The Jet Lag Theory of Purgatory

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Models of purgatory tend to come paired with an operative conception of what perfection consists in. In the recent philosophical literature, two models, the satisfaction model and the sanctification model, have been pitted against one another. The former focuses on innocence before the law and makes purgatory out to be a place where a debt of punishment is paid. The latter focuses on moral character and describes purgatory in terms of character formation. If perfection consists in a certain way of being related to God, however, then there is a third model (or perhaps a particular way of developing the second model) that merits our attention that focuses on relational dynamics.

In a recent book, Jerry Walls argues for a version of the doctrine of purgatory that he takes to be philosophically robust and also friendly to Protestant sensibilities.¹ He considers views on which purgatory is a place where guilt is punished² and views on which one completes the unfinished project of sanctification, siding with the latter against the former. In this paper, I explore a way of thinking about purgatory that either falls outside of Walls’s taxonomy or else forces one to add to it. I will not argue that this new way of thinking about purgatory is true or even that it is probable if one assumes the core tenets of Christianity. Instead, what I will argue is that, if we should think there is some intermediate state between earth and heaven, the theory I will offer is an attractive vision of such a state that deserves to be explored alongside the more conventional ways of thinking about purgatory.

I

Any theory of purgatory will draw a distinction between the final state of the blessed in heaven and an intermediate state that some or all of the people who end up enjoying that final state will inhabit prior. The intermediate state is impoverished relative to the final state but is not equivalent to being damned. It is supposed to somehow be a state such


²Walls notes that one can make a distinction between guilt and “the debt of punishment” (Walls, 21). I will be using the term guilt throughout in explicating the satisfaction view, but, if one is convinced that there is a distinction here and that it makes a difference, one can substitute the terms without it affecting the argument.
that the people who inhabit it have a trajectory that intends them for the final state of blessedness in heaven even though they either do not enjoy it yet or do not enjoy it fully. Where accounts of purgatory can diverge is in their delineation of why the intermediate state is required, how this intermediate state differs from damnation and beatitude, and what condition needs to be fulfilled in order to move one from purgatory to a final state of blessedness.

A view of purgatory centered on punishment, what Walls calls a satisfaction model, will be one on which people must go to purgatory because the sins committed in their earthly life need to be punished. There is a conceptual similarity in the rationale for both hell and purgatory on this view, namely, the notion that sin cannot go unpunished. Purgatory and hell differ conceptually, however, in the duration of punishment, the nature of the people who are admitted to each, and perhaps the severity of the punishment endured. One might think, for instance, that people in purgatory have only venial sins to purge whereas the denizens of hell will have committed mortal sins as well. People in purgatory will have “done their time” at some point, but, on the traditional view of hell at least, people in hell will stay there. Ultimately, on this view of purgatory, people get out of purgatory when they have endured whatever punishment fits what they are being punished for (excepting prayers for the dead or indulgences as a means of expediting the process).

A view of purgatory centered on sanctification, like that of Walls, can account for things a bit differently. Someone with this view need not posit that guilt is being atoned for. Rather, heaven is a place where only perfect people can go, and, whatever progress we make in sanctification before death, we will not be perfect when we die. On this view then, purgatory is a kind of finishing school where the problems in oneself that were not already worked out in life are solved. The difference between the damned and those in purgatory is that those in purgatory are suffering in the service of becoming worthy of heaven. They need not be suffering as a punishment, but rather, they are being made better people. Once all the imperfections are worked out, those in purgatory can enter heaven. The suffering of the damned does not, in contrast, make them any more worthy on the usual way of thinking about hell. At best, perhaps it acts as a check against further moral and spiritual decline.

As Neal Judisch points out, a complicating factor for a taxonomy put in terms of satisfaction and sanctification models is that “satisfaction” has at least sometimes been used to convey something that is equivalent to

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3 Even someone who held a version of universalism on which there is no such thing as hell and that all will, in effect, go to purgatory, should want a way of distinguishing between the concepts of hell and purgatory such that the claim that there is no such place as hell has a distinct content from the claim that there is no such place as purgatory.

One might think that “sanctification” emphasizes the positive aspect of the process of growing towards a perfected state whereas “satisfaction” emphasizes the fact that the maimed parts of human nature need to go through a painful process of healing that cannot be skipped over. I will follow Walls’s terminology, but it should be borne in mind that talk of “satisfaction” does not entail that a given source has what Walls is calling a satisfaction model.

Why might one think that Walls’s taxonomy inadequately canvasses all the options as it stands? Sometimes one has to go through an uncomfortable process not because of some structural defect in oneself but rather because one needs to acclimate to a new context. If one walks from a dimly lit room into a brightly lit one, then it will take a second before one is able to take advantage of the better lighting conditions of one’s new environment. The darker the room from which one has come and the brighter the room into which one is moving, the longer and more uncomfortable will be one’s time of acclimation. This effect need not be the result of any defect in one’s eyes. Rather, it is the result of moving from a suboptimal context into an optimal one.

The following case will map neatly onto the view I want to propose.

JET LAG: Christian, Patrick, and Daniel all receive invitations to come on an all-expense-paid vacation to a certain Bahaman island. Christian and Patrick accept, and Daniel turns the invitation down, choosing instead to vacation in a dark, gloomy corner of Siberia. Christian travels three time zones in order to get to the island, and Patrick travels eight. On day one of their vacation, Christian enjoys his vacation more than Patrick, whose enjoyment surpasses Daniel’s. As the days progress, however, the ability of Christian and Patrick to take in the goodness of the island increases and the difference between them narrows. Eventually, both Christian and Patrick will get over their jet lag and will enjoy the island equally in contrast with Daniel’s continuously miserable Siberian holiday.

The basic idea is that purgatory is like the state of being jet-lagged. It arises from the disparity in the goodness of heaven and earth. It is not so much a distinct place (or needn’t be) as it is the state of new arrivals in heaven. In order to posit a need for acclimation to the goodness of heaven, one need not posit an undischarged debt that must be paid or a need to put in the blood and sweat necessary to form the moral dispositions one did not form on earth. One need only posit that there is a significant difference between the mode of being that is available on earth and that available in heaven, and that when someone enters the afterlife, her own

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mode of being is continuous enough with that had on earth to require a
time of adjustment. One can claim that the degree of jet lag is related to
one's sinfulness on earth, but fundamentally, the jet lag metaphor offers
one a different kind of model for thinking about an intermediate state.
It forces one either to add another category alongside sanctification and
satisfaction models or else to subdivide sanctification models into those
that emphasize what one might call Aristotelian virtues and others that
emphasize the relational realization of perfective qualities.

A concept of purgatory cannot be independent of an operative concep-
tion of what human perfection consists in. Purgatory just is that which
purges the soul of imperfection. If one thinks of perfection as innocence
relative to God's commands, then punishment is what fits a lack of perfec-
tion. The debtor who has paid his debts is once again innocent before the
law. If one thinks of perfection in Aristotelian terms as the possession of
a set of right dispositions trained into one through habituation, then the
proper response to imperfection is more habituation, more training.

What if, however, our notion of perfection is that of the fulfillment of a
whole-hearted desire for union with God? Suppose that this state did not
only encapsulate what human happiness consists in, but that this state
also was the very thing that perfects a human being. If one thinks of per-
fecion in terms of intimacy with the divine because, for instance, God
just is the Good, then the proper response to imperfection is interacting
with God at the level and to the extent that one is capable in an effort to
grow that intimacy into a more mature form. Habits are formed to be sure,
but to focus on the habituation of the human agent alone in this context
is to miss the point. An imperfect relationship with God is solved in and
through God's presence, not the building up of one's inner resources for
doing the right thing under one's own power. This is not to say that, to
count as a sanctification model, one must affirm that purgatory is a matter
of building up one's inner resources in this manner. It is, however, to em-
phasize that the nature of sanctification can be parsed in terms that differ
enough to generate very different looking models. Even if one posits that
God gives one the strength to achieve the necessary habituation, being
an indirect cause of perfective habituation is quite different from being a
cause of growth through interpersonal relationship.

The jet lag model draws some support from some of the general
features of the Thomistic worldview, even if it may be out of step with
many of the things Aquinas says specifically about purgatory. Aquinas
parts ways with Aristotle by claiming that true virtue is infused by God\(^7\)
and that human perfection is underwritten by relational properties that
one bears to God because God just is "the Good."\(^8\) Unlike Aristotle, for

\(^7\)Aquinas, Thomas. Summa Theologica. www.newadvent.org/summa. ST 1a2ae, q63, a.2.
\(^8\)For a relational account of Aquinas's ethics, see Andrew Pinsent, The Second-Person Per-
Aquinas true virtue comes to one at once through the gift of relationship with God.\(^9\)

Thus, for Aquinas, someone entering the afterlife having a right relationship with God should not need further practice to acquire virtue. Virtue has already been infused in him or her. The appropriation of these infused excellences takes time, however. The infused virtues can coexist with imperfections and limitation.\(^{10}\) So long as one is, in fact, one of the relata, God underwrites the perfective quality of the relation, and, in this life, not every imperfection negates one’s standing in these perfective relations to the divine. That is, after all, why there is supposed to be a distinction between mortal and venial sins. It would be consistent with a general Thomistic outlook, then, to think of purgatory as that state of being in which the infused virtues come gradually to have their full effect in a context free from the limitations of a fallen world.

It may be possible to see the outworking of infused virtues as similar to the acquiring of virtues that are not infused, especially if there is room for playing an active part in entering more deeply into them, but at some point, there will be a definitive difference. An Aristotelian virtue is a disposition seated in the individual, and whatever role others may play in creating a friendly environment, it is a disposition acquired through repeatedly exercising the will in the way it will eventually be disposed. The infused virtue, arguably, is one where the seat of the disposition to act well is in the relation. God plays the most important role in underwriting the relation, and even if there may be some state of the will that is a necessary condition on the obtaining of the relation (or on its not failing to obtain), the infused virtue’s effect is a matter of being acted on rather than of practicing something until it becomes second nature. Acting in line with the way one has been acted on by the divine may replicate some of the Aristotelian habituation process, but the overall picture is quite different.

The view I am trying to describe would invert a typical picture of purgatory as a place where one is attempting to become good enough to enter into God’s presence. On the jet lag model, God’s presence is not what is withheld from one until one becomes perfect but what perfects one. Instead of a place of punishment or a place in which one gets repetitions doing the right thing, imagine a day care center for people with developmental delays in social cognition. Interpersonal exchanges are simplified and given at the pace that a child can receive. The hope and expectation is that the delayed children will be able to enter more advanced and fulfilling relationship, but care is extended at the level it can be received. Suppose further that these developmental delays were not caused by the predeterminations of genetics but rather arose from being raised under impoverished social conditions. Having endured trauma, the children

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\(^9\)Cf. Aquinas ST 1a2ae, q65, a.3 and q. 71, a. 4.

\(^{10}\)Aquinas ST 1a2ae, q. 71, a.4.
need time to be able to acclimate to and embrace the benefits of their current position fully.

In sum, then, on the jet lag view, purgatory is necessary because of the discrepancy between the goodness available on earth and that available in heaven. It takes time to grow into the opportunities for unimpeded relationship with God that are available in heaven. If this is painful, it is the pain of recovering from the trauma of living in a fallen world and not that of being punished for sins that should already have been atoned for or making the choices necessary to train into oneself dispositions to act rightly. It is over as soon as one has acclimated to one’s new context.

Before moving on to compare the merits of the jet lag view and alternatives, let us briefly distinguish the proposal from one given by David Vander Laan. The “heavenly sanctification account” given by Vander Laan claims that there is no such thing as purgatory. Imperfect believers go to heaven. God, however, ensures that the actual world is not one in which these imperfect people sin in heaven through the use of middle knowledge and other kinds of knowledge regarding the dispositions of these persons that can play the same functional role as middle knowledge. Imperfect persons in heaven are not put in a position where they will fail, and this allows them to enjoy heaven while finishing their sanctification.

On both my proposal and that of Vander Laan, persons begin their afterlife in heaven who would not be entering heaven upon death on a satisfaction or a sanctification model with more Aristotelian leanings. It is also true that on both proposals the final state of the person in heaven emerges over time. The difference between the proposals is that the growth present in the jet lag case is fundamentally relational, and there is an organic connection between how heaven is experienced and the need for growth. In contrast, it is consistent with Vander Laan’s account that the experience of heaven has no organic connection with the area in which growth is required. A promissory note has been taken out on one of the qualifications for being in heaven, but because God has guaranteed that one will eventually finish the sanctifying work that was started on earth, one is provided with the fruits of it before all the qualifications are filled. Why, one might wonder, is it even important to finish sanctification if God can use his middle knowledge to ensure that one enjoys heaven without it? Insofar as Vander Laan has an answer to this question, it is that there is value in the “free self-direction of character,” that is, in “free postmortem action that contributes to the agent’s moral development.” In contrast, the growth that lies at the heart of the jet lag account has nothing to do with the value of choosing to be a virtuous person per se. It is, rather, just

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12Ibid., 331–332.
13Of course, Vander Laan could add to his account to make it more relational.
14Vander Laan, 337.
that capacitation which is necessary to enter fully into the good of relating with God in intimate communion.

Having outlined the basic idea and distinguished the view from the nearest view in the literature, I will explore how one might argue for the jet lag view as an alternative over a pure satisfaction model or a more Aristotelian sanctification model.

II

Keeping Hell and Purgatory Separate

I take it that it would be a substantive revision of the tradition if one were to collapse the difference between purgatory and hell and that the difference in kind between the concept of each is supposed to be reflected in who goes to these places and what happens to them in each place. When the idea of purgatory was introduced, the idea wasn't that hell might be more permeable than was previously thought, for instance. On the jet lag theory, the people in purgatory share with the blessed the essential property that qualifies one for the final state of blessedness, a loving relationship with God. The damned don't have that. The suffering of the damned is the suffering of people not in a relationship with the source of all goodness, and one could argue that it is that lack of relationship in which their suffering consists. To the extent that those in purgatory suffer, it is because their capacity to take advantage of the bliss available to them is still growing, and they know that they lack the full measure of the goodness available to them.

On rival views, there is an unnerving similarity between what goes on in hell and what goes on in purgatory. Walls quotes Dorothy Sayers as addressing this point as follows.\textsuperscript{15}

\begin{quote}
The sole transforming difference [between purgatory and hell] is in the mental attitude of the sufferers. Dante has grasped the great essential which is so often overlooked in arguments about penal reform, namely, the prime necessity of persuading the culprit to accept judgment.\textsuperscript{16}
\end{quote}

If the sole difference is one of attitude, it is notable what the difference is not. If Sayers is right, then the difference between what happens in purgatory and hell is not a difference in the pains endured by the denizens of these two realms but in how they relate to those pains.

Consider first the satisfaction view. On the satisfaction view, both those in hell and those in purgatory are punished for wrongdoing. Punishment is the activity that defines each place, and both places are defined as places that wrongdoers belong in the afterlife. It's not clear what one would lose by asserting that everyone is sent to hell to be punished after they die. Some will just be released later. Those in purgatory go to some place that's

\textsuperscript{16}Walls, 74.
very hard to distinguish from hell in terms of what goes on there.\textsuperscript{17} One could posit some sort of essential difference in kind concerning the kind of punishment that goes on, but it’s not clear how one would underwrite that difference using the model.

The problem with an Aristotelian version of the sanctification view is a little more subtle. If purgatory is, by definition, the place where imperfect people are made perfect through habituation, then one wants to know why people move only up and not down. Why is there a boundary between hell and purgatory such that people in purgatory don’t end up habituating in the wrong direction, even ending up in hell? One way of answering this problem would be to appeal to the traditional idea that people in heaven can’t choose anything but the good. This won’t work in this case, however, because the most plausible interpretation of that traditional idea is that the people in question can’t sin because their character has been perfected. It would be inconsistent with their character to sin.\textsuperscript{18} On the sanctification view, however, it is exactly the imperfection of character that leads to one being in purgatory in the first place. What, then, is to keep people in purgatory from becoming more imperfect?\textsuperscript{19}

Walls entertains an objection identical to or very close to this one.\textsuperscript{20} He asks why it should be that souls cannot come to be damned in the afterlife if they can repent and reform themselves in the afterlife. His answer is that there is an asymmetry between choosing the good and choosing against the good.

Walls makes his case as follows.

Now I am inclined to think that it is possible but unlikely that persons who die in grace but need purgatory would turn completely away from God after death and be lost. The fundamental reason is because there are deep differences between the choice for God and the choice against him. There are far deeper and more intelligible motivations for choosing God than for choosing against him, and these make the former choice far more stable in the long run. Indeed, the radical asymmetries between the two choices are such that there is good reason to think the choice for God is not reversible in the same sense that the choice against him is.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{17}Cf. Aquinas \textit{ST}, appendix II, article 2.
\textsuperscript{19}The proponent of the sanctification view could, of course, make God a kind of Frankfurtian intervener. If someone in purgatory were to be on the verge of doing something that would make her more imperfect, God could override her will, causing her to do nothing. Thus, someone in purgatory would be guaranteed to improve only through habituation and the use of her free will, and it would not be possible for her character to degenerate in purgatory. Walls relies heavily on incompatibilist intuitions about the value of a freely chosen character in motivating his model of purgatory, and an appeal to Frankfurtian intervention would be an odd fit in his view. Exactly how artificial one finds this solution, however, will likely depend on one’s broader convictions concerning the free will debate.
\textsuperscript{20}Walls, 147–149.
\textsuperscript{21}Ibid., 148.
I am willing to grant Walls all the points he makes in this passage. What may easily escape one's notice, though, is that Walls does, in fact, grant that people who are saved in this life can make a choice in the afterlife that sends them to hell. It is surely true that it is hard to get one's mind around why one would make a choice against God if one has died and found oneself in purgatory. Finding oneself in purgatory surely confers what John Hick called “eschatological verification” on one's belief in God and the gospel. In short, if one has made it to purgatory, one now knows better than to doubt or rebel. It is a traditional, if somewhat mystifying, doctrine within Christianity, however, that a third of the angels made a choice against God despite knowing that God exists and knowing quite a bit about what God is like. The asymmetry between choosing the good and choosing against it lessens the cost to be paid if one admits that one can worsen one's condition in purgatory, even becoming damned, but it is still a significant cost.

**Personal Identity and the Transformative Nature of the Afterlife**

One of the more provocative arguments that Walls gives on behalf of purgatory concerns personal identity. Walls’s idea is that the afterlife is supposed to involve the very same people who die, not new people who bear a certain resemblance to the people who have died. There should, therefore, be substantial continuity between the properties of the person who dies and the post-mortem being that is said to be identical with the person who has died. Without a period of transition between one's earthly state of being and one's final state of blessedness in heaven, one might worry that personal identity is not respected.

To see the point, consider an example. Suppose one is watching a movie, and Bob is a character who is prideful, cowardly, and vengeful. He is a hunchback, gets hungry, and has atrocious taste in music. Bob vanishes from the screen and a moment later Bob* appears. Bob* is in some respects similar to Bob, but Bob* is not prideful, not cowardly, not vengeful, not a hunchback, never gets hungry, and never tires of listening to the harmonic splendor of choirs of angels. Would one think that Bob and Bob* are identical? One might well think that something had happened to Bob off-screen and that he has been replaced by an imposter. One might entertain the hypothesis that mind control is involved or perhaps just bad screenwriting. In contrast, if Bob gradually morphed into Bob*

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23 One can also run a similar argument in terms not of the continuity of identity but in terms of moral continuity. If one dies in a morally imperfect state, and Heaven is a place where only the morally perfect can go, then one might think it implausible that one's moral status can take this leap without the right kind of explanatory factor, something that by its nature entails moral growth (Cf. Barnard, 314–316). Likewise, if it is morally permissible for God to transform individuals into morally perfect beings at death, one must wonder why God can't do the same thing for us here and now (Barnard, “Purgatory and the Dilemma of Sanctification,” 318ff).
over the course of the movie, then one would probably accept that Bob and Bob* really are the same person.24

Although there is something to be said for worries having to do with personal identity, there is also reason to think that the transition into the afterlife should be transformative. Exceptional experiences of a positive or negative sort can accelerate change in ways that may otherwise seem discontinuous to outside observers. It is plausible that one’s death and the beginning of an afterlife could be an even more transformative experience than the events that typically accelerate change in this life.

The Protestant who rejects purgatory may do so by citing the many Bible verses that seem to indicate that a believer will be enjoying the presence of God after death and a reprieve from the suffering that typifies this world. Such characteristics are not easily harmonized with an intermediate post-mortem state characterized by suffering undertaken to make one worthy of being in the presence of God. Jesus tells the thief on the cross, “Today you shall be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43). The Apostle Paul writes that while we are here in the body we are absent from the Lord but that when we leave this body, we will be present with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8). Revelation depicts a vision of a new earth and a new Jerusalem appearing seemingly all at once and fully formed. The new Jerusalem is a place where there is no crying or pain because “the old order of things has passed away,” which is associated in the previous verse with the old earth (Rev. 21:3–4). In John, Jesus says he’s going to prepare a place for his followers and that the transition to their residence in that place will have the character of him personally taking them to be with him “that you may be where I am” (John 14:3). As it is put in Jesus’s parable, the good and faithful servant is told to “enter into the joy of [his] master” (Matt. 25:21).

When a Protestant who denies purgatory is pressed to give an account of how it could be that people who die as imperfect people could gain immediate access to the presence of a perfect God, such a Protestant is likely to appeal to still more verses that seem to indicate that believers will undergo some sort of transformative experience at death. When we see him, we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is (I John 3:2). I Corinthians says that we shall be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye and the result of this change will be the perishable being clothed with the imperishable and the mortal with immortality (I Cor. 15:52). Similarly, Philippians talks about waiting for Jesus to come from heaven and transform our lowly bodies into glorious ones through an exercise of his power (Phil 3:21).

I do not mean to prooftext. Each of these verses could, no doubt, be given an interpretation from a perspective that is sympathetic to purgatory. The thing to notice, rather, is that there is a substantial and familiar body of evidence that suggests that entering the afterlife is transformative, involves leaving behind the suffering that typifies life on earth, and has

24See Walls, 114–122, for an extended argument along these lines.
the presence of God available from the get go. In contrast, a central ratio-
nale for purgatory by the lights of the satisfaction and a more Aristotelian
sanctification view is that, for one reason or another, one must be kept out-
side of the bounds of God's heavenly presence because one is unworthy.
God is too holy for a wrongdoer or improperly habituated person to be
in his presence. Furthermore, on these views, the afterlife does contain
suffering, maybe even suffering that surpasses that of earth.

It is hard to see how either the satisfaction or an Aristotelian sanctifica-
tion view could account for the evidence that entering the afterlife is a
transformative event. On the alternative sanctification view in particular,
it does not appear that we are “like Him when we see Him.” On Walls's
view, for instance, we take up our project of sanctification where we left
off on earth because of the continuity between who we were before and
after death. If entering the afterlife changes the nature of the project in any
substantive sense, it is unclear how. After all, Walls insists that the limited
opportunities for sanctification on earth imply that there must be a place
to finish the sanctification process. I suppose it is open for a more Aristo-
telian view to allow for some change that is relevant to sanctification that
accompanies one's transition into the afterlife, so long as the change is not
sufficient to undercut identity. To do so, though, would be to open the
door for questioning whether a purgatory devoted to sanctification is re-
ally necessary. If part of the work of sanctification could be done through
the transformative events surrounding one's death, why not all of it? It is
open, on the other hand, for the holder of the satisfaction view to claim
that entering the afterlife is a deeply transformative event. One could be
transformed and yet have a debt of punishment to pay.Positing this only
makes it the more curious that transformed people must be punished be-
fore they can enter God's presence.

In contrast, the jet lag model can honor both personal identity and the
transformative nature of the afterlife. On the jet lag model, the attribute
most fundamental to one's perfectability, one's relational stance toward
God, holds steady across the transition through death into the afterlife. In
the afterlife, one undergoes a continuous transition that leads ultimately
to a final state of blessedness. If, as the jet lag model supposes, one's iden-
tity and moral standing is most defined by one's relational stance towards
the divine, then we have continuity across physical death that should be
sufficient to guarantee the identity of the pre- and post-mortem person.

On the other hand, the jet lag model can draw a principled distinction
between one's mode of being before and after death such that entering the
afterlife is an inherently transformative event. The person experiencing
trans-world jet lag enters into the presence of God. None of the cogni-
tive barriers that hamper one in a fallen world occlude one's access to the
divine anymore. Relational dispositions that were partially masked due to
living in a fallen world can now be manifested without impediment. One

25I thank Tom Flint for helping me to see this possibility.
has moved, as it were, from faith to sight. This transformative experience removes the need for any of the tears and sorrow of earth. One enters immediately and all at once into a state of blessedness. The only caveat is that one's final blessedness awaits full acclimatization to one's new surroundings.

Atonement and Double Counting

One source of concern with purgatory for Protestants is the relationship between purgatory and the doctrine of the atonement. One rather general way of characterizing the worry that is independent of one's theory of the atonement is in terms of double counting. The thought is that Jesus's atoning death on the cross is supposed to do something for the believer. Whatever the atonement is doing, it is supposed to address one's failure to meet the standard necessary for heaven. We're imperfect; we're sinners. Thus we need a savior. Purgatory, however, looks like a solution to an identical problem. Purgatory is supposed to be necessary because we are imperfect and thus unworthy of heaven. The question, then, becomes why we apparently need two solutions to the same problem. Doesn't that call into question either the necessity of purgatory or the efficacy of the atonement?

The clearest answer one can give on either the satisfaction or an Aristotelian version of the sanctification view is that more than one thing needs to happen for one to be worthy of heaven and that the atonement doesn't do everything that is necessary. Thus, in effect, one can avoid double counting by having the atonement count for less. Or, more subtly, one might suppose that one thing needs to happen but that this one thing has an aspect to it that requires purgatory and is not addressed by atonement absent purgatorial suffering.\(^{26}\)

On an Aristotelian version of the sanctification view, one can claim that the atonement takes care of the need for punishment, for example, but claim that it does not take away the need for moral habituation. After the atonement has done its work on someone, she is still unworthy of being in God's presence due to lacking the right dispositions. On the satisfaction view, one might claim that atonement is sufficient for God to be willing to reinstate one, while still claiming that the atonement is not sufficient to nullify the requirement that one suffer punishment for one's sins. There are, no doubt, more ways one can develop these views to try to deal with the problem, but, in each case, avoiding the charge of double counting will involve restricting the scope of what the atonement does to remedy one's imperfection.

The jet lag theory has an easy way out of this predicament. On the jet lag view, however the atonement works, its ultimate end should be the restoration of relationship with the divine. This work is not done by purgatory. Instead, purgatory is just that time of learning to appropriate that

\(^{26}\) I thank an anonymous referee for drawing my attention to this possibility.
relationship in full. The relationship is already in place before one enters purgatory. Thus, there is no double counting. Sanctification on earth is a matter of growing into this relationship, learning to appropriate it and live into it within a fallen world. Purgation in the afterlife is a matter of doing the same without the obstacles of one’s former existence. For both, one can claim that the atonement is 100 percent effective in removing the problem of a sundered relationship with God and replacing it with a restored relationship.

One might insist, however, that the appropriation of what the atonement does for one is facilitated by purgatory. Perhaps we must take an active part in the process. We get to participate in Christ’s redemptive activity and thus purgatory is necessary.\textsuperscript{27} Depending on how it was fleshed out, I think there is much to commend a view of the atonement and redemption that allows for active participation. The most attractive way of filling this suggestion out, however, is in relational terms, or so I would contend.

When the beloved has taken a broken relationship and made whole relationship possible again, one must still respond. One must live into it, and one must trust in spite of the fact that doing so can be painful. If the account we are using is inherently relational, then we are not forced to make a division between what each party is contributing because the relation might depend on both of its relata. One can thereby make room for the active participation in God’s redemption and perfection of the human person. In contrast, if one is not using a relational model, it is hard to see how the necessity of two distinct processes does not imply that each process is not completely effective at addressing the human condition (at least absent overdetermination). Consequently, I take the objection to double counting on the grounds that purgatory can be a participation in God’s redemptive work to be grist for my mill.

\textit{The Question of Continuity with the Tradition}

I take the foregoing to be sufficient to motivate the idea that the jet lag model of purgatory offers a distinctive way of thinking about purgatory that is worth consideration alongside satisfaction models and versions of the sanctification model inconsistent with it. One might, at this point, be concerned that the jet lag theory of purgatory is not continuous enough with traditional accounts of such a place to warrant inclusion as a possible account of purgatory, however. Whether this is so will in part have to do with what one takes to be necessary for continuity with the tradition and what exactly one takes the traditional view of purgatory to include. I will not attempt to adjudicate either of these matters here. Instead, I will grant that, for many whose tradition includes a doctrine of purgatory, the jet lag model may be a nonstarter. I want to claim, however, that there may be more continuity here than one might first imagine.

\textsuperscript{27}I thank an anonymous referee for this objection.
When Aquinas speaks of purgatory, he emphasizes that it is a place of cleansing and distinguishes cleansing from earning merit. He says that “venial sin prevents one who has charity from obtaining the perfect good, namely eternal life, until he be cleansed.” Purgatory isn’t supposed to be like a cosmic gym where one creates a new and improved soul. The point of purgatory is not supposed to be earning God’s presence but removing obstacles to it. It’s more of a detox center than a gym. If you think that what one needs to be cleansed of are bad habits, you’ll say habituation happens in purgatory. If you think that penal guilt follows one into the afterlife, you’ll say punishment happens in purgatory.

If the cleansing of the soul is the heart of the concept, though, then one has to ask why it is that one’s own efforts or pain would be required to remove the stain of sin and make one worthy of God’s presence. To put the point provocatively, if Pelagianism is unacceptable as an account of the life of faith for our earthly life, why would it be more acceptable in the next? Why couldn’t it be that it is living into God’s presence itself that washes away what needs to be washed away? On a more relational way of looking at things, the blessed in heaven enjoy a state of complete union with and repose in the divine, and the path to this state is increasing degrees of surrender and openness. If that’s right, however, then I think the character of any habituation or penance there may be in the afterlife changes dramatically.

In giving voice to the Catholic view of purgatory, Neal Judisch says,

[P]urgatory is the purifying and transformative postmortem encounter with Christ which takes the broken and sick and heals them, making them fit to enjoy unsullied and unending communion with God and the saints in the life everlasting.

The inherently relational language of this description accords well with the model I have been presenting. If one agrees with Judisch that this description captures the essence of what purgatory is about, then that provides one reason to think that my model is a live option.

Once again, how sensible the account I’ve given here appears will depend in no small part on one’s conception of what human perfection consists in. On a judicial or Aristotelian conception, it may not be worth considering, but, on a relational notion of perfection, it is an attractive option.

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28 Aquinas ST, appendix II, article I, reply to objection i.
29 Aquinas ST, appendix II, article I, reply to objection ii.
30 It is noteworthy that in Francis Beckwith’s review of Walls’s book he cites a number of authorities across the Catholic tradition and the language of cleansing runs throughout these quotations. Francis Beckwith, “Like It Was Written In My Soul From Me To You: Assessing Jerry Walls’ Critique of the Catholic Account of Purgatory,” The Heythrop Journal 55 (2013), 1–12 at 3–4.
In closing, I will point out a hybrid option that some might find appealing. There is a natural way to combine the jet lag model of purgatory with a sanctification model of an Aristotelian stripe. The way to do so is to think of the habits that need to be formed as relational habits. For those who can agree that how a human being relates to goodness is identical to how a human being relates to God, there is room to merge the jet lag model and even an Aristotelian sanctification model. Characterological growth is necessary for proper relatedness, and proper relatedness is the frame within which one should understand character formation. This hybrid, however, should fundamentally change how we think about the sanctification that is going on in purgatory. One should no longer think of it on an analogy to physical training and the building of a kind of freestanding moral excellence. Rather, one should think of it as growing into a relationship.

The jet lag model gives us a model of purgatory even more appealing and ecumenically acceptable than that which Walls provides on his own. It draws a clear conceptual distinction between hell and purgatory and what goes on in each place. It can account for the continuity that undergirds personal identity across one’s entrance into the afterlife while also taking into account the transformative nature of the afterlife. Lastly, it respects Protestant soteriological concerns while being more continuous with traditional conceptions of the function of purgatory than may initially appear.

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32Walls has an extended discussion in his book of hybrid accounts of purgatory, but these are all hybrids of the satisfaction and sanctification models. Thus, they are not applicable here. See Walls, 71–82.

33Although Walls does not include any inherently relational items in his model, there are parts of his book that seem to indicate that Walls might not be constitutionally averse to any gloss of sanctification in relational terms. Cf. Walls, 85–86.

34I would like to thank Jerry Walls, Tom Flint, and two anonymous referees for helpful feedback on this essay.