundamental distinction is drawn between natural inclinations (or

natural appetites, *appetitus naturalis*), which arise from the very nature of a being and are directed toward its proper perfection, and elicited or acquired desires (*appetitus elicitus*), which arise through cognition, deliberation, habit, education, or particular life circumstances (Aristotle, 1986, II.4; Aquinas, 1947, I, q. 80, a. 1; I–II, q. 10, a. 1). Natural desires are therefore universal and grounded in the ontological constitution of the human person, whereas acquired desires vary according to individual experience, culture, and historical conditions.

This study is concerned exclusively with natural desires because only such desires belong to human nature as such and can therefore serve as a reliable basis for an anthropological argument concerning the ultimate end of human beings.

Following this framework, the present study focuses on three fundamental natural desires:

1. The desire for absolute truth
2. The desire for absolute goodness
3. The desire for complete happiness

These desires are not merely psychological tendencies or culturally conditioned preferences. Rather, they arise from the rational and volitional nature of the human person and express the intrinsic orientation of human faculties toward their proper fulfillment. Consequently, an analysis of these natural desires provides a

philosophical pathway for understanding the ultimate end of the human being.

4. Happiness

In this study, happiness does not mean temporary satisfaction or fleeting pleasure; rather, it refers to the ultimate perfection and full flourishing of human personhood. Happiness is realized when the fundamental faculties of the human being—reason, will, and love—reach their ultimate fulfillment. From this perspective, happiness requires the complete knowledge of truth, attainment of absolute goodness, and the realization of a meaningful existential relationship with the ultimate end.

This conception of happiness is rooted in the Aristotelian–Thomistic tradition, in which happiness (*eudaimonia* or *beatitudo*) is understood not as a transient psychological state or subjective feeling of satisfaction, but as the objective perfection and complete flourishing of the human person through the full actualization of his rational nature and ultimate end (Aristotle, 1999, I.7, 1097b22–1098a20; Aquinas, 1947, I–II, q. 3, aa. 2–8; q. 5, aa. 3–5).

5. Personal God

Personal God refers to a being endowed with knowledge, will, self-awareness, intention, and the ability to establish

relationships with His creatures. Unlike impersonal forces or abstract principles, a personal God is capable of knowing, loving, and responding (Page, 2019, pp. 297–317).

However, divine personhood does not imply anthropomorphism. The personal God is not subject to human physical or psychological limitations. Rather, personhood in God exists in an infinite and perfect mode. Therefore, attributing personhood to God refers to perfections such as awareness, will, and love, not to human physical or emotional limitations (Brümmer, 2005; Feser, 2017; Lebens, 2021).

6. Divine Love

Divine love in this study is understood as the will for the good and perfection of creatures and the guidance of them toward the realization of their ultimate end. If God has placed within human beings the desire for happiness and perfection, the realizability of this desire implies a form of divine attention and care. Therefore, divine love is not a human emotion but an existential perfection and relational reality through which God leads human beings toward their ultimate fulfillment (Wessling, 2020).

7. The Principle of Teleology and the Non-Vacuity of Natural Desires

According to this principle, no natural capacity or innate inclination in the order of existence is futile or lacks a real object.

Just as the faculty of sight corresponds to the visible and the faculty of hearing corresponds to the audible, so too human natural desires must have a real and corresponding object.

This principle is not merely an intuitive assumption, but is grounded in a broader metaphysical framework within the Aristotelian–Thomistic tradition. First, according to the principle of act and potency, every natural potency is ordered toward its proper act; otherwise, it would remain unintelligible as a determinate capacity rather than a mere indeterminate possibility (Aquinas, 1947, I, q. 77, a. 1). Second, the classical axiom *natura nihil facit frustra* (“nature does nothing in vain”) implies that natural faculties are intrinsically directed toward ends that render them intelligible as parts of an ordered whole (Aquinas, 1956, III, ch. 97). Third, the explanatory success of teleological accounts in describing biological and rational structures suggests that purposiveness is not merely heuristic but reflects a real feature of natural order.

From these premises it follows that natural inclinations are not arbitrary psychological phenomena but are structurally ordered toward real objects of fulfillment. If a natural inclination systematically lacked any possible realization or corresponding object, this would generate a metaphysical tension within the unity

and intelligibility of nature as an ordered system.

Based on this framework, if the fundamental human desires for absolute truth, absolute goodness, and complete happiness had no real corresponding object, the teleological structure of human existence would be called into question. Therefore, the existence of these desires may carry an ontological implication for the existence of an ultimate goal corresponding to them. The theoretical framework of this article is built upon this principle.

Literature Review

The issue of inferring the existence of God from human experience and the existential structure of the human being has a long history in philosophy and theology. One of the earliest formulations of this idea can be found in the works of Thomas Aquinas. By introducing the notion of the natural desire for the vision of God, he argued that the human intellect is naturally directed toward the knowledge of the ultimate cause and absolute truth, and that this desire finds its rest only in the knowledge of God (Aquinas, 1947, I-II, q. 3, a. 8; 1956, III, chs. 25–26).

In the modern period, Immanuel Kant, through his moral argument, posited the existence of God as a condition for the possibility of the highest good and the harmony between virtue and happiness.

Although Kant employs the human aspiration for happiness, his argument remains primarily within the framework of practical reason and pays less attention to an ontological analysis of human natural desires (Kant, 1997, pp. 239–247).

In contemporary philosophy of religion, thinkers such as Jacques Maritain, John Finnis, and Bernard Lonergan have emphasized the role of the rational structure of the human being in orienting it toward absolute truth and goodness (Maritain, 1959; Finnis, 2011; Lonergan, 1972). Lonergan, in particular, speaks of an "unrestricted desire to know," which drives the human being toward infinite truth (Lonergan, 1972, pp. 13–20). These perspectives have provided a fertile ground for formulating anthropological arguments for the existence of God.

In contrast, thinkers such as Feuerbach and Freud have attempted to reduce human religious inclination to psychological or social factors. According to them, God is nothing but a projection of human desires, needs, and ideals (Feuerbach, 1967, pp. 29–35; Freud, 1961, pp. 21–38). These reductionist approaches represent one of the most significant theoretical challenges to anthropological arguments.

In Persian-language scholarship, numerous studies have been conducted on Kant's moral argument, human dignity, the natural desire for God, and

the concept of the personal God. However, most of these works have either focused on proving the existence of God in general or have examined divine attributes independently. Few studies have attempted to infer, through the analysis of human natural desires, not only the existence of God but also the attributes of divine personality and love.

Therefore, the innovation of the present study lies in its attempt to integrate philosophical anthropology, the concept of human dignity, and the principle of the non-vacuity of intrinsic desires, thereby explaining the transition from the concept of a “necessary being” to a “personal and loving God,” and partially addressing a gap in contemporary philosophy of religion literature.

Research Method

This study is fundamental in terms of its objective and analytical–argumentative in terms of its method, and it falls within the domains of philosophy of religion and philosophical anthropology. The data of the research have been collected through library-based methods and by examining philosophical and theological sources as well as works related to philosophy of religion.

In the first stage, the fundamental concepts of the research—namely personhood, human dignity, natural desires, the personal God, and divine

love—were analyzed and clarified through conceptual analysis. In the second stage, the theoretical foundations of the study, particularly the principle of teleology in nature and the rule of the “non-vacuity of natural desires,” were subjected to philosophical analysis. In the third stage, using deductive reasoning and ontological analysis, the relationship between human natural desires and the necessity of an ultimate goal was examined. Finally, through an analysis of the nature of happiness and human dignity, the attributes of personhood and divine love were inferred as necessary characteristics of the ultimate end.

The argumentative method of this paper is based on a movement from inner experience and the existential structure of the human being toward a metaphysical account of his ultimate end. For this reason, the present research belongs to the category of anthropological arguments in philosophy of religion and seeks to derive conclusions about divine attributes from reflections on the nature of the human being.

1. Theoretical Foundations: Human Beings, Natural Desires, and Ultimate Perfection

1.1. Clarification and Status of the “Personal God”

In contemporary philosophy of religion, a *Personal God* refers to a form of

theism that conceives of God not merely as a first cause or a purely necessary being (as in classical theism), but as a transcendent *Person*. This notion emerged in response to views that characterize God as an impersonal force, an anonymous absolute, or a purely metaphysical principle devoid of intellect, will, or consciousness. From a theological standpoint, personhood is itself regarded as a perfection of being; and since God is conceived as the fullness of all perfections, He must therefore possess personhood in its highest and most eminent degree. Accordingly, a personal God is a being endowed with knowledge, self-awareness, intentionality, beliefs, and agency; He is capable of action and of causal engagement with the world (Peterson, 1997, p. 107).

The key to understanding the notion of a personal God lies in the distinction between *being an individual* and *being a person*. The personal God is one who possesses the defining features of personhood—especially mentality and intentional action—in an infinite and perfect mode. He not only knows, but wills; He not only bestows existence, but does so according to purpose, intention, and an intelligible plan of creation. These mental attributes include the capacity for relationality, love, compassion, attentiveness to prayer, and responsiveness to supplication. Such characteristics

make God a being with whom a living and existential relationship is possible—arguably the most decisive distinction between the personal God and the God of purely philosophical abstraction, who is grasped solely by reason (McGrath, 2011, pp. 299–300).

A crucial distinction between the personal God and an anthropomorphic conception of God lies in the purification of divine attributes from all limitations and imperfections. Anthropomorphism is a philosophical error that consists in attributing human bodily properties or finite emotional states to God—such as having physical hands or eyes, possessing a body, or experiencing emotions such as regret or fatigue. By contrast, defenders of the personal God explicitly affirm that God is an *incorporeal person*: a pure and infinite spirit devoid of parts, dimensions, or any form of composition. Accordingly, God is a pure and simple personality, free from all deficiency, while possessing personal perfections—such as will and knowledge—in their highest and most perfect form. This approach is especially consistent with the principle of *tanzīh* (divine transcendence) in Islamic and classical Christian thought, and accords fully with the Qur’anic declaration: “*Nothing is like Him*” (Quran, 42:11).

1.2. Philosophical Anthropology: The Concept of Person, Dignity, and Existential Constituents

At the heart of the anthropological argument lies the distinction between “the human being as a person” and the human being merely as an “individual” or a “biological entity.” In philosophy, particularly within metaphysical and phenomenological traditions, a *person* is defined as a being endowed with self-consciousness, rationality, free will, and moral capacity. These features constitute the core of spiritual life and the intrinsic dignity of the person.

Human dignity refers to the intrinsic worth and moral status of each individual, according to which the human being is not merely a means to the ends of others, but is itself an end in its own right (Mohammadrezaei, 2010, pp. 152–158). This understanding of human dignity was classically formulated by Immanuel Kant in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, where he argues that every rational being must always be treated as an end in itself and never merely as a means (Kant, 1996, pp. 37–38). The essential constituents of dignity include reason, free will, and the capacity for love.

Reason, understood as the faculty of grasping universal concepts and making judgments, enables the human being to pursue truth. Free will allows individuals to choose between good

and evil and to determine their own moral destiny. Finally, the capacity for love refers to the ability to establish deep and reciprocal relationships with others, enabling the human being to transcend self-centered existence and to endow interpersonal relations with meaning. These constitutive elements shape the innate and ultimate orientations of the human person and require appropriate perfection and fulfillment in order for human dignity to be fully realized (Maritain, 1943, pp. 5–6).

1.3. Analysis of the Three Natural Desires

Classical philosophical and theological traditions analyze the intrinsic tendencies of the human being in terms of three fundamental and natural desires, which are grounded in the faculties of intellect and will. These desires include the desire for truth, the desire for goodness, and the desire for happiness (beatitude). The desire for truth refers to the intellect's innate orientation toward knowing ultimate causes and attaining a comprehensive understanding of reality. Just as the eye is naturally ordered toward seeing, the intellect is naturally directed toward grasping truth, and this orientation remains unfulfilled until it attains complete and adequate knowledge. In this regard, Aquinas maintains that the human intellect naturally desires knowledge of the first causes and ultimately finds its fulfillment only in

the knowledge of the First Truth, namely God (Aquinas, 1947, I–II, q. 3, a. 8; 1956, III, ch. 25).

The second desire is the desire for goodness, which corresponds to the will's natural inclination toward absolute good and moral perfection. The human will cannot be satisfied with finite and relative goods, since it is always capable of conceiving a greater good. This intrinsic dynamism implies that its ultimate telos cannot be anything less than infinite goodness. This indicates that the human being is naturally oriented toward the realization of the absolute good, a tendency deeply embedded in its existential structure.

Finally, the desire for happiness or beatitude refers to the human being's ultimate orientation toward complete and enduring fulfillment. This desire transcends transient pleasures and seeks an ultimate good with which it can be fully united, and which constitutes the end of human existence. In fact, these desires are not merely acquired or superficial inclinations, but rather intrinsic and necessary features of human nature as a personal being, revealing the depth and complexity of the human spirit in its quest for meaning and ultimate purpose in life (Finnis, 2011, pp. 100–125).

1.4. The Lawfulness of Nature and the Non-Vacuity of Natural Desires

The final argument in this section rests upon the metaphysical principle of teleology and a classical philosophical rule: “*nature does not produce any natural desire in vain.*” This principle, rooted in Aristotelian philosophy and employed within Thomistic theology, asserts that every necessary and intrinsic inclination in natural beings must correspond to a proper end and an adequate object for its fulfillment (Aquinas, 1956, p. 98). Although human beings may individually fail to realize these desires, the very structure of such desires—namely, the intellect's inclination toward truth and the will's orientation toward the good—cannot be rendered ultimately futile within the overall structure of reality.

If the fundamental internal desires of the person (truth, goodness, and happiness) were to remain ultimately unfulfilled due to the absence of a corresponding and absolute end, then:

1. The lawfulness and teleological structure of reality would be undermined;
2. Human dignity—defined precisely in terms of these ultimate capacities—would remain incoherent or incomplete.

Accordingly, the presence of these natural desires in the depths of the human heart points toward a final

cause and ultimate end capable of satisfying these necessary tendencies.

2. Ontological-Anthropological

Argument: From Natural Desire to a Personal God

This section addresses the core of the article's argument and demonstrates that the ultimate end capable of fulfilling the threefold human desire (truth, goodness, and happiness) must necessarily possess the attributes of personhood and love.

2.1. The Necessity of the Ultimate Object: The Absolute Character of Human Desires

As established in the preceding section, the natural human desires for truth, goodness, and happiness are tendencies that can only be satisfied by an absolute fulfillment.

- **Absolute Truth:** The human intellect is not satisfied with any relative or contingent truth, since it always remains capable of questioning beyond it. The perfection of intellect therefore lies in the knowledge of the ultimate cause and absolute being, which is itself the source of all truth (cf. Maritain, 1959).
- **Absolute Goodness and Happiness:** The human will is not fixed upon any finite good, since it is capable of recognizing its limitations and desiring a greater good. Happiness, understood as the complete

fulfillment of the will, necessarily entails union with infinite goodness (Pieper, 1965, p. 32).

- **Conclusion:** The ultimate end capable of fulfilling these desires must transcend all material, temporal, and contingent realities; it must therefore be an absolute being and ultimate cause. At this stage, the argument establishes only the necessity of a Necessary Being. The subsequent step is to determine the qualitative attributes of this Necessary Being.

2.2. Establishing the Personality of God through the Desire for Beatitude and Human Dignity

The pivotal moment of the argument lies in a precise analysis of beatitude as the ultimate inclination of personal existence. For a person, happiness cannot be reduced to the attainment of a mere psychological state or the performance of certain actions; rather, it must consist in a form of union and relational participation with an ultimate end that integrates perfect cognition (truth) and perfect love (goodness).

- **Beatitude As Relational Fulfillment:** Beatitude, understood as the ultimate perfection and fulfillment of the human person, cannot be reduced to a merely subjective psychological state or the possession of external goods. Because the human person is

essentially rational, free, and capable of love, complete beatitude necessarily consists in the fulfillment of these personal capacities through a reciprocal relationship with the ultimate end. Human beings, as entities endowed with dignity and personhood, are therefore inherently oriented toward a relational and reciprocal connection with their ultimate end. Such a relation necessarily involves both intellectual recognition and volitional attachment. The structure of human beatitude is consequently dialogical rather than merely consumptive or state-based.

- **An Impersonal Ultimate End Undermines Dignity:** An ultimate reality that is purely abstract—such as a physical law or a mathematical concept—or a non-personal force, such as a cosmic energy, is incapable of entering into reciprocal relationality with the dignity and spirituality of the human person. A person cannot love, nor be loved by, an object or an abstract principle in the full and proper sense required for beatitude. Yet love and reciprocal recognition constitute essential components of genuine happiness. Consequently, an impersonal ultimate end fails to account for the relational structure embedded in human dignity.

- **Only A Person Can Correspond To A Person:** The deep human desire for complete beatitude requires a conscious, intentional, and responsive subject capable of recognizing human dignity as personhood and establishing a genuine “I–Thou” relation. Only a *person* can serve as the adequate object of both knowledge (truth) and love (goodness) in their fullest sense. Therefore, the ultimate end and creator of human beings must itself be personal.

2.3. Establishing Divine Love through the Necessity of the Fulfillment of Natural Desire

If the Creator has implanted within human nature an intrinsic and necessary desire for perfection (beatitude), and is aware that the fulfillment of this desire is possible only in ultimate union with Himself (and not with any created reality), then such an act implies a form of existential concern and providential intentionality.

- **Natural Desire and The Problem of Futility:** Suppose that the Creator were to place within human beings a desire that is ultimately unrealizable, or that He were only capable of providing an impersonal response to a deeply personal aspiration. In such a case, the Creator would have brought human beings into existence in a condition

of ultimate frustration, thereby undermining their dignity and rendering their fundamental orientation toward fulfillment meaningless. This outcome is incompatible with the notion of a supremely wise and perfect being.

- **Providence and Divine Love:** The only way to avoid rendering the fundamental human desire meaningless, and to preserve the teleological structure of reality, is to affirm that the Creator is not merely the ultimate end, but also actively directs the creature toward the realization of its proper perfection. This claim, however, requires a further philosophical clarification. Within the Aristotelian–Thomistic tradition, love is understood primarily not as an emotion but as the willing of another's good (*velle bonum alteri*) (Aquinas, 1947, I, q.20, a.2). Accordingly, if the Creator intentionally orders rational creatures toward the fulfillment of their natural capacities and ultimate end, His providential governance necessarily involves willing their good. Divine providence is therefore more than the rational governance of creation; it is the expression of a benevolent will directed toward the flourishing and perfection of creatures. In this sense, divine love is not a passive affection or emotional disposition, but the perfect act by which God wills and

continuously sustains the ultimate fulfillment of rational beings.

3. Critical Examination of Alternative Views and Concluding Results

This section pursues two primary objectives: first, to distinguish and defend the proposed anthropological argument against competing views—particularly reductive accounts that interpret the desire for God as illusory; and second, to synthesize the main conclusions of the argument concerning the necessity of a personal and loving God.

3.1. Critique of Purely Cosmological Arguments and the Necessity of the Development of Divine Attributes

Traditional arguments for the existence of God—such as cosmological arguments and the argument from the unmoved mover—which are grounded in abstract metaphysical concepts, typically aim only at establishing the existence of a Necessary Being or a First Cause. The central limitation of these arguments, as noted at the outset, is that they point merely to a metaphysical necessity devoid of personal attributes; that is, to a being that functions as a purely logical-ontological requirement rather than a relationally accessible subject.

The anthropological argument based on natural desire, by contrast,

functions as a complement and development of these classical proofs. Whereas cosmological arguments establish the *existence* of God, the present argument seeks to establish His *attributes*. It has been shown that the ultimate end capable of fulfilling the desire for human happiness (and not merely the desire for existence) cannot be impersonal. Beatitude, in its ultimate form, is essentially relational and reciprocal in structure. Consequently, the Necessary Being in question must possess consciousness, will, and love to correspond adequately to human dignity as personhood.

An unmoved mover that lacks awareness cannot respond to the intrinsic human desire for knowledge and love of a personal being. As such, it fails to account for the principle of the non-futility of natural desires. In this sense, the absence of personhood in the ultimate cause would render the deepest existential orientation of the human being unintelligible, thereby violating the foundational metaphysical principle that no natural desire is in vain.

3.2. Critique of Reductionist Anthropological Views

One of the most significant critiques within the philosophy of religion concerns reductionist approaches that interpret the desire for God as a mere illusion or as a projection of human

psychological, social, or cultural needs. Ludwig Feuerbach and, following him, Sigmund Freud are among the most prominent representatives of this position (Feuerbach, 1967, p. 149; Freud, 1961, p. 32).

According to this perspective, God is not an objective reality but rather a product and projection of the human mind and its inner needs. In this radical strand of philosophical anthropology and the psychology of religion, it is argued that human beings unconsciously externalize their highest ideals and perfections—such as goodness, omnipotence, omniscience, and infinite love—and attribute them to a transcendent and supernatural being. In this way, these human perfections are reified and appear in the symbolic form of God.

On this interpretation, religion and the concept of God are reduced to instruments for the satisfaction of the deepest psychological needs and unattainable desires of human beings. For example, Freud argues that the idea of God and religion functions as an illusion rooted in the childlike need for a powerful and protective father figure capable of shielding human beings from the overwhelming threats of nature, such as illness, death, and natural disasters.

Similarly, the desire for survival after death and the overcoming of worldly suffering give rise to concepts such as

immortality of the soul, heaven, and divine justice. Yet these notions, on this account, are ultimately nothing more than projections of frustrated human desires for happiness into an imagined celestial realm. Consequently, they do not point to any external or objective reality corresponding to a personal and loving Creator; rather, they merely reflect the psychological vulnerability, dependency, and wish-fulfillment structures of the human psyche.

• **Response to Reductionism (Defense of the Intrinsic Desire Thesis)**

A crucial distinction must be drawn between a *natural intrinsic desire* and a merely psychological or contingent need. This distinction is grounded in the work of thinkers such as Bernard Lonergan, who argues that at the level of rational and volitional subjectivity there exists an *unrestricted desire* for absolute understanding and final intelligibility (Lonergan, 1972, p. 19). This desire is not a derivative psychological state, but an expression of rational intentionality itself, rooted in the very structure of consciousness as an open-ended dynamism toward meaning and truth.

The human subject, by virtue of intellect, is oriented toward complete and unconditioned answers—answers that would terminate the infinite regress of questioning. Only an absolute reality, namely *Being itself*, can satisfy this transcendental

dynamism. Accordingly, this desire is not an acquired reaction to environmental conditions, but a necessary and constitutive feature of the knowing subject as such.

This “intrinsic desire” stands in fundamental contrast to acquired psychological or neurotic needs proposed by reductionist theories, e.g., Freud in *The Future of an Illusion* (Freud, 1961, p. 32). Freud interprets religion as an illusion and a form of universal neurosis rooted in compensatory mechanisms, particularly the infantile projection of a powerful father figure who alleviates existential anxiety and fear of nature. In this account, belief in God functions as a defensive mechanism designed to fill psychological deficiency.

By contrast, the present argument rejects this reduction. The intrinsic desire is not a symptom of lack or weakness, but a *positive and powerful orientation* grounded in the highest faculties of human existence—intellect and will. Its aim is not consolation, but fulfillment in truth and goodness. Just as sight is ordered toward seeing and hearing toward sound, intellect and will are naturally oriented toward unlimited truth and absolute goodness.

To interpret this desire as a deficiency is therefore to mischaracterize the very structure of rationality, effectively treating the defining feature of humanity—reason itself—as

fundamentally defective. On the contrary, this desire constitutes an *actual perfection* of rational nature, a teleological dynamism that moves the human person toward its ultimate end. That ultimate end, on this account, is the personal God who alone can bring intellect and will into final rest.

• **Argument from Realizability**

The argument from realizability is grounded in a deep metaphysical and teleological principle, traceable to Aristotelian philosophy, according to which *nature does not produce any natural desire in vain* (Aquinas, 1956, p. 98). Within this framework, every power or inclination that exists necessarily within a being must correspond to a real and attainable object in reality.

For instance, the capacity for flight in birds or the instinct of survival in animals is correlated with real external conditions (air, life preservation, etc.). If the human natural desire for absolute goodness, ultimate truth, and complete happiness lacked a corresponding real object (namely God), then it would constitute the only fundamental desire in the entire order of nature that is inherently futile.

If, following Feuerbach and Freud, this ultimate desire is reduced to projection or illusion, lacking any external referent, then the entire teleological structure of reality

collapses. In such a case, the deepest existential orientation of rational consciousness would terminate in non-being or futility. This generates a profound ontological paradox: the most teleologically structured being known in nature would be directed, at its highest level of consciousness and volition, toward emptiness.

Such a conclusion implies not only a deficiency in the human condition, but also a defect in the rational intelligibility of reality itself. This defect can only be accounted for by either radical metaphysical contingency or the absence of ultimate intelligibility.

By contrast, affirming the non-futility of natural desire entails the existence of a rational, wise, and purposive source of reality. If an omnipotent and perfectly good God is assumed, it becomes unreasonable to suppose that He would implant in the deepest structure of human existence a desire that is intrinsically unfulfillable or illusory. Rather, the realizability of this desire indicates that its source must be grounded in divine wisdom and intentionality.

Thus, the natural desire for absolute goodness becomes a strong indicator not only of the existence of God, but specifically of a *personal and benevolent God*, whose purpose in creation is the fulfillment and perfection of rational beings in accordance with their ultimate end.

• **Projection Requires a Source**

Even if one grants, for the sake of argument, that human beings project attributes such as love, personality, and power onto the divine, the question remains: from where do these attributes originate within the human being?

These qualities—reason, will, and love—constitute the core of human dignity. They cannot plausibly be explained as accidental byproducts of matter alone. Therefore, their presence in the deepest structure of human existence itself suggests that they originate from a source that already possesses them in a higher mode.

In this sense, the projection thesis paradoxically presupposes what it attempts to deny: the existence of a real foundation for the very perfections being projected. The existence of these attributes within human nature thus points toward a Creator who endows human beings with these capacities precisely in order to orient them toward Himself.

3.3. Conclusion: The Necessity of a Personal and Loving God

The results of the present anthropological argument may be summarized as follows:

3.3.1. The Necessity of An Absolute and Personal Ultimate End

In light of the principle of the non-futility of natural desire, there must exist an ultimate and absolute object capable of fully satisfying the human

threefold desire for truth, goodness, and happiness. Given the personal structure and dignity of the human being, this ultimate end cannot be an impersonal entity. Complete beatitude necessarily involves reciprocal relationality; therefore, the ultimate end must itself be personal.

3.3.2. The Necessity of Divine Love

The human natural desire for perfection functions as an existential call. The creation of a being endowed with such a desire—whose fulfillment is possible only through union with its Creator—implies divine attention, care, and love. Only a loving God can account for the implantation of hope within the human heart and can actively draw the creature toward its ultimate perfection, namely union with Himself.

3.3.3. The Rejection of Ultimate Existential Frustration

This argument demonstrates that belief in a personal and loving God is the only rational means of preserving the teleological structure of reality and avoiding ultimate existential frustration for the human person. Since these desires constitute the very core of human dignity, their complete frustration would render human existence fundamentally incoherent and axiologically deficient.

Conclusion

This article has employed an anthropological argument, grounded in the analysis of the human natural and intrinsic desires for truth, goodness, and ultimate happiness, in order to provide a rational account of the divine attributes of personhood and love. The core of the argument rests upon the philosophical principle that “nature does not produce any natural desire in vain.”

It has been shown that if the necessary human desires for ultimate perfection—which constitute the core of human dignity—are not fulfilled by an absolute end, then not only does the human being remain in a state of existential frustration, but the teleological structure of reality as a whole is called into question. Moreover, the complete happiness of the human person requires a reciprocal relationship grounded in both knowledge and love. Only a conscious and volitional subject can serve as the adequate correlate of such a relationship. For this reason, the ultimate end and Creator cannot be an abstract entity or an impersonal force; rather, it must possess personhood in a manner commensurate with human dignity.

The implantation of such a profound and structurally necessary desire in relation to no created reality, by a wise Creator, itself indicates an active form of existential care and

concern. This providential orientation corresponds to divine love, through which the human being is called toward its ultimate perfection and union with God by means of hope. Consequently, only a personal and loving God can serve as the ultimate guarantor of human fulfillment and final beatitude.

While acknowledging the validity of classical theistic arguments, this account seeks to address their limitations in the transition from a “Necessary Being” to a “beloved personal subject.” In doing so, it offers a systematic defense against reductionist interpretations that seek to dissolve the reality of the divine into psychological, cultural, or projection-based explanations.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors of this article declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Negative AI Statement

The author(s) declare that no AI tools or services were not used or not highly applied during the preparation of this work.

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