THE CATHOLIC LIBRARY OF RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE

To be completed in 100 Volumes

Translated from the French

PRELIMINARY LIST

Baptism and Confirmation. Rev. A. D'Alès, S.J.
The Breviary. Its History and Contents. Dom Baudot, O.S.B.
The Church in Modern Times, 1447-1789. Canon Léman.
The Cradle of the Bible. Mgr. Legendre.
The Moral Law of the Family. P. Méline.
The Last Things. Abbé A. Michel.
St. Paul. Abbé Tricot.
The Papacy. Abbé F. Mourret.
Holiness in the Church. R. Plus, S.J.
Greek Literature in the Early Church. Abbé G. Bardy.
The Christian Latin Literature of the First Six Centuries. Abbé G. Bardy.
The Congregations of Priests, XVI-XVIII Century. Canon Pisani.
The Church in the Early Centuries. Abbé Amann.
The Theology of the New Testament. R. P. Lemonnyer, O.P.
Pastors and People. Canon Magnin.
Mediæval Spirituality. Felix Vernet.
The Christian Life and the Spiritual Life. V. E. Masson, O.P.
Polytheism and Fetishism. M. Briault, C.S.Sp.
Faith and its Rational Justification. Rev. G. Brunhes.
The Books of the Latin Liturgy. Rt. Rev. Abbot Cabrol, O.S.B.
Foundations of Thomistic Philosophy. A. D. Sertillanges, O.P.

Catholic Library of Religious Knowledge

XX

FOUNDATIONS OF THOMISTIC PHILOSOPHY

BY

A. D. SERTILLANGES, O.P.

TRANSLATED BY

GODFREY ANSTRUTHER, O.P.

SANDS & CO.
15 King Street, Covent Garden, London

B. HERDER BOOK CO.
15 & 17 South Broadway
St. Louis, Mo.

Nihil Obstat

F. Edwin Essex, O.P.
F. Thomas Gilby, O.P., S.T.L., Ph.D.

Imprimatur

F. Bede Jarrett, O.P.
Prior Prov. Angliae.

Nihil Obstat

F. Stanislaus W. Lamb, O.P., S.T.L.

Imprimatur

✠Andreas Joseph, O.S.B.,
Archiep. S. Andr. et Ed.

Edimburgi,
die 27 Junii, 1931.

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY
NORTHUMBERLAND PRESS LIMITED, NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE

CONTENTS

FOUNDATIONS OF THOMISTIC PHILOSOPHY

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

THOSE who know St. Thomas well are at times tempted to ask whether, in spite of his world-wide reputation, he is really understood by many. Indeed, we like to lose sight of his fame, and fondly imagine that we are the first to discover his breadth of outlook, and extraordinary subtlety.

People like to picture him as a good sort of man, a simple, holy, uneccentric friar, quite ordinary, in spite of his holiness. They hardly bother about his mere mortal life, so much so that now it is impossible to piece it together. This is a pity, and it is a good sign that scholars are getting tired of mere pamphlets and panegyrics. Yet this neglect is itself instructive. St. Thomas's life is so bound up with his thought and ideas, that once you have grasped them, you have understood the man. It is his thought that matters. We need have no more interest in his life than he had himself. We dis-

cover him in his effects, as we find God in the universe.

Catholics have a special reason for studying St. Thomas; he is their own philosopher, and his works are a family treasure: he is the "Catholic Doctor" *par excellence*. When many outside the Church are taking an interest in him, it is surely wrong for Catholics to neglect him. Leaders of Catholic thought, and the whole Church through them, owe much to him for their fundamental principles, and Pius X has said that "none can depart from St. Thomas's teaching, especially in metaphysics, without danger."[1]

Every earnest, thinking man, who wishes to know more about his religion—and every Catholic implicitly professes to be such—must take at least some sort of interest in this teaching. Not that he is expected to study it deeply, for specialization in this matter is the work of a few. All we mean is that there is no excuse for ignorance, and in saying this we put ourselves under an obligation of doing our share to make this knowledge as accessible as possible.

. . . . . .

This is not a résumé: there are quite enough of them already. They are not of the slightest use to those who know the matter, and are ignored by the beginner. Much less is this a learned treatise. We have tried that elsewhere for scholars,[2] and we are not doing it over again. But there is still another way of treating a great philosophy. One can write for a public consisting of just ordinary people—neither advanced students nor wholly unlearned.

[1] Encyclical *Pascendi Gregis*.
[2] *Saint Thomas d'Aquin*. Paris, Alcan.

Pascal wanted to forget that he was an author, and in the same way we may write for the general run of people, and not think of the reader as a student at any particular stage.

As regards philosophy, the ordinary man is one who, while not making it his special study, feels that inevitable curiosity about it which we all have, and which knowledge alone can satisfy. We are not writing technicalities, as a teacher for students, but merely putting the thinking man in direct contact with reality and thought.

That is the simplicity we aim at. And Thomistic philosophy is remarkably suited to such treatment, for in St. Thomas, clearness and technical precision are joined to the broad outlook, if I may use the expression, of the intelligent man in the street.

Those who know already will easily see what lies beneath our bare outlines: those who do not already know must not expect to *learn*, as if they were back at school, but I hope they will *understand*. What I mean is that they will not be in a position to teach others, or to call themselves philosophers, but they should have gained some real appreciation of this veritable poem of St. Thomas.

I call it a poem, for it really is one, if read in the right way. St. Thomas is, properly speaking, a metaphysical poet, taking the word in its broadest sense to signify one who interprets the universe; a prophet of being—of God, humanity, nature. Poet and philosopher here unite. He writes his poem in abstract language, as Victor Hugo or Pindar in image, Beethoven in sound, and Michael Angelo in line and mass. Yet his poetry is nearer reality, for he gives us, instead of an artistic interpretation, which is arbitrary, a true account of

things. He analyses where others only depict: he deduces where they introduce: he makes us understand, where they make us see: he reveals when others sing. Yet always his theme is their theme. He treats of the universe, of man, of divinity and its attendant beings. He strives to create within us a representation of all these things—a new world, the double of this one, which will enable us, despite our narrow limitations in time and space, to live in the whole of it.

We want to reach the very soul of the poem of ideas, to probe its spirit, to grasp its underlying unity. This means that we shall dwell little on detail and avoid discussion. If we can get at the source, it will explain itself. Nor shall we trace the historical growth of the doctrine, though quite aware that it did not drop ready-made from heaven. It simply is not necessary for our purpose.

A genius belongs to the ages preceding him before he lives for the future. A work of genius is a product of society, and the more it owes to society, the more it has begged from men and things, the greater it is. And it is precisely because it absorbs everything and transforms everything into itself, that it is always young and original. A genius is full of life, and living consists in adapting and assimilating, and thus recreating and manifesting itself anew. He is more adapted than others to his particular age, he is steeped in it and alive to its wants, but nothing can satisfy him save the quest of eternity, which is of every age, and that is what makes him the concern of all.

Just as a genius can unite a variety of peoples into one empire, so he can bind all ages together into a permanent whole. He treads the same path

as his contemporaries, and it leads him towards the eternal. He proclaims what his fellow men are vaguely thinking about, and he is found to voice the sentiments of all. Heedless of his own popularity, he is self-sufficient and self-contained. He gathers every ray of light he can find in his obscure surroundings, and concentrates in himself their finest qualities.

To profit by a time-honoured genius, then, we have no need to go to history. All we need is to be human beings. This is not to be taken as a slight on the historical method, indispensable in many ways, and extremely illuminative always. All we say is that we can have the teaching without its historical setting.

I repeat that a Catholic work, because Catholic, is universal in every way. It appeals independently of any age to every age; there is something in it like the liturgy or the Church. If we see that from his friar's cell, St. Thomas is in touch with every age of Christianity, like a wireless operator at sea, then are we ready to lend an ear.

St. Thomas is profoundly original, for it is proper to genius to make what it creates appear fresh and verdant. It scatters seeds, which, though as old as truth itself, seem capable of germinating for ever. So fundamental are St. Thomas's principles, that his genius, like all genius, is its own and only explanation.

But no one would dream of accusing him of that pretentious originality which some people display in order to achieve a reputation. He thought far too intensely and disinterestedly; he was far too much taken up with his object to care what others thought of him. It is quite his own affair. Time is too

precious to waste in ostentation: he has quite enough to do in tackling the difficulties of knowledge. He needs all his faculties to accomplish the task of co-ordinating thought and being—a giant undertaking, and an exceptionally impersonal one. He was much too keen on reaching his end to strut about on the way.

His very expressions are an indication. He expounds and proves: he never "affirms" or "declares." He says: this is necessary; this is impossible; or, it seems. All these express a relation with things, not with the truth in his mind. He knew none of those phrases so common with us—"one feels," "one likes to think," "one can't help thinking." He had no use for personal ideas.

This is his strength, for impersonality is a characteristic of truth, and a genius who stands for truth is greater than one who stands only for himself.

St. Thomas is sincere, and that is his most effective weapon. For real intellectual work we must get away from ourselves, into the realm of ideas. It is reality that is intelligible, not the subjective pretentiousness of a teacher. Facts speak: "Wisdom crieth out." We can do without any pedantic intermediary.

What St. Thomas says, properly understood, seems evident to a right-minded man, precisely because he puts forward the truth in the full light of day, and does not treat is as a personal possession. He relies on you, not on himself. He draws us out of ourselves, by deducing from principles innate in us, something we had never realized before.

Hence the impression we get that his doctrine satisfies some secret craving, answers some want

vaguely foreseen. Strictly speaking we learn only what we have somehow possessed all along, without being conscious of it. We become convinced only of what we implicitly held before. The more this law is allowed its sway, the more is genius content to put us in the presence of truth, the more fully we grasp it.

There is another characteristic which naturally follows from this. In steering clear of any sort of personal vanity, St. Thomas avoids its usual accompaniment. I refer to that exaggeration and excluding of other points of view, so marked in these days when every writer, piling Pelion on Ossa, seems to push his books and himself. St. Thomas was an impartial thinker; his judgment is never warped; he never strains a point, nor has a bias. He knows that one truth corresponds to another, and that their nice juxtaposition and balance is the only way of weighing them. Nature does not prefer a mountain to a mole-hill, or make one out of the other. It keeps its laws. All things are in proportion; all things sincere and balanced. That is the very essence of nature.

And St. Thomas was wise enough to follow nature's lead. He was determined that his idea should correspond with reality in all its relations and proportions. It must exactly reflect being; otherwise his mind would be a distorted mirror. There must be nothing misplaced, nothing due to idle curiosity. The great, the small, the mediocre, the sublime, must all be considered, and allotted each its place and its degreè of perfection.

It is a Thomistic principle that the proper object of creation is not this or that creature in particular, but the whole order of Being. In the same way,

the aim of Thomistic philosophy is not this or that particular conclusion, but Truth.

We shall find St. Thomas just as interested in the *minutiæ* as in the great questions, and he will show us that these small details are not really small. Smile if you like at the insect and his futile work; yet the philosopher realizes that life is there, utilizing the radiation and chemistry of the universe, part of the equilibrium of cosmic forces, and that the breath of the infinite stirs in these tiny bodies.

A philosopher's business is to expound this fullness in all things, and not to be too taken up with just the large things. St. Thomas succeeded. He stresses nothing unduly. He argues quite simply, and betrays his interest quite naïvely; he calmly applies far-reaching principles to small nothings, till he persuades you that there *are* no nothings, that everything is great and divine, and reflects its Author.

St. Thomas is always calm, is never surprised. His boldness is just as aggressive as Shakespeare's or Dante's, who stop at nothing, but somehow his does not seem like aggression. He dreams no dreams like Dante: he sees. He is not disturbed by his thoughts like Shakespeare: he judges calmly. There is nothing of Hamlet about him.

Neither has he anything of Abelard or Kant, for, besides being bold and calm, he is sure. In morals and in metaphysics, where the need is more apparent, he shows an extraordinary sense of value, which has earned for him the title of the "most prudent" (*prudentissimus*). In practice as well as in theory, in the appraisement of worth and just comparison of values, his sense of proportion is manifest. He triumphs over confusion because he possesses order.

He has a special gift for borrowing, arranging, estimating and labelling, and then he takes the chaotic elements of an obscure problem and welds them into a harmonious whole.

We may perhaps derive some real benefit from studying St. Thomas, even in an amateur way. Our times are times of confused thought and topsy-turvydom, despite the wealth of material. If anyone find here a guide line, if ordinary people can find a little light in these times of darkness, then will our philosopher be greater by one more benefit conferred.

CHAPTER II

BEING AND KNOWLEDGE

A. The Object of Human Knowledge

PHILOSOPHY confronted with things is thought confronted with chaos. To our minds things are in chaos, for, though we notice that they are, superficially, and, we presume, fundamentally in order, still our minds are restless, because we cannot fully comprehend this order. We may grasp its main outlines, but we are at a loss when we come to examine it more closely, and the farther we go into it, the more we find ourselves faced by a mystery. Yet, in spite of appearances, we all desire knowledge and want to satisfy this desire. Like Mallarmé's, our ideal should be to chant a "hymn of the relations of all things." We might well emulate the "esprit sphérique" of Amiel, who saw all and understood all, because he embraced all. Though our task is apparently more modest, that is what we are trying to do, and, of course, we can hope for only a partial success. We wish to arrange the parts of the world in perfect unity, estimate their relative values and beauty, and unite them to their God. This is the object of knowledge.

We shall specify this object, and sub-divide it as

we go along, but the main questions that will keep coming up will be the following:

Of what stuff are all things made? Is it really the same everywhere, or is reality composed of disparate pieces? What principles of organization does nature obey? What ideas, and what leading idea is found there? Whence comes the action which operates there, and what are its forms? Is it possible to account for this beautiful harmony by some marvellous machinery? And lastly, according to what plan does everything function, and what task can be done by each part individually, and all working together?

These several questions present the problem of causality, and they present it under four aspects, just as we may ask about a statue: (1) What is it made of? (2) What does it represent? (3) Who made it? and (4) What is it made for? The whole secret of the world lies in the answer to these questions. When you have studied substance, analysed its intricate composition, understood the process of its making, and found its maker, is there anything more to be done?

Yes, there is one thing more, which we may best explain by answering another question. Why ask these questions, unless it is because we already have a certain knowledge of things? Then, should there not be some correlation between the nature of things and the knowledge we have of them? We surmise that the process of discovery here corresponds to the thing discovered itself, and we give as our reason that knowledge is appropriation and adaptation, and adaptation is always reciprocal.

We look at the world, but what do we mean by "look"? We think about it; what does

"thinking" mean? And then comes the question, what are we? What is this real thing which sees and thinks precisely in so far as it sees and thinks? What connection is there between the knower and the thing known in the very act of knowing, and, before this, in the capacity of knowing and being known?

This is an old problem. It was Plato's starting-point. Aristotle eagerly seized upon it, and while he criticized his master, his own philosophy was fundamentally a revised version of Platonism. St. Thomas received the work, completed it, and put it in a new form. Nobody has since surpassed these united geniuses, and, unless we wish to go wrong, we must confine our efforts to clearing up questions of detail, which, in a matter like this, may be of immense importance. But our great effort will be to dig deeper and deeper for his meaning, which can always be further penetrated; and, if possible, to strengthen it.

B. The Nature of Knowledge

Here is a fact. I am myself, and nobody else. I am conscious of my identity, of my unity, i.e., of my distinctiveness and difference from everything else. Yet when I open my eyes, when I look, listen, feel, smell, taste, or think, am I not in intimate contact with something other than myself? I am immediately conscious of this *other* than myself which invades me. Something outside of me becomes me; then I experience it; I live it, as a secret joy or pain.

Still more, I do not even know that I exist except

by this invasion from without, which makes me aware of myself by stimulating me to live the life which it brings me. Should I know that I existed if I did not think or feel? And should I think or feel if I did not think or feel *this* or *that*? *This* or *that* determines my action, and my action reveals to me the subject of it. It is by being able to appreciate things that I am able to appreciate my own proper self. By determining me, the object makes me visible to myself: its light illumines me, and, in revealing itself to me, it shows me my own mind. It is in this way that an appearance becomes a self-appearance. A communication puts us on the alert. Apart from that, we should be nothing but darkness.

This is why scepticism and subjectivism, which maintain that nothing is known or can be known but self and modifications of self, are inimical to life in all its phases, and undermine the very foundations of knowledge. I should know nothing of myself; I should not even know that I know; I should be ignorant even of my very existence if the evidence of something outside of me did not arouse me to the consciousness of myself and my actions. I exist in myself only after having existed in something else. My thoughts return to me only after going the round of the world. My consciousness of myself is due to a certain external excitation, and therefore evidence of some disparity between myself and my object. I feel myself only by the fact of becoming something else. I become myself by becoming all things. Sleep, which partially cuts me off from communication with the world, cuts me off proportionally from communication with myself, and I should be cut off from myself altogether were

it not for the part which, in sleep, I have taken away from the world. Once the link with *that which is* is recoupled, I regain myself in feeling myself *he who is*.

None who reflects about this, seriously and honestly, without sophistry or juggling of words, will deny this first evidence. And a poet confesses it. Shakespeare writes:

> "For speculation turns not to itself
> Till it hath travell'd and is mirror'd there
> Where it may see itself."[1]

This mirror is the object which we look at. Knowledge has been defined as "the reasoned return of the intelligence upon the data of intuition." What are these data of intuition? Is it ourself, first of all? Is it not rather the external reality that strikes us, both as child and grown-up? It is the *not-me*, to use the jargon of philosophers, which appears immediately to my consciousness; it is not the internal conditions of its representation. The thing known is the object; it is not the image or the image-projector of the object. At the outset of knowing I am relatively passive; I am acted upon from without.

This, then, is a strange fact. Something outside causes a disturbance within; a thing which is not myself becomes, in some mysterious way, an element of my very life. I look, I listen, I think, which means, I live; and therefore that which determines these acts determines my life. I must, then, live that determinant, and so embrace other things. I find myself actually something else, without any change of nature taking place either in me or in the other thing.

[1] *Troilus and Cressida*, III, 3.

What is this extraordinary phenomenon, to which we get so used that we do not appreciate it? The ordinary man sees nothing wonderful in the production by a camera of innumerable replicas of those who sit before it, and yet what a marvel it really is! We ought to be just as surprised that beings, which apparently have no connection with one another, possess each a replica of the others and show a capability of embracing everything, so as in some way to *become everything*.

If only we could grasp the full meaning of the Aristotelian phrase: To know, means, properly speaking, to become! If I do not in some way become what I know, I shall not know it. The knowing is in me; it *is* me, it is my perfection, as Being, as St. Thomas says, is a perfection of everything which is. For the relation is the same between my being and that which I am, and between my knowledge and that which I become by my knowledge. If I do not form, out of my own substance, the stone, tree, or any object you like which becomes me by being known, how can the consciousness of that object result, as it needs must, from the consciousness I have of myself? What can be explained by the mere fact that the object lies outside? And if it lay within, and did nothing but lie there, and were not assimilated, I should be ignorant of it. There must be a point of juncture or suture. I have my allotted circle of existence, out of which I cannot go; the thing also is equally limited, so that any sort of contact of consciousness is impossible, unless there be some compenetration of being.

St. Thomas insists that *knowing*, in its principle, is *being*. The things we know truly mould some-

thing in us into a resemblance of themselves: they communicate their form of being (*species*) to us, and, because we *are* these things, and we operate according to what we are, in performing an action that is our very own, we can *conceive* the object such as it is in itself, according to its own proper nature (*quidditas, ratio*).

Those who, like Duns Scotus, have combated St. Thomas on this point, have not understood the state of the question, and their explanations obscure the issue. They are content to bring into contact with the intellect an image of the object; they do not speak of any assimilation; they attempt no sort of synthesis. They repudiate the *information* and identification of the knower and the known precisely as such in the common act of knowledge. From this it follows that they account only verbally for what takes place. They are like a man who wants to fix a negative without any knowledge of the chemistry of photography. The activity which they attribute to the mind is not to the point, for it is not a question of the mind's independent activity, but of its activity *in the other thing*, and according to the other thing. Nor is the "contact" these writers speak of any more to the point, for we are not concerned with the juxtaposition, like two doubles, of object and intellect, but with how the object affects the intellect, and how the intellect ideally becomes it.

These lesser thinkers do not see that understanding is a becoming, a modification of the subject in conformity with the object. We must leave them in their blindness, which promises no conquest whatever to those who follow them. Being would not be attained by knowing, if knowing did not

already belong to being. We hold, and find it instructive, that there is a real compenetration between the knower and the thing known; that thought contains being in some way, and can therefore help us in defining it.

Is not this the reason for these fine thoughts of St. Thomas: that the most perfect and intimate way of possessing a thing is by knowing it; that the contemplative life is the highest; that contemplation, of itself, arrests other activities, admitting them only in order to enable itself to continue and grow. In fact, the "possession" of God will be in contemplation, and it will be, none the less, completely all-satisfying. Man's noblest enjoyment, in this life and the next, is to grasp by knowledge the creative work, and the Creator Himself.

How does this compenetration come about, by which knowledge and the fact of being known can be conceived?

It might be best to approach a solution negatively, by saying that he who becomes something else by knowledge must not suffer any change of nature; otherwise the process would be a metamorphosis, and not knowledge at all. A body which is heated participates in the surrounding heat, but it does not *know* it. A chemical compound which undergoes change becomes something else, but it knows nothing about it. Yet is there any way of becoming something else without renouncing oneself? Can a being, while remaining what it is, be turned into something else? Can it put on something else as a garment, or, better, as a new being? And has this other thing any way of communicating itself without losing anything?

We are forced to suppose that there is something

on a common plane, above these two existences, which can assemble them into a special, common life. What is this something? What is it in the thing understood, which, by coming into me, becomes me, and represents it as a sort of substitute or double, in such a way that I really know it, though it be by a modification of myself?

St. Thomas replies: It is the real form of the object known communicated to me, not as a natural form embodied in matter, but *intentionally*, that is to say, as an *idea* or *intentio* of nature. It is like saying that when I look at a statue it comes into me by its form, by which I mean, not the actual form which gives the marble its figure—which cannot be communicated—but the form which conveys to my imagination a block of marble shaped to an expression of art.

Every object is a work of art, and this art has an immanent principle, an infused idea, which can be communicated to a subject, provided that he is capable of receiving it.

This capacity implies that the subject must not be so shut up within himself as not to be able to go outside himself in any way. His own form of being must not be entirely used up in determining his matter, but must be free enough and independent enough to live in a wider circle. In other words, there must be certain forms of existence sufficiently autonomous and plastic to be moulded into others, and thus to communicate to the subject the thing known according to some aspect or other.

Does this seem impossible? What is to prevent a new idea determining a power which belongs to a being already constituted, that is to say, already making real one of nature's ideas? Cannot one

idea be grafted on another, like an adjective on to its noun? Nature's ideas determine matter, but cannot a composite being, or even a simple one, the subsisting idea, become matter as far as some new determination is concerned?

Matter and form are relative terms. Quartz is matter to granite, granite to a wall, the wall to a house. Oxygen and hydrogen are matter to water, water to flesh, flesh to man. Everything in nature may become in turn the support and stay of an ever increasingly complex whole. If we look upon knowledge as an example of this, then, in the act of knowing, the human soul, though itself an intellectual form, becomes matter to an intellectual form, namely, the form of the thing known.

This intellectual engrafting is called by St. Thomas *intentional*, by reason of its mode. While insisting on this, we may call it *objective*, to denote that it turns a thing into an object for us.

St. Thomas could see only two extreme cases where this further determination of a form might be impossible. One was if the first constitution of the being under consideration implied a total absorption of its constitutive idea; that is to say, if it was completely individualized and immersed in its matter. The other was, on the contrary, a pure idea, but one which contained all possible ideality, and was in consequence incapable of receiving anything. The latter case is that of God, Who consequently really knows Himself, and all other things in Himself. Under the first are included all inorganic substances, which, having only the minimum of immanent ideality which is totally used up in determining them, cannot enjoy the luxury of

a participation in the ideality which surrounds them. "To him that hath shall be given."

We must bear in mind, when we talk like this, that we are dealing with the intangible. We cannot hope to make things clear, for "The principles of things are hidden in an impenetrable secret," and we are here at the very heart of these principles. The whole of philosophy is only an effort to push back the obscurity of effects towards their causes, without ever being able to dispel it. But knowledge is a fact: we do not hope to *explain* it, conscious, as Goethe said to his friend Falk, that "there are primitive phenomena whose divine simplicity it is useless to wish to trouble or disturb." Nevertheless we may lay down the terms, mark out the scope of inquiry, and conclude from "this must be" to "this is."

Consequences

What follows from this as regards the constitution of reality, and what can we gather, in the realm of metaphysics, from this interpretation, to which there is no alternative? It has been already made plain, for the Thomistic doctrine has passed over little by little from one of its correlative terms to the other, from Being in us to Being in itself. It follows from our analysis that reality, which is knowable, since *de facto* it is known, must of necessity be constituted at its foundation by that very element which causes it to be known: in other words it is itself an idea. Outside God and ourselves, an idea is a thing, while a thing, in us and in God, is an idea. At this stage, this will serve as a reasonably accurate résumé of Thomism.

We have just said that the principle of knowing and the principle of the thing known, in so far as it is known, are identical. We know only by the idea, taking the word in its broadest sense (*species, intentio*). If, then, we really and truly know things, it is because the idea is the basis of all that is knowable, and consequently of all that is.

Nourishment cannot be something entirely different in nature from that which it nourishes: there must be something in common to bring them together. Grass and the flesh of the grass-eating animal contain the same elements. If reality, of itself, nourishes thought, how can we avoid saying that reality is thought; that reality is intelligibility adapted to the intelligence; passive thought adapted to active thought?

Our activity provides a test. We draw out ideas from things, combine them and work them out within ourselves, and re-embody them in action. Does not the fact that the action succeeds, or harmonizes with things, prove the objective validity of the idea and of our judgments? If abstract thought resolves concrete problems, how can we fail to acknowledge its essential relation to the concrete?

By knowledge we obtain the subjective form of an objective reality; it is, indeed, objective reality itself, received into us, according to our nature and its own. It is a synthesis of subject and object, a common life of two realities, made for each other, because they are kindred beings.

Aristotle says: the world is *full of soul*. The world is imbued with spirituality and law; it is mind and law, reason and art, the formed idea of an intelligence, and we know this because the descend-

ing scale of intelligibility ascends again through us to its source. Since we know by means of an idea, since it is we who know, and reality that we know, we perceive that everything participates in the same essence.

The thing understood is adapted to him who understands it, and when these two act on each other in virtue of their capacity of understanding and being understood, they coalesce. We understand a thing by becoming it in its form of being: the thing is understood by becoming our act of understanding. The idea corresponds to the being: the being is made for the idea, and the soul unites the two. The unity is achieved in us because the thing is made for us and depends on us. This is a real unity, and manifests the fundamental unity of the intelligible, of the intelligence, and of being.

Being thinks, is thought, and outside that there is nothing. In its fullness, in God, being is the Thought of Thought, to use Aristotle's sublime expression. In all other intellectual beings it is living thought, and in bodies it is lifeless thought, but it is always and ultimately thought. Ravaisson writes that the world is a non-thinking thought, depending upon a self-thinking thought. "The world," says Novalis, "is a captive thought." God is a free thought.

We may say that since our souls exercise a universal power over being, they are, in a certain way, everything which they can become. The profound nature of the soul is an anticipatory and potential possession of everything that exists. The soul is a latent world; its initial zero is only the sign of a predestination to an infinite, which is expressed

in mathematics by double zero, joined together, ∞. The human soul, in its essence, is every idea and every being. Soul, of its very emptiness, eagerly summons idea and being to itself, to satisfy the natural desire for its own completion. Its need to know, to taste, to feel is only its need of self-realization, of passing from potency to act, of following its natural bent, and of finding itself. Its need of God is only the need of achieving this conquest of self and of all things, by going to the very Source whence they flow, and where self and everything else find their justification.

With what greatness does this truth endow us! The depth of our mind is unfathomable, like the world, and like God Himself. We are citizens of the infinite: we *are* infinite. It is only gradually that the knower realizes his universal power, though he really possesses it from the first. He is at once determined and undetermined; he is man, and he is the world. As the object of thought, he is one particular thing, but as the subject of thought he is a universal thing: for we can only become something in so far as we are it already, and we progressively become, or can possibly become, all things.

Our extension in being is thus measured, not by the narrow limits of our person, but by the vast horizon which opens before us. Take away thought and we are no more than the lowly beast, whose domain is a den and an acre or so of forest. Take away thought, and man is but a feeble nothing. We alone, in nature, have the whole universe for our world; other knowers have only certain districts, while the non-knowers have no more than themselves for world.

The intelligence itself is greater than anything else that comes within its range. It is a star in the heavens of nature, the harbinger of a new world. Or better, it is the eye of nature, the eye that nature lifts to heaven, the eye which has already pierced the heavens, which belongs to heaven, which *is* heaven, by its substance and power and its content of celestial light, and is of the earth earthy only by the organic means which it uses. The intelligence reveals our affinity to all things; it indicates the profound unity of being, to whose hidden depths it opens the door.

We must there seek for an explanation, as well as for an application, of this tendency of the mind to unify whatever comes under its sway, and enclose it in a more and more comprehensive framework, in order the better to grasp it. If the mind is, by its nature, adapted to its object, if there be a kinship between itself and reality, we are led to conclude that the tendency in us to unify things corresponds to a unitive arrangement in nature. Inversely, if there be a unity at the basis of everything, if everything is idea, then the mind will find satisfaction in bringing the phenomena of experience ever nearer to ideas. And if, after this, we come across a real idea, so rich that it comprises and explains everything, we shall have found the perfection of knowledge, as well as the perfect being. We shall have found the divine science, and God.

This in bare outline is the Thomistic structure, and its foundation is here in the analysis of knowledge. The mind which tends towards unity as towards an ideal, is forced in another way to tend away from it. Its first step is to acknowledge unity; then it makes an inventory of what it contains,

and finally it reintegrates the simplicity which it lost by analysis.

We try only to unify the multiple, and we only try, naturally and effectively, to unify that if it is ultimately one. Hence, instead of groping its way, our mind pierces to the very core, and unifies almost unconsciously, just as we can remember what a face looks like as a whole, without analysing its individual traits. Once we have grasped this essential order of unity in multiplicity and multiplicity in unity, we need not search for the accidental connections which follow from it. At least, perfect intuition would have this result, otherwise the universe is an enigma.

The Moderate Idealism of Thomistic Doctrine

It will be seen that the conclusion drawn from the interpretation of reality, as the object of knowledge, brings us to idealism. Things are ideas. The world might be called objectively a *real appearance*, just as subjectively it is a true *hallucination*, it is an idea formed by Mind. But Thomistic idealism carries with it none of the shortcomings that belong to the name: and also, because it is idealism, it lacks all the shortcomings of materialism.

It is proper to Thomistic teaching to envisage things from such a height that it embraces in one comprehensive synthesis the diverse positions which customarily divide philosophies and men. Mind and matter, body and soul, intelligence and will, unity and multiplicity, movement and rest, determinism and liberty, created and uncreated being, which each in turn have become all-absorbing and

exclusive in other systems, are here reconciled and brought into harmony.

From the start this spirit of synthesis is shown by the balance established between the consideration of subject and object in knowledge, which enables St. Thomas to escape both idealism and materialism, by being, as it were, out of reach of both.

If we examine materialism from the point of view of this initial problem, it is objectivism, that is to say, an exclusive preoccupation with the object, while idealism similarly considered is subjectivism, an engrossment of all reality in the subject. The subjectivist says: Everything is myself, since it is I who think, and the object of my thought is only what is within me. He ignores altogether the thing thought of, or its resorbence into himself. The materialist says: Everything is matter, since I think matter and find within me nothing but it. *He* ignores the subject, as subject, which builds up the idea from the matter outside of it.

The whole history of philosophy might be summed up as an oscillation between these two extremes. On one side, an entire confidence in the appearances of external reality, and the monopoly of thought by the study of objective relations. Such is naturalism, and such was formerly the teaching of those whom St. Thomas calls the *ancient naturalists*, Empedocles, Heraclitus, Diogenes of Apollonia, Hippo, Critias, and above all, Democritus. On the other hand, the fanatical insistence on the subjective conditions of knowledge, of the faculties and of self, and the tendency to look upon reality only as a modification of thought. This position is represented by Kantianism, and among the Greeks by the schools of Elea and Carneades.

Such a split into opposite camps is fatal, because at the very outset it divides thought and things, the knower and thing known, as such. And that is all that need be said. We are bound to acknowledge the immediate evidence that *we* know, that we know *this*, and this becomes us, and that neither knower nor thing known loses its own nature. The whole future study of knowledge is governed by this elementary observation. It is the vertex of the angle: produce the arms as far as you like, you will but show more and more its original correctness or error.

Materialism begins in external observation. It takes note of objects, among which are men, beings capable of knowing. It analyses this object, man, and imagines it has pieced together the objective conditions in which he knows. It says: That is all there is. Sensation is only a phenomenon like any other, like heat or electricity: thought and will are "secretions," the soul a word born of ignorance. I myself am a synthesis of states resulting from the same objective conditions, which give rise to thought and sensation. There is nothing else.

Yet even while the materialist is treating himself as an object, he is still an observer, and therefore a subject. He may like to overlook this fact, and imagine himself a stranger to himself, but he cannot help remaining a subject which observes.

How can this aberration come about? Because at the very outset the obvious and unexceptional opposition which exists in every fact of knowledge is neglected, between that which knows, precisely as knower, and that which is known, precisely as known. Because the need is not recognized of

allowing a special place for the subject precisely as subject, the worker of an action which is *sui generis* and irreducible to any other objective condition, namely, knowledge.

Knowledge does not go on within me as a phenomenon which comes from elsewhere and is entirely conditioned before it comes to me: it is also conditioned by my conceiving it, and it is I who manifest it under an entirely new form, a form which escapes all observation except my own, which is subjective and hence unyielding to any explanation merely from outside.

Knowledge has objective antecedents, and is itself objective, but it is equally subjective. By forgetting this, or not taking it sufficiently into account, people come to deny thought, and even sensation and life for what is peculiarly their own. They do away with the soul, and finish with a radical falsification of reality, the definition of which can be found only at the very heart of being, and by contact with its essential elements. "There is no such thing as *brute* matter," wrote Emile Boutroux, "and that which makes being of matter communicates with that which makes being of spirit."

Now as regards idealism. It starts by supposing that the first, if not the only object of philosophical inquiry is the thinking subject, or, better, the phenomena which we attribute to it, so much so that nothing can be conceived or granted except by or through this first object. This can go to great lengths; in the first place we may conclude that knowledge is in no way related to things, but only to my own mental states. As the Platonists held: knowledge is relative to ideas. With this difference that, whereas, on the Platonic hypothesis, ideas exist

of themselves or, as some maintained, in God, here they exist in us, and all human knowledge is thus reduced, in a manner, to psychology.

Further, since reflection consists in placing an interior object before one and thinking of one's thought as of a thing, if you say that the thing is inaccessible, you must say that even our mental states are inaccessible, and that true science, strictly speaking, consists not in *knowing* exactly, but in *living*. And so real knowledge becomes the unreflecting rhythm of the ego.

This leads to the ancient error that everything which is seen is true, even contradictories. If each one knows only his own mental states, he can judge only of them, and only in so far as he is affected. Every such judgment will therefore be immediate and infallible. Hence all states of knowledge will be valid, but we shall know nothing of their import.

It was sufficient for St. Thomas to have enunciated these consequences to justify his going back to a position which did away with them. But what can this position be? It is simply this: Knowledge implies immediate, objective data: not everything is subject or modification of subject. Now since from another point of view we are forced to hold that these objective data can be known only by becoming subjective, the only explanation is that subject and object, in the act of knowing, form a real synthesis. There is between them a constitutive relationship, absolutely fundamental, a relationship in *being*. This means that being is idea, as idea is being; that the stuff is common to both, and hence one can adapt itself to the other. The real can be in us without ceasing to be in itself, because its existence in itself implies an essence or form of

existence, which we can participate in, which we live in common with the object, and which knits us together.

It will be obvious that the problem of knowledge plays a leading part in the Thomistic system, just as it does in that of its antagonists. Everything, explicitly or implicitly, comes back to this. We often have the feeling of facing a closed system, but there is a way in, as in a split-ring. To ask, what is being, is to ask, what is this which appears to us. And how can we answer without first saying what we mean by appear, and what appearance gives or does not give to reality; so that we can say: This is the objective residue, and that belongs to the subject, and that is their common property; and such, finally, is being.

C. Particular Conclusions, giving the plan of Thomistic Teaching

This initial position leads to far-reaching consequences. To bring them out one by one, as they come within the scope of our experience, is to establish in its true order the whole of philosophy. St. Thomas has by no means done that, and even a superficial knowledge of the universe shows it to be so astonishingly complex that we should not expect it of him.

St. Thomas's teaching, taken in its entirety, is not a philosophy but a theology, which uses philosophy as its handmaid. St. Thomas never speaks of himself as a philosopher; the *Philosophi*, for him, were a class apart: he is *Doctor Catholicus* or *Theologus*, concerned with *Sacra Doctrina*. Theology avoids

the critical point of view and its accompanying analytical method. Its tenets are received, not discovered, believed, not criticized. Its content embraces the whole object of knowledge, but views it from the particular angle of divine revelation, from which angle it appears most unified and co-ordinated, and at once finds a proper place for human nature in so far as it can know, since it is properly classified in the order of being. We know that the classification of things according to truth is the same as according to being. If the order of beings is known by divine faith, then our condition as thinking beings, our capacity and our limitations will be likewise known.

Further, even in philosophy, the state of these problems in St. Thomas's day did not require the elaboration of a critical teaching, and he had no temptation to follow this line of knowledge. There existed in intellectual circles a unanimous acceptance of the conditions of thought. It was better for him to set to work to solve the problems of his time. On occasion, when the need arose, St. Thomas justifies his principles. He lays down the main lines which subordinate knowledge as a whole, and its characteristics, to the initial fact of the mode of thinking, but, while doing so, he took things for granted and used them. He did not mind anticipating, only he took care to advance nothing which might later be contradicted; and he anticipated not only himself, but the work of the future, being aware of the solidarity of human thought and the unity of knowledge.

In the chapters which follow, as we do not wish to depart too widely from St. Thomas's method of procedure, and as it is not our design to present

his philosophy in its entirety, we may abandon the genetic method sketched in this first chapter. We have all the more reason for doing so, since we can thus notice a few of the more salient characteristics, which when brought together may furnish a scheme of his teaching.

If knowledge may be called the return of being upon itself, being that is intelligence on the one hand and intelligibility on the other, then, the greater the being or the perfection (which comes to the same thing, since to perfect is to make to be), the greater its intelligibility and intelligence. And *vice versa*. Being and perfection, intelligence and intelligibility, go together and are, so to speak, only one thing. The more a thing is, the more it can be known; and the more knowable it is, the more it knows itself and all things. The all-being is also the all-intelligent and all-intelligible. On the other hand, as we recede towards non-being, the ultimate state of which is pure potentiality, we proportionally recede towards the unknowable. At a certain point active knowledge ceases. Then there is only an immanent idea called a *form*, or, from another point of view, an *end*. In the extreme case mentioned, there is not even that. There corresponds to the quasi-nothing of pure potentiality, beyond the nothing of active knowledge, the quasi-nothing of cognoscibility.

It is precisely this which experience shows us.

St. Thomas explains that we understand by the impression which things make upon us. This impression gauges their intelligibility and our intelligence. It is the subject or the object which sets the limit as the case may be. The conditions of knowledge make us realize that the objects of

experience are not entirely intelligible, and that we ourselves are not pure intelligence. There is in both a residue of the same nature, which conditions knowledge, active and passive, and which characterizes and limits it in all its branches. This is matter.

Our minds grasp the abstract nature of each individual thing which is represented to us. We do not grasp its individuality, though it is identical with the thing. The individual is for us "ineffable," since it implies an element which seems a stranger to that by which we know, and which represents a sort of degradation of it which we cannot grasp. We notice a similar waste in ourselves. We cannot completely understand ourselves at all: there are depths of unconsciousness in our individuality which we can neither sound nor reach, and our mind is there entombed.

If we realize that the form of existence of things by which we understand them is endowed with a sort of infinity, and that it represents, in its simple definition, an infinite series of closely allied propositions, which particular things one after another bring to reality but never exhaust, we come to the unexpected conclusion that the infinite is easier to grasp by the mind than the finite, and that the principle of the finite, matter (which, it is true, is in another way infinite), is for us in this life the chief barrier of knowledge.

What is this obscurity in us and things which limits our knowledge to universals? And what exactly is the place of an intelligent being in the hierarchy of things?

The obvious answer is that the living spirit and intelligible reality reach a stage beneath which they

live in a strange and inexpressible state of weakness. The light of the understanding has its penumbra in the senses and darkness in matter. Matter is a residue of mind, and a degeneration of it. When we seek to decipher nature, we find in everything, including ourselves, this obscurity, belonging to phenomena and to nature, in all its varied aspects. We cannot grasp it, yet it underlies thought as it underlies being.

The two aspects of nature, *act* and *potency*, are thus brought out. The genesis of the idea and the genesis of the thing show us these two sides of being. We reach the individual by a power that is half-blind and only semi-conscious, sensation. We never master it: we attain to our individuality only superficially, and by non-intellectual means.

This last fact is certainly the most striking, for our individuality is within us, and ought not to need pursuit. Yet we *do* pursue after it, and cannot overtake or capture it. Were we able to discover ourselves we should discover everything. To comprehend ourselves in our knowing states would be to comprehend the world. But everything slips away from us, ourselves included, because a vista, in a way infinite, opens before us.

At the beginning of our existence as thinking subjects we know nothing. We first house impressions and vague sensations. Next we gradually elaborate them, or rather we leave life to elaborate them spontaneously for us, and form an experience. The outside world dawns upon us, through the animated body, which apportions its qualities and rhythm by means of sensations. As the body is joined to the world, as the matter of the world is joined to its immanent idea, so the interior stock

of sense experiences, joined to our thinking soul, excites, by abstraction, the general idea, which really throws light on surrounding reality and its causes. But even now, in order that the idea, already received, may be used for actual knowledge, it must still come into contact with the images, whence it springs. It will be extinguished as soon as any sort of trouble, momentary or lasting, overcasts or effaces the imagination.

The only way of accounting for these facts is to say that the intelligibility of one part, and the intelligence of the other are not entirely unshackled, and are equally subject to restrictive conditions. Such an intelligible form does not exist *of itself*, as Plato believed. We must extract it. The intelligence is not independent in its functioning: it emerges from an obscure zone, above which it can raise itself only with difficulty, in constant danger of falling. Ideas in nature are mixed with certain things from which we must disengage them: our ideas are shrouded with a mist which obscures their light. Our conceptions are not intuitions and never more than partial. By abstraction we parcel out what is really one thing, fix what is really successive, hold up time and cut up substance. We make a heap of debris out of what was a living nature.

Our mind has in consequence a painful journey, groping from one glimmer to another, from one point of view to another, but the attempts at combining called judgments and reasoning, although restricted, are pushing always towards the light. Abstraction brings the whole richness of nature into a restricted conformity with out imperfect selves. We have an inkling of this underlying richness,

but we assert its presence rather than actually attain it. Hence it might seem that we have been over-enthusiastic about being. We must, however, distinguish. Thought is sublime by reason of its object and its possibilities; it is weak in its mode of functioning and weak as regards what it grasps at.

This apparent paradox is due to the fact that we and our immediate object are irreducibly composite, and this composition limits knowledge. Where the opaque element, matter, is removed, the object becomes entirely intelligible, and the subject entirely intelligent. The latter, being itself transparent, will, as knower, become equal to its own intelligibility, and will be able to grasp itself. It will be able to exercise the same power outside itself; and that without effort of discursive reasoning, or mixture of unknowable elements. Intellectual intuition would be a living contact, just as abstraction is a dead one. *De facto* we have no such intuition, and in the Thomistic system, we derive our certitude of the composition of things, and of our own composition, from the principles of knowledge and its modes, at the same time as the certitude of the essential and universal ideality of things.

This dualism is called hylomorphism, and taking off from things compounded of matter and form, the domain of our philosophy of being, stretches both ways. Upwards towards ideas more and more disengaged and pure, and downwards towards the darkness of matter. The musical scale of creation has matter for its bass, and God for its highest note. In the realm of created things, the idea will take us as far as the intellectual human soul in a body, the disembodied soul, and the angel. To

matter belong extension, number, movement, and time, which are attributes of *beings in motion*.

This matter-idea dualism, fundamental to Thomism, must stop at a point. If pushed too far it will have dangerous consequences, and will contradict its starting point, the supremacy of idea. What is found at the origin of a system must find a place also at the end, when the circle is completed. This teaching therefore takes dualism only as far as it should be taken, and we find out when to stop it by again reflecting on the fact of knowledge. For though matter resists intelligibility, it is no stranger to it. Matter and form are intimately connected. Our mind, conceiving the abstract through the things of sense in which the individual lurks, communicates with matter and unites it in the general idea of being. When thought affirms a thing to be, even though it affirms it to be unthinkable for it, it none the less admits it to be thinkable in itself. Mind and matter, viewed as *being*, differ only in degree and perfection. Since *being* is the object of our mind, and matter is a form of being, we must, indirectly, understand matter. A pure intelligence, an absolute mind could comprehend a material thing. Matter and form are equally transparent to it. *Sicut tenebræ ejus, ita et lumen ejus*. This is God's way of knowing.

It is universally true that knowledge is the return of being on itself, and the tendency to do away with the duality of subject and object, which appears in knowledge, is perfectly resolved in God, Who understands all things, and is absolutely simple.

The human soul, as St. Thomas so often says, is at the threshold of intellectuality. We have noticed some of its limitations. Its knowledge of

the world must come through the body, and therefore the relations of things can only be made manifest by the relations of the body. The series of things, once outside and now within us, reflected in the thought which abstracts them, reveals the world to us, and it can do so only according to the mode imposed on it. The measure of our physical make-up, whether specific or individual, measures our aptitude to experiment, and hence to think, the marvellous whole, which comes to us through our body, and of which the body is itself a part. Our experience will depend on the facility we have of bringing the images of things to us, or preserving and combining them in us, so as to form our inner world. Our experience is the flow of the universe into us, unconsciousness the ebb. The phenomena of the world are always affecting our senses, while *forms* and the reasons of things affect our minds. Nature caters for body and soul by supplying mental, and not merely bodily, food. It is our imperfection, not nature's, that prevents full assimilation.

But nevertheless, we are spirits all the same; our minds, in themselves, exclude matter; their action transcends physical change; it is autonomous, and belongs to the abstract. Let us keep on repeating that we know this to be true, because the mind's object is universal, and because the object and subject must correspond, since the object, in the act of knowing, is a development in the subject itself, and what our soul conceives is formed out of our own substance.

Hence the incorruptibility and immortality of the soul, which follow necessarily from its behaviour in the act of knowing. It is a *little lower than the*

angels, as the Vulgate renders Psalm viii. It serves therefore as a natural link between forms of existence, which are forms *of* matter (the soul is form *joined to* matter), and forms without matter. Under this last head come God, and below Him, the "vault" of created being.

The passage from forms of existence in general to the angels, forms which are self-subsistent, neither material nor joined to matter, is explained by St. Thomas as follows:

First, form, idea, is the basis of being, and matter is only a sort of degeneration, a *potency* corresponding to an *act*, a relatively non-being, a prospective being, as opposed to a being really in act, or a *perfection*. Therefore secondly, it is form which gives being to the composite of matter and form, just as in the universe, it is act which explains potency, and is prior to it. It follows thirdly, that matter cannot subsist alone, since it is then without being, but form *can* subsist, the only condition being that it must be sufficiently perfect; for it is an imperfection in a form that makes it need a support. A material form is the determination of the matter it informs, its *act*; by itself it has no subsistence or *proper* perfection. The human form is relatively, and eventually, self-subsistent; it *can* subsist alone, though this is not natural to it. It must have a body in order to show and develop itself by action, and to make up the complete human being. Above the human soul is pure form, totally free from matter properly so called.

The consequences are obvious, for, since the knower's clearness of vision and the clarity of the thing known are both limited by matter, take away matter, and they are on an equal footing, are like

each other, and combine. The angel is a real idea present to itself, fully knowable to itself, and typifying, in value and form, though in indefinitely varied degrees, that intelligible knower, which is the ideal being. In an angel, intellectuality is not a function or a superimposed and partial activity; it is its very nature. " It *has* not intelligence," says St. Thomas, " it *is* intelligence." It follows that it must *be* itself, and be entirely evident to itself. Again, everything it knows must be equally evident and quite transparent, seeing that the obscurity of being, in subject or object, comes only from the obscurity of matter. Instead of our clumsy groping after truth, this doctrine finds room for an intellectuality which is all light, where the idea is the whole being, where the idea is the subject itself, and no longer implies that unknowable element which bars our entrance at the very threshold.

St. Thomas's doctrine on the angels is based on a comparative analysis of spirit, pure and simple, and spirit joined to material conditions. By taking away from the whole what is passive and material—a loss which is really a gain—we reach pure spirit. We complete the work by removing the limitations, and this, done in detail, may rightly be called building a world.

There is one last step to mount. This is not really a step, it is true, because it is transcendent. God is above intelligence and intelligibility, because, as source of being, he is above being. But inasmuch as we take the word being to include its source, and qualify it as self-subsistent being, we may equally well use the terms subsistent intelligence and subsistent intelligibility or truth.

The angels, though *real ideas*, have their sub-

sistence, not in themselves, but from without. The idea which they represent, which they are, can be thought of as existent or as only possible, and must therefore come into being by the power of something else. What has need of being made real, does not make itself real. In this the angel, though quite spiritual and immaterial, bears a likeness to matter. It is also potential as regards the existence which it receives, as matter is potential as regards the form which something in act gives to it. But, if an angel receives its existence from something outside, this something, if similarly dependent, makes us seek higher still; and since we cannot go on for ever in a series of causes, we must come to a *first*, where essence and existence, idea and actual being, are absolutely identical.

And so we reach the summit of a spiral composed of three formations. These are intelligent beings, intelligences, and, at the summit, intelligence itself.

Our doctrine impels us to this flight towards a world above. But, while we acknowledge that it is there, we learn that it is closed to our intuition, and that we cannot have any direct contact with it. What is in itself the most knowable, is for us the most unknowable, because its perfection blinds us. We are as much dazzled by too much light as by sudden darkness. We know spirits and God only as postulates, which are our sole means of naming and qualifying them. This is what is meant by Thomistic *analogy*, to which we must return in the next chapter. This is important for all higher philosophical thought.

This analysis of thought and being opens up all the problems which thought will have hereafter to resolve. There lies the whole of metaphysics, the

study of which consists in unravelling the conditions of being, the object of consciousness, of being as being, and which gives a complete answer to the question: What must necessarily follow from that which actually is. If *that which is*, precisely as the object of consciousness, appears to us, in the very act of knowing, as an idea made real, as an existing essence, limited by its matter, then, by passing from this first conception to the postulates it necessarily implies, we shall be able to reconstruct all reality, including the Supreme Reality.

Philosophy is the art of discovering the essential links between things, and of joining them together like a rosary with its *Paters*. The idea is a *Pater*. The principal value of the idea here is not its content, but its important position in relation to primary causes. To study its nature, scope and value, is to rise to the source of things, of which it is the reflection.

If the soul did not thus reflect upon itself, what would it think of, and how high could it rise? Should it refuse to conquer itself, it would be powerless to conquer anything at all that is above it. It would be reduced to mediocrity. Then all man's work would be *for his belly*, as the Bible puts it, which is a summary way of saying his physical life and the external actions which characterize it.

Considered uniquely as the instrument of the *rational animal*, intelligence is the servant of animality. It does nought but perfect and enlarge the work of the senses: it is a universal hand, as Aristotle calls it. The internal images, which the soul uses, result from bodily actions, and idea is only a superior means at the service of these actions. If so, what becomes of our wonderful vocation and

privilege, situated as we are, on the confines of two worlds? Aristotle has defined human intelligence as a hand; he also says, thinking of our capacity for the ideal, that man only makes full use of his powers by going beyond himself, which implies first overtaking himself. By reflecting on himself, as knower, he finds his taking-off point, and is directed towards invisible realities.

By this very fact, the theory of knowledge bears also a moral character, partly, of course, because ethics are based on knowledge, but also, and primarily, because it leads us to the life of the spirit, which in turn leads to God, and compels us to contemplate our relations with Him.

"Ideas," wrote Schopenhauer, in the margin of a Plato, "are realities which exist in God. The world of bodies is like a concave glass which spreads the rays emanating from the ideas. Human reason is a convex glass which reunites them, and re-establishes the original image, although it is distorted by refraction." St. Augustine says, with more authority, thinking also of Plato: "The doctrine of ideas is so rich that none can become wise without understanding it." St. Thomas quotes this phrase with approval. For him ideas are almost everything, since they are the source of the ideas by which man understands, and at the same time the source of being. In every created being, essence comes first, and is the object of knowledge: then comes existence. In this way everything has an ideal beginning which gives it its status in being. What *we* call beginning is really only a continuation, because a being must be thought of before it can exist. Its true beginning is in the mind. *In the beginning was the word*. Hence every idea in a

created mind is a divine creation, and an indirect communication from God. Our conception of things follows their existence, which in turn follows their conception by the divine mind.

Thus our ideas depend on God's. If there were not in God *reasons* for all things, there would be neither object to embody ideas nor subject to conceive them. God's ideas found things, things thought, and thought action. For, as Novalis observes, " incomplete theory wards off practice, but complete theory brings it back."

CHAPTER III

GOD

In qualifying being, in the way he has done, St. Thomas inevitably and by anticipation, has qualified the Source of being. But a central problem like this dominates the whole of science, theoretical and practical, and must be treated apart. Indeed, the entire Thomistic teaching is but a long treatise on God, for we cannot study being, in its various manifestations, without referring constantly to its causes, and that brings us to the first Cause. The doctrinal section called theodicy is therefore only a framework. Everything else is really there and is deduced from it, and everything comes back to it. It is most important to grasp its main lines, which are the main lines of the whole of knowledge.

Seeing that we are presenting only the main theses of Thomism, three principal questions here call for our attention.

1. Is it possible and necessary to prove the existence of God?
2. What can be known about God?
3. What value can we accord to this kind of knowledge, as compared with our knowledge and certitude of natural things, and what value has it in relation to what God really is?

I. Need we Posit, and can we Solve this Problem?

A. Can God's Existence be proved?

We have not to wait for Kant and modern criticism to call in question the possibility of proving the existence of God. The arguments used, when they depend on a particular philosophy, lead to a discussion of that philosophy, but if we confine ourselves to the thesis itself, I believe we shall find nothing stronger than, or indeed anything really different from, the objections which St. Thomas puts to himself in the *Summa*.[1]

He asks: How can you prove God's existence, or anything whatsoever, without starting with a definition, without positing an essence which, it will be proved, demands existence, without supposing a logical order, an order of necessity which requires God, and which is therefore anterior to God? Now God, if He exists, cannot be defined: He is incomprehensible. If God is, His essence is none other than His being; for every determined essence implies limit or exclusion. If God exists, He is not preceded by any necessity resulting from the nature of things, since, if He is, then the entire nature of things comes from Him. There is, consequently, nothing upon which to build a demonstration of His existence. We do not know what should be seen to exist in order that God may exist. All that we could demand as necessary would not be God, except in name. Where can the argument start?

[1] Ia, q. 2, a. 2.

Secondly, to demonstrate one thing from another is to establish a relation or proportion between them. The earth is hot: I set out to prove that its heat comes from the sun. I can do so because there is a proportion between the heated body and the body which supplies the heat, and therefore a possible passage of heat from one to the other. But if I affirm the world is, and set out to prove that it has an infinite being for its cause, i.e., a being out of all proportion to it, how can the passage be made? The argument leads us nowhere, since it tends to the unknowable. We cannot compare what is caused with what is the cause; that is to say, we do not know whether there is causality, or whether this definite relation, causality, is here applicable. We know even that it certainly is not applicable, for there cannot be a definite relation between two terms of which one is infinite.

Thirdly, if there is a God, we must hold that He exists of Himself, i.e., by His very nature. Therefore His being and His nature are identical. Therefore, to know the nature of God is the same as to know His existence. Now we admit that God's nature is inaccessible. Avicenna had said, and St. Thomas repeats: "The same reality answers this double question: Is it? What is it?" Under these conditions is Pascal far wrong in saying: "If there is a God, He is infinitely incomprehensible, and we cannot know what He is or whether He is"?

Lastly, the difficulty becomes still more striking if we observe that every demonstration depends ultimately on experience, seeing that the principles employed can have no other origin. Those who imagine that principles drop from heaven, under

the name of innate ideas, may believe that these may help them to ascend thither, but if experience is our starting-point, and our domain the world of experience, our principles will not take us any farther than their nature imports or their power allows. To make them lead us to what is transcendent is to violate them, and that is really to abandon them and lay down an arbitrary conclusion. It is a logical fault in every matter to prove something about the object by principles which belong to another kind of object, like using mathematical arguments in morals. Here the mistake would seem much graver. We claim to pass, by means of experimental principles, to an object, which, by its very nature, is outside experience. We use principles of one genus to prove an object which transcends all genera. We speak of causality, finality, necessity, participation, etc. To apply them to what is transcendent is a *petitio principii*, or begging the question. It is a contradiction even, for these *relations* can belong only to what is relative, and God, if He exists, cannot be related to anything, because He is infinite and therefore absolutely outside the framework, with no definable link with anything at all; outside the logical order which claims to include Him, and dictate its laws to Him.

To sum up, to deduce God's existence is to deny Him: therefore we cannot have any real demonstration of it.

These arguments, which in substance are St. Thomas's, are surely disquieting, and not without force. Kant succumbed to them, Pascal half succumbed, and in contemporary thought

objections of this kind meet with ready credence. Let us examine St. Thomas's answer to the ages which followed him, in quietly solving his own objections.

Here again the gravity of the question justifies our elaboration of St. Thomas's replies; but if our exposition seems full compared with the brief answers given by St. Thomas, we feel, on the contrary, bearing in mind all that follows from it, and the difficulties of to-day, that we only feebly sum up in this work of synthesis, where every solution has far-reaching consequences.

The first objection is based on the impossibility of defining God, and is, to that extent, unanswerable. St. Thomas, more than anybody, more than certain deists would desire, insists on the unknowableness of God. On this point he goes to the extreme limit, and would applaud wholeheartedly the pungent little dialogue of Leonardo da Vinci: "What is the undefinable thing which would cease to be if one could formulate it? The infinite, which would be finite if one could define it." But it remains to be proved that every demonstration of a thing depends on a definition of that thing, and this cannot be proved. There are two kinds of demonstration, one which tries to establish a simple judgment of existence, and another which attempts to give the reason for that existence. An example would be if I, not content with showing by experience or otherwise that man is mortal, undertake to show the intrinsic reason, and natural necessity of his immortality. In the latter case I must obviously begin with a definition. What is man? The accurate answer to this question puts me in a position to

decide whether death is just a frequent accident or an unavoidable fatality. And in order to define man, I must have recourse to notions anterior to him, which include him—such notions as living, natural body, four elements. I envisage "man" as a logical network which itself corresponds to a network of objective conditions, and which obliges man, so to speak, to be mortal, by obliging him to be what he is.

God's existence certainly cannot be proved by this form of argument, and, were there no other, the objection would hold good. But the other kind of demonstration offers a way out. To establish a simple fact, a definition is not necessary, at least, a definition of the *thing*; and that is what the objection must needs suppose. Obviously we should know what we are talking about, and, in consequence, define our terms. We want to prove the existence of God: then we must say what we understand by "God." But this definition is not necessarily a definition of His nature; it may be nothing more than an expression of a function. I call God the first cause, whatever that may be, of the movement of beings, of their existence, of the order they manifest, of the hierarchy of their values, etc. That gives an object to the proof but it is not a definition of God: it does not endow Him with an essence that can be expressed in concepts; a determinate being; much less a being resulting from a necessity anterior to it, from an order of things that include Him. Thus the whole objection falls to the ground. It supposes an *a priori*, or better, *ex prioribus* proof, while the proof of God's existence is *a posteriori*, *a posterioribus*: it starts with effects, not with causes. I do not set out to

derive the necessity of God from a logical order or a reality anterior to Him. I undertake to deduce this necessity from what is, and from the logical consequences of what is. That is quite a different thing.

It is objected: you do not know what you must know to exist in order to prove that God exists. But I do. I must show that some sort of principle exists of the unexplained being which I posit, under all the forms in which this being is presented to my observation, and in which it lacks a sufficient explanation. Then again, it is quite beside the point to tell me that everything I can demand as necessary would be God only in name. I demand nothing nominally in the sense in which you take the word. In this sense God is not *named*, and we affirm it with St. Thomas, even at the risk of shocking the timid. St. Augustine said, long before you, speaking of God: "If you understand Him, it is not He." *I* demand something quite different. I demand a cause sufficient to explain obvious effects. This cause can be anything you like so long as it plays its proper part. Far from wanting to define it, I undertake to prove that, if it is going to play the part reality assigns to it, it must be incapable of definition. How can I, then, characterize it, and build up a purely natural theology? We shall see; but at the moment I answer: Uniquely by its effects, and in no sense by itself.

That seems to me enough for the present: it will become clearer as we go on.

What about the second argument? It states that the lack of proportion, of definite relation, between God, if He exists, and what is said to demand His existence, is an obstacle to any proof

of His existence. Causality is a relation, and there is no relation between the infinite and the finite. I reply: It is perfectly true that God is not proportioned to the creature, that there is no reciprocal relation of God with the creature, any more in the order of causality than in any other order. That too we take upon ourselves to prove, so far are we from denying it implicitly in our outline of proof. We do not find it at all embarrassing. On the contrary, we should like to retort, and ask whether no contradiction appears in saying, on the one hand: If God is, then He must be infinite, and on the other: An infinite God cannot be demonstrated by finite effects. How do you know that God, if He is, must be infinite? Renouvier would not grant it, though we do. You and I know it, because we know what conditions must belong to a principle of the universe, if the universe needs a principle. If you mean that the universe has no need of a principle, the statement must be examined. But what surprises me is that this infinity, which is required, since it is postulated, seems an obstacle to a demonstration when it supplies one of the terms of a demonstration!

Moreover, this obstacle is illusory. We cannot adequately know a cause by effects disproportionate to it, and when it is a question of a transcendent, infinite cause, we cannot claim to define it. But, without knowing or defining it in this way, we can prove the existence of the cause by the existence and exigences of its effects. We can reach it and characterize it precisely as the sufficient cause of them, requiring such and such attributes in order to be sufficient, the notion of which attributes being borrowed from these effects. What will then be

defined will be its *rôle*, but it will not be God, whom we affirm, on the contrary, to be unknowable in Himself.

It will be objected that it is a contradiction to attribute to God certain well-defined *rôles*, and at the same time declare that He is indefinable. This would be true if we claimed to define these well-defined *rôles* from God's point of view. The infinite God cannot have in Himself any defined *rôles*—*rôles* determinable by us as qualifications of His nature. God has no nature, and no *rôles*: He is; He is infinitely, and that is all, and that is enough. These *rôles* we speak of are defined by us only from the creature's standpoint. We, being finite, must posit them: they are differentiated only by our analysis, and given their character by our way of conceiving them. The divine Being absorbs them all in the mystery of His unity.

We must understand that it is not God Who is here to be defined and made intelligible: it is the world. The problem of God is only the ultimate basis of the problem of the world and of life. Take away God, and life and the world are left unfinished, are not defined, but offer only something relative and insufficient, without ultimate reason for existence: what may be called *a system of nothings*. But, to manifest them, and make them thinkable for us, it is sufficient to be able to think of, and define God, and make Him apparent to us, precisely as exercising a function. The problem of God leads us to this: to comprehend the necessity of the Incomprehensible, to know that there is an Unknowable, to define the need of the Indefinable. So true is this, that if we were able to understand and define God, we would then be unable to account

for the world. I mean that if God were to enter into the categories of thought, under any guise whatever, He could no longer be that first thing which the world requires in order to remain in what Renouvier calls "the limits of the possible intelligence." It is quite obvious, therefore, that there is no contradiction of any sort. The defined and the non-defined do not belong to the same object or the same subject, and the objection falls to the ground.

On the question of the identity of essence and existence, of being, and that which is, in God, we are in entire agreement. We admit the consequences: we can no more attain to the being of God than we can to His nature. But it is by no means necessary to attain to God's being in this way in order to form a judgment of His existence. To affirm that God is, is not to be in contact with God's essence. *Being* may be taken in two ways. First as signifying the very entity of a thing, in which sense *being* is substance, quantity, quality and the rest, because "that only can be called being which enters, in some way, into the general categories of being."[2] Secondly, as expressing the truth of a proposition, by means of the connecting-word *is*. In the first sense, the word *being* signifies God in His reality, and therefore stands for something unknowable. In the second sense it signifies nothing; it is only a predicate which can be applied equally well to a thing without real existence, as when we say: Thisness *is*, or nothing *is* inferior to being. When we say: God *is*, we simply affirm the reality, under whatever form it be, of the sufficient and necessary principle of all things. We predicate

[2] *Quodlibet*, IX, art. 3.

reality of the unknowable and unnamable principle, without which nothing can be known or named.

It will now be apparent that the very being of God, identical with His essence, has absolutely no need to be attained by the mind, in order that the proposition, *God is*, may be true and rigorously demonstrated. We do not put God among existing things in the sense that we attribute being to Him as a quality which He possesses in common with His creatures. In that sense God *is not*. If He were, He could no longer be called the source of being. That which causes being is above and outside the being which it causes. Since all causality implies an ultimate principle, we postulate one, and call it *God*. When we say *God is*, we consecrate this postulate to Him alone, but we do not, properly speaking, qualify its possessor. Our God is not *such* a one; were He *such*, He would be limited, and could no longer answer our requirements. The phrase, *God is*, is positive only as an expression of the insufficiency of the world and the correlative necessity of an ultimate principle: as a value of definition, in the proper sense of the word, it is entirely negative.

After that it is useless to dwell on the last argument; it is already answered. Our principles are derived from experience, and, it is objected, they cannot take us out of the realm of experience. Hence we cannot pass beyond that realm. I answer that we pass beyond experience only in the sense that we follow up our experiences to the source which explains them. If we cannot close the circle, if series of causes cannot give a reason for their efficacy save by means of a first cause, at once immanent and transcendent, then we must admit a

first cause. This first cause is immanent by its action and life-giving presence, and, under this aspect, it is knowable, as a necessity of experience itself. As transcendent we declare it inaccessible and unknowable; we do not put it in any ideological framework or category. The relations we attribute to it are only conveniences of thought; in no sense are they realities. There are no real relations of God to the creature: there are only real relations of the creature to God, which we, by an instinctive need of *correlation*, make reciprocal. Whatever there is in the creature comes from God, subsists by God, and tends towards God, but without any change, or real qualification, or attachment, or real relation on God's side.

The inclusion of God in a logical order, on which He is made to depend, is therefore only a way of speaking. We really do not include God in anything. The logical order is an emanation in ourselves and a blurred image of His inaccessible truth, which it does not comprehend. God is not reducible to a system: He is limited by nothing, not even by Being, if we mean by that, Being other than Himself. He *is*, and every necessity, logical or real, comes from Him. The " system " we invoke in order to render God's existence necessary, i.e., certain, is a system of things. It is the law of the sufficient *raison d'être* applied to facts, which, without God, is broken off suddenly when its application is most imperative. For at this point the cycle of facts is about to close, the series of causes about to find its starting-point and its end.

It may be objected, with Pascal: " If there is a God, He is infinitely incomprehensible, and we can know neither what He is nor whether He is." We

answer (perhaps in Pascal's own sense) that we cannot know what He is, i.e., in Himself, but only what He is in relation to us, or more exactly, what we are in relation to Him. Again we cannot know whether He is, if by *is* is meant the being of His essence. We even go so far as to say that in this sense He *is not*, or, if you like, that His being is His very nature, as His nature is His being—feeble words that do not pretend to define or qualify, in the strict sense of these terms, what God really is. Still, the affirmation, *God is*, is exact, as a postulate of the real, in the sense explained above, and to be further explained later on.

Thus Pascal's proposition may be directed against the misunderstanding of it. We might apply it to the world, and argue: If there is a world, it is infinitely incomprehensible without God. But there is a world. *Ergo*. And we have a right to ask, with Jacques Rivière: " Can we say that we do not understand that, without which all the rest appears to us incomprehensible? "[3] There is no doubt that we do not comprehend Him in Himself, but we comprehend Him as an inevitable postulate, qualified as such, and we reach the height of comprehension in declaring Him, properly speaking, beyond our comprehension. " When a problem is insoluble," says Novalis, " we resolve it by proving that it is insoluble."[4] This is St. Thomas's meaning, when he says, speaking of God: " The supreme knowledge we can have of Him is to know that He is above all our thoughts."[5]

These objections thus answered are seen to arise

[3] *A la trace de Dieu*, p. 44.
[4] *Fragments*.
[5] *De Veritate*, q. 2, art. 1, ad. 2.

from a false conception of the relations of God with the world and with thought—a conception falsely attributed to us and then used against us. The replies do no more than re-establish the true conception. It must be admitted that we often lend colour to these false interpretations by language and ideas which are more or less anthropomorphic. As we shall see, St. Thomas, in his own quiet way, boldly uses agnosticism. He was familiar with the truth of Pascal's maxim, which he expressed with reference to holy Scripture: "While acknowledging one truth, we must always bear in mind the truth of its antithesis." When St. Thomas speaks of making God known, he does not forget that, on the other hand, God is unknowable, and that our demonstrations do not reach His very being. Therefore the opponent will apparently have occasion to object to them, but he does so only by disregarding Pascal's maxim, by having a one-sided, distorted view of truth.

B. Is it Necessary to Demonstrate the Existence of God? St. Anselm's "Proof"

While some refuse to be convinced by arguments, there are others who refuse even to consider the question, for a quite opposite reason. God is not demonstrable, some say. But others say: God is evident, and therefore does not need to be demonstrated. Still they argue a good deal in support of this self-evidence, and subtly too. St. Anselm argues in page after page of his *Proslogion*, and his *Book of Apologetics against Gaunilon*, but his method is defensible as an example of the Socratic

method, of bringing an opponent to agreement by the investigation of his own principles.

St. Thomas is scarcely convinced by this attitude. He finds it unscientific; he attributes it partly to confusions in doctrine, and partly to those habits of mind which in us have the force of evidence. Accustomed from childhood to invoke God, religious men cannot call in question a notion which seems bound up with their very intelligence. They say: It is evident, where they should say: I believe it, or where it remains to say: I prove it. This is not a reason for turning a deaf ear to them. They incidentally say much that is true, and we must show just where they are at fault.

There are, then, those who say: God cannot but be evident to us, since He is in us far more intimately than is our own soul. We might reply: You are begging the question; you cannot know that God is in us, except you are first of all sure that He exists. But granted we know His existence by some other means, e.g., faith, even then your statement that God is necessarily evident to us, because He is in us, is not exact; for it does not follow that a thing is evident to us because it is in us. It must be present to the mind as its proper object, and this is not true of God. It is not even true of our own soul, which is more than intimate to us, being a very part of us. Our soul becomes an object of our intelligence, only by recourse to our senses, by intellectual abstraction and reflection. With God for our object, we must pursue the same process, and in addition to it, bring in the principle of causality. Then we can attain to God, starting with His effects in us, but in this case our method is one of demonstration, not of immediate evidence.

Others insist: How can He, by whom we know everything else, help but be evident? Is not God " the light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world "? Is He not the source of all understanding, as of all being? We answer. Granting, without proof (as these opponents do), that God exists, He is the principle of intelligibility, of intelligence, and of intellection, but not in the sense that nothing can be known without knowing Him, or before knowing Him, as the knowledge of conclusions depends on the knowledge of axioms. God is the principle in this matter in so far as He causes the light which the mind uses, just as He supplies the light which is immanent in all things. Therefore it is by using this causality that we can attain to God; therefore by demonstration, not by evidence.

Others argue from *objective* truth; truth *is*, and it is evident that it is; even in denying it by saying: There is no truth, we affirm a truth by that very fact. And truth is eternal, for if we say that truth once was not, even then it was true that it would begin. But God is truth; therefore He exists necessarily and from eternity. The flaw in this argument rests in taking truth, eternal truth, as if it were something subsisting in itself. Truth is a truth of things; it is the relation of things to the mind; it is founded on being. Now, it is quite obvious that being is, but it is not so obvious that it comes from a first Being, which is called from this very fact the first Truth. Just what is to be demonstrated is assumed, and the assumption is quite arbitrary.

Or you may argue from Goodness. Every being seeks after goodness, and goodness has its source

in God; in fact it is God, and no intelligent being can wholly aspire to God in this way without God being self-evident. I reply: There is in us, by reason of the Good to which we naturally tend, a confused sentiment of God, and a correspondingly confused knowledge of Him. But this is not really knowing that God is, any more than you really know that Peter is coming, if you merely know that *somebody* is coming, who turns out to be Peter. This is knowing an object *in confuso*, whereas proper evidence implies knowing it as *such* a thing. In this case, what we have a definite sentiment and certain knowledge of is beatitude. But we know that people have imagined beatitude under all sorts of forms, often, unfortunately, without introducing God. Montaigne found two hundred and eighty sovereign goods in the philosophers.

Lastly, St. Anselm sought—more philosophically but still sophistically—to prove God's existence evident by including it in the very notion of God. His procedure was not lacking in force; for we mean by " evident " that which is known by the sole consideration of the terms, so much so that its denial implies a contradiction. Now, says St. Anselm, having understood what the word " God " means, we are immediately assured that God is. The word " God " signifies a being, than which nothing greater can be thought of. Now what exists at the same time in the mind and in reality is greater than what exists only in the mind. Can we imagine a perfect thing without existence? Therefore, to conceive the notion of God, and to affirm that He does not exist, is to utter a contradiction. If our idea of God has no real object answering to it, the idea itself falls to pieces. But we do have

the idea. Therefore with it we have the certitude of an existence which cannot be separated from it. We can deny this existence in words, and consider this denial in thought, but it is only an apparent denial. The mind of necessity must affirm it.

St. Thomas has examined this argument time and again. At one time he simply refutes it; at another he draws out of it a valuable truth, as is his wont. Here is his position. God's attributes follow necessarily from the notion of God. If He exists merely in the mind, these attributes will be notional; if He exists in reality they will be real. The first of these attributes, in our eyes, is obviously self-existence, for without that He would be nothing and could not be the cause of being. Therefore if God exists, in Himself, or in our minds, He must exist there by reason of His own nature, and His existence will be identical with Him, in such a way that if we had intuitive evidence of His nature, His existence would be incomparably more evident to us than is the principle of contradiction. But we have still to choose between the two ways of existing attributable to God, the one real, the other ideal. We have no intuition of God, and consequently the identity of subject and predicate in the sentence: *God is*, is not immediately evident to us: we must get it by demonstration. Granted this demonstration we know that God, really existing, is also really identical with His being, and that we cannot suppose Him not existing without contradicting ourselves. But, until we have that demonstration, we have no right to affirm that God exists, and the subtleties of Anselm add nothing to our knowledge.

There is a double flaw in his argument. First,

when he tries to pass from the idea contained in the word "God," as understood by everyone, to the existence of God, he supposes that everyone understands by the name "God" just what he requires for his thesis, viz., that God is that, greater than which nothing can be conceived. This is false, since we find that many among the ancients make God out to be a corporeal being, or have confounded Him with the world, or talk of a *finite* God. Great doctors like John Damascene enumerate the various meanings of the word "God" without ever mentioning this one. Nowadays, ethnology applied to the religious conceptions of primitive peoples has taught us that such metaphysical notions are foreign to them.

But even granted that the word "God" can have no other meaning than St. Anselm's, you must still bridge the gulf between the conception of such a God—viz., the greatest conceivable thing, and therefore self-existing—and the existence of this God in reality. The objector can always say: I conceive the greatest conceivable thing as really existing, as existing of itself, as being unable not to exist, but I have no business to conclude from this that He exists in fact, and it is false to affirm that existence in fact would add anything to my notion of Him. There are here two different orders. Actual existence adds nothing to the perfection of a concept; it belongs to another order. A concept may or may not include the notions of existence, self-subsistence or intrinsic evidence, but only in the order of concepts, and the attribute affirmed will still remain merely conceptual. As long as we are in the world of ideas we cannot conclude to the existence of anything real. We need a bridge

to pass from this designation of ideas to positive reality.

Further, on a point of logic, there is an obvious mistake. Anselm takes as equivalent the *conception* of a really existing thing, and the *affirmation* that it exists. Now a conception cannot of itself serve to justify an affirmation. There are two mental operations, simple apprehension and judgment, and the former does not include the latter. To name God, *He who is* presumes nothing as to the affirmation of His real existence. In spite of the verbal paradox, *He who is* might perfectly well not exist. If you affirm Him existing, this can only be in virtue, either of an intuition—but that suggests ontologism—or by a demonstration, which is refused.

Anselm's activity leaves us with a deep sentiment of God, an admirable analysis of the conditions of the First Principle, a powerful psychological effort, and a breath of religion which amply redeems the logical weakness of the *proof*. It is not a proof, but there is, as a kind of preamble or illustration, an imposing systematic construction of the *hypothesis, God*.

II. What can we know of God? The Five "Ways"

We have already answered this question in a negative way, in replying to those who deny the possibility of proving God's existence, and who say: If there is a God, He is infinitely incomprehensible, and we can know neither what He is, nor whether He is. We have rejected the latter part of this sentence, but without giving any proof,

while we have conceded the former part, as to our knowledge of what God is, but not in positive or sufficiently precise terms. We have, then, to go back on our reasoning as regards each of these statements.

How do we set about proving God's existence? St. Thomas, in the *Summa*, has opened up five ways. We have no intention of taking them one by one here; that has been done many times.[6] Let us here take them *in globo*. They may be synthesized as follows:

Everything which we experience appears to belong to a chain of existing things, implying and succeeding one another; a chain of attributes which communicate with each other and interchange; a chain of graduated values, of results, now partial, now general, and growing more and more general till they form a universe. It is so many ordered series which cross and interlace, indefinitely sub-divided into a number of combinations, but where everything is linked up. One being comes from another, which itself finds its *raison d'être* in a third, and this third in yet another. An effect comes from a cause, which in turn implies a third. A change, whether local, qualitative or quantitative, calls for a source of change, which appears dependent on a second, which issues from a third. A perfection is of such a degree in one place; of some other degree elsewhere, in conditions which reveal a common origin. The same question arises if we compare the perfection of this origin with its kindred perfections. Again, as regards the arrangement of things, an element is aggregated to a compound.

[6] Sertillanges' *Saint Thomas d'Aquin*. Garrigou-Lagrange, *Dieu, son existence et sa nature*.

This in turn becomes elementary in relation to a further compound, and so on in ever-increasing complexity. Fresh perfections show themselves and open out vistas of still greater ones. All that, to use an abstract word, familiar to philosophers, may be called an immense *conditioning*, by which being and its perfections exist in different degrees, bearing different mutual relationships, and under different forms.

How can this series be accounted for, and what does it presuppose? Can it be shown that all this rhythm of nature betrays a divine influence?

Some say that it is subjective, i.e., it postulates nothing but ourselves. We might smile and pass on, but we remark that it does not alter the question, except that it gives rise to further problems. For these states of ours are conditioned one by another, just as much as things are, and in default of finding God at the apex of things, we have simply to find Him in ourselves.

Others admit that it is real, but only as the whole: its divisions are due to mental analysis: it is thought which creates them by reason of its very nature and needs. That does not alter the question either, as we shall show presently. The common consensus, and ultimately everybody, once beyond the stage of quibbling, acknowledges the world's existence. It exists with this character of a vast, multiform series, and here is the place to ask, yet again, whither this series leads us.

In no order can anything give what it does not possess. If it does not possess it of itself, it receives it from something else. The fact that there are interchanges and gradations proves that there are sources. Some of these sources are evident to us,

and there is no lack of them in every natural species. Only we must ask: Where are the primordial sources, the first energies, beings, perfections, *reasons*, of everything? For it is the first which supplies everything in a series of causes. When a chandelier is hung from the ceiling by a chain, the ring nearest the light holds it up; this ring hangs upon another, which in turn depends upon a third; but it is the last ring which supports everything. Similarly, when a thing is brought into being, its birth supposes an immediate condition which is called a generating condition. This condition is itself conditioned by all sorts of facts which explain its existence and action. Each of these facts has new conditions, and so on, till we come to the very springs of the cosmos.

Going forward, we find the same conditions are required to account for any further generation. And the question remains the same if, instead of being, we take a state, quality, arrangement, or attribute of any sort. For, although being is multiform, its essential laws are the same, and we are analysing one of the profoundest of them. Since each thing gives only what it has received, it is an intermediary, and, of itself, explains nothing: it is a simple channel, not a source. Consequently, in each series of causes, these channels or intermediaries cannot go on indefinitely. "There cannot be an infinite series of causes." The reason is, not only because an infinity of elements in the universe seems an impossibility, but also because it would have no purpose, would account for nothing, and leave the whole train of nature without a sufficient cause.

Every conditioning is composed essentially of

three terms: an origin, a communicating medium, and an ultimate result: source, channels, effect. It makes no difference whether the system of channels is more or less developed, whether the medium is simple or multiple, whether the number of intermediaries is finite or infinite. Suppress the first source; an infinite number of intermediaries will not fill its place; the transmitting channels have no longer anything to transmit, and offer only a useless emptiness.

If you deny the reality of component parts, and make them out to be the results of a purely mental disintegration, you may be forced to conclude that there are no causes or distinct effects, no parts of a universal harmony, or co-ordinate movement, or gradations, or interchanges, but you must still acknowledge a fundamental unity, whence your mind necessarily draws out all these divisions. And this analysis must lead you to a *less* which presupposes a *greater*, and that a *greater still*, until you must eventually come to an integration, which brings us back to our original conclusion.

It is said that the principle of causality fundamentally expresses only one thing, viz., that all things form a *whole*; that their character and their very reality depend upon, and in some cases consist in, their being inserted in this whole. We agree, with the proviso that not all phenomena are related to the whole in an immediate and independent way: there are interpositions and mediations; there are series. To deny this would be to deprive knowledge of its object. We have still to determine the character of this whole. If it appears divine, we shall rest content, satisfied in having established the transcendence of God in Himself.

To return to the point. When we follow up the series of phenomena and beings to find their first cause, we must bear in mind that it is not succession in time, but dependence in nature that is important. The causes of the world are not discovered by regression in time. The past may be a condition of the becoming of the present, but not of its actual being. The past, no longer existing, cannot be the cause of anything. It is not the past which causes the present, which actually explains it, and supplies the reason, immanent or external, proximate or remote, of its existence. A father is the cause of his son's birth, by collaborating with the general causes which concur in every generation, and are the mainstay of all being. But after his son's birth, he explains nothing. Whether or no the father continues to live makes no difference to his son's life. Thenceforth the son depends only upon the activity of general causes, and the intrinsic consistence of his own being. And so with everything. Hence the regression which we are attempting is not a regression in time or a search for temporal origins. We reason about a series of causes as we would about a row of skittles standing in a straight line, nearly touching. Knock the first, and *immediately* you knock down the last. So the first cause *actually* accounts for the very last effect.[7]

This observation is most important, for, if we were to take a series of causes made up of beings simply following one upon another, each causing the next, but the action of the last not resulting, properly speaking, from the whole, then there is no reason why these *ordinated*, but not *subordinated*

[7] NOTE.—This is only a comparison. In reality there is a measurable time between the falling of the first and last skittle.

causes should not be infinite in number. St. Thomas believes in the philosophical possibility of an eternal world, in which there would be an infinite series of generations. He calls this infinity *accidental*, i.e., having no essential relation with causality. But within causality proper there cannot be an infinite series, because there would then be nothing to unite and integrate the conditions requisite for a phenomenon; because there would be no original term whence the phenomenon or the being would be reputed to come.

This leads us to the first beginnings of being and activity, of perfections of every form, degree and order. That these sources exist cannot be gainsaid. Reason demands them and science pursues them. Science believes that it has detected them and is constantly striving to trace them to deeper and more certain origins. Suppose that we think we have found, by science, the beginning of life, of the stars, of the evolutions they command; the beginning, proximate or remote, of all observed movements, of all organizations and perfections which are found in the world. What ought we to expect from these beginnings in order to accept them as such; in order that they may be truly the first? They must show such properties, that their own existence, their own activity, their arrangement, if any, their perfection, their all, find their justification without recourse to anything else. For, to explain a phenomenon means to think of it in function of immediate antecedents, these antecedents in function of others, and these in function of others still, and lastly in function of everything, as regards its primordial conditions and its first roots. The real must therefore be intelligible:

only in so far as it is intelligible does it exist for us intelligent beings. Unless human thought, in its most essential action, be fallacious, these conditions, these roots of universal being, must be able to be thought of without reference to anything else. That is what is meant by necessary: necessary not merely in the sense that it must not be lacking, must not perish, or fall to bits, or be other than what it is, but in the sense that it *cannot* be thus in any way at all. It carries its whole *raison d'être* in itself, so that its derivatives receive from it, but without its receiving anything from anywhere, whether as intelligible or as being.

It is this last effort of research which Plato, in his *Phaedo*, reproaches Anaxagoras with not having known how to accomplish. "Anaxagoras," he says, "saw only the cause of that which is: he did not see that other cause, without which this cause would not be a cause at all. There is matter and instrument (or intermediary), but there is also the Good, the divine, the immortal Principle, which alone is capable of binding together and embracing all things."

As a matter of fact this necessary cause, which we are seeking after, demands, when analysed, very stringent conditions. By successive demonstrations, it can be established that it is unique, and not multiple, as one might be led to think it, in view of the great diversity of series used in our regression. It is a sort of centre of universal convergence. For then it can be shown to be incorporeal, for what is corporeal is, at least potentially, multiple, as well as being potential in many other respects. The necessary being is simple in every way, otherwise it would be posterior to its component parts,

and would therefore pose the double problem of their origin and their synthesis. It must needs be perfect, in order to be the sufficient cause of all being; it must possess all perfections, the fount whence all perfections are derived. It must, then, be the sovereign Good, the unique and eminently simple source of all multiple goods. Therefore it must be endowed with infinity, which is really the same thing, since what is perfect excludes all limitations. It is consequently everywhere, and present in all things, since a thing is where it operates, especially if it has to provide being and all its attributes. It is unchangeable and unchanging, as change would make it potential, and tending towards its plenitude rather than actually possessing it. It must be endowed with knowledge and not be inert, for the plenitude of a being which is present to itself, utterly without potentiality, includes that perfect intimacy of knowing subject and known object which is knowledge. It must, then, know itself perfectly, by itself, and must know all things through itself, since it is the source of the entire being of each thing. It must have in itself ideas of all things, actual or possible, which is really only to know itself in so far as it is, or can be, participated in. It is substantial Truth, inasmuch as its being is the essence of that truth which is found in things, and also of the truth which is found in the mind, both of which are in it identical. It is entirely living, or rather, it is *Life*, and notably as to its sovereign intelligence which is perpetually in act. It is endowed with a will, and its will is eminently free, because will follows on intelligence and is proportionate to being, in such wise that a being which causes all

things by its intelligence, necessarily rules them all by its will. It loves and does everything by love, since it gives being, with all that accompanies it, only as an effect of its creative love. It is just and merciful, giving each being what its nature needs, and, by its plenitude, putting bounds to all the misery of created being, according to its equitable wisdom. It is provident, because the order of things is a part of the things themselves, and cannot escape Him who gives all being. All things obey its power, for this is identical with its being, which is the cause of all being. Lastly, its highest activity is the contemplation of its own perfection, which is its happiness.

There we have reached God, for the word "God," in its highest and most complete acceptation, means all that. And the two questions: Is there a God? and, Can we know Him? coincide. To be, for God, is to be all that. We know that God is, because we know that there must be a being answering to that description. We know it because there must be a necessary being, a first, essential, absolute, completely independent being. And we know that there must be a necessary being in this sense, because, like an axle which remains stationary when the wheel revolves, it is the starting-point, the foundation, the inevitable condition of whatsoever is.

Theodicy

Clearly, the philosopher who sets down all these conclusions is in duty bound to establish them by deduction. This is the function of natural theology. Hence we may say that theodicy is only one long

proof of the existence of God. St. Thomas says so incessantly, insisting that it does nothing but answer the question whether God is (*an sit*). As for God's nature (*quid sit*), St. Thomas declares it to be inaccessible, as we have already said. Just as the visible rests on the invisible, so the thinkable has its source in the divine unthinkable.

Somebody is sure to say that it is strange to give a long list of God's attributes, and end up by declaring that God is unknowable. What do you mean by "know," then? What is the good of these deductions and attributions, these multiple and marvellous "names," which you give to the first Principle?

There we have the main question. We have laid down the terms, and indicated the solution, as far as necessary for a preliminary question, but we must persevere with it, for, of all St. Thomas's teachings, none does more honour to his genius and watchful wisdom.

III. What Value has our Relative Knowledge of God?

How, asks St. Thomas, do we set about defining our knowledge of a thing? We have only one means: to distinguish this thing from others, and mark its place in the framework of our thoughts. We first determine the *genus* of objects to which the thing to be defined belongs. Then we find *differences*, by which the thing in question is more and more characterized, and marked off from all those other objects with which it has been associated in our original, comprehensive notion.

Can we use this method to define God? One might imagine that we can, when we read in the Catechism: "God is a pure spirit, infinitely perfect, knowing all things, seeing all things." And to read the table of contents in the front of a manual of theology would make one even more confident. Common sense, whatever its ideas of God, does not feel obliged to express them under the form: God is a being, which . . . By expressions such as these, as by the phrase "pure spirit" or any similar one, we appear to put God in a *genus*, and then into a *species* by means of proper, constitutive *differences*, which characterize Him completely. But there is in fact no genus which can claim to include or contain God, not even the so-called genus of *being*, the notion of which is not homogeneous, though in a way it binds all genera together. We have already said that God is above being, and consequently outside it, as its source. If God is thus above being, He is *a fortiori* above the *categories*, which for us classify being, and supply us with our *genera*, such as *substance*, *quality*, *position*, *duration*, and so on. And *a fortiori*, He is still more above and beyond the *differences* which the mind uses to give precision to these notions, and to apply them to beings: e.g., *matter*, *spirit*, *individual*, *person*, *intelligence*, *power*, *goodness*, *justice*, and in general every substantial or accidental attribute, every qualification borrowed from the framework in which for us all being is inevitably placed.

This means that God cannot be defined, wholly or in part, by a positive definition. Any attempted definition of God is partly erroneous. To think of Him as definable is to deform Him, to lower Him,

in a word to deny Him. If we comprehend Him, He is no longer true God but an idol. St. Thomas has much to say on this important point. We have already seen how he does homage to God's unknowableness, in making it, as far as we creatures are concerned, His highest and richest attribute. "God remains," he says,[8] "in a sort of night of ignorance, and, in this life, it is by this ignorance that we are most perfectly united to Him." He adopts St. John Damascene's description of God as an "Ocean of substance, without determination, without bounds." The same saint says elsewhere: "It is impossible to say what God is in Himself, and it is more exact to speak of Him by excluding everything. Indeed He is nothing of that which is. Not in the sense that He is not, but in the sense that He is above all that is, and above being itself."[9]

In other words, when we try to define God we have to fall back on negative *differences*, which describe God by what He is not, constituting Him "by exclusion," by taking from Him whatever is repugnant to the character of Super-Being. We say, for example: (1) God is not a mere ideal; (2) God is not a mere phenomenon; (3) God is not a body; (4) God is not a being of sense; (5) God is not an intelligence joined to a subject, or dependent on an object, etc. We know Him properly, as far as we can know Him, when we have distinguished Him from all else; when we have denied Him everything—and this has made some high mystics speak of the nothingness of God—in order better to take away the quasi-being of creatures from the Super-Being, which alone completely is.

[8] In sent. I, dist. III, art. 1, ad. 4.
[9] *De Fide Orthod.*, lib. I, cap. 4.

But this is not the only possible point of view: or rather, our ideas may bear some correspondence with God, and this point of view may be made clearer and more comprehensive without being abandoned. Without attempting to define God, we may still speak of Him, and mean something by our words. We can characterize Him indirectly by His works; by referring to Him the notions that have led us to postulate Him. It would surely be contradictory to admit God's existence and then refuse Him that without which He could not fulfil His office; if we could not satisfy the conditions which, in our eyes, His existence demands. We have named God the cause of all things, because being, in all its forms and manifestations, requires this postulate; because a less supposes a greater, and so on till we come to a reality which embraces all things. Having done that, we cannot deny God the plenitude of worth which this need demands. Of what use would God be, if He did not possess this eminently, under the form (or absence of form) which belongs to the First Principle? God must supply being; therefore He possesses it. He is being *per se*, source of all participated being, and therefore we are bound to attribute to Him everything in being that is really being; i.e., every perfection which does not imply limitation or imperfection in its very notion. We rise to God, starting from created things, using certain definite relations between what is and what must cause it to be; between the tree and its hidden root. It is surely not arbitrary to name God after these relations; to endow Him—with certain necessary provisoes — with characteristics taken not from what He is, which we do not know, but from

what we are, we creatures who owe our being to Him.

God is a boundless plenitude, " an infinite and undetermined sea of substance," devoid of any sort of landmark to serve as the basis of our distinctions or divisions. We can name and qualify Him only by means of creation, which reflects its Creator, as a tree witnesses to the existence of the hidden roots whence it draws its life. Paul Valéry, in his *Aurore*, expresses much the same thought when he represents *Ideas* as saying:

> Nous avons sur tes abîmes
> Tendu nos fils primitifs;
> Et pris ta nature nue
> Dans une trame ténue
> De tremblants préparatifs.[10]

If we consider the mode and the multiplicity of our qualifications, we name God after the creature; but if we consider the essential content of the terms attributed to Him, then we name Him after Himself, since, as source, He contains, in His own way, " drowned in the infinite," as Albert the Great puts it, the foundation of all our qualifications.

This is generally known, in Thomistic theology, as the *analogical method*, which we now proceed to explain.

[10] I am indebted to Father John O'Connor for the following translation:

> O'er Thine unfathom'd awe
> Our gossamer we spin;
> Round Thy sheer Godhead draw
> Our cobweb-veiling thin
> And gemm'd precariously
> With dew-drops from Thy sea.

Analogy

Analogy, in general, means likeness. There are likenesses of various kinds, notably direct likenesses, as that of father and son, king and minister, to which we apply common qualifications, on account of their mutual resemblances. There are also indirect likenesses, founded solely on the similitude of two relations, as when we say of a ship's captain that he is king on board, to express that the captain is to his ship what the king is to his realm. In the first sense, there is no analogy between God and creatures, and the names, the qualifications borrowed from creatures, the human words, such as they are, cannot belong to the first Principle. It is not true that God is good, wise, strong, intelligent; it is not true that He *is*, or is being, if we mean by these terms that there is in God and in creatures, under the names of goodness, wisdom, power, intelligence or being, something which the creature holds in the same way with Him. Such a communion, or participation in a notion, held in the same way, appears to St. Thomas as not only wholly erroneous, but also absurd.[11] The reason is that there are no qualities in God; there is no distinction of subject and attribute, much less qualitative distinctions capable of being expressed by human names. What we call wisdom in God is identical with what we call goodness or power or being in Him; identical with what we call God. In God

[11] *De Veritate*, q. 2, art. 1.

there is only God, pure simplicity, since, being essentially infinite, everything in Him is infinite, and between infinite and infinite no distinction whatever can be made.

It is not correct to say: God is wise, and man is wise, but God's wisdom is the maximum, and man's is less; in God it is infinite, and in man it is finite. For to declare God's wisdom infinite is to identify it with all the other divine attributes, and with the divine Being, and therefore to remove it infinitely from our wisdom, which is limited to itself and not identical with our nature. Therefore there is no attribute really common; no notion in which the divine Subject and created subjects hold in common way. Creatures split up perfection and arrange it under *names*, but in God it is a nameless synthesis. He has no distinct attributes, no definite characteristics, no essence. It is false to speak of His perfections in the plural, if we mean definite perfections distinct from one another, though we may speak of His perfection, which is the perfection of being, beheld in its infinite source. None of these attributes belong to God *formally*, unless we add the word *eminently*, to signify that the attribute in question is most certainly present, in an infinite way, but, as it were, dissolved in the Super-Being, and surpassing any *name* we can utter.

Indirect analogy is founded on a likeness, not immediately between two things, but between two proportions relative to them; not a definite relation between the beings which are affirmed to participate in a common notion, but this notion is attributed to both of them because one bears a relation to a third thing, similar to the relation which the other bears to a fourth. To take an example. The

number six is related to four in this sense that it is twice three, while four is twice two. Therefore we may give both of them, though they are quite different, the common qualification of *double*. To apply this to our names for God. We do not say that there is any sort of definite relation between a creature and God, or any mode of existence really common to both, but there is a similitude between the relation of God to God, on the one hand, and creature to creature on the other. God is to God, looked upon in the plenitude of his being and perfection, what man is to his intelligence, goodness, power and other qualities, to himself and to others, so long as no imperfection is implied. God is to Himself alone, in His simplicity, what all these terms express separately. As so distinct, these terms relate only to man, but God is so perfect that, in surpassing them, He absorbs them all, and in the name " God," all the perfections are included which we claim when we ascribe these names to ourselves. Therefore, while we acknowledge that in God there is only God, we may think of Him, as we think of a man, endowed with intelligence, goodness and power. In other words, we must use human language, and we may lawfully use it of God, and say: God is intelligent, good, powerful, and so on.

These expressions are lame and equivocal, since they do not mean the same manner of existence when applied to God and to man. But they are not purely equivocal. They are true when viewed from a particular angle, though, viewed otherwise, they may be false. This point of view is legitimate, for the creature demands God in the name of all the perfections it contains, and because we cannot

alienate from God any perfection which is found in creatures, no matter under what form, or absence of form, He possesses it.

Obviously this is quite negative, and tells us nothing about God considered intimately in Himself. It simply denies that we can deny any perfection to the first cause. It affirms, correlatively, that He must be accorded every perfection found in His works, and it gives us a long list of names. Yet we are fully aware that this litany of names is defective. We know that the subsequent affirmation adds nothing to the original negation. It is merely positive in form, and the truth remains that " we do not know what God is: we know only what He is not, and what relation everything else has with Him."[12] We can do little more than give an answer to the question: Is there a God?

Owing to this inevitable ambiguity in the names of God, we may say that they are not true, that the attributes lent to God are not genuine, unless they be safeguarded by a perpetual proviso. As they stand, in their ordinary human meaning, they are quite untrue; they are inadequate, false, even ridiculous. Hence that bold statement of the pseudo-Denis, quoted by St. Thomas, that everything which is said, with truth, of God, may with still more truth be denied of Him, because the words that we utter are really only the language of creatures, applicable to creatures, and necessarily insufficient when applied to God. It is true to say that God is good, because in His infinite perfection, the meaning of good is to be found. It is true to say that God is not good, for we have to remove

[12] *Cont. Gent.*, I, 30.

from Him all distinct attributes or separate notions; every positive statement which implies a correlative negation, as happens with all human words. " God," says St. Thomas's master, Albert the Great, " is at once unnamable and all-namable, and ' Unnamable ' is the most beautiful of all His names, for it raises Him at the outset above every endeavour to speak of Him."[13] " These terms, Father, God, Creator, Lord," writes St. Justin, " are not divine names: they are appellations derived from His benefits and works."[14]

The consequence is that God is not properly the subject-matter of any science, not even of what is called natural theology, which, for St. Thomas, is only a chapter of general metaphysics, and bears a metaphysical character. Every science, he says, proceeds from principles anterior to its object (*ex prioribus*), and there are no principles anterior to God, Who is the cause of all things, including principles. Therefore God can be the object of intuition, but not of science. We can demonstrate something about Him, namely that He is, and that He is beyond the phenomena of experience. We may further attribute to Him, by similitude or analogy, certain qualities, the notion of which is derived from phenomena. In so doing we use objects which, far from being principles with regard to God, have Him for their Principle. And since a science includes a study of a thing and its principles, and since natural theology attains and treats of God only in so far as He is the first cause, its subject-matter is not God in Himself, but

[13] *Summ. Theol.*, Tr. III, q. 16, ad. 1.
[14] *Apologia II, Pro Christianis*, No. 6.

universal being. In other words, there is no natural theology outside general metaphysics.[15]

Well then, it will be objected, all terms applied to God are only so many metaphors. God is intelligent, as a pilot is king. We are landed in symbolism, which is only a veil of pure agnosticism, and everyone knows the outcome of that. Further, all these terms are synonymous, not representing separate ideas, but all meaning the same divine Being, without partition or forms. Theodicy is, then, only one long tautology.

The latter is easy to answer, but the former requires a little care.

It is untrue that the terms employed to qualify God are synonymous, precisely because they are not, in themselves, divine qualifications, but only human notions and human ways of speaking. They answer directly to our own concepts, and are therefore diversified with our concepts. They are not influenced by the fact that God is unique, since they correspond to Him only indirectly. They keep their distinct meanings and that is just the opposite of a synonym. If we had direct intuition of God, and tried to define Him in words, then, in virtue of His perfect simplicity, we could give Him only one name; or if we used several, they would be synonyms. But our knowledge of God is not intuitive: we attain to Him only through, and by means of, creatures. Therefore we name and qualify Him only by names and attributes of created things. Doubtless these words certainly signify one unique thing, divine simplicity, but they nevertheless, immediately and directly, stand for human

[15] Proem. in Comm. in Metaph.

notions, imperfect mental concepts. "As, therefore, to the different perfections of creatures there corresponds one simple principle, represented by different perfections of creatures in a various and manifold manner, so also to the various and multiplied conceptions of our intellect there corresponds one altogether simple principle, which is imperfectly understood according to these conceptions. Therefore, although the names applied to God signify one thing, still, because they signify that thing under many and different aspects, they are not synonymous."[16]

This is a sufficient reply to the objection. Tautology means repeated expression of one and the same idea by different words. Here, it is not the words only that are diverse, but the very ideas. Only the thing expressed is one and the same. To draw a multiplicity of ideas and words from one and the same thing does not spell tautology but rich variety. Tautology is useless and tedious, and nobody would suggest that it is useless to express God under all forms of life when this procedure is the starting-point and *sine qua non* of any union of our souls with the Supreme Life.

We grasp reality, whatever it be, only by thinking it and expressing it to ourselves; we must do this before we can make any use of reality. Since we have to use God as our guide through life, to satisfy the movement of life, with its reverses, its yearnings and its hopes, we must conceive God: we must know His nature, under the form of attributes by which the being of God is adapted to our minds and given for our instruction. Those who, through misguided piety, are chary of naming God, err in

[16] Ia, q. 13, art. 4, corp.

the other direction, as experience shows only too clearly.

The other objection was that the doctrine of analogy leads to a mere symbolism; that it builds up a mere system of metaphors, not a system of truths. This is equally fallacious, but not so easy to answer, because we have to assign analogy its exact place between two extreme errors concerning our knowledge of God.

These two extremes are *agnosticism* and *anthropomorphism*. Symbolism and analogy hold a position midway between them, but, while symbolism is but agnosticism in disguise, analogy keeps clear of anthropomorphism. Agnosticism says that God is in no way knowable; He is one great x, an unknown quantity; all that is said of Him is empty and vain; every symbol applied to Him is impertinent and useless. There is a basis to being, but religion consists in respectfully acknowledging the impossibility of ever knowing what that basis is.

The exponents of symbolism, on the contrary, succumb in part to that irresistible tendency which has given rise to purely natural religions. They acknowledge these religions as so many purely arbitrary systems adapted to various states of civilization or of the individual. God remains inexpressible, and the names which we give Him are not truths, but handy inventions, without objective foundation, justified by their spiritual results.

By condescending to man's instinct in this way, symbolism may possibly have some value, but, owing to the equivocation it encourages, it is possibly more dangerous than rank agnosticism.

Otherwise, the two are fundamentally the same, and in neither case is theodicy possible. God's "attributes" are valueless in philosophy, and the only divine name is "Unknowable." Everything else is subjective either to the individual or to society: it is consequently arbitrary, and varies according to the individual fluctuations of mind, and progress of time and of civilization. The religious consequences are obvious.

At the other extreme is anthropomorphism, which may be summed up in Voltaire's ironical epigram: "It is said that God created man to His own image: man has retaliated." The ancient, pagan religions were entirely anthropomorphic, although Goethe has tried to see in them, not so much the humanizing of God, as the deifying of man. The two are easily reconcilable; they are correlative. Philosophers have held the most extreme anthropomorphism. Swedenborg said: "God is a Man"; Renouvier: "God is a finite Person." As we know, even Christians and Jews, while acknowledging the true God, often instinctively entertained ideas of the same sort. But that is beside the point. The point here is that in philosophy, in the various scientific accounts of God, we come across an unconscious, thinly-veiled anthropomorphism. Unless their words belie them, philosophers of these schools hold that the divine attributes are qualifications belonging to God in the same way as they belong to us, only magnified and adapted, so they say, by pushing them to their utmost limit, without, however, changing them essentially. The "infinite number" of Pascal is a number; "it is false that it is even: it is false that it is odd." That shrouds it in a sort of mystery, but it is a number for all that. In the same way,

the intelligence which we attribute to God is intelligence and nothing more. The same applies to goodness, power and the rest. God is put into the *categories;* He becomes definable, by departments, if I may say so. The first being becomes qualified, complex, multiple, corporeal, outlined, in lieu of being sublimely and necessarily simple. If there were in God something which corresponded, properly, directly, and word for word, with even our most sublime ideas, something over and above the " ocean without dimensions or bounds " of St. John Damascene, then we should adore a false, man-God, with no philosophical value whatever. As we have seen, the problem of God's existence is the problem of the source of being, and whoever places God in the categories of being implicitly denies His existence.

Thomism does not do this. Analogy, as we understand it, is not a simple magnifying of all these names and ideas, which leaves them still with their proper forms. It is a complete transposition, putting one unique term in place of a multiplicity of terms, yet one which corresponds to them all. God's wisdom is God. God's goodness is God, and is therefore the same thing as His wisdom, with this sole difference that we signify it by a different word, to indicate that the indivisible plenitude of the first being comprehends the entire content of all our words, without corresponding *nominally* with any of them. That is why we say, with Albert the Great, that God is unnamable.

On the other hand, God is described by a number of names, and is even known as the " All-namable." Analogy supplies the necessary corrective. It takes into account the limited range of human

thought, our incapacity to think of the One otherwise than as the multiple. We speak of God, while our judgment simultaneously affirms Him ineffable; we use a number of names to express Him, while our judgment acknowledges His indivisible unity.

When focused on God, thought can do no more than make these desperate efforts to overstep its natural limits. Still, we are not so hopeless as defenders of symbolism, because our names of God are not mere arbitrary, subjective figures of speech. They have a real foundation, since they correspond to a real relation, one term of which is quite definable. It is also an essential relation, because it follows upon the natures of the things related, even though one of them is outside the categories of being. For this relation is one between cause and effect, and God is the cause of being. And when attributes have a real foundation, we may apply them to God, and our words will not be mere symbols, but formal truths, though deplorably inadequate. We have no difficulty in admitting that, from another point of view, our words are false, or that their falsity outweighs, though does not contradict, their truth. It simply manifests our incapability.

In short, there is a middle term between agnosticism and anthropomorphism which steers clear of both. Symbolism is nothing more than modified agnosticism. The Thomistic doctrine of analogy is quite independent. It is clear and accurate, though justifiably subtle.

The following brief formula, rightly understood, contains a complete explanation of how, and to what extent, we can name God:

"We do not know what God is, but only what He is not, and what relation everything else has with Him."[17] And this is the Thomistic doctrine of our knowledge of God.

[17] *Cont. Gent.*, I, 30.

CHAPTER IV

CREATION

A. Creation and the "Beginning"

The problem of creation is no less difficult and delicate than the problem of the existence of God. At bottom it is the same. Creation is conceived of as the frontier which thought encounters in its flight to God, and in its return to created things. To ask the meaning of creation is to ask how the world holds together; how God arranges it; and both questions include the nature of God, such as we can know it, and its functioning in this world. We cannot know what creation is, without knowing what God's action is, and God's action is God. We cannot know what creation is without knowing what is meant by beginning and non-beginning, by time and eternity. And, since eternity is one of God's attributes, we are brought back to the question of the validity of these attributes. In the light of the exposition in the previous chapter, we must now try to raise ourselves to the level of Thomistic doctrine concerning creative action. St. Thomas is again at his best, though not always understood. Yet the false ideas rife to-day necessitate a clear understanding of his thought.

We admit at the outset that St. Thomas—despite his clearness, if not because of it—is sometimes liable to leave a false impression in the mind of the beginner. Since he writes as a theologian, and for simple folk, he makes great use of Scripture, and language more or less anthropomorphic, which gives him the appearance of forsaking his leading principles. He is like an astronomer who in his ordinary, everyday conversation, and even in his serious writings, speaks of sunrise and sunset, although he knows that these movements belong to the earth, and not to the sun. There is nothing wrong in this way of speaking, but we shall explain the doctrine better if, as far as is possible, we avoid expressions of this sort. We shall be safe in so doing, and in no way contrary to St. Thomas's mind.

In attacking the problem of creation, St. Thomas is forced, by his principles, to choose between Revelation and Aristotle, between the Apostles' Creed and the Sayings of the Philosopher. Aristotle believed in the eternity of the world: faith affirmed its beginning. On this question of fact no reconciliation of the two is possible, and Aristotle must be abandoned. But was it a matter of giving up any philosophical principles? Does creation essentially imply beginning in time? Is the philosophical conception of an eternal world legitimate? If the answer to this last question is affirmative, then Aristotle was wrong only as regards a fact, inaccessible to human speculation, the misconception of which could be no cause for humiliation. That was St. Thomas's contention, and he held it with a firm conviction, which makes him appear rather tart in contrast with his usual

suavity. The *Opusculum De Æternitate Mundi contra Murmurantes* bears traces of a certain impatience with the unphilosophical character of the objections. But his insistence is only the result of a deep realization of what was at stake in the debate, viz., the real relation between God and the world, which is intimately bound up with the very notion of God.

Those who support at all costs the theory that the world had a beginning in time, do so, usually, simply because they have a confused idea of what creation means. They imagine that it is, considered actively, an intermediary between God and the world, and passively an intermediary between nothing and being; a succession or passage from nothing to being. They picture the world as being brought into reality *at a given moment*, before which only God existed. They imagine that the act of creating took place *in time*, when God, as it were, tired of solitude, decided to make a world like unto Himself. The becoming of the world is deemed similar to any other becoming, except that it began with nothing, and presupposed only its divine cause. This, taken literally, is absurd. I say "taken literally," because it can be quite a legitimate account if properly handled and corrected. Like every writer, St. Thomas employs similar expressions, as I have just said. But he is alive to the fact that they are due to our way of understanding, or rather imagining things. They are not literally true, and to go by them would lead, not only to absurd conclusions, but to grave doctrinal difficulties as well.

The Nature of Creation

Some people imagine creation to be an action intermediate between God and the world; between God, the cause of the world, and the world His effect. But can there be an intermediary between these two terms? What middle term can there be between God and the creature, meaning by "creature" the entire creation? It cannot be something in God, because He is unchangeable and gains no new quality in making the world. Neither can it be something in the creature, for the creature has still to be made, and if any part of it is anticipated, this would need to be made by a previous creation, which would require another before it, and so on, giving us an indefinite series of creations.

Secondly they imagine that creation, taken in a passive sense, is an intermediary between nothing and being; a passage from nothing to being. They do not notice that by this conception "nothing" is turned into something. How can you start from nothing? How can you *pass* from nothing to reality? How can you cross by a bridge that has only one pier and no span? A passage implies two terms, subject and object. In creation the subject *world*, in order to effect its passage, must already exist. In order to set out on its journey towards existence, it must already be in existence. And what are the two terms of the passage? The second is apparent, namely, the world in the first instant of its existence. But where is the first? Is it also the world—the world not yet existing? The "world not yet existing" is nothing at all.

Moreover, creation is imagined to take place *at a certain moment*. What moment can possibly precede the world's existence, to assist at its creation? It is not a moment of time, because time does not yet exist: time is an attribute of successive realities, "measured movement," and it cannot precede either movement or being. Nor is it a moment of eternity, for eternity has no moments, or, if you like, has but one, the eternal moment: eternity is indivisible and unchanging. If the world were created at this moment of eternity, it would be eternal in the proper and divine sense of the word, which is just the opposite of having a beginning.

Were creation to be so imagined, we could not claim for it the character of a total action which supposes nothing pre-existing. For it would presuppose duration and being, for these are both necessary for any sort of becoming, or passage, or change.

Creation is not a change; it is not a passage; it is not a becoming. It is not a substitution of being for nothing; a succession, effected by God, from nothing to being. It is not an arrival at being (*accessus ad esse*). There is no moment of creation anterior to the world itself. In a word, there is not, under the name of creative action, an intermediary between God, Who creates, and the world which is created. All that is pure fiction, pure imagination. We cannot avoid it in our use of words, since language is unable to express these ideas properly, but we can avoid it in our judgments.

Creation is, if you will, an action, since there is a cause and an effect. But the cause is the eternal God, or God creating from eternity, and this is not

an intermediary because God's action is God. The effect is the world in being, not in becoming, since it does not become. It is the world in its entirety, including its duration and its first instant, if there was one. And it makes no difference here whether or no it has a first instant: that is something quite accessory, held by faith, and has nothing to do with the essence of creation, considered philosophically. St. Thomas remarks that philosophers like Avicenna, who hold an eternal world, are just as insistent that God created it. If you take away from the notion of creation all idea of passage, movement and becoming, it remains nothing but a pure relation, and there is no reason why this relation should not be eternal when its first term is the eternal God.

Now for a true idea of creation. It will be easy once the ground is cleared.

We must not start with nothing at all and say: (1) There is nothing; (2) God makes something. That is the sort of explanation that does harm and holds us up to the derision of philosophers like M. Bergson, M. Edouard Leroy, and M. Paul Valéry, who would soon show us that our original so-called nothing is full of being, or else a mere figment of the imagination, "a comedy of silence and perfect darkness," an empty vessel, already crammed full of what is going to be got out of it. Pure nothing is not a reality, and cannot serve as the beginning of any sort of action. To speak of a moment when there was nothing is pure nonsense, for there must already have been something, in order to have a moment at all. A moment is a position of time, and time is an attribute of existing things. We cannot imagine anything outside time. Even if we try to conjure up an

image of the non-being which is supposed to precede the world, we cannot help imagining it in time. We thus make a sort of empty, infinite time, with no differentiations, ready, at one of its so-called instants, to receive the world with its duration, and to be henceforth quite definite and consistent. That is devoid of sense. There can be no duration before the duration which measures being. You might suggest the duration of God, but that will not help us, as His duration is not successive, since He has no extension and cannot provide a definite moment of creation; in point of fact, God's duration is simply God, thought of in terms of time.

Let us get rid of these chimeras once and for all. Let us start with being, not with nothing. What being? If we admit God's existence, we may start with *His* being. If, on the contrary, that is not granted, we may start with the creature's being, which eventually leads us back to God's.

Starting with God, we argue like this: God is, and God is not alone. He has given a sort of extension of His being, which we call the world. Therefore the world depends on Him, bearing to Him the relation of effect to cause, which is a relation outside time, for time is just as much created as anything else in the world, and equally dependent on the Supreme Being.

Starting with the creature, we put it like this: The world is, and is not independent, because not self-sufficient. The assemblage of all its phenomena and beings points to a first being, which is the key to all of them, and, in this sense, their *origin*, quite apart from the question of whether or no they began in time. For whether duration is

finite or infinite it is equally subject to the conditions of all dependent being, and therefore depends on the first Principle.

This argument is like those which we have already used to prove the existence of God. Indeed it is these proofs of the existence of God which provide us with the genuine idea of creation. And notice that we make no mention at all of the notion of beginning; of a nothing preceding, or underlying the world. It is simply a question of a system of actual dependent beings, needing a first term, and consequently a question of the entire, actual dependence of everything in the world, including duration, on the first Principle. We say *actual dependence* to denote that this relation is co-extensive with time, when viewed from the standpoint of the creature; and we say *including duration* to denote that, from God's standpoint, it is a relation outside time.

And it really is so. Creation, taken in an active sense, is outside time. Time has its roots in the eternity of God, and so has the world, in which all succession is measured by time. "Creation," says the Russian philosopher, Berdiaeff, "is not metaphysically admissible unless it is accomplished in eternity and not in time." Quite so. Creation, taken actively, is eternal, since it is God Himself. God's action is God, and His simplicity admits no distinction of subject and action. As we have already said, to represent creative action as an intermediary between God and His work is a crude figment of the imagination. Creation and Divinity are thus one and the same thing.

Viewed from the creature's standpoint, creation is the creature itself, in so far as it is dependent.

In other words, it is a relation of a derivative to its cause. We imagine it as an action received, as if the creature were first of all non-existent, and then received being, but it is not so in reality. But we must put out of our minds the idea of nothing, and start with being. Creation is simply a pure relation. As St. Thomas says: "Take movement away from action and passion, and nothing remains but relation."[1] Every created thing in the world must bear this relation to God, not merely at the first moment of its existence (if it has a first moment), but continuously, through all its phases and states. Therefore creation, which is nothing more than this relation, must obviously be co-extensive with time. If the world were eternal, i.e., if its duration were infinite in every way, it would depend on God, successively and continuously, and the act of creating would be incessant. If it has a beginning—as Christian Faith teaches—it began to depend when it began to be. But *began* here means that the beginning of the world was created with the world; that the world's first instant is itself a creature. Therefore creation, taken actively, is always outside time, and, taken passively, co-extensive with time.

It would be more correct to say in the latter case, that God created the world "at the beginning of time," and that, since then, He keeps it in existence. This is quite an accurate way of putting it, and the most natural, on the supposition that the world *had* a beginning. For, if it has a beginning, the first instant of time is, as it were, privileged. It is looked upon as new, though, of course, it is not really so, since *new* literally connotes a temporal

[1] Ia, q. XLV. art. 3. corp.

order, which is here purely imaginary. Still, the temptation to think of it like that is irresistible, because we irresistibly think of creation as a becoming, as *being* after *non-being*. Because of this apparent *newness*, which really only brings out the finite character of the world's duration in the past, we keep the word *creation* to signify the first instant, and call what follows *conservation*, or *creation continued*. But this first and following dependence are identical in nature, and the use of the two words *creation* and *conservation* is merely a human way of emphasizing the contrast between the eternal past and the world's temporal duration.

Creation, even when attached to the notion of beginning, cannot be regarded as an historical event. It is not an event at all, because there is not a stage on which this so-called event could be enacted; because nothing *takes place*; no change is produced. There was no reality before the first instant of the world's existence, though there are subsequent realities and events. It was created out of God, if you like, but only in the sense that it was God's handiwork. It is a relation, not an event.

The same safe-guarding distinction applies to what follows creation, and is called *conservation*. In reality there is no *following*, and hence no strict conservation. St. Thomas explains at length that these different words are due to our human way of expressing ourselves. Creation could not be renewed, or go on through the course of duration, because, taken actively, it is outside time, and, taken passively, co-extensive with time. Time is included in the integral object of creative action. A *continued* relation, in this sense, is meaningless. It is the world that continues, not creation, because the

world is in time and creation is not. By creation the world goes on, dependent on God for its duration just as much as for its extension and essence. Therefore creation and conservation are one and the same thing. They are distinguished only to bring out the fact that in conservation the effect is successive. The world exists; the world goes on; the world, including its duration, depends on God, by a relation outside time, and we call that relation creation.

From this we see that it is wrong to argue: Once the world is created, it has no need of being kept in being. By the very fact that it is, it will go on being, for everything keeps itself in being; nothing in nature is ever annihilated, but only transformed into something else. This is just as wrong as to argue: The world has always existed, and therefore never had need of being created. The only ground for arguments like this is a complete misunderstanding of what is meant by creation. Creation is not something which took place once and is then over and done with. Nor can it be dispensed with by saying that its effects are eternal. Creation is a first condition of finite being, precisely as being, and of its qualifications as such. These include duration, whether it be finite or infinite. Creation is not an action taking place in time. Therefore it cannot be limited to a first moment. For the same reason, even if you suppose the world to be eternal, you still cannot dispense with creation on the grounds that you have dispensed with a first moment. Creation is an action taking place outside time, above and beyond time, and however long the time (*ad infinitum*, if you will) it still depends on creation. While a thing exists, it certainly lasts,

and this we grant; but to explain this we must be able to find in it, *at each moment*, all the conditions of its existence, and one of these is the first Cause. Creation answers these requirements, and it is just as necessary for existence *ab æterno*, as for yesterday's existence. It is simply a question of degree: the need is the same.

There is another, and apparently paradoxical consequence of this doctrine. Instead of creation being an intermediary between God and His creatures, as was imagined, it is posterior to the creature, for a relation necessarily *follows* its terms, an attribute, its subject. The created world is first of all the world: it is *consequently* created. I do not mean by *consequently* that it follows after in time—obviously not—but that the world precedes it in the order of thought and the nature of things.

St. Thomas admits, when treating of this point, that creation holds "a certain priority from the fact that the object to which it is related is the first Principle of creatures."[2] Quite so. From God's standpoint creation is prior; but this only means that God is prior to the world, since, taken in an active sense, creation is God Himself. But that is only a "certain priority," due to our way of approaching the question, and to our imperfect understanding. There are real relations of creature to God, but not of God to creature. God has no real relation to anything, being absolutely independent, but everything is in relation to Him, since it depends on Him for its very being. Therefore creation, in God, is not a real relation, but only a relation of reason. Creation is an attribute of

[2] Ia, q. XLV, art. 3, ad. 3.

created things and therefore logically posterior to them. A logical treatment of creation must not start with creation itself, for it would then have no basis. It must not start with nothing, for that cannot be a basis either. It must start with being.

B. The Eternity or Non-Eternity of the World

With these principles, St. Thomas, as philosopher, is not in the least embarrassed by the Aristotelian theory of an eternal word, or rather of an infinite regression in time. He is indifferent to it, and serenely argues to prove: (1) That it is not conclusive in fact; (2) That it is philosophically possible and contrary only to Revelation.

1. It is not conclusive. The necessity of an effect depends on the necessity of its cause. The cause of the world is God, and God acts, not by necessity of nature, but freely, being all-sufficient. Therefore the world's duration, like its nature, will be what God decides it to be. Aristotle may have believed the world eternal because his philosophy, void of faith, had not a sufficiently exact idea of God's transcendence. In one way he separated Him too much from the world, and in another way he made Him depend on it. Christian faith alone has laid down the true relations between God and the world.

Further, the idea of absolute beginning, which, at first sight, seems quite simple, is really very profound, and it is quite understandable that even a deep thinker like Aristotle should find it more natural to think of duration as an endless cycle of beginnings. Aristotle gives his reasons for this theory, but they are not so much positive teaching

as answers to the false interpretations of *beginning*, which he found prevalent. They are not conclusive, as an examination of the principal ones will show.

Aristotle states that the phenomena of nature depend on an intrinsic necessity. Hosts of things around us come into being and perish, while the basis of nature remains unaltered. The framework and springs of the world are necessary. But what is necessary, always is, and can neither begin nor end. It is obvious enough what this argument proves, and what it does not prove. It proves conclusively that the world, in its entirety, was not brought into being in the same way as the particular beings which it contains. What is necessary in it has always been. That is quite true, but it presupposes the world's existence. If the world did not exist it would be neither contingent nor necessary; if it has not *always* existed, it has not *always* been contingent or necessary. This attempted proof of the world's eternity begs the question, for we must presuppose the world before we can qualify it and draw conclusions as to its duration. The natural order of ideas is: (1) The world exists; (2) In it some things are contingent, and some necessary; (3) What is contingent perishes, while what is necessary endures for ever. But this *for ever* expresses only the world's extension in time and has nothing to do with infinity. God creates the world and gives it whatever length of duration He thinks fit.

Among the *necessary* elements in the world, matter, for the ancient philosophers, held the first and foremost place. The eternity of uninformed matter, prior to and underlying all phenomena

seemed a necessary postulate. Many forerunners of Aristotle maintained this theory, and attributed to God the *rôle* of ordering or *forming* matter, which till then was in a state of chaos. Aristotle himself believed in the eternity of a world already formed, and he apparently wished to prove his theory by the eternity of matter. But his proof has much in common with the last one. Matter, he argues, cannot be engendered, since there is nothing prior to it; no "contrary" from which it can be brought forth. That certainly demonstrates that the world did not "become," but it proves nothing against its being created, for creation does not suppose any sort of prior condition: it is not a becoming, and is outside time. Matter will have a beginning, like everything else, if God so wills. It will not be, properly speaking, created, because, of itself alone, it has no being; it will be *con-created*, i.e., created in the composite things which exist at the first instant of the world.

The question of eternal matter has troubled many minds. Even Fathers of the Church, like Tertullian and Origen, influenced by Platonism, regarded creation, as depicted in Genesis, as the ordering of a chaos. St. Basil went so far as to postulate a sort of spiritual matter out of which the angels were created. But it must be carefully noted that these Doctors did not therefore liberate matter from God's jurisdiction, or remove it from creation, properly understood. They were simply thinking of how the world began. But the truth remains, they did apparently believe as a matter of opinion in eternal matter.

Aristotle has another argument, which has been resuscitated since his time. It is based on the fact

that every new thing coming into the world presupposes something before it: every movement and every instant supposes an anterior one. Every beginning is at the same time a continuation. An absolute beginning, says Paul Valéry, like many earlier philosophers, "is necessarily a myth. A beginning is coincidence. We must conceive of some unknown sort of contact between everything and nothing, and, in trying to do so, we find that every beginning is a consequence: every beginning is the accomplishment of something." We would like a reason for this statement. The concept is plausible and not anti-philosophical, but to make it a rigorous proof is to push it too far. He is not sure that Aristotle would have agreed with him. St. Thomas certainly would not have thought so, though he seems to have forced Aristotle's meaning somewhat when he quotes him. Be that as it may. No proof is forthcoming that the notion of beginning, which undoubtedly implies something to follow, equally implies something preceding. Why should it?

In the rational order, it is easy to find examples of followings which do not imply a series of previous beginnings. Geometrical conclusions are deduced from principles, but the principles are not deduced from any previous ones; they are first beginnings with respect to the conclusions. For, as St. Thomas puts it: "To conclude is to acts of the reason what to move is to acts of nature."[3]

Paul Valéry says: "In trying to think of it, we find, etc." It would be more exact to say: In trying to *imagine* it. Our imagination is quite incapable of picturing an absolute beginning, whether in time or space, but that does not mean that we have the right

[3] *De Potentia*, q. III, art. I, ad. 6.

to *judge*, and judge with certainty, that the world is really infinite either in extent or in duration. To do so is simply begging the question.

If the world is eternal, every state and every movement has one preceding it, and every instant is at one and the same time a beginning and an end. But logic does not permit us to take this consequence as a fact, and then start with it to prove its own antecedent. In order to hold an absolute beginning, it is not necessary to conceive of "some sort of unknown contact between everything and nothing," unless *conceive* is here again taken as an act of the imagination. We have already disposed of the theory of a nothingness preceding the world, the idea of the precession of some nature or absence of nature. The only reality is the world itself, which includes space and duration, since they are qualifications of it. There is nothing anterior to time, taken as a whole, any more than there is anything exterior to the whole of space. St. Thomas finds many points of resemblance between these two examples. "When we say that above heaven there is nothing, the word *above* signifies only an imaginary place, inasmuch as it is possible to imagine other dimensions beyond those of the heavenly body."[4] He says much the same thing of a duration preceding the first duration. Supposing the world to have gone on for twenty milliard years: we may imagine it to have gone on for thirty milliard, and this stretching of time would be analagous to the stretching of space, by making the world out to be larger than it is. You may represent this on a graph, by producing both axes beyond their present extremities. All this is pure imagination, due to our way of thinking, which

[4] Ia, q. 46, art. 1, ad. 8.

originates in sense experience, and is subject to images of space. In reality everything would be within this world increased in size or duration: the world itself would have changed, and there would still be nothing outside it. We have admitted that those who believe in a *beginning* to the world, often imagine it anthropomorphically, and thereby falsify their idea of creation. But those who deny the beginning may be equally the sport of similar fancies, even while they pour derision on the first. They are " clever," says Pascal, " but only up to a point."

The following argument scarcely needs answering, once the nature of creation is properly understood. It runs: God is eternal; creative action is eternal. How, then, can the created world be other than eternal? This conclusion does not follow. God is eternal, not as an antecedent, with consequences which follow automatically, like a tank, with the tap always running, which must of necessity overflow. God is a free cause, His effects are freely willed, and His will gauges their duration, as well as their extension and nature. God's action is eternal, but it takes on a kind of determination from the conception of the effect which it produces, and the effect conforms, not to His action, as it really is in itself, but to this determination of it. In describing it like this, we must make allowances for our mode of understanding. The objector apparently wishes to conclude that the world ought to exist *as soon as* God exists; *as soon as* God's action is postulated. This is unreasonable. Taken literally it puts God in time, and gives Him a duration of the same kind as ours, since it compares His with ours, and makes out that the two coincide. This is a great mistake.

God's existence and action are not temporal phenomena though infinitely distant. They exist at all times and belong to no time. God's existence is God; God's action is God. Therefore on no hypothesis can God's duration be made to coincide with the world's. If the world were eternal, i.e., without a term in the past, its duration would be none the less absolutely different from God's. I would even say that it would be farther removed from the divine eternity than on the supposition that it had a beginning, for it would be less determined and less perfect, having neither starting-point nor end. God's eternity, on the contrary, is a sovereign perfection, entirely centred in the " Indivisible," for it is nothing else than God Himself, viewed under the relation of time.

In short, there is no compelling proof of an eternal world. Philosophy leaves it an open question: Revelation alone can settle it. On the other hand, apart from Revelation there is no conclusive argument to prove that the world began. Such is St. Thomas's thesis. It appears at first sight rather bold, but it is really quite simple and serves as a touch-stone for the mind. The imagination is balked by it, but the metaphysical mind will delight in it.

This thesis may be proved *a priori*, as follows: The " newness " of the world, or rather, the finite character of its duration in the past, can be the object of demonstration only in two ways: either by starting with the nature of the world, and finding out whether it has an intrinsic principle of endurance, or else by considering the cause of the world, which is God. There is no third way, since, apart from the world and its cause, there is nothing. Now we cannot deduce any conclusion as to the duration of

the world from its nature, because a thing's nature does not include its duration, and is consequently compatible with duration of any sort. Excluding other forces at work, what is to prevent a thing which exists to-day from having existed yesterday and the day before, and so on without end? If you argue that it could not have existed at such a date because its *raison d'être* did not then exist, you revert to its cause, and the only cause of the world, taken as a whole, is God. If God had wished an eternal world, then its *raison d'être* would have existed always, and the world too could have existed always, being ready to receive existence at every moment of the eternal duration. It is impossible to imagine anything which could influence God one way or the other. He acts as He wishes. He can do anything that does not involve a contradiction, and it would be hard to prove that there is any contradiction involved in the hypothesis of an eternal world.

Yet any number of arguments of all kinds have been used to prove the non-eternity of the world, though they, none of them, have much weight for St. Thomas, and he finds no difficulty in disposing of them. We shall not go into details: that has been already done elsewhere. The arguments imply one or other of the following defects:

1. A confusion between a relative beginning in a course of activity, such as we see in nature, and absolute beginning, and an attempt to apply the rules of one to the other. An event in this world always comes about at a given moment. Therefore it is presumed that the creative event must needs come about at a given moment also. We have already pointed out the immaturity of this idea.

Creation, even on the hypothesis of finite duration, is not an event: it does not take place *at a given moment* of an imaginary eternal duration. This is pure fiction. To conclude that what happens in relative things must happen in the absolute, is, says St. Thomas, to be like the child referred to by Maimonides. He is told that a man comes into the world after nine months of gestation, and he answers: That's impossible; a man could not go nine months without eating and drinking, since he cannot do so for a single day.

2. A wrong meaning given to the phrase *ad infinitum*. It is taken to represent a regression towards (*ad*) a real term (*infinitum*), which our minds can approach, even though it is declared in the same breath to be immeasurably distant. And apart from this supposition, what do the following objections signify: An infinite past cannot be traversed; an infinite number of days in the past makes a total which cannot be *actual*, and, in any case, could not be added to, etc.? These arguments implicitly suppose there must be a first day of the world, even at infinity, and some means of covering the distance from then till now, and constituting a whole. Now this notion contradicts the very hypothesis. The phrase *ad infinitum* cannot refer to a term. Nothing could be *ad infinitum* in that sense. What it stands for is the law of retrogression without end. It must be taken as an adverbial phrase, meaning *infinitely*, not as the preposition *ad* with a noun. We may go backwards *infinitely*, but not *to the infinite*. Therefore there is no first term to arrive at, nor distance to cover, nor days to add up. On the hypothesis of an eternal world, the past is not a whole thing, for, as Aristotle shows, infinity and entirety are incom-

patible ideas, like determined and undetermined, actual and potential. The infinity of which we speak is not of number, and the objections of Cauchy and others, who deny the possibility of an actually infinite number are quite beside the point. Nor is it certain that an actually infinite number is an impossibility. Pascal and Leibniz believed that there could be one, while St. Thomas declares[5] that an actual infinite is not repugnant to Aristotle's principles. St. Thomas himself rejects it in the *Summa*, but takes the opposite view in his *Opusculum De Æternitate Mundi*, and in his commentary on the *Physics*.

The past, whether finite or infinite, becomes a composite whole only in our minds: in itself it has never existed except successively, piece by piece, instant by instant, in something which is not even a part of itself, for an instant is not a part of time. That is why St. Thomas says that time exists formally only in our minds.[6] Therefore it is fanciful to represent the "entire" extent of the infinite past as a totality, complete in itself and comprehended by the mind. We will not stop to ask whether the mind really comprehends it or can add anything to it. It is our imagination that leads us to speak of the *number* of past days, and the aggregate of past centuries. These aggregates only exist in so far as our minds form them, and we, of course, always form them finite. Therefore they do not help at all in settling the question of the possibility or impossibility of the infinite in reality.

The same applies to infinite *distance* from a starting-point of things, a notion at least implicitly underlying many arguments which are thought

[5] *Cont. Gent.*, II, 81.
[6] *Comm. in Physic. Arist.*, lib. IV, lect. 23.

convincing. Here again the imagination is at work and needs to be counteracted. On the hypothesis of an eternal world, the starting-point of things is neither far removed nor near, since it does not exist at all. The individual instants are parts of a fictive "whole." In its progress, the world—by which I mean the entire universe—gets no farther from its starting-point than it gets nearer its end, which nobody would hold to be a real thing. At each moment, it advances with respect to some definite, antecedent term, and it draws nearer to some ulterior term, but the imagined "aggregate" neither advances nor goes back. It is without position, like a point in an infinite straight line. We cannot say that, in ten thousand years' time, an eternal world will be farther from its beginning or nearer its end. It will always have ahead of it, and in its wake, an equally undetermined infinite, and even while going on from one term to another, from one definite epoch to the next, it remains, as it were, eternally stationary with respect to its infinite past and future. Even the actual present, which is always fleeting, and following a determined course, never advances one step nearer its end.

(3) A confusion between *indeterminate* and *unreal*. It is objected that time ought to be something real, since God created it, yet it is indeterminate, and therefore unreal. I reply: Time, taken as a whole, is indeterminate, but, as we have said, we must not take it as a whole. God created it as it is, successive, becoming instant by instant in reality and in our minds. "Taken as a whole" time was not created by God but only by our minds. We explained above that primary matter is not created

in itself, but only in composite, material things, precisely because, taken alone, it is indeterminate, and has no proper existence. Similarly, duration, as a whole, whether finite or infinite, has no proper existence: it is formed only by the mind. Its only reality is that of the world, considered in each of its states. In this sense, then, is it created in itself, and also in our minds as our ideas are created, and as everything that exists is created.

We should not be surprised that the idea of creation is difficult to grasp, for it is the bond which unites the creature to God, and it participates in His mysteriousness. Those who think they have a clear idea of it are victims of their imagination. Creation, like Providence, in one of its two aspects is God Himself; in the other it is where the creature joins God. It is thus steeped in divine mystery: the ineffable welding of finite and infinite.

St. Thomas was obviously not in a position to judge the so-called *scientific* proofs of the beginning or end of the world, but there is no doubt that he would have regarded them as very childish. We know nothing of the world as a whole. Our "laws" are drawn from experiments of a very restricted nature, and are only approximate. We have no assurance that there are not, in particular cases, much broader laws, ruling entireties unknown to us. To claim to incorporate the two infinites of Pascal into a thermo-dynamic formula, and use it to predict the fate of the world, "whose centre is everywhere, and circumference nowhere," would show a lack of imagination almost amusing. Aristotle would shrug his shoulders, as he did at those who tried to prove, by the beginnings of

Greek civilization, that the world itself had a beginning.

For St. Thomas, the question of the eternity or non-eternity of the world is a purely theological one. In philosophy it is a problem, in the Aristotelian sense of the word. You may give arguments for both sides, or support one of them, but no *necessary* argument either way can be forthcoming. God's will alone can settle the debate, and philosophy knows nothing of what God wills. Its supreme attainment is to prove God's existence, with all its implications. We Christians believe that the world began, on the authority of Scripture, taking as literal and conclusive the words of Genesis: *In the beginning God made heaven and earth.*

C. Does Creation Extend to the Universe as a Whole? Matter. The Multiplicity and Variety of Things

Having dealt with creation, and discussed the eternity and non-eternity of the world, we may now go on to discover the extent of creation. Does it include the entire universe, first, as regards its matter, and then as regards the multiplicity and variety of its forms and natures?

We have already mentioned, though from a different standpoint, the ancient opinions about matter. I say from a different standpoint, because we were then speaking of duration and not dependence on a first Principle. But in point of fact, the ancient philosophers who taught the eternity of matter, taught also that it was independent of God. Like certain Christian writers, they confused the

problem of beginning with that of the first cause. They made matter not only a principle co-eternal with the first Principle, but independent of it, and hence a co-operator in the production of the world. God and matter, the Demi-urge and chaos (when physical forces did not take the place of God), accounted for the world, instead of everything, including matter, being accounted for by God.

There seems to be a perpetual tendency to think as they thought. As St. Thomas remarks, it is not at all easy to take a comprehensive view of the question, and find its only true answer in God. Lower minds can see in nature only exterior and superficial changes of one common substance, and explain them by mere material causes. We have to try to look more deeply into nature, to probe the *essences* of things, to acknowledge that their material properties are only so many symptoms or consequences. Then the question of causality is put on a higher plane: we must discover essences. It was in searching for the origin of essences (as well as for the origin of knowledge) that Plato put forward his theory of ideas. In this Aristotle refuses to follow him. Aristotle calls these ideas *forms*, and makes them belong, not to the world of causality, but to the physical substances, which are its effects. This brings us back to the question of cause, in so far as it concerns essences. Aristotle solves it metaphysically by his system of living worlds, and physically by the theory of the zodiac. This theory taught that the varying positions of solar rays, in the course of the year, were the efficient cause, not only of heat and cold, but also, by some hidden influence, of the birth and destruction of all things. This is like the modern theory

of radiations. The thought manifested by essences came from the first heaven, which in turn derived it from the contemplation of Pure Act.

These ideas seem strange to us to-day, but they are an indication of the perpetual desire of discovery, and it is better to be wrong as they were, than to be wrong with some of the moderns. This brings us to the problem of essences.

The ancients, in attacking this problem, neglect the problem of the *total* substance. Matter remained like a residue at the bottom of all their explanations. Where does it come from? Either they did not ask the question, or they replied: It is eternal, the material out of which God formed the world. Matter and God are thus two co-existing principles, one perfect act, the other pure potentiality, and so they account for all reality.

St. Thomas, however, objects that this explains only qualities and essences, not *being* in its entirety; not *being as being*. It does not answer the ultimate question of metaphysics, the question of being as being. It explains how white becomes black, how dense becomes rare, how cold becomes hot, or *vice versa*: a consideration of material properties is sufficient for that. It explains, too, how *such* being becomes, by a substantial change, such other being; but it does not take us out of the realm of particular considerations. We are not concerned with the question of *such* being, or of being affected by *such* matter. Creation is concerned with *being as being*, and that is precisely what is left unexplained. It is a question of the ultimate basis of things in their entirety, for, when an element is found to be based on being, it thereby comes under creation. Is matter *being?* If it were not, it

would not be an element of reality. It is not *a being*, since it has no determination or unity of its own, but it is *of being*; it belongs to being in so far as it is able to be. This is enough to enable us to say, as we have done, that matter is not, properly speaking, created, seeing it does not subsist of itself alone, but *concreated*. In brief, matter enters into the object of creation, like everything else, and this is the problem.

This problem would remain unanswered, no matter how we conceived of matter, were it not for St. Thomas's high metaphysical principles. Whence comes the stuff of which nature is made? Is it a creation of God? Is it independent, presupposing nothing and itself presupposed in everything that exists? That is the question.

In the *Summa contra Gentiles*,[7] St. Thomas attacks and explodes the theory of a matter independent of God. For what purpose is matter, he asks, as regards an active cause? Obviously, to serve as a recipient of its action. Therefore its action is not all-powerful. In one way it is a slave, and, in consequence, the result is not entirely its own. For, just as an action belongs to the doer, in so far as it comes from him, so it belongs to what suffers the action in so far as it resides there. Can we say this of God? No. He is almighty, and His action, identical with His being, is self-sufficient; it is all being, whether by reality in God Himself, or by power, in the sense that all created being comes from Him. Therefore there is no use in postulating a matter co-eternal with God, which He must act upon, as a sculptor makes things out of marble. If an artist could create the material

[7] II, 16.

of his art, he would be the God of his production. God, the sovereign Artist, supplies the material of His art, as well as the forms. His power is not restricted to the latter. He is the all-powerful principle of being, and therefore supplies the whole of being.

When a worker has need of material, it is obviously material proportioned to his action, in such a way that it can receive every form that he can give it. Otherwise his power of making, which can be exercised only in a material, would be purposeless, as he would have no means of manifesting it. This supposition is particularly untenable when we are concerned with the foundations of being. Nothing in nature is without a purpose. Everything that an active cause can really do, can always be really done. But it is obviously not true that matter can receive everything that God can do. God can make infinitely more things than matter can receive. Matter is limited to physical creations, of definite form, and in definite quantities. There are many beings, especially possible ones, apart from matter. God's power is absolutely infinite, and therefore could not be exercised as such if it were conditioned by matter. And if it is not so conditioned, why postulate matter as a co-eternal principle that is pre-supposed in everything created by God?

Further, in nature, when two realities are connected so as to form a certain order, it is necessary that one should proceed from the other, or both from a third; otherwise their order, their harmonious and productive intercourse, would be without explanation. We should be compelled to put it down to chance, and chance has no place in the

first constitution of things; it comes only from their interactions, which are subsequent to their being. Therefore, if there exists a co-eternal matter, corresponding to the action of God, and in harmony with it, then one of these two must proceed from the other, or both from some third thing. But God cannot proceed from matter, nor, moreover, can He and matter proceed from some third thing. These two solutions are excluded by the very notion of God, for He is the first Cause, and would not be at the summit of causality if a superior cause could be attributed to Him, whether individually or conjointly. Therefore matter must come from God; i.e., God is the cause of matter.

Is God, equally and properly, the cause of the multiplicity and variety of beings? Or is His causality only general, concerned with the primary elements of the world, and not with the particular details of its constitution? This is a big question, and the diverse answers given to it will be better appreciated when we treat of Providence.

St. Thomas declares that God cannot be ignorant of the results of His initial creation, or be interested simply in primary beings. He says this would make the world of experience a chance production. We mean by a chance production the result obtained when several distinct agents do each their own work, without their actions being co-ordinated or directed by some higher cause. If God were concerned simply with the primary elements of the world, and each of these acted independently, without the guidance of a higher cause, the world we experience would be a chance production. But order is heaven's first law, and order cannot be attributed to chance. The greatest effect must be

attributed to the greatest cause, God. We can admit—indeed, we must admit—intermediate causes, but it is inconceivable that God should be unconcerned with what is most noble in the universe, and that it should be left to chance. Creation would be meaningless. The order of the universe is, as it were, its ultimate *form*, which gives it its unity, and its very being, as a whole. Granted that God created the universe, you cannot say that what is properly the universe, viz., the organic multiplicity of things, with their distinctions and limits, escapes His supreme causality.

The reason why certain philosophers held a world due to chance, was because God is absolutely simple, and can only will and produce what is simple. But we have already seen that God's simplicity is not a simplicity of exclusion, but a simplicity of richness. We shall show that He even commands evil. Therefore we must hold that His creative intention, directly and in itself, implies multiplicity in its effects. The reason is that, as every created thing is necessarily imperfect in comparison with the first being, the quota of perfection in the universe cannot normally be concentrated in one sole nature. Neither God nor the indefinite virtuality of matter would be made manifest. Goodness is diffused and gradated, and must descend from the Sovereign Good, Who is a synthesis of all good, to a variety of beings and perfections which, by their multiple good, form an analysis of the good, and combine to show forth the infinite riches of the Supreme Good.

Creatures resemble God more by their diversity and gradations than if they constituted one unique

effect, for they can communicate their perfection, as God communicates His, and this is only possible where there is diversity. They also resemble God's thought. Just as we use many words to express one idea, so God creates many beings to express Himself in the world.

From diversity naturally follows inequality, for beings will vary in perfection according as they approach or recede from the supreme perfection of God. It is by successive negations that a scale of values of being can be arranged under the perfect being; just as, if we start with what is lowest in the scale of creation, pure potentiality, we gradate the perfections of beings by successive additions. This is true of all classification, e.g., vertebrate, *in*vertebrate; rational animal, *ir*rational animal. That is why Aristotle compares the series of forms of being and their definitions to numbers, which are changed specifically by adding or subtracting a unit. He thereby affirms implicitly that diversity implies gradated perfections, at least as regards the domain of essences.

Individuals, on the other hand, are differentiated by matter, and since forms are manifested in matter, the purpose of the many individuals of one species is to show forth the potentialities of that species. This material or individual multiplicity is thus similar to specific multiplicity, and the same principles may be applied to both. How to account for the inequality of beings is therefore the same problem as how to account for their diversity and multiplicity; or, if you will, one explains the other. Just as a participation in the supreme perfection must be multiple, otherwise the universe would not manifest that amount of goodness which it should,

so also it must be gradated, and consequently unequal.

Philosophers who believed that the inequalities in nature and in human beings must be attributed uniquely to particular causes, or to free will, instead of seeing in them the divine necessity of order, are obviously at fault. The Manicheans thought that a perfect God could produce only the perfect, and consequently they granted to Him only spiritual and incorruptible beings, and abandoned corruptible beings to an evil principle. Origen, in opposing them, fell into a similar error. He granted that an excellent and just God could be the cause only of what was excellent and just. From that he concluded that only excellent creatures, rational creatures, made to the likeness of God, were of divine creation, and that they had all been formed equal. What inequalities there were, were due to the different use they made of their free will. Some had been given the rank of pure intelligences, others had been bound to bodies, and in these two ranks the diversity of degrees was due to the diversity of merits or the gravity of faults. St. Augustine wrote of this:

"What could be more nonsensical than to say that God created the sun, which is unique in this world, not out of a desire to enhance the beauty of the universe, or preserve corporeal things, but because one soul sinned in a way to deserve to be imprisoned in such a body. Why! If not one, but two, or a dozen, or a hundred souls had happened to commit this same sin, then this world would have a hundred suns!"[8]

[8] *De Civ. Dei.*, XI, c. 23.

Schopenhauer, Renouvier, and even Kant, have elaborated similar theories from not very different motives. Schopenhauer, judging the world to be bad, interprets it as the fall of the will, into the multiple and imperfect, from a state of perfect unity, in which it could not maintain itself. Renouvier attributes the fall of primitive man to a state of an imperfect and progressive world, to a sort of original sin, with orders to climb up, by the efforts of civilization, towards the lost Eden. Kant, without going that far, shows that he is infected by the same spirit when he puts free will outside *phenomena*, into some sort of state inaccessible to experience, and attributes to this primordial responsibility the characteristics of a *phenomenal* will, no longer free. Lastly, in quite a number of contemporary poets, in Sully Prudhomme, and in Paul Valéry, *being* itself is continually represented as a fall and an error.

Soleil! soleil! faute éclatante!

These theories all result from a misunderstanding of the exigences of order: they sacrifice the first Cause, and His unerring wisdom, for particular causes. Can any person, asks St. Thomas, hold that *natures*, the first basis of action, are themselves the result of action, and thus come about accidentally? Why bring in questions of merit or guilt? The very first constitution of natures is clearly anterior to all questions of proportion or right, which are measured by the mode of being of its subject, i.e., by its nature; and all merit presupposes this nature, since merit is based on action, and action is posterior to being. Inequality comes from God, as His direct effect, or at least as directly

willed. It is a condition of universal perfection, of harmony, which is the highest expression of the Good.

D. Creation and Evil

This is the place to consider evil, for the principal errors connected with creation are based on it.

What is evil? It is not something positive: it is a lack, an imperfection and limitation of being, which impedes its full realization. Looked at in this light, there is no need to try to find a cause for it. Evil has no cause of its own, since it is no being, but a mere privation. Still, the *fact* of evil is very positive. Evil *is* not, but there is evil: and since this accident, this deficiency, is produced by the very fact of a complexus of causes, this is the place to treat of it, and discover why the first Cause permits it. The solution is based on the principles we have just put forward.

The universe is created, as we have said, by a communication of the Sovereign Good, in which all things participate in varying degrees. Each thing expresses God in its own way, and is therefore good, though necessarily deficient. There is only one perfect being, God: all other things must be in gradation, both as regards their being and their perfection. The multiplicity of limited, and consequently deficient natures, is compensated for by the unity of order, and it is for the sake of this order that evil is permitted. Without evil, or rather, without the diversity of natures which permits it, God would be less perfectly reflected in the world. Every nature, as such, no matter how lowly, implies

a perfection of a special kind, which no other being can replace, and which therefore has its due place in the universe, being endowed with the degree of goodness destined for it by the supreme wisdom. *Essences* show forth being, and being would be the poorer if robbed of any essence whatever. All beings are deficient either in themselves, or (what comes to the same thing) in their natural surroundings, which are, as it were, part of them, and that without which they cannot be defined. Therefore they necessarily fall short of perfection, in a greater or lesser degree, and thereby give rise to evil. God could prevent this failing, by a constant intervention of His sovereign power, but it would be incompatible with His wisdom. As we shall see later, Providence leaves natures to themselves, and does not keep interfering with their mode of acting, or with their natural tendencies. There would be no purpose in natures being deficient if endowed with the gift of never failing. What can truly fail, will fail from time to time, if left to itself.

Further, though evil in itself is non-being, it is indirectly a condition of the interactions of being, since it is a condition of all action. This argument is equally cogent here, as when used of the inequality of natures. There would be no such thing as action if there were no contraries, for contraries are the basis of all interchanges: the very weakness of certain things, whether beings or phenomena, is sacrificed for the birth or success of others. This is just as true in the moral order as in the material. There would be no life for the lion without death for the sheep, nor martyr's patience without the malice of his persecutors. Good is more powerful for good than evil is for evil. The good done more

than compensates for the evil. The good resulting from a well-built house is greater than the trouble it is to build it well. Evil is evil, but it is good for evil to be. This is true at the first foundation of things and at their ultimate effects. These must be waste, but it is not a meaningless waste, because it shows forth God's glory under some new form, and that is its ultimate purpose. For example, in material waste, God is manifested in the higher cosmic laws; in moral lapses, by His justice, which is the law of the moral order.

This does not mean that our created universe is the best possible one. For St. Thomas, our universe is the best that could possibly be made out of the elements of which it is actually composed. But to improve it, it would only be necessary to increase the number of its elements, or enhance their value, and thereby render their relations more perfect. We have no right to expect this improvement. God is under no obligation; He is absolutely all-sufficient for Himself. A moment's reflexion will show that the best possible world is not possible, for God could always improve on it. Whatever God makes will necessarily be immeasurably deficient, in comparison with the infinite possibilities He could make, just as it is an unspeakable marvel, compared with nothingness or the infinite decline open to it. Our universe is between these extremes, and its relative value is gauged by comparison with either extreme. It is the best and the worst; it is nothing and it is being. As Pascal says: "An all in comparison with nothing, a nothing in comparison with all."

E. The Unity of Creation

Is the universe really and truly one, or are there several worlds? We must carefully distinguish, for there are several ways of looking at the problem. We may look at it from the standpoint of astronomy, or of cosmology, or of metaphysics; the last dealing with the transcendent relations between the first Cause and the world (or worlds). Or again we may look at it from the standpoint of God's absolute power, or else from the standpoint of what is called in theology His *ordinary* power.

When an astronomer speaks of a "plurality of worlds" he does not mean it in the sense in which we take it here. It is generally admitted that the solar system, which is a universe, in a restricted sense of the word, is only an element in the nebulæ of the Milky Way, there being millions of them in astronomical space. These groups are sufficiently independent and isolated to be given each a collective name and to be distinguished one from another. The astronomer would be the first to admit that the word "world," in this context, has only a relative sense, for no one believes that these groups are really independent and isolated. They are observed to be composed of similar materials, subject, broadly speaking, to the same laws, and united one with another by their mutual interactions. Worlds wholly independent and isolated could not possibly be known by us, for in order that they may be known, light would have to come from them to us, and that would make them subject to at least one common law, the law of light, and thus not completely isolated. The comparatively small universe known

in St. Thomas's time was held to form one sole totality, well defined and perfectly linked up, with actions and reactions going, without break, from the periphery to the centre, and *vice versa*.

But is it possible that there are other worlds, absolutely independent of us, cut off from us, and having no connection with our universe? St. Thomas says that it is *logically* impossible. He says *logically* impossible, because, if you regard only God's power, then several worlds are just as easy to create as one, since God can do anything He wishes. He can do everything that does not involve a contradiction, and there is no contradiction in the existence of several worlds. But there is one sense in which they would be connected. They might conceivably have no external relations one with another, but they must be assembled and unified in the divine mind. In that sense they would be connected, and we, though incapable of knowing anything about them in this life, should see them some day, in seeing God. Therefore, absolutely speaking, a plurality of entirely unconnected worlds under one sole God is contradictory, since they must at least be connected in the divine mind.

But could several worlds exist with no other connection with one another than their unification in the divine mind? Conceiving unity in a more concrete sort of way, we must here distinguish the *absolute* power of God, and His *ordinary* power, or power governed by His wisdom. By His *absolute* power, God could create several worlds without any mutual relationships, other than their unification in His mind. But His absolute power, i.e., His power, singled out and considered apart from His other attributes, is only a mental abstraction. We dis-

tinguish His wisdom and His power, and His other attributes, as already explained, but they are really identical. By His *ordinary* power, i.e., by His power in consort with His wisdom, God could not create such worlds. Here is St. Thomas's reason for saying so:

"All things that come from God have a relation one with another, and a relation with God,"[9] because God's only possible motive in acting is to show forth His goodness, and communicate His perfection. Every other primary motive is excluded from Him by His plenitude of being and absolute independence. He needs nothing, and can acquire nothing. His only act is to give, and what He gives must in some way be Himself, since there is nothing besides Him. Thus creation is an emanation of the divine; a participation in God. It is multiple because one solitary being could not suffice to show forth the riches of God, which is the ultimate purpose of all things. Therefore it is impossible that they should be entirely unconnected and unrelated. They must have an order, for order is heaven's first law. God wills them, not for their individual worth, but for their collective worth. The world essentially is God's work, and order is its *form*. God wills, first and foremost, not this or that creature, but the order which they proclaim. Just as an artist wills, not this or that element of his production, but the whole of it; just as a wise government wills, not the success of individual enterprises, but the common good of the whole nation, which comprehends and surpasses the good of individuals; so God wills the good of the universe, taken as a whole, and this good surpasses the good of particular essences.

[9] Ia, q. XLVII, art. 3, corp.

Therefore the motive of God's action is to diffuse His goodness. Therefore His work must be *ordered*: His creation must be one unique universe.

Democritus, who was a better cosmologist than metaphysician, held a plurality of worlds, succeeding one another, and subject only to Chance. St. Thomas admits that there could be many independent worlds if they were fortuitous, because Chance is itself multiple, and could not unite them. Even in the theory of Democritus, these worlds had a minimum of unity, since they resulted from a common law of atoms, but this unity is so restricted that it is more exact to say, as did Democritus, that there are many worlds made out of the same matter, than that there is only one. There are modern materialists whose philosophy is no more advanced than that of these ancient "naturalists."

A correct view of the world's origin is sufficient to refute this theory. It is true that Chance of itself causes the multiple, because it is an accidental cause without unifying principle. On the contrary, God is one, He acts by His intelligence, and intelligence unifies its objects. God tends always to unity: He assembles and unites, and makes all His creatures common children of one Father. It is inconceivable that His work should not be co-ordinated.

St. Thomas gives the following dilemma,[10] in answer to an objection: Either these supposed multiple worlds are identical, or they are without purpose. Number is not willed for its own sake, but only for the sake of the variety of conservation of beings. Mere repetition is valueless: number is simply the measure of material things. If creatures

[10] Ia, q. 47, art. 3, ad. 2.

were multiplied merely for the sake of number, there would be no reason why they should ever cease being multiplied, but would go on *ad infinitum*. If, on the other hand, they are multiple for some other reason, they must needs form part of a plan. They will be unified, not only in the divine mind, but in *being* as well.

There is a side issue, which never occurred to St. Thomas, but which is often discussed to-day, namely, the question of a plurality of worlds in the sense of Fontenelle, a plurality of *inhabited* worlds. It is useless to ask what St. Thomas's opinion would have been. In the absence of any positive or scientific data, he would probably have confessed complete ignorance about it. Still, had it occurred to him, it is quite likely that his keen intelligence would have sought a solution of the mystery.

There are Catholics who believe that it is contrary to faith to hold a plurality of inhabited worlds, yet Revelation, which concerns only our world, gives us no hint one way or the other. There are others, both Catholic and non-Catholic, scholars and popular writers, who consider such a theory as arbitrary in the extreme, and most improbable, because of the stringent conditions required for life in this world, which we find nowhere else, save possibly on Mars. This is a curious outlook. Obviously, we have no certitude, but surely the theory is quite reasonable. Why should the planet Earth have a monopoly of intelligent beings? Consider the myriads of suns, that we know, and the myriads of others that we suspect to be: they are similar in composition, and it is probable that most of them have satellites as our sun has. Is it unreasonable to maintain that

the stringent conditions required for life have occurred, in the course of thousands of years, a little oftener than once? Is it unlikely that God, Who has been so prodigal in creating worlds, should single out our tiny earth, and give no intelligent beings to the great worlds which will continue long after ours has become as dead and uninhabitable as the moon?

We cannot say for certain, but it is at least within reason for those who believe in God, to maintain that the whole creation was not made merely to be contemplated by us insignificant beings, who have never known its true dimensions, and probably never shall. That seems hardly in keeping with God's wise adaptation of means to ends.

Of course it will be objected that "it often takes a big machine to make a small object: a huge apparatus to produce a spark." It is not a matter of size, but of value. Agreed. Or again: "The sublime results to which this discovery [immensity of the universe] has led man must make him proud of his rank here on earth, by showing him his own grandeur in contrast with the extreme smallness of the base whereby he measures the heavens."[11] Beautiful words and true, but hardly to the point, for it is not easy to believe that the spiritual dignity of lowly intelligences like ours requires quite such profusion and disproportionate grandeur.

It seems almost to accuse God of a certain want of skill. Creusot's great steam-hammer can crack a nut. Yes, but it was not made for that. It is not skill, but want of it, which requires an enormous machine to do a small job. If God thought fit to give Himself innumerable chances of doing the work

[11] Laplace, *Exposition du Système du Monde*.

He meditated, and then did it only once, would it not resemble—though slightly, I admit—the Chance of Democritus, which occasionally brought off a success, because it had infinite numbers and time at its disposal?

But we are out of our depths, and had better conclude, as we began, by saying that we do not know.

CHAPTER V

PROVIDENCE

God creates, and having created, governs. Divine governance and Providence are not exactly the same, but, as one supposes the other, and as we commonly call them by the same name, we may take them together here.

I. The Meaning of Providence

God's Knowledge

God is provident because He gives things, not only their being, but their order and destiny, for these are included in the object of God's intelligence. It has been proved in the second and third chapters that God is intelligent, and we need not prove it again here. We might say a good deal more about it, only we must keep within bounds. We refer the reader to the wonderful account of it given by St. Thomas in the *Summa*.

The divine intelligence comprehends all things: it does not remain shut up in itself, as Aristotle held. Aristotle would argue that, because God knows only Himself, He is ignorant of everything else. *We*

argue that because God knows Himself, He consequently knows everything else.

As already shown, to know means to become ideally that which one knows. Obviously God cannot become anything, ideally or otherwise. He cannot be anything but Himself. Further, a multiplicity of ideas in God is inconceivable, for God is perfectly simple. Therefore what is created cannot be in Him, as the details of a landscape are reflected in a mirror. While human intelligence is conditioned by its object, from which it receives, and on which it depends, God's intelligence can be conditioned by nothing, depends on nothing, and receives from no created thing. God is absolutely intelligible and absolute intelligence, and the cause of all that is intelligible or intelligent. Therefore He must know everything, in knowing Himself.

God knows all things, not only in general, but through and through, down to the minutest details, all of which are ruled by His providence. *Things in general* is not a reality: it has no being. God, the cause of all being, knows all things in their reality, each individually, and even their very possibilities. We have already ruled out the sort of modified creation which makes God responsible only for primary elements. For the same reasons we here rule out a modified form of knowledge, which would confine the divine intelligence to universals, and deny it that universality of knowledge which, as cause of being, it demands. If an architect were the cause of the house in all its details, including the materials of which it was made, and its site, he would know it, in knowing himself, in his own thought, and would have no need to ask the builder for information. God is the cause of all things and so has no need

to draw His knowledge of beings from the beings themselves: He draws on Himself for it; He knows them wholly, and nothing, for Him, is general or particular.

His knowledge embraces everything *ad infinitum*, for it comprises the real and the possible, the present and the future, the actual and the potential—where infinity lurks under so many forms. God's knowledge is God, and He can fail to know only by failing to be. He comprehends infinitely. "He is," says St. Thomas, "virtually all things."

The Contingent Future

A special difficulty is raised in the schools over the contingent future, i.e., the future not yet determined in its causes. Its bearing on Providence is obvious, for, if God is ignorant of the future of beings, of their vagaries and actions, how can He rule them?

The difficulty is due to the fact that the future, as such, does not exist, and therefore cannot be the object of *vision*, while, as contingent, it has no being, by anticipation, in its causes, and therefore cannot be the object of *prevision*. How can even God know what can be neither seen nor foreseen?

This difficulty originates in a false comparison of God's knowledge with ours. Our knowledge, like its object, is in time. If subject and object, the mind and the thing, do not in some way concur, they cannot be united. I do not know what you will do to-morrow, because my mind is working to-day, and to-morrow and to-day are different times, unconnected by any certain causality. But if my mind were outside time, I should see what you are going

to do to-morrow, just as well as I see what you are doing to-day: there would be no difference. So it is with God.

God, says St. Thomas, is like a spectator at the top of a high tower, watching a procession go by. Each individual in the procession sees those who are ahead of him, but not those who follow. The spectator sees the whole procession at once, because he is not in it. So we who are in the procession of time, measure our knowledge by time. The very words which express it are of *time*, and the future, as future, escapes us. But God looks on time as a whole, by one simple glance. His word is unmodified by time; it expresses the whole of being without division or succession of any sort, so much so that God, in seeing Himself, sees all things present and to come. Present and future are differences of His own making, and in no way limit His knowledge any more than the wall which is built day by day limits the architect's knowledge. Past, present, and future are attributes which no more limit God's knowledge than red, white, blue, or round, square, triangular. The last mark a spatial order, the first a temporal order, but space and time are differences of being within *the categories*, and God is above all categories, and above created being as its principle. Strictly speaking, God does not see *into* the future: He sees the future in His eternal present.

Another characteristic of divine knowledge, already touched upon, is its absolute independence of its objects, and these objects' absolute dependence on it. "God's knowledge is the cause of things," St. Thomas says over and over again. It is the cause, since it is to things what an artist's knowledge is to

his works. The artist works in virtue of a form which he conceives and wishes to impress on some matter. God, author of the matter as well, works in virtue of a more complete intellectual form; but the relation is the same. God does not know the creature by its being impressed on Him. On the contrary, His knowledge creates it, though not precisely as knowledge, for knowledge, as such, is not a cause. You will never build a house by having an idea of it: you must apply your idea to the material, and that supposes in you an inclination or bias, which leads you to express the idea in some material. We call this inclination the will.

God's Will

God is will, in the same sense, and for the same reason, as He is intelligence. He is will because He is being, and because all being has this inclination or impulse towards a good, which is suited to it. The will may be regarded as the inclination of the intelligence, or better, the inclination of the soul, which, by becoming something else by knowledge, now tends to a good other than itself. Will and intelligence act in conjunction and cannot be found apart, and therefore God must have will. But in God, will and intelligence are identical with His nature.

Just as God primarily knows only Himself, and everything else in Himself, so He can will only Himself, and everything else by reason of Himself, in so far as it participates in His goodness. Therefore God's will has no end outside God Himself. His end is Himself, but Himself regarded as goodness which can be diffused. He can acquire nothing;

He can only communicate. His end is all goodness, all generosity, and, whereas men, in giving, receive something, God gives without recompense. Hence St. Thomas says that He alone is, strictly speaking, liberal.

God's Liberty

God knows and wills. But does He will freely, or is He subject to a sort of fatality, whether in the nature of things which compel Him, or in His own perfection? Jupiter was subject to *Fatum*, and in a number of philosophies, God is regarded as a supreme necessity, or eternal axiom. This is contrary to our principles. God cannot be determined by anything, since what determines a thing must precede it, and nothing precedes God, the first cause of all things.

God could not be determined by an effect, infinite like Himself, because there would then be two Gods, which is absurd; nor by a finite effect, because this would limit His action, and make Him a finite cause. God has no limitations: He is being, pure and simple. Therefore nothing can come from Him in virtue of a sort of natural obligation.

Further, God is the Intelligible-Intelligent, the *Thought of Thought*, as Aristotle puts it, and His effects must proceed from Him in an intellectual way, not by a fatality of nature. They must be the effects of practical knowledge, of art. They cannot bind Him, because He receives from nobody, and is the Author of all the laws which govern them.

None the less, God's will, in itself, is necessary, because everything in God is necessary, since everything in God *is* God. But it does not follow that the

effect is necessary, because God's will transcends and is entirely independent of its effects. That God can do only what He actually does, is true in the sense that His will is unchangeable, but it does not mean that His effects have any right to existence, or compel Him in any way. In that sense God can do whatever He pleases. The contingency of the world is due to the world, not to its cause. The world is contingent because it has nothing in it to make it necessary, even though it issues from a cause which is itself necessary.

Ultimately, it all comes back to the proposition that the world is not God nor equal to the active power or motives of God. Our position contradicts Pantheism, for Spinoza makes these following two propositions equivalent: God acts necessarily, and: The world is only a mode of God.

God's Omnipotence

In order to have a right idea of Providence, we must know whether God's will is always obeyed. We give an affirmative answer to this question, because God is the cause of universal being, and all being must obey His law. A cause infallibly attains its effect, unless impeded by something which is not subject to it. Since God is the cause of all things, nothing can escape His causality, and therefore nothing can impede the complete realization of His effects.

But omnipotence means a great deal more than that, for obedience to God expresses a relation only of actual being, whereas God's power rules all being,

actual and possible. God can do all things, in the sense that His power extends to everything that is being in any way. Therefore God can do anything that does not involve a contradiction.

Some have gone too far, attributing to God the power of doing the impossible, as if it were a mark of power to be able to do what cannot be done. In his *Opusculum De Æternitate Mundi*, St. Thomas, while speaking kindlily of this opinion, out of respect for the piety of its supporters, nevertheless firmly rejects it as devoid of sense. His own conclusion is, in the words of his master, Albert the Great, that "whoever speaks of realizing a contradiction is postulating not power, but impotence." The reason is that God's power is equal to His being, and cannot escape, or go beyond being, without running counter to His nature. It cannot overstep the limits of thought, and thought implies a harmonizing of elements into an ideal synthesis. Contradictions cannot be reconciled, and thus they form a kind of frontier to God's knowledge: they are not really a frontier, because a frontier is a division between two things, and in the present case there is nothing the other side.

Is God's power faithful and just? Speaking strictly, justice implies a debt, and God is not indebted to any creature: He gives everything its being, and any right belonging to a thing obviously follows on its being. But precisely because things have certain rights, God, in giving them their being, gives also these rights. In so doing, He as it were obeys an order, which is not imposed on Him from without, but which is a necessary element of His work. In this way He pays a debt to all things, in

giving each creature what fits it for its nature and purpose.

Again, God's omnipotent will is loving and merciful: loving, in so far as it communicates good; merciful, because it removes evil, as far as justice allows.

God's Love

God must have love—not passionate or emotional, but intellectual love. He wills good to His creatures in willing their being and the consequent perfection which is their happiness. God's love is creative, i.e., it does not depend on the creatures' merits or goodness, but precedes them and is their first cause. God does not love His creatures because they are good: they are good because He loves them. God loves the Sovereign Good, and consequently He loves all things, since all things participate in the Sovereign Good, all communicate in being, of which He is the source. But it follows also that He loves them unequally. The difference is not in Him. God's love is God. The difference is due to the fact that His love wills that there should be differences, and that, from the creature's standpoint, these differences allow the creative love to be qualified and gradated.

God's Mercy

The same must be said of mercy. In God it is not a passion, a loving sorrow, as it is in us, for a passion supposes a body. We name it by its effects. The effect of mercy is to help, to alleviate suffering, and

remove misery, which God does in an eminent way, as far as His wisdom and justice allow. Mercy and justice must always be taken conjointly, though mercy, in a way, excels and surpasses justice. As St. James says: "Mercy exalteth above judgment."[1]

II. Definition of Providence

We are now in a position to define Providence. St. Thomas borrows the following fine definition from Boëthius: "the divine reason itself, situate at the summit of things, and disposing all things." Providence implies the disposition of things, but a disposition in thought, preceding the things themselves, i.e., it is first and foremost a *plan*. But it is a plan, not merely to be conceived by the intelligence, but to be realized by the imperative judgments of its Chief. Thus the event is fixed, and bound to its temporal causes, even though it exist in the divine mind. The realization of things, or their real following on their cause, is not, properly speaking, an effect of Providence, but of divine government, at least in Thomistic language. Still, as we said, language often confuses them.

God, then, is provident, in so far as He "disposes all things"; in other words, because the order of things, just as their substances, proceeds from Him. This order supposes, on the one hand, a directing of each thing towards the particular end, which is suited to it, or which it must serve, and, on the other, the directing of all things towards the ultimate end, which is the manifestation of the supreme Good.

[1] Ch. II, v. 13.

Necessity, the Alternative to Providence

Those who deny Providence, or remove certain things from its sway, do so either because of objections which they cannot answer, or because of incidental error, or else because their philosophy is defective in its very principles. Materialists like Democritus attribute everything to material combinations, unaided by any superior cause, and working without purpose: then chance takes the place of Providence. Idealists come to the same conclusion in insisting on their so-called *necessities*, which do away with the first necessity. It would require an entire book to refute them, but we can at least get rid of the chief objections and errors. Both in modern thought and in antiquity there is a constant error which sees an opposition between necessity and Providence, neglecting the fact that the necessary and the contingent are differences of being, and forgetting that the problem of Providence, the problem of the divine ordering of being, belongs to the highest level of thought.

When treating of God's existence, we showed that any necessary thing, other than God, must have a reason for its necessity. For example, necessary geometrical conclusions are based on antecedent principles. Natural necessities are the executive causes of Providence: they presuppose some real antecedent to their action: they act on things already in existence, according to some pre-established order. "Pure determinism is nonsense," wrote Jules Tannery, "it must presuppose a thought, for things are determined for and by

thought." To say that things come about by necessity is rather like saying that, because a bullet leaves the gun and hits the target, it is impelled uniquely by gunpowder, and does not require a marksman.

Evil

Evil, physical and moral, is a disorder which has led to a denial of Providence. But it may be retorted that the fault is only in the order of things, which are made for a determined end. You do not complain of disorder in a sand-heap, but in a machine or in an organism. You cannot blame an architect or grammarian for not healing you: you blame the doctor for that, and the grammarian for grammatical mistakes. In the same way, you cannot blame nature for its waywardness and its monstrosities, or life for its unhappiness and its faults. Nature and life follow an order, have a final end, obey a thought, are ruled by a Providence.

But we may reasonably ask how it is that evils and errors should find a place in this divine order. That has been explained in the foregoing chapter, by the inevitable imperfection of created being: we may almost say, by its very perfection, in so far as the manifestation of one being's perfection implies imperfection in another. Granting this then, evil comes from the infinite goodness of God, for God's goodness envisages, before all else, the good of the universe, which, far from excluding evil, demands it, either as real or as possible, and consequently produces it in a certain number of cases.

It is sophistry to argue that only a perfect being

can come from what is perfect. On the contrary, only an imperfect being can come from what is perfect, for the perfect which would come from the perfect would be the perfect itself. Beings which come from the absolute being must be only relatively perfect, multiple and varying in the degree of their perfection. Thence come all the oppositions and interferences which give rise to evil.

It may be objected that in relation to God, degrees of perfection are purely arbitrary. If the world were ten times more perfect than it is, we could still postulate one twenty times as perfect. If it were ten times less perfect, we should look upon its actual state as an ideal. All we can say, absolutely speaking, is that the world has *some* degree of perfection: we have no way of gauging it by comparison with anything else. It is infinitely perfect as God's handiwork, and infinitely imperfect in comparison with God. Many things in it seem to us senseless or unjust, but to acknowledge Providence, we have no need to understand all its secrets: enough that we can catch a glimpse of its work. Once acknowledged, Providence appears only the more wonderful by its unaccountable way of working. We bow down before a mystery, and say with St. Augustine: "God, Who is Sovereign Good, would never have allowed evil in His works if He were not so powerful and good that He could bring good out of the evil."[2]

[2] *Enchiridion*, Ch. XI.

Chance and Fortune. Free Will

Another objection is that, if Providence rules all natural things, there is no room for chance, and if it rules all moral things there is no room for free will. But it is highly unphilosophical to deny chance, and immoral to deny free-will, for that would stifle morality in its very principle. Therefore there is no such thing as Providence.

This is a good objection. St. Thomas reverts to it again and again, and here is his solution of it.

First of all, we must rigidly maintain that all things without exception are under Providence, because nothing can act without at the same time determining the end or result of its action. To speak is to seek to be heard: to govern is to will to be obeyed. Therefore the more powerful an action, the more determined are its effects. If a result escapes one agent, it is the independent work of some other agent, which has intervened and frustrated the first. I cock my gun and fire, and the shot goes in a certain direction, determined by my aim: if it deviates it is because of another influence contrary to mine. Since nothing can be contrary to, or impede God, His action always attains its end. Everything He creates is according to His pre-established plan, which includes even contingencies and free acts.

Again, God's knowledge is the cause of things: it owes nothing to them, but gives them their all. God's knowledge extends to all things, general and particular, necessary and contingent or free. Therefore all things, including free acts, are subject to His pre-established order or Providence.

God is introduced into metaphysics as the necessary principle of all things, and any qualification or modification of His supremacy is equivalent to denying His existence. Liberate mind or matter, action or passion, or any other mode of being from God's jurisdiction, and you set it up as a self-sufficient nature, a rival to God. "God's power embraces all that is, under whatsoever form, or in whatever matter it may be, since everything is a participation in His being. Similarly, by His intelligence He comprehends all knowledge and all that is knowable. Further, His will and its object comprise every desire and all that is desirable. So that all that is knowable, as knowable, all that is desirable, as desirable, falls under the sway of His will, while all that *is*, as being, comes under His active power."[3] "There is nothing that escapes His government, just as there is nothing that does not come from His being."[4] It follows, then, that "as God is perfect in being and in causing, so He is perfect in ruling."[5]

If free will or any other cause could act independently of God, it would follow that the universal order would no longer have its full perfection in God. It would gain or lose something from these interferences, and its ultimate form would be determined, not by God, but by these secondary causes. It is, however, blasphemous to suggest that a creature can improve on God's handiwork. The definitive order is in God, in so far as He is its cause: it is not established independently of Him by the creature's co-operation or opposition.

[3] *Perihermenias*, I, I, 14.
[4] *Cont. Gent.*, III, Ch. I.
[5] *Ibid.*

St. Thomas is absolutely unshakable on this point; he allows no reservations: it is not his way to dispute the title of the first Cause to primacy, of the Transcendent to independence, or of the universal Being to communicate itself. Any *dividing* is an offence in his eyes: he allows only *subordination.* As we participate in the first being, so we have a share in the sovereign action, but as this participation adds nothing to the first being, so to share in the divine action is not to modify it in its results, or to be, in any sense, a *component* part of it.

We have still to determine how far this mystery is explicable, for, like creation, it *is* a mystery, and cannot be fully explained. Indeed it is the same mystery as creation, for creation means establishing being with all its manifestations, and these include created activity and its results. It is correct to say that creation, properly speaking, has to do only with subsisting things, but this exactitude does not affect the problem. Non-subsisting things, like action, are said to be "concreated," and therefore created. The acting subject is just as much created *as acting,* as it is *as subject,* and therefore its action is as much created as its being: it is a participation in the first Action, just as the subject is a participation in the first Substance: the two are identical. Hence we are again faced with the mystery of the contact and reconciliation of absolute Being with its derivatives, of the Infinite with the finite.

Here is St. Thomas's effort to reconcile them, as far as is compatible with a mystery.

Attempt at Reconciliation

"It must be understood that the divine will, of which we speak, is outside being: that being is penetrated by it entirely, and as regards all its differences. Now the possible and the necessary are differences of being, and therefore they have their origin in the divine will."[6] "It is necessary that it should belong to him on whom the production of any genus of realities depends, to produce also the differences of this genus, just as he who produces a triangle makes it equilateral or isosceles. Now the necessary and the possible are the proper differences of being. Whence it follows that it belongs to God, Whose power is the proper cause of being, to give to what He makes, by His providence, its necessity or possibility of existing."[7] "Other causes do not make the law of necessity or contingency, but merely use it when it has been made by a higher cause. Hence a thing is subject to the causality of any other cause, only in so far as it is its effect. But that it should be necessary or contingent depends on a higher cause, which is the cause of being, as being, and from this cause the order of necessity and contingency is derived."[8]

These accurate statements contain the whole doctrine. We have only to understand them, and apply them to the two parallel cases which present special difficulty, viz., chance and free-will.

There are numbers of people, Christians and

[6] *Perihermenias,* I, 14.
[7] *Substantiis Separatis,* Ch. XV.
[8] In VI *Metaph.,* lect. 3.

others, who are under the impression that it is disrespectful to Providence to believe in chance. They argue that what is subject to Providence should not be fortuitous. Therefore, since all things are subject to Providence, nothing will be fortuitous, or a chance production. St. Thomas makes an objection out of this, and answers it. Far from eliminating chance, we make it one of the elements of this world. It is not, properly speaking, a cause, and Chance, with a capital C, means nothing. But it is an accident of causes: it comes about by the meeting of causal series, which are ordered in themselves, but not co-ordinated. It is, according to Aristotle's classic example, as when two slaves, each sent by his master, and on quite definite errands, meet in the market-place without any pre-arrangement. Or again, to borrow an example from St. Thomas, it is as when one man buries a treasure, and another happens to dig a grave there, and finds it.

Chance is a natural fact which cannot be gainsaid. Providence takes it into account and is in no way opposed to it. Chance is subordinated to Providence, only the subordination is transcendent, i.e., chance is an element of something relative, Providence an aspect of the absolute, and the absolute, far from hampering the relative or contradicting it, constitutes it, corresponds to it point by point, establishes it in its proper nature, sustains it at each moment of its development, and makes, rather than mars, its nature and characteristics. Providence has willed that in this world there should be not only effects, but above all an order, in which the relations of causes with their effects form a principal element. Therefore the creative action, far from suppressing

contingency, must guarantee its course. God is too sovereign to interfere with the liberty of His works: He is a head Who can give complete freedom to His subordinates, because His government is such that this very freedom is one of its elements. God does not compel His works: He endows them. It is only between them that there can be victor and vanquished. Two created causes, coming into contact, may agree or clash, but God's action neither agrees nor clashes with ours: it makes all things and consequently manages all things. Every effect of God, in so far as it comes from Him, must be necessary; but it may be, in another sense, contingent, if God so determines it.

The mistake is due to the fact that we regard God as a cause like other causes, differing only in power, a Demi-urge, Whose action co-ordinates the actions of creatures, works over the same ground, harmonizes with them, supports or runs counter to their very order. So considered, God's intervention would overrule all secondary causes, and thus deprive them of their natural action; hence there would no longer be any contingency, chance or freedom. Then only two logical positions remain. Either you are a fatalist or a materialist. But God's action is not like the action of secondary causes. He transcends causality, and it may even be said that He is not a cause at all. God is a super-cause, which means that He has the power of causing a contingent being to be contingent, just as He causes a necessary being to be necessary. It is quite true that, in creating the contingent, God did determine it, but only as regards its deepest being, not as regards its lesser modes, and therefore He determined it to be contingent. He determined it to be

undetermined. God determines a being only in the sense that He causes it to be what it is. He may determine it to be undetermined, just as He may determine it to be determined or necessary. He is thus as much the cause of chance as of being.

The same applies to human liberty. We admit it as a fact which necessarily follows on the gift of intelligence. Consequently Providence does not exclude, but, on the contrary, creates free will, even while all free acts, like everything else, have God for their first cause. Such an expression as: "God has given man liberty, and man uses it," shows a fundamental misconception of what is meant by use, or by freedom, or even by man. To be man is to *be*, in a way determined by our human nature; to be free is to *be*, in a more determined way, since it adds liberty to the other human perfections; to use is to *be*, in a still more determined way, since to use is to put into act and render effective what was hitherto only potential. Thus God, Who is the source of being, is still more the source of free acts than of the free will or of the man.

If you deny this you take from God what He above all demands, what is most like Himself, who is Pure Act. You make God only a partial cause, a cause which owes something to its effects, an ordainer who must wait to see what his creature will do, and modify his plan accordingly. That is blasphemous. Man depends entirely on God. In all the various phases of his life from his first moments, in his faculties and in the exercise of them, man is only a participation in being, a reflection of the First Being, owing everything to God, without Whom he has no substance, no potentiality, no act.

This does not detract from liberty, but, on the contrary, constitutes it, by showing that its only adequate explanation is to be found in God. Man *is*, because God created him: he uses his liberty, and does so in this or that way, because God created him with the exercise of liberty. It is a mistake to confuse the conditions of psychological functioning with the transcendent condition which creative intervention implies. Psychologically, man would be free even if God did not exist, or did not act. God's action is not an element in human action, or an addition to it, or blended with it. Better, God has no action, if you mean by action something other than God; one of the forms under which we think of being. God does not act in this sense: He does not move or intervene. *Intervene* would then mean that God's influence was inserted into ours, and thus modified it, thwarted it, abolished it, and hence turned a free act into a necessary one. That is nonsense. God creates, and all that creation postulates is a pure relation. This transcendent relation, which affects human action in all its phases, cannot change the character or internal relations of human action, and make a necessary effect issue from a free power. It only makes the created to be created and not uncreated: it only makes a derived being not the first being: it only makes man not God.

It is difficult to know how to put into words a truth which is fundamentally so simple, yet so misunderstood, and bring it home to Christians and unbiased thinking men. If God were to act in us as we ourselves act, or like the hundred and one influences which surround us, that would be the end of liberty. This infinite composer would alone direct

our actions and determine the results of our works. Our acts would no longer be our own, but would become divine acts. We would then have to say that we were only the " occasions " of a divine action, and man would be reduced to the status of a phantom. But God's *motion*, i.e., His creation, in relation to voluntary acts, is of quite another order, an order which transcends, and cannot be compared with the action of the will on itself, or the action upon us of some external, created influence. God's intervening does not modify our action, but, on the contrary, confirms it, and gives it its entire *raison d'être*: it is the ultimate foundation of a free nature, with a free functioning and a free act. A free act means the work of a soul evolving of itself and according to its own law.

God is not here a particular condition of willing, but a general condition of being. If there is liberty, it must be created by God: otherwise, how could it exist? If there is any necessity, it must likewise be created by God, Who is Himself the first Necessary. But this does not do away with liberty or necessity, nor does it confuse them. Or must we say that God, Who creates them, destroys them by the very same act? Are they less created, because they are created such as they are, and not as something quite different?

Let us try to put it in yet another way. God does not modify: He *actualizes*. He actualizes a free being in its liberty, and a necessary being in its necessity: He actualizes the man, the free man, and the man acting freely, and thus He actualizes the free act itself. But no sort of modifying intervention comes *between* these elements: the influence underlies them, affects them all, actualizes all, with-

out changing their natures. Therefore God's being does not absorb ours or prevent its being autonomous. God's action does not deprive our action of its freedom, or render it necessary. God's action is identical with His being, and the question of the relation of our action to His, is identical with that of the relation of our being with His. He does not, in our manner of speaking, *act*: He *is*, eminently, and is therefore the source of all being and all action.

Because derived being presupposes absolute being, pantheists conclude that the former is only a mode of the latter, and they make God absorb all things. Because human action, like all action, presupposes the action of the absolute, fatalists conclude that everything is comprised in the great Necessity, and that there can be neither liberty nor contingency. The mistake is the same in each case. Absolute being does not properly belong to being at all, nor absolute action properly belong to action. By making them homogeneous with their derivatives, they cannot help entering into composition with their derivatives, and thus make the absolute absorb all things. But once admit that one transcends the other, that they are infinitely heterogeneous, though bearing an analogy one with another as explained in Chapter III, and you remove the incompatability.

This does not mean that their compatability is established. We cannot know positively how God's being is compatible with the being of creatures, which " adds nought to His," or how God's action is compatible with man's free action, and does not absorb it. The real relation between the divine action and ours, between God's being and our

being, necessarily escapes us, for, to understand that, we would have to penetrate God. It comes back to what we have said of creation. One of the terms of the reconciliation to be established, one of the terms of the relation to be fixed, always escapes our grasp. But, though we do not comprehend, still, our notion of the divine transcendence shows at least that the difficulties are without weight. God's very impenetrability is His best defence.

CHAPTER VI

NATURE AND LIFE

We have viewed the universe as a system of interchanges of communications and mutual dependences, in which the causal series, which have their ultimate origin in the Sovereign Being, sustain the beauty and usefulness of the cosmos.

But these actions and reactions and communications are not all of the same nature. The mind frames ideas or expresses them: an animal is born and dies: two chemical elements are combined or separated: a body changes its position, grows hot, expands, liquefies, is electrified. These phenomena are quite different. The last three groups of examples are of changes belonging to matter, and the sphere in which they are produced is nature properly so called. The first belongs to an order, which, in itself, is alien to and higher than the material world, but which nevertheless is bound to it, and the subject in which it is produced belongs to two worlds. It is the human *compositum*, an eminently Thomistic notion, which must be carefully defined.

The phenomena known as material changes are easily distinguished. The generation and dissolution of animals are the extreme events of what we call life, and life is a particular case of natural

functioning, which calls for special treatment, and which is so well treated by St. Thomas. St. Thomas differs from many philosophers and scientists in making the combinations and dissociations of elements generations and destructions in the complete sense of the words, viz., a summoning forth from primary pure matter, which holds the lowest place in the scale of being. Again, the superficial changes in the last group—changes of place, size, quality, and modifications of every sort—lead to the general problem of movement, in the complete sense of the word.

Nowadays, when we speak of movement, we mean exclusively a change of place, and we are content to imagine, with Descarte, not only that everything is made "by figure and movement," as Pascal puts it, but that everything *is* figure and movement and nothing else, in such a way that quality becomes quantity modified and active. St. Thomas rejects this impoverishment of being, and this false simplification, which is due to a too mathematical conception of reality. Natural qualities presuppose, but are not the same thing as mechanical movement. Therefore a qualitative change is a movement *sui generis*, and cannot be reduced to the other, any more than increase and diminution, which are changes of substance. Here the mechanical effect is only a means, occasion or result of an inner metamorphosis, which is itself qualitative, formal, in a word, of an ideal order. Emile Boutroux endorses this when he says: "Matter in movement seems to be, in bodies, only the vehicle of higher properties, which are the physical properties properly so called."[1]

[1] E. Boutroux, *La Contingence des Lois de la Nature*, p. 64.

To sum up. All this is a matter for *movable being* (*ens mobile*), as a Thomist would say. This expressive phrase, taken in its most profound sense, marks with a bold line the great division of being into two zones, on the confines of which is the human being.

I. Nature

A. Change

Let us study change in its simplest form, which includes, under one name, local change or change of position, increase and decrease, and alteration with respect to any of the elementary qualities which we call physical. How are we to interpret this general fact of nature, of which the stars and atoms offer us the most striking instances? Movement cannot be really defined, any more than other primary notions. Pascal rightly says that the so-called definitions which are given it would be better called propositions, and are more obscure than the thing they set out to explain. Still, a notion of movement which appears the most fundamental at first impression, may not be so when systematically studied, and it is legitimate to investigate the more general headings under which movement should be ranged.

It is evident that the *end* of movement is to acquire something: to gain a certain place or position, to reach a new level of growth, to become coloured, to grow hot, to be electrified—that is its end and result. Before this movement commences, its objective will be a natural possibility: afterwards, it will be a fact. And during? It is this *during* which is the move-

ment itself. It may sound strange, but this *during* cannot be fully grasped, for at any given moment we can only grasp a thing acquired or a thing to be acquired, never the actual acquiring. If this elusive thing exists, and it does exist, since something is done by it, in what compartment of being should we put it? Not in actual being, which has no more to acquire, nor in potential being, which has not yet acquired anything. There must, then, be some middle term. What is its nature with regard to these primary notions, which have nothing anterior to them? Its nature must be somehow actual, since movement is something real, something which actually takes place. It cannot be the actuality of the thing acquired, nor, moreover, the actuality with which we begin. Therefore the only actuality that it can be is that of potency, which is certainly something real, for there can be no movement without it. Movement, then, is the actuality of the potential, precisely as potential (*actus entis in potentia, prout in potentia*). You may think this childish, but further analysis will show that it is, on the contrary, profound.

Movement is continuous; if it is broken up and intermittent, it is then a series of movements, and each is necessarily continuous. For we mean by movement being continuous, that at any given moment there is a transition from one term to another, even while we affirm that there are only two realities, viz., something acquired and something to be acquired. It seems at first sight reasonable to suggest that movement is some sort of intermediary between these two terms, since it passes from one term to the other. But further consideration will show that, however close two

moments may be, there is an infinity of possible moments between them, and it is impossible to locate the movement between any particular pair. We can comprehend the starting-point, and the stopping-point, but we cannot grasp the movement which goes on between them. Its reality is ever fleeting: what we apprehend is already something else, its aftermath or foretaste.

If we say that movement is merely the movable thing in each of its successive states, we make the dynamic static. Granted no other alternative, we are bound to admit that movement is something that we cannot lay our finger on, since what we so indicate has either finished or not yet started. What is in a state of flux, cannot, as such, be apprehended: it is becoming, and not being.

We do not go as far as M. Bergson, who defines being itself by becoming. For us, being is *idea*; its absolute is the first Idea, which is perfectly actual and unchangeable. God cannot be becoming: being, as such, is thinkable: the mind's object must be able to be designated, which cannot be said of becoming. Consequently, in order to express becoming in terms of being, by a convenient definition, we must have recourse to something else besides a natural positivity, for the state of the movable thing in movement, viewed precisely as such, expresses only being, and not the change of being. Regarded as brought about by an anterior evolution, this being in movement is an arrival; regarded as having still to turn into something else, it is a departure. But, regarded as, at the same time, having anterior acquisitions, and acquisitions yet to come—a double relation, given it by the mind —it is movement.

The mind divides up the movement of a thing, in order to find something positive in it to grasp, but, in so doing, it declares in the same breath that this division is purely conceptual: we admit that the task of grasping movement as such is beyond us. Thomism thereby escapes the Bergsonian criticism of maintaining that movement has divisions. We are quite aware that what is continuous has no actual divisions at all, but only potential ones, and we hold that the mind, not the movable thing, utilizes this potency. The movable thing is one in itself, covers the undivided ground, and cannot be intermittent, because there is no reason why stoppages, once admitted, should not be infinite in number, and thus render the whole passage impossible.

Yet that was Zeno's contention. He maintained that an arrow in flight could never reach its mark, nor Achilles catch up the tortoise, since there was an infinity of positions between them. The answer is that the verbal and conceptual divisions which we employ to denote becoming, do not qualify the movement in itself: they are an artifice of the mind, not modalities of the thing known.

The Subjective Aspect of Change

What, then, according to us, is movement itself, and in itself? We have already said that. We have movement when, in one and the same concept, the double relation of anteriority and posteriority is attributed to one of the states of the movable thing: when this state is considered at one and the same time, as an arrival and a departure, without any

sort of discontinuity. Yet movement is not a mere subjective notion, for there is something objective and real in it, viz., the movable thing and the diversity of its states. But it is quite true that this something is not movement itself. Movement in its perfect form, in its full entity, which answers to its definition, is a subjective effect. It is *the act of what is in potency, in so far as it is in potency*, the latter half of the definition obviously connoting a mental operation. As an act, and consequently as a definite reality, movement can exist only in the mind: in itself, since it is the act of what is in potency, *in so far as it is in potency*, since it is therefore always in potency, it implies a kind of non-entity, which only the mind which conceives it can remedy.

Here are St. Thomas's own words:

"The integral notion of movement is obtained, not uniquely from movement as found in things, but also as found in the mind. For there is nothing of movement in things save an imperfect act, which is a sort of beginning of a perfect act on the part of the thing in movement, as when a thing is growing white, it is already imperfectly white. In order that this imperfect act may be movement in the complete sense of the word, it must be apprehended by the mind as a mean between two terms, of which the earlier is compared to it as potency to act (hence movement is called act), while the later is compared to it as perfect to imperfect, or as act to potency. Hence movement is said to be the act of a thing existing in potency."[2]

Movement is therefore the order of priority and

[2] In III *Phys.*, c. I, lect. 5.

posteriority in synthesis, and the work of the mind. Without the mind there would be no movement, and apart from the mind there *is* no movement, but only successive, unconnected states, a multiplicity of parts without unity. The determination of its parts is due entirely to the divisions made by the mind. This is the gist of the mystery, in which movable being is shrouded. We regret that St. Thomas did not dwell more upon it. In his day there were other problems more pressing, while only in our own day are the far-reaching consequences of this theory fully realized.

Movement is "the very life of nature," to use St. Thomas's own expression. We cannot know time except by it, and even space is dependent on it, if it is true that space is that which can be gone through. By making movement depend on thought for its very being, we make it, to a great extent, subjective. Or, if you like, subject and object are here united: they are not separate like two things. Man is mixed up with nature: our thoughts, feelings, memory are factors of the universe. And granting the divine origin of the world, we may find some truth in this fragment of Novalis: "The world is the result of an action and a reaction between myself and God. Everything that is, and everything that comes to be, is born of a contact of minds."[3]

That is as it should be, for, having defined being by *idea*, it must seem quite natural to affirm a synthesis of being and idea. St. Thomas's much remarked "realism" is also an idealism. It is Plato's doctrine completed and restated.

[3] Novalis, *Fragments inédits*. Paris, 1926.

B. Substantial Becoming

Substantial becoming, a phenomenon of movable being, is not, properly speaking, a movement. For what comes into being, at the moment when it really becomes being, is already in being. There is no succession except in its preparation and preliminaries. In itself, and strictly speaking, such a becoming is an indivisible phenomenon, because there are no stages in substantial being. A thing is not more or less this or that. It is always what it has to become. In nature the products reproduce what produces them. Generation gives birth to what engendered it: systole and diastole, a sort of elasticity of alternating rhythm, is one of nature's great laws. In treating of becoming, then, we must define its terms, lay down its principles, and mark its place in this ever-changing world.

Contrary to the ancient Greek philosophers, and to a fair number of modern philosophers, St. Thomas considers the becoming of substance as a fact. For him, man, dog, oak tree, water, etc., are not just different modes of one unique substance, for then they would not differ as beings, since substance is being, and all real attributions are added only to determine it more exactly. St. Thomas did not hold that there were only apparent generations in nature. He based the work of nature on more profound conditions: he believed, with Pascal, that "the principles of things are nearly allied to nothing." He makes movable being movable in its very being: it is, as such, eternally in a state of flux: it unmakes and remakes itself by genera-

tion and destruction, as its modes are unmade and remade by alteration, increase or local movement.

Substantial Form

We have already touched on the metaphysical antecedents of this theory. Nature is embodied ideas. This we may prove by the fact that knowledge consists in abstracting or disembodying the idea, and, though the idea so obtained by the mind does not adequately correspond to the idea embodied in the thing, nevertheless it is true as far as it goes, and may be made more definite by further analysis and synthesis. The only alternative to this is Plato's theory of *separated ideas*, according to which natural realities are only shadows of self-subsisting ideas. It is not sufficient explanation to say that these are divine ideas, for there are no particular ideas in God, because everything in God is wholly Himself, unparticularized perfection, the source of all ideas as it is of being: He is not a demi-urge who moulds matter according to a plan. Hence the immediate *raison d'être* of a nature, which answers the question: What is it that makes it what it is? is not God, but a participation in God; something in the thing which we can attain by knowledge. This is the *substantial form*, which St. Thomas defines as "the very likeness of the sovereign Act, included in the matter."[4]

[4] *In. Boet. de Trin.*, q. 4, art. 2.

Primary Matter

But *form* cannot be the unique principle of movable being, for two reasons. First of all, because the individuals, which are multiple in one and the same species, contain something more than the idea by which we know them, and secondly, because one form entirely supersedes another, and turns one thing into another of an entirely different nature, not by change of place or by successive alteration, but in itself. Therefore there must be a subject common to both forms, and that is matter.

Privation

There is yet a third principle. Before the subject of a substantial becoming receives a certain form, it possesses it in potency, for unless matter had this potency it would serve no purpose. But matter can pass under several forms in succession, and therefore must be in potency to all of them. Indeed, matter is, by definition, pure potentiality and nothing else. Therefore, when it appears under one form, and is going to receive a different one, it not merely does not possess the second, but is *deprived* of it, for *all* forms are included in what it has potentially, and each generation and change in turn simply give this capacity a provisional satisfaction. If matter were nothing more than a subject, it would be fully actualized by the first form which came to it, and no further substantial change would be possible. Nature is ever evolving, which means it is ever pursuing something, and

the starting-point of this endless pursuit is what we call privation, i.e., a capacity which everything affects and nothing fully satisfies. That is why nature shows no anxiety about any one of its works. It is always striving to do something afresh, to bring forms into being, incessantly, and at all costs, and it is quite indifferent to the destruction, suffering or death of its productions, so long as its new productions prosper by it.

Character of Matter

In Thomistic philosophy, matter itself is void of any kind of determination of an empiric order. It is easy enough to laugh at the scholastic "*Nec quid, nec quale, nec quantum,*" but not so easy to suggest anything better. Since matter serves as the support of substantial change, i.e., of the entire becoming, as such, it obviously cannot be determined in any way, save in so far as it is a potency. What *is*, does not become: matter must lack what it is to become. If it is to become purely and simply, it must have no determination whatever: it must be only a possibility of being. *Pure* matter is pure of all definable actuality, of all that so belongs to the categories of being. Hence it has no qualifications, physical or chemical, spatial, numerical or temporal, all of which are modes of being. It is a noumenon, the basis of all phenomena. It can be defined only negatively, or by analogy with *secondary* matter, which we use in what we make. Or it may be defined as a potentiality through its successive realizations, which shape it as a mould shapes its cast. For, just as the soul

is potentially all things, in so far as it is capable of knowing them, so matter is all things in so far as it is capable of becoming them. But in itself, matter is unknowable, like its most distant opposite, God.

Metaphysics and Physics

This metaphysical theory of nature, so often misunderstood and confused with physical theories of all kinds, is not to be identified with any of them. It is, however, compatible with any purely experimental theory. The Thomist may hold the theory of atoms or æons, and the stellar systems of the infinitesimal, without departing from his metaphysical principles. What the scientist calls primary matter, the Thomist considers as so many primary *dispositions*, which uniformly affect the metaphysical matter underlying them all. The Thomistic doctrine of *mixture* does no violence to the fundamental laws of chemistry or physics. A scholastic may believe in atoms or vary according to the ever-changing theories of the day, and in so doing he need make no modification in his metaphysics. The interpretation or application of metaphysics may depend on experimental sciences, but, in themselves, metaphysics are quite independent, because their principles, their method and proper object, belong to a higher order.

Active Cause

Matter must be acted upon in order to pass from one form to another, since nothing can be actualized save by some anterior act, which contains an

equivalent in power to what must ultimately result. Nature is a system of interchanges, in each of which there is a giver as well as a receiver. One receives the effect, the giver is the active cause of it.

The question of what act is, in itself, and of how to understand this communication which is said to take place between the doer of an action and the recipient, which is potential to the effect, is a much debated one. This is what St. Thomas suggests:

Being, of itself, is productive of being: the good, which is identical with it, diffuses itself. To do so it has only to be in act. To be in potency, on the other hand, is proper to what receives, for "by definition, what is in act moves, and what is in potency is moved." But we must distinguish two stages. There is the first actuality of the active cause, which disposes it to activity in a permanent way, and the second actuality, which determines it, by giving it the ultimate dispositions required for the kind of activity expected in such circumstances. To take the example of an athlete's muscle. By its primary act it receives its being, and is made contractible: by its secondary act it contracts when put into action. Every particular act thus depends on its first act, and ultimately on God.

Nature of Action

So much for the conditions of action, but we do not yet know what action is. That by which an active cause acts is its own self—regarded in its ultimate determination—it is not the exercise of its function. And yet there is no other positive reality in the active cause at the moment when it

acts. The exercise of power is only the ultimate static state, by which it is constituted an active cause: it is not the action in actual movement; the active action, so to speak. Therefore we are obliged to look for the reality of the action outside the active cause, in which we find its principle, but to which it is not a superadded reality. Where is it, then? It cannot be left hanging in the air. It can only be found in the matter which receives the action. St. Thomas says so in so many words: "*Actio est in passo*; the action is in the recipient." When he speaks on occasion of the action being in the agent or active cause, and the receiving of the action in the recipient, he must be understood to mean that the action is in the agent as regards its principle, and in this way an action belongs to the agent which is its principle. But in itself it does not belong or inhere. The agent, according to St. Thomas, is called agent only in virtue of an extrinsic denomination: by what takes place in the recipient of the action. It is justifiable on the grounds that the agent is responsible for what takes place.

Action, as distinguished from becoming, is only a pure relation. As was said of creation, take away movement, and action connotes nothing but a pure relation. But it does not follow that we agree with Scotus, that action *is* a pure relation. Action is what takes place, in so far as it is subject to the active cause. Therefore it is movement itself, in so far as it is related to the agent; it is not the relation itself. In creation, action does become a pure relation, but that is a unique instance in created things. The only other instance is that of the *procession* of the divine Persons in God.

It must be admitted that this rather goes against our instincts. We cannot help thinking of activity as a sort of effort or nervous release, but in reality there is no effort: there are just beings in relation one with another, which condition each other and are subordinate. Being communicates itself, because the good, which is identical with it, diffuses itself. Being is, of itself, active and productive of being. Perfection implies expansion, subject to circumstances, which are themselves the products of being. The world is an order of regulated, "concatenated" phenomena. Particular laws indicate the diverse natures of being. Laws become more comprehensive as we rise higher in the scale of being, till we reach God, Who can diffuse His being and goodness with absolute freedom. As St. Thomas says: "God's will is the origin of all movement in nature."

Univocal and Non-univocal Active Causes

An important distinction must be made between the *univocal* cause, i.e., the agent of the same nature and species as its effect, and the *non-univocal* cause, which differs specifically from its effect. These definitions alone make it clear that the non-univocal cause comes first and conditions the univocal, for all particular species depend on more general activities. Hence the classical saying, so often referred to by St. Thomas, that "man and the sun generate man."

Spontaneous Generation

A much-debated question arising out of this is whether the general activities are able to work independently of the particular species which they condition. In other words, can the sun generate man, of its own accord, without man? This, in later times, and quite improperly, has been called *spontaneous generation*. Nobody would dream of upholding a spontaneous generation in the sense that a being could emerge from its surroundings without adequate preparatives. But *spontaneous* is understood to exclude direct ancestors of the same nature as the effect, and postulates only the action of the general causes of the world. St. Thomas would have been the last person to believe in a generation without proper cause, general or particular, since he affirms the primacy of act over potency, i.e., the necessity of a being in act for the generation of what is up till then only in potency; or, what comes to the same thing, the necessity of the perfect as source of the imperfect. But the question debated was, whether certain beings, even living beings, could not be born of matter by the sole influence of general activities, without a *semen*, representing the generative power or vitality of the species. St. Thomas saw no doctrinal difficulty in it, especially as he believed that the first mover had a spiritual influence over the physical world, even while he viewed Aristotle's living heavenly bodies with suspicion. Consequently the principle that every living thing comes from a living thing was not entirely set aside. Again, it seemed to be borne out by experience. It was believed that

"imperfect" animals, i.e., animals with not very complicated organisms, could be generated, in properly disposed matter, by the sole power of the stars; heat of fermentation was a sign of this. The variety of species so brought into being depended on the diversity of material conditions.

Certain Arabian philosophers extended this theory to the generation of "perfect" animals. Avicenna said: Whatever is generated by seed can be generated without seed, by simple mixture, under the influence of higher causes. St. Thomas replies: It does not *seem* possible that perfect animals can be generated otherwise than by seed. Nature has definite means of producing all its effects, and what it does not do it presumably cannot do. We do not find that the higher forms of animals are generated without seed, but only the inferior forms which differ very little from plants.[5]

This way of putting it does not imply that St. Thomas was absolutely opposed to the theory. It is obviously a question of experience, not of doctrine. There is no reason to suppose that St. Thomas would have objected, for doctrinal reasons, if, in a wider field of experience, biology and palæontology bore favourable witness to the hypothesis that natural forms evolve from non-living to living, or from one species of life to another. In his eyes, minerals, animals and plants, higher and lower animals, differ only by their organization, of which the form or living soul is the *act*. Learning by modern science that the various degrees of organization are ranged not only in order of value but also in order of time, there is no reason why we should not adopt a larger interpretation of the

[5] Cf. *Summa*, Ia, q. LXXI, art. 1, ad. 1.

principle that what nature is not seen to do it presumably cannot do; and there would be nothing repugnant in the idea of a thing passing naturally from one species to another. The unity of matter, and the permanence of superior agents, lend colour to this idea. To take the extreme case. God is immanent in the world, and though He transcends all things, He is the cause, nevertheless, of all acts, primary and secondary, of created causes. As we shall see, He intervenes in the generation of the human being, though it is a perfectly natural generation. Why, then, refuse a more comprehensive interpretation of the Gospel words: The Father worketh until now?

Further, the general activities of the world, properly interpreted, form a likely instrument of the divine operation. It is a question for general cosmology to settle, and we shall be perfectly ready to revise our cosmology, ancient or modern, when experience makes it imperative, which it has not done up till now. The theory of *transformism*, considered as the general procedure of nature from the appearance and distribution of life on the earth, has still to be proved. Nobody has yet discovered the missing links between various forms of life, which is the only way, I think, of proving it. Still, science has not spoken its last word. The Thomist is not perturbed by the thought that in the end transformism may win the day. His doctrine is quite open to such an attractive hypothesis, because it is so comprehensive. Surely we should adapt our expression to modern chemistry, which has passed beyond such old-fashioned axioms as fire begets fire, and air, air. There is such a thing as chemical transformism: the scientist can generate

new species before our eyes, and we ought to be the last to say that a similar transformism is impossible in regard to life. As a matter of fact, the Thomist is a good deal more broad-minded than some people are led to think, and if we wish to spread Thomism, it is quite useless to remain blind to the discoveries of modern science.

C. *Purpose in Nature*

Substantial and accidental generation both imply an ultimate principle, which is, in a sense, their first principle. This we call the *end*. In active causes endowed with knowledge, the end is an intrinsic principle, while in non-intellectual beings, the end moves them in the sense that it determines the form of their activity, by defining their being. A being is defined by the particular purpose for which it was made. This is only another way of stating the law of determinism, and it is curious that scientists and philosophers, who have a clear idea of determinism, feel obliged to reject the idea of *end*. An end is that which a being, properly qualified, i.e., placed in suitable circumstances, is determined to produce: it is that towards which it tends, which characterizes it as dynamic, as its definition characterizes it as static. A definite being is the proof of a definite antecedent activity, and of another definite activity to come, and this reveals *intention* in nature. By intention I mean a tendency, an immanent quest of an end. Hence we can no more do away with ends in nature, than with definite being, definite activities, the regular recurrence of the same phenomena in the same

circumstances; in short, with natural movement, in its source and in all its forms. To put it another way. There is no activity without direction, and no direction without two terms, the second of which, after the action, is called the *result*, and before the action, the *end*. To say that there are results but no ends, is like saying that a direction can be determined by a term, which is still absolutely non-existent. A result without an end is an effect without a cause.

If there were not this inclination in general and particular natural causes, they would produce nothing, for to produce is to make something. *A fortiori* nature would not produce regular effects which recur and combine, and make a marvellous harmony.

Nature and Providence

In nature there is intention only in the sense of tendency: there is art, but it does not know itself. But this *natura naturata*, as Spinoza would call it, implies a *natura naturans*, with conscious intentions, outside it.

Aristotle says: Order is the outcome of wisdom. Since there is order in nature, there must be, somewhere, a *reason* for it, an idea which directs the world, and that is God. This brings us back to Providence.

Further, the *idea*, which forms every natural thing, must also be the principle of matter, since matter is a sort of degeneration of mind. For the same reason it must be its end, and that helps us to imagine the final transformation of the world as depicted by St. Thomas. Begotten of mind, pene-

trated with mind, tending towards mind, the world may one day become more or less mind. The determinism of physical laws may be, to a great extent, provisional. Even the physical world may perhaps share, with the world of spirits, in the "liberty of the children of God."

D. Determinism and Contingency

But this is not the place for dreams of the future. The present provides a problem difficult enough, in the reconciliation of natural ends with the immanent necessities which lead to them. They are necessities, because a natural end depends on an active determination, which in turn depends on an ontological determination, or one arising from the very nature of being. A thing can no more act otherwise than it does, than it can be otherwise than it is, and hence the whole of nature seems dominated by an inexorable necessity.

This St. Thomas will not admit, but his own position needs to be stated with care.

When we see a cause regularly producing an effect, we conclude that it is predisposed, and obeys a law immanent in its being. When we see several causes regularly concurring to produce one and the same effect, as in the generation of a living thing, we conclude that there is a pre-established harmony between them. They are directed by one immanent idea, one common *intention*, which is as much a natural factor as they are. This cannot reasonably be denied. And here the scientific experience of a Claude Bernard, and the realist and positive spirit of a Pasteur agree with us.

If we observe a very general fact, like the re-

currence of the seasons, or the regular evolution of species, or the formation of the stars, we get a more comprehensive idea of causality than we do from particular agents; we get the idea of a centre of action, whence the series of causes cascade, each cause depending on the next, and all together producing a harmony.

It would seem, then, that all the general causes in nature act of necessity, for what is most fundamental to, and even identical with being, must surely be necessary. Can the same be said of nature as a whole, in particular as well as in general, in such a way that nothing can act otherwise than necessarily? The Stoics believed so, and the same opinion is frequently met with among modern writers. At first sight there seems no answer to it. Without going so far as to attribute a living soul to the world, and thus make it a huge animal, with us as its parasites, we certainly can imagine it as a unique being, evolving according to some higher law of organization and development, in such a way that everything in it comes to pass as in a regular crystallization, in the formation of a chemical compound, or in the evolution of a living being. It would be even more necessary than is the case with the examples chosen, for there the matter limits and to some extent frustrates the intentions which direct them, whereas a universal intention regulates matter as well, and renders chance impossible. To St. Thomas this was clearer than it was to Aristotle, against whom he objects.[6] Still he will not be led astray. It seemed evident to him, as it did to Aristotle, that nature, which is responsible for all definite effects, occasions also a

[6] In I *Perihermenias*, lect. 14.

host of others; that all relations of phenomena are not equally *natural*, for all are not equally the object of reason, and do not bear the character of one of nature's ideas. That is natural which tends to a realization of an *idea*, to a form.

When he observed the birth of a normal living being, i.e., one with the characteristics of its species, St. Thomas had no doubt that this was a natural effect, and he acknowledged the determinism of the subordinated causes which governed it. But if the product were a monstrosity, he would call it an accident: not that the chain of causes which had led to this effect was not equally rigid, or that, from this point of view, as Claude Bernard has remarked, what happened was not equally natural, but that we are used to the normal things that are ordinarily produced, and do not think that a sheep with a fifth leg, or one in the middle of its back, is a production governed by an intention of nature, or that a definite complexus of agents is naturally ordained to such a result. In other words, there are results which are not ends, because they have no immanent *form* or proper goodness, and they can be caused only by the irrationality of matter, intractible to ideas. To put it still another way. The world of effects is too large for its laws: it overflows the series, which laws govern, because there is not, in created being, an all-embracing and supreme law, an "eternal axiom," to rule the chance concurrence of causes. The great series of phenomena which interact are like two messengers who hurry past without knowing each other. And when a thing escapes the laws which should govern it, we say it is accidental, a chance production, a thing removed from all natural necessity.

This is not a denial of determinism, in so far as it is a postulate of science. We maintain in general terms that whatever goes on, must go on, granted that suitable conditions are maintained; and this is true, although in another fashion, even of free actions. Otherwise we must postulate, with Renouvier, *absolute beginnings* in the course of an action, and effects without sufficient cause.

But we must take into account that one of the conditions of reality is matter, and matter in itself is undetermined: no form can be given it without the possibility of its falling short of its end. Consequently no assemblage of defined or definable conditions can govern action in its entirety. Chance appears marvellous to us, because it reveals to us, in the plan of creation, the infinite ways in which natural things can combine, and it leads us step by step to the infinite Creator.

Those who maintain the possibility of a sort of general formula of the world, which would account for every single event, rationalize it out of resemblance. They lose sight of the irrational, albeit natural element called matter. They imagine that the singular is made together with the universal, and is only a sort of universal individualized by being combined with other universals, whereas the singular thing is "ineffable," inexpressible in concepts, irrational in its basis of matter. Pascal's expression: "We do not know the whole of anything," is something more than an empirical statement, since this is necessitated by the dualism of matter idea, which is the basis of terrestrial being. St. Thomas might almost have used the phrase of Emile Meyerson: "The mere fact that the world exists is enough to prove that it is irrational."

We have already seen, however, that matter, though irreducible to idea, is not a complete stranger to it, since matter is being, though of a very inferior sort: it comes from God, as all other being. Hence, for God, nothing is accidental, since everything is subject to Him, even what appears to us to run counter to Him. Necessary and contingent must not be judged by this criterion. God transcends the categories of being: He is the cause of the very differences: He makes the necessary to be necessary, and the contingent to be contingent.

II. Life

We came now to the question of life. Its essence must be something quite simple, at least in its notion, for it is found in such different beings as lichen, protozoa, and man. It cannot be activity in its most general sense, for all being is active, but not all being is living: but it is one of the very earliest divisions of activity. There are, fundamentally, two kinds of activity, namely transitive and immanent. Transitive actions are actions in which the agent and the recipient are distinct beings. Immanent actions are actions in which the agent is also the recipient, though not precisely as agent, for, strictly speaking, nothing can move itself: nothing can give and receive, be active and passive at the same time, and under the same aspect. But certain beings are so constituted that they can be agent and recipient of the action under different aspects, and these are said to move themselves, or to be living.

This appears at first sight very elementary, but to understand it properly, it must be borne in mind that movement, in the Aristotelian sense, does not signify merely change of place: it includes as well every kind of change that has to do with the essence of things, and therefore, in a living thing, it includes all that concerns its interior evolution, and its relations with its surroundings: growth, adaptation, defence. In all these cases, the living thing finds in its own nature certain tendencies relative to a plan of development, which it must realize by its own proper means. It must, of its own accord, apply these tendencies to the divers circumstances of its life, co-ordinate them with the world outside, utilize external stimuli, resist would-be aggressors, rather as a first principle of a syllogism combines with minor propositions to produce positive or negative conclusions.

Hegel said: "A tree grows by syllogism." Plant life assimilates from its surroundings, and by this means evolves and realizes its natural plan, the plant itself being the agent. The same applies to animals, and even more so, for they have knowledge and more resources for the attainment of their end. Lastly the rational animal, man, has in addition the faculty of judging its ends, instead of merely attaining them, in suitable circumstances, by the impulsion of its nature. Man dominates his objects, and, instead of simply working out his destiny, like the plant, or being the unconscious arbiter, like the brute, he has free will, i.e., he obeys only his rational nature, and, up to a point, can choose his destiny, instead of just submitting to it.

This general theory of life has its opponents,

but it has nothing to fear from science. It agrees with the scientific conclusions of men like Claude Bernard and Wundt, who, with St. Thomas, make a living being one "which moves itself," i.e., which has the property of going through a definite series of changes, by means determined by its own nature, and its relations with its surroundings. The *guiding idea* of Claude Bernard is nothing else than the *form* or immanent idea of St. Thomas. The only difference is that in St. Thomas *form* accounts for all things, and not merely living things. Everything in this world happens according to a plan: everything acts according to some immanent, guiding idea. In living things, the form, having a new part to play, takes a new name, and is called the *soul*, but that does not alter the theory: it is simply an application of the general philosophy of forms. And it is worth noting how very striking, in the light of modern science, is this unity of plan in Thomistic philosophy. It explains those transitions from the inanimate to the animate, those likenesses between living things and so-called inert bodies, which science more and more reveals.

Whatever else it is, the soul is a form, a real idea, whose object is the body: it is complex and one, because the body is complex and one: or rather, the body is one, because the soul is one; composite, because the soul needs a harmony of properties and organisms to manifest itself, just as a composer needs an orchestra, or a thinker words and phrases. "The body," says Paul Valéry, "has too many properties, resolves too many problems, possesses too many functions and resources, to correspond to anything but a transcendent need, which is powerful enough to construct it, but not

powerful enough to do without it."[7] There is, in the transcendent world, i.e., in the metaphysical order, the world of "Mother-Ideas" as Goethe would say, a need of bodies, which means that not all forms of being are destined by God to be immaterial and subsistent, nor are they all capable of it. Certain less perfect forms need a support for their being, and an instrument for each of their functions. The instrument is an organ; the support for existence is the body. The human soul is of the number. It requires the body for its own manifestation and service. But, at the same time, it is sufficiently powerful to form its own body, just as a man who is a property owner and an architect needs a house to live in, and can build it. We shall see later that the soul cannot form its body entirely of its own accord, but still, it is responsible for it.

There are three classical problems: (1) How does the soul form its body? (2) How is the soul united to the body? and (3) How does the soul move the body?

I. How Does the Soul Form its Body?

It is not strictly exact to speak of the soul making the body. The soul makes nothing, as it is of itself, only an *idea* of *making*, an inherent form. There certainly is an organizing principle in the seed, but that is not the soul of the being which is engendered. It is the *power of the species*, incarnate in the elementary properties issuing from the principle of generation. Soul is the starting-point of the

[7] *Introduction à la méthode de Léonard de Vinci.*

movement, since it gives life to the parents, and characterizes their operations: it is also the end, since it is the principle element in the offspring. But it is not the agent. The soul comes when a living thing is constituted as an organized body, capable of having a soul. As embers burst into flame when fanned to intense heat, so the soul comes to the body when the body reaches a sufficient state of development to receive it. St. Thomas defines the soul as "the act of an organized body, which possesses life potentially." When this organized body, by the fact that it is organized, passes into act, it becomes *animated*, and then, and not before, it acquires a soul. "It is the same thing for matter to be united to form, as for matter to be in act."[8] The soul, then, does not precede the body in order to constitute it: it follows it. What does precede is the species and the biological—and perhaps other—properties of the *semen*, which represent the power of the species.

Nutrition and Growth

Nutrition and growth are simply forms of continued generation, and may be explained in the same way. To be nourished is to be regenerated: to grow is to be regenerated with additions, and in each the action consists in assimilating what is outside, under the form of food, air, or movement. Things outside us nourish us and make us grow, by being changed into us, and this is caused by a *power of the species*, just as a generation is. This power does not belong only to the soul, but to the

[8] In II *De Anima*, lect. I.

compositum of soul and body. The soul, as form, determines the species, and consequently its end, while the body is responsible for the physical transformation of external matter into itself. The body does not grow, receive nourishment or recover from illness by the distinct action of soul or body, but by the united action of both. The animated body is thus creative: it makes what was before alien to be a part of itself. In the nutrition, growth and recuperation of a living thing, the soul acts *through* the body, and the body acts *according to* the soul.

II. How is the Soul United to the Body?

It is just as inaccurate, strictly speaking, to speak of the "union of soul and body" as of the soul making the body which it animates. I say *animates* advisedly. In common parlance we speak of the soul *inhabiting* the body, which shows a misconception of their true relations. We are led by it to imagine the soul installed in the body, and assuming direction, as an aviator climbs into his machine and takes over the controls. The problem of the union of soul and body then becomes practically insoluble, because of the extreme disparity between the two. Descartes found he could not explain it on his principles, and had recourse to a makeshift: he threw over the idea of union, and invented a sort of mixture or quasi-mixture, which served its purpose up to a point. But it is not surprising that a problem should prove insoluble when in reality it does not arise.

All union presupposes separation, at least in the mind, and separation implies two distinct beings.

Now neither the body nor the soul, taken alone, is a being. The soul can no more be defined without the body, than the body can without the soul, or the thought behind a phrase without its expression. It is quite philosophical to say that the soul, *as animating, is* the body, that is to say, as regards its proper form, or actuality. Under these conditions the real being is the compound, and a compound is a natural union under its various parts, without any sort of problem arising. The body is only properly a body, i.e., a body *in act*, because it is animated: the soul is a soul only because it animates. The union of soul and body is not, then, a problem of union, but a problem of being, and one identical with the general problem of matter and form, of idea and the *substratum* of idea. We may analyse this dualism, but not separate the parts, which consequently cannot be united in any domain whatever, living or non-living.

To try to *unite* soul and body, in the strict sense of the word, is like trying to unite the circumference to the circle, or heat to the flame. Heat is one of the constituents of the flame, and the circumference one of the constituents of the circle. They are not united at all. In the same way, the soul is one of the constituent parts of the animated body, and therefore, like any other form, it is *that by which a thing is what it is*, not the thing itself. The soul is *that by which the animated body is what it is.*

III. How Does the Soul Move the Body?

Here again, to ask how the soul moves the body is, strictly speaking, to make a problem where none exists. We use the expression in ordinary speech,

and so did St. Thomas, but it is inaccurate. The soul does not really move the body, since it is the body's form, and not properly distinct (*aliud quid*) from it. It is, we repeat, a constituent, not a mover. As such, it has no action of its own. If it possesses one, as in man, it is because it is not merely an animating principle, but self-subsisting principle as well, and it is under this latter aspect that it is the active cause of spiritual functions, though it still needs the body's collaboration. "The purpose of a form is to constitute its subject,"[9] not to act.

When we say that the soul moves the body, we must be understood to mean the incarnated soul, or, what comes to the same thing, the animated body, the organized body, with the soul as its act. In other words, the soul is the principle whereby the organized body moves itself according to its own laws. The motive power is the "disposition itself of the movable thing," i.e., its organization. It is because its body is organized that the living thing can move itself, and the more complicated its organization, the more varied its movements.

The soul and its faculties of themselves are not causes. Taken in this way, as immediate and sufficient causes of psychological phenomena, they are only, as Ribot has said, "verbal entities." That which thinks, wills, consents, and moves itself is a mixed substance, not a soul *in* a body. In vital actions, taken in the concrete, we cannot distinguish soul and body, and Claude Bernard was quite justified in saying that in this matter, "spiritualism" and "materialism" are out of date expressions.

[9] Q. II, *de Veritate*, art. 14, corp.

Non-living things do not move themselves, although they also have a kind of soul, viz., their substantial form, which bears the same relation to them as soul bears to living body. St. Thomas's reason is that non-living things have no autonomous movement whatever, because their organization is too simple for one part of it to act as mover with respect to another part. The internal mover of a living thing is not the soul, but the whole thing, its various parts being, under different aspects, mover and moved, and acting one upon another. The soul is mover only in the sense that it *informs* the *compositum*, and possesses powers which pass into act by means of the body's organization. The soul thus comes first and the rest is dependent on it, but it is not thereby an autonomous cause. It is the source of the effects only in so far as it is the principle of the nature, which it has in common with all the element assimilated after generation by nutritive regeneration. There is, then, no need to pose the question of how the soul moves the body, because the body is not really *another thing*. The question is, how the animated body moves itself, according to its various parts, or how its diverse functions coalesce. The scientific treatment of this question belongs to psycho-physiology: its philosophical explanation can be treated quite briefly.

It is only natural that in a being which is one, though virtually multiple, a modification in one of its parts should lead to a modification in other parts. A heavy body falls without being pushed: it falls because it is heavy. If we suppose that this is due to some immanent law, quite apart from any mechanical explanation, we may draw a comparison between it and the living being, which

moves itself according to an internal law, and does not require an extrinsic force. The difference between the two cases is that the law by which bodies fall is simple, whereas the law of a living being is multiple: it not merely keeps it in being, but directs its destiny. That is why living things have complicated organisms, which need special sciences like psychology and physiology to treat of them, by which they are described in terms either of simpler phenomena of the same order or of lower phenomena of the inorganic order. And, just as organic or inorganic substances become part of the living thing by assimilation, and lose their autonomous existence, so they cease to be subject to their own laws, and are ruled by the more comprehensive law of the soul.

There are two main classes of organic life, vegetable and animal. Plants owe their nature and development to the mutual interactions of their various parts, which stimulate each other, each being mover and moved under different aspects. The latter includes animals, which have sensation and desire, and man, who has intelligence and free-will as well. It is only to be expected that these functions will make themselves felt in the actions of the body. Knowledge and desire modify, and are modified by the body and its movements. There is an internal correlation, a pre-established harmony between soul and body. Our very inclinations make us active forces. We have no need to postulate any sort of demi-urge within us, and thus incur the criticism expressed in Titchener's ironical definition of the soul as " an invisible animal inside a visible one."[2]

The soul's action is immanent in the *compositum*,

and therefore is not, strictly speaking, the action of the soul, but the action of the whole *compositum* moving itself. Actions belong to subsisting subjects: *actiones sunt suppositorum.* I am one, and I exercise power over my body, by my soul, because I am my body, just as I exercise power over my soul, by my body, because I am my soul. I rule myself, by myself, and this reciprocal activity is my proper evolution, as a mixed substance. There is no need to introduce anything from outside to explain this mutual influx, no need to look for the door through which the soul's activity can enter the body. My soul moves me only in the sense that it is the principle of my action on myself.

The Soul's Action and the Conservation of Energy

This theory clears up a question which used to be bitterly debated in the early days of the thermodynamic theory, namely, how to reconcile the soul's action in the body with the principle of the conservation of energy. Can it be supposed that the soul really creates energy, and keeps on adding it to the world? And if it does not create energy, how can it move the body? You must have a concurring principle of force to impel the various organs, or even to direct their energies. But, to St. Thomas, this question is absolutely meaningless. The composite living being is one: the soul gives it its law, which all the bodily energies obey. There is no need of any *force* belonging properly to the soul. The energy spent in a living being is not, for St. Thomas, the energy of the soul, but solar

energy, and a modern would explain that it is found in the plants which animals feed on, and constitutes what are called nutritive substances, the potential energies of which become actual in us. The " forces of the soul " are therefore forces of the organized *compositum,* in which the soul is principal. The soul is not a distinct thing, and has no need of distinct energy. Whereas the soul can be independent of the body in some of its operations, such as thinking, there is no way in which the body can be independent of the soul, which gives the body its being, defines it, and directs it towards its proper ends. A thing acts according to what it is. Therefore the body acts according to its form, which is the soul. When the soul becomes something else by knowledge, it modifies its own ends, and at the same time modifies the bodily powers whose whole purpose is to realize these ends. An auxiliary force is needed only in a system governed by a law, which needs to be modified or reversed by an outside force. But the law of the body is the soul, and any modification of the soul modifies its vital law, and, without introducing any new energy, changes the whole course of the bodily actions.

That being so, we do not have to postulate any new creation of energy to explain the effects of life and free will: it is explained by transformation. The living thing is immersed in its environment: the world outside influences it in a hundred and one ways. Energy itself, properly so called, comes from it. From a physical, chemical or mechanical point of view, the organized body is only the point of the concentration of energy: it is because of the soul that it is able to transform it, and direct it to the ends of life. This is the energy which supports

life and develops it, without any creation of energy, and also without any loss.

The soul is regarded as an internal art, as an active idea, but it is not active of itself. To take an example. A clock goes because its maker gives it a certain *form*: he impresses his *idea* of what a clock should be on suitable material. But that does not of itself make the clock go. It goes by means of wheels, weights, springs or pendulum. In the same way, the soul acts by means of the properties of the organism which it directs, and to which it gives a purpose. The efficient movement also comes from the soul, inasmuch as it is the principle of activity. The soul is therefore behind everything in a living being: it accounts for everything, and in a certain way, does everything.

Importance of this Doctrine To-day

The importance of this doctrine can be realized in an age when materialists on the one hand, and Cartesians or neo-Platonists on the other, prove equally unable to co-ordinate the data of experimental science with philosophy. It is generally agreed to-day that a chemical compound is a unity whose elements are now different from what they were in a free state. Obviously, we can go farther. An organism is a unity, a substance determined in itself, not a colony of cells or atoms. No other theory will explain how the living being can assimilate its environment, first, for its development, secondly to restore lost tissues and regenerate itself according to an unchanging plan, and thirdly to reproduce itself, with its specific characteristics,

according to the laws of heredity. It is the *form* or soul, or, as Goethe was fond of saying, the *entelechy*, which explains the unity of the *compositum*, the unity of the living thing, the proper character of organic development, of growth and protection. Hence Goethe's "stubbornness of individual characters," and "the aptitude of man to repulse what is not in harmony with his being."

This may explain the curious idea of Novalis, that illness is, as it were, a "bodily madness." The conduct of a living being should be in accordance with its immanent idea, by which its species and its ends are determined. Therefore any organic ill is a sort of physical aberration, comparable with that mental aberration which we call madness.

On the other hand, science reiterates and confirms St. Thomas's theory that these vital manifestations are directed by a living form to prearranged ends; and that these are realized by the collaboration of elementary properties, with the active and passive concurrence of environment as a condition. For the Thomist, the body's actions, regarded as purely chemical, physical or mechanical, go on as if there were no soul at all, but, regarded as vital, they depend on it entirely. The form of a bed, says Aristotle, cannot be attributed to the saw, but to art, and yet the saw makes the bed. In the same way, assimilation, which is the function of a living being, is brought about by elementary qualities, but it is not the less to be attributed to the soul. The soul is the immanent art of the body: it is not the engineer, as Plato held, or the pure spirit of Descartes, united to the body by some unknown means, and doing a work impossible to describe.

In this respect, St. Thomas's philosophy is

thoroughly up-to-date. Animistic, in the Aristotelian sense, it is at the same time idealistic, positive, metaphysical, and open to all experiment. It well deserves the praise of Wundt, who wrote: "The result of my labours leads me neither to the materialist's hypothesis nor to the dualism of Plato or Descartes. Aristotelian animism, which unites psychology and biology, is the only likely metaphysical conclusion of experimental psychology."

CHAPTER VII

THE HUMAN SOUL

A. The Human Being's Place in Creation

By studying life in general, and its principle, the soul, we have already indicated the place of the human *compositum* in the scale of beings. Man is "neither angel nor brute": neither an angel incarnate nor a spiritualized brute, but a mixed, composite nature, with its own mode of being, and its own proper character as revealed by its functions. The human soul must, then, have its place in the graduated scale of being, must be an intermediary between the spiritual and the corporeal world.

It is sufficiently perfect to subsist by itself, like an angel, but not to provide its own individuality, or to act without the body's help. Corporeal things act upon the soul through the body and *vice versa*. It is only by the body that we know not merely matter, but spirit as well, for every idea, even our idea of God, has its first origin in the world outside of us, and comes to us through the senses (*omnis cognitio a sensu*). We can observe what goes on in the world outside us, and affirm the truth of the invisible, only by the knowledge which we get through the modifications of our own body.

Similarly, the soul cannot act directly on the exterior world: it is much too diverse in character, albeit the same at base. The living body serves as an intermediary. The modifications of our body mark the limits of our action on nature, and of nature upon us. The soul's force consists properly in mastering its body, and by the body, the rest of its environment. The more capable the soul is of producing numerous effects in the body, the stronger it is; and the less the body is affected by its environment, the stronger it is.

Moreover, the soul is at the frontier between our physical being and the universe. It presides over our unity and autonomy, and directs our self-defence and our impressions. It distinguishes us from the world, into which we revert when the soul leaves the body. It is the guardian of our gates, the "strong man" who secures our home; and it is also the principle by which all things become us, and we become all things.

We can form very little idea of the extent of the soul's power over this seemingly remote world of nature and our fellow men. Our partial identification with our environment does not exhaust it, for our body is the only part of our environment which has become identical with us. There is nothing to show that this partial identification cannot be extended, and the more it extends, the more shall we be able to modify our environment by immanent acts, conscious or unconscious, just as we modify ourselves. This would include magic, charms, telepathy, etc., all of them phenomena which St. Thomas knew about or at least suspected, and not always attributed by him to the devil.

But we belong to the spiritual world as well, and

the soul has its own function, into which matter, though a condition of it, does not formally enter. This raises human nature and human destiny to a much higher level.

Man is born of mind and matter. Their intimate connection, and their proper characteristics as well, are thereby manifested. Hence the many contrasts which are in no sense contradictions. Sensation and reason, brute desires and sublime aspirations—these are opposed, if you like, but only as light and shade are opposed in a Rembrandt. Pascal goes too far in attributing to the Fall particularities which would have existed without it, though not in so marked a degree. His "monster" can, to a great extent, be explained naturally, and therefore is no more a monster than is a protozoon or an anthropoid. Our nature has a character of its own, and its own kind of unity. Its very rank, on the frontier between the spiritual and corporeal worlds, makes it composite and diversified.

St. Thomas fully realized this. He understood that it would be just as dangerous to oppose body and soul as to confuse them, which is the initial error of several philosophies which concentrate on only one or other part of our being, and deny or ignore the other. St. Thomas takes us as a whole. He analyses the human being as a physical compound, even while he is treating of man's spiritual dignity. He is a follower of Plato and St. Augustine as well as of Aristotle. And he is a follower of Christ in that he introduces Christian doctrine to complete man and his destiny, by linking it up with the supernatural.

In going down the scale of gradated being, we meet with man on the confines of mind and matter.

In going up, we meet with man, his matter included, as a creature directed by his whole being towards mind, to such an extent that even his body participates in mind. An example of conjoint exaltation and humility. But this is a matter for the moralist.

B. Intelligence

Our proper function is to understand, for only by that can we be in contact with the *other*. Knowledge is a becoming, and we are its subject. This similarity between matter and mind enables us to deduce the nature of knowledge from the very nature of being, and, inversely, our definition of knowledge leads to a clearer idea of being. This needs treating more in detail.

The proper object of the intelligence is the nature of things. Being is *idea* in the objects of our experience; ideas which give form to being, whether substantial or accidental, are, as it were, impoverished. They are *individualized*. They have lost their universality, the infinity of their extension is compressed in a particular case, and they have become singular by their association with matter. They necessitate other powers of knowing in us, which are likewise associated with matter, and subject to the limitations of time and space. These are the senses.

Since every subject operates at its own level, there must be in the act of human knowledge a subject at the beginning of the same order as the object to which it corresponds, i.e., an object immersed in matter. But this same principle implies that we cannot grasp an idea itself, as idea, abstracted from

its matter, except by means of a power which is itself abstract, ideal, disembodied, and immaterial. That power is the intelligence.

Intellectual knowledge consists in the apprehension of being, in a state prior to its becoming individualized in things. We can apprehend being in this state only by working backwards. We disengage the idea of being from the thing which embodies it: we go up from the idea made real to the idea itself; from the house to the plan; from the work of art which nature reveals, to the art, in accordance with which nature makes or realizes it.

This distinction between intelligence and sensation is often denied on the grounds that the idea is a sort of tracing, a vague generalization obtained by the superposition of successive images on one another, and that it does not transcend sense knowledge. It is quite true, as we shall see, that we have a vague, general image of this sort, namely the image in the imagination, which we can easily observe. But we can discover something else. The idea of a mathematical relation, of a definition, of a property of being, or again the idea of a negation or privation, which do not exist as such in reality, or the idea of an idea, when thought reflects upon itself—all these are, in themselves, although the imagination plays a part, far removed from images. We can see by the very use we make of our ideas that they are really general, or rather universal, and applicable to an infinity of things, whereas what is concrete is necessarily unique. The universal image is characterized by a vague generality, but the universal idea by a distinct and defined generality. The image is temporal, moving, subject to time and space, and never for

two instants the same, whereas the idea is necessary and outside time, even though its object be changeable. The image is here a lower form of sensation, expressing nothing in particular, whether concrete or abstract, removed from the active intuition of the senses without arriving at the level of the intelligence.

If these statements are true, we are bound to postulate an intelligence. Powers correspond to acts, and acts are first specified by their objects. Since intelligence finds in sense objects, the matter of an intuition which surpasses them, viz., the intuition of essences, we must suppose that, like essence, it is on a level with the universal, outside time, and necessary. We must, at least negatively, abstract essence from its external or internal environment, which is subject to movement, contingency, and particularity of time and space. If I become immaterial, I must be potentially immaterial. "By the fact," says St. Thomas, "that the soul knows the universal natures of things, it perceives that the form by which it knows is immaterial: otherwise it would be individuated, and thus would not lead to the knowledge of the universal. Now, by the fact that the intelligible form is immaterial, one understands that the intellect is a something (*res quaedam*) independent of matter."[1]

To be quite clear, we must distinguish four terms belonging to the same process: object, act, faculty, and being. The becoming, which is knowledge, unites all these terms, and therefore they must belong to one and the same order. If the *object* is immaterial, it can only be attained immaterially,

[1] *QQ. Disp. de Veritate*, q. X, art. 8, corp.

i.e., the *act* is immaterial. If the act is immaterial, it can only issue from an immaterial power, which is the *faculty*: and lastly, a faculty and its immediate subject must be of the same order. A purely material being cannot possess a power which is immaterial in itself or in its object. The intellect may be material in certain respects, but it must be immaterial as subject of this power, as doer of this act, and as benefited by this object.

Hence this unique phenomenon of nature: a power belonging to a soul, which is the act of a body, without that power being itself the act of the body. The soul, based on material conditions, rises above them. Situated on the confines of two worlds, it draws on both for its knowledge, as for everything else.

The Soul Unknowable in Itself

We have noticed that St. Thomas uses a very vague phrase to designate the soul: *res quaedam*, a something. That is intentional. Our conclusions regarding the nature of an intellectual soul are purely negative. The intellect is outside and above matter—that is all we can say. We know it only through its acts: it remains in itself unknowable. All we can demonstrate is that there are present in us, call them *ideas* or *concepts*, certain objects which, by the fact they are in us, appear as *natures*, stripped of the material and temporal conditions by which natures are individualized. We must postulate as the basis of their presence (which is the result of a process) a subject of the same order, which possesses ideas potentially, till the impress of the

objects, coming through the senses, puts it in act. We thus describe the phenomenon by an example taken from the act of sensation, the only act which gives us immediate intuitions. We compare the act of understanding with sensation, whose conditions we know, just as we describe sensation itself by comparing it with action and passion, as when we speak of objects moving our senses. There is this difference, however, that the action and passion implied in sensation are objects of intuition: we feel that we feel; whereas intellectual action and passion are judged only by analogy. Normally we have no intellectual intuitions. To think our thought is not to make it our proper object, but rather to analyse the necessary conditions of thought, which, though undefinable in themselves, are definable precisely as conditions. This recalls what we have said about our knowledge of God: it is a sort of algebra, but in algebra there is truth.

Stages and Conditions of Intellectual Knowledge

Since the intelligence is a power belonging to a soul which is the form of a body, the act of intellection will be an act bound up with the act of the body. In fact, it is in the midst of sense phenomena, in continuity with them, and dependent on them, that the intellectual act takes place. It cannot be detached. St. Thomas thought that no spiritual phenomenon could be produced in us normally, otherwise than through the senses. If any event in a man's life is spiritual, I suppose a conversion is. Yet St. Thomas goes so far as to

say that "the change from vice to virtue, or from ignorance to enlightenment, which takes place, attains to the spiritual part of the soul *per accidens*, the transmutation taking place *per se* in the sensitive part."[2]

How do we set about convincing someone and altering his outlook? By sounds coming from our lips, which go to his ear, excite or awaken in him mental images, and are changed *per accidens* into new ideas or resolutions. It is exactly the same with the changes produced spontaneously in us: they are fundamentally physical; they affect the body, and we can bring them about only by modifying (by means, however, which are beyond our ken) "the unconscious and generalizable organism which harbours the idea."[3]

People are often surprised to find Spinoza bringing the body into the definition of apparently the most spiritual things. St. Thomas does so just as much, only it is not noticed. St. Thomas often speaks of the *soul* when he means the soul as form, as animating, and not as mind, and in this sense the soul includes the body in its definition and in its act: it is the *body itself in act*.

In these days of "science" it would be well to pay more attention to this conclusion and to correct our vocabulary accordingly. That is one of the conditions of the Thomistic revival in psychology, yet it is given little thought. We are here presenting the metaphysics of the soul in the language of the ancients. To-day experimental psychology derives its language from positivism or even materialism. The task remains to piece together

[2] *QQ. Disp. de Veritate*, q. XXVI, art. 3, ad. 12.
[3] Marcel Proust, *Du côté de Guermantes*.

these fragments of knowledge and make a doctrine of them.

"The human soul," wrote Spinoza, "is adapted to conceive a very great number of things, and the more ways its body is disposed, the greater will be its aptitude."[4] St. Thomas would thoroughly agree. He says himself: "The diverse dispositions of men to works of the soul depend on the diverse dispositions of their bodies."[5] "The nobility of the soul follows the good disposition of the body . . . hence it follows that those with a delicate sense of touch are more noble of soul and more clear-sighted in mind."[6] The reason has been given above. We are one part matter, and matter, in us as in all things, is a falling off from intellectuality, since it is a sort of degradation of being. Now, as everything operates at its own level, our partial identification with matter will lower our object. Our object is not the purely spiritual world, but the sensible world. In order to operate in a spiritual way we must wait for nature to come to us and be incorporated in us, and that is the purpose of the senses. The senses inform us, and to do that they must first inform themselves; by collecting their material and moulding it in their own way, by gathering pollen and making honey.

Elaboration of the Universal

The task of elaboration indicated in these words is indispensable because of the conditions imposed

[4] Spinoza, *Ethica De An. Theor.*, 14.
[5] *De Mem. et Rem.*, lect. I.
[6] *De Anima*, II, lect. 19.

on every natural becoming. Just as anything in the physical order is potentially everything, by reason of common matter, so the soul is potentially all things, and all things are potentially the soul, by reason of the divine intelligibility in which all things participate. But in both cases there must be intermediaries, and the greater the distance between the elements employed and the result aimed at, the more numerous the intermediaries, and the more difficult the passage. "Since the distance between intelligent beings and exterior, material beings is the greatest possible, the form of a material thing is not received by the intellect immediately, but reaches it through many intermediaries."[7]

The Senses

First of these intermediaries are the senses, i.e., that organic power, whose organ is to the body what the sense itself is to the soul. As the body, once affected, affects the soul, which is not really a thing distinct from it, so the organ, affected by the sensible thing, affects the sense, which similarly is not a thing apart from it, but its ontological *act*. But since the external, sensible thing can act on the organ only in accordance with its nature, i.e., by its form, there will be in the sense, i.e., in one of man's powers, a true reflection of the object. The form of the being, realized in this object, will be lived by the subject: man will live the world, which becomes partially identical with him, under the form of an action exercised by him and received into him. It is this double of the universe in us

[7] *QQ. Disp. de Anima*, art. XX, c.

which St. Thomas designates by Aristotle's word, the *phantasmata*, i.e., the internal apparitions of images or phantoms. It must not, however, be supposed that these forms are therefore visible. Material objects can be manifest in other ways besides to sight. They are manifest by their sounds, smells, movement, rhythm, and the organism which creates the *phantasma*, can react to all these. Moreover, an object of sense does not merely affect a man's brain, but his whole body, especially his mien and demeanour and his gestures. "A man thinks with his hands," says Père Jousse, and the reason is that a man most often thinks with a view to acting, with the result that the *phantasmata* are to a great extent the residues, plans, or symbols of action.

Besides the external senses to which the word is ordinarily applied, St. Thomas gives four internal faculties of sense: the *sensus communis*, the imagination, the *vis æstimativa* (in animals) or *vis cogitativa* (in men), and the memory.

Sensus Communis

The *sensus communis* is the root of all the sensibility which is diffused throughout a living being, "the centre whence flow the senses proper, whither their impressions return, and where they are synthesized."[8]

Imagination and Vis Cogitativa

The imagination is a power different from, but connected with, the *sensus communis*. The particular senses and the *sensus communis* gather the impressions: the imagination stores them up and puts them together. From this preliminary elaboration there results a sort of judgment, still quite instinctive, and determined by the laws of the species and not by the subject's own initiative. In animals this instinct is free from all alloy and left to itself: in man it is impregnated with reason, and thence gets its name of *particular*, or *cogitative reason*. It is called *particular* reason to indicate that it has nothing to do with the universal yet to be elaborated, and that the subject merely passes from one particular case to a similar, or from several particular cases to a new case of the same sort, without evoking a *principle*.

This gives rise to the experience which "consists in the conscious collation of singular cases of the same kind, which have been acquired by the memory." From this there results an empiric rule of action, which is still neither science nor art, but which, in man, foreshadows them. It should be noted that this sort of experience is not purely individual: it bears a social character. By heredity, education, mutual influence, the child and the adult manifest forms of experience much higher than those acquired by an individual. Their share in the experience of ages enables them to act wisely without wisdom, cleverly without personal ingenuity, artistically without art.

The Sensitive Memory

Fourthly and lastly is the faculty known as the *sensitive memory*. The adjective is really superfluous because, strictly speaking, there is no such

[8] *De Pot. Animæ*, c. 4.

thing as an intellectual memory. We remember our ideas in the sense that we can call them up again, but the feeling that we have had them before, which is essential to memory, is due to their temporal and therefore sensible connotations.

The memory is the treasury of sense appreciations, as the imagination is the treasury of images. Memory is awakened over what was pleasant, harmful, etc. Further, the appreciation of time is here a condition of all the others: without it you may have imagination, or return of imagination, sensation or return of sensation, but not remembrance. Besides being a treasury of sense appreciations, which lead to instinctive judgments, memory extends to our acquisitions of every kind, though it regards them all under the special relation of time.

It goes without saying that in St. Thomas this analysis of functions in no sense obscures the impression of the profound unity of the general phenomena of sensitive life. Imagination, memory, instinct, and the *sensus communis*, all depend on a general power of sensation, which bears the same relation to the manifestations of sense life as the power of assimilation does to nutrition, growth, and generation. On the other hand, St. Thomas would be the first to agree that his classification, which answers to the data of common sense, is cursory and open to further research. But it does at least show us how it is possible to rise above sense knowledge and reach the universal.

The Active Intellect (Intellectus Agens)

It is a fact that man rises from experience to the *idea*, i.e., to a consideration which is applicable to all cases of the same genus, and even, by analogy, to certain cases beyond the genus, viz., to the transcendentals. For the Thomist here is the principle of science and art: of art when the end in view is something to be made; of science when it is a question of *being*. But there must be a power in the soul to make this transformation of experience possible.

It might be suggested that this power is not in the soul, but comes from a higher plane. In his earlier works St. Thomas seems not averse to this view. Certain Catholic Doctors, he says, affirm, with a show of reason (*satis probabiliter*) that it is God Himself Who plays the part of the active intelligence in us, and they cite in support of their opinion the words of St. John concerning the Word: "*He was the light which enlighteneth every man coming into this world.*" However, he says farther on that it is hardly natural to suppose that there is not in the soul itself an immediate and sufficient principle of its own operations, as would be the case if the power of understanding, instead of belonging to each soul, were a common reality, whether God, or, as some Arabian philosophers held, an Intelligence. For this reason St. Thomas definitely upheld the opposite opinion, and he calls the power which enables us to transform sensible experience into general ideas the *active intellect*. We must assign its exact place in his system.

Every theory of knowledge supposes a previous relationship between that which is to know and what is to be known. The real thing, in order to become an idea in us, must in some way be idea already. How it is so is explained in Chapter II. Reality is the descent of idea into matter. Since it comes from idea and realizes it, it is full of idea, and can therefore revive it in a subject that is suited to receive it. Only, it does not do so of its own accord, for ideality as existing in things has lost the characteristics of universality and necessity, which alone could make it the object of the intelligence: it is subject to extension, number, movement and contingency. In order that the real may revive in the mind, with its proper characteristics, it must in some way or other return to its original, disembodied state and lose its individuality. When a real thing is generated, its idea is, as it were, *attracted* into matter: to be understood by the mind, its idea must be *extracted* or *abstracted*, and this operation requires a suitable power. Let us repeat that this power need not be in the soul: it could be a separated intelligence: it *could* be God, and ultimately it *must* be God, inasmuch as He is the source of intelligibility, as of everything else. St. Thomas calls the active intellect a "light emanating from God," and speaks of God as the "excelling cause of our knowledge." But here it is a question of the *immediate* principles of knowledge, and the view which puts them outside the soul may be considered as arbitrary and we can here neglect it.

Besides its passive capacity of adapting itself to things, of receiving the soul of things into itself, there is in the soul an active power of transforming,

which completes in the intellect the process of disembodying already begun in the senses, and which renders possible this assimilation of form, in which the act of intelligence consists. This is the active intellect. The only alternative is to postulate innate ideas, which render experience useless. But, granted that our sole source of knowledge is external reality, wherein the idea is manifested, but does not, strictly speaking, exist (*ipsa forma non est, sed compositum per formam*), we are bound to postulate some active principle which procures its existence. And since its subject must be the intellect, and its object must be the thing itself, we have to postulate a *spiritual* activity presiding over the synthesis of subject and object, which is the foundation of all knowledge.

There is here a threefold co-operation: of the *possible* intellect, which receives the impression of images representing external reality, the *active* intellect, which draws from these the ideality they embody, and thirdly the images themselves, which, by being thus impressed on the intelligence, bear witness to the objectivity of knowledge. The three necessary conditions of knowledge are: an active power of idealizing, a passive power of receiving the ideas, and a specifying power, to which the idea, given and received, gives form.

We must point out that these three elements are not three subsisting things. They are *things* in the broad sense of the word (*res quaedam*), but they are not *subjects*. The words "active intellect," "possible intellect," "images," used as subjects of our sentences are misleading, as is all language. There are not two intellects, like two souls. The images are only modifications of the subject which receives them. But we may distinguish the subject

precisely as endowed with understanding, and as being modifiable into these images. There is a similar distinction possible between the intellect understanding potentially, and the intellect in act. Put it this way. The intellectual soul has the power of communicating something of its own intelligibility to the sense images, and, because it also enjoys a passive power, it is affected by the images and conceives the objects which they represent to it. It is this passive power of being specified which gives rise to the term *possible intellect*, and the active power of spiritualizing the images which gives us the term *active intellect*. The eye offers a similar example. It is not only transparent and passive under the action of colours, but at the same time it gives out light, so as to manifest the colours and make them actually visible. Hence there are animals which are said to see at night, because their eyes have an illuminative power capable of lighting up their objects.[9]

In these explanations, intellectual knowledge is seen to be really and truly a transformed sensation. "Sensualists" agree with us on this point, the only difference between us being that we hold a *total* transformation. It is equally true to say that sensation is only a physiological alteration transformed. But it is a *total* transformation. There are diverse orders, and there must be some elevating power in order to pass from one to the other. In one case it is the activity of sense, an *animated* power: in the other, that of the intellect, a power of an order higher than physical life.

[9] Cf. *Cont. Gent.*, II, Ch. LXXVII.

Intellectual Memory

Are the ideas which are extracted from the images of the imagination stored up in the intellect, or do they merely reappear there when the conditions which gave rise to them are reproduced in the brain? St. Thomas considered this important, because, if the ideas themselves are not preserved, if there remains only the capacity of reviving them by a renewal of the *phantasmata*, what becomes of our thoughts, and the memory of our thoughts, when the soul is separated from its body, and can no longer use its brain, and therefore lacks all experience?

We shall see later that the soul then acquires a new and higher form of experience, but this does not entirely make up for the loss. If, on the other hand, our thoughts remain, they must revive in what will be practically a form strange to their present one. Without an answer to this inevitable question, the doctrine of the soul would not be complete.

In his commentary on the *Sentences*,[10] St. Thomas is hesitant. Later on his thought grew more definite, though certain expressions, and, it is said, certain incidents in his life, reveal a persistence of the doubt. His answer is in the affirmative, and here is his reason:

If a spiritual power is capable of receiving a new impression, it must be able to keep it, because it is hardly likely (*non videtur probabile*) that the result of a spiritual generation should be less stable than

[10] Bk. IV, dist. 50, q. 1, art. 3.

precisely as endowed with understanding, and as being modifiable into these images. There is a similar distinction possible between the intellect understanding potentially, and the intellect in act. Put it this way. The intellectual soul has the power of communicating something of its own intelligibility to the sense images, and, because it also enjoys a passive power, it is affected by the images and conceives the objects which they represent to it. It is this passive power of being specified which gives rise to the term *possible intellect*, and the active power of spiritualizing the images which gives us the term *active intellect*. The eye offers a similar example. It is not only transparent and passive under the action of colours, but at the same time it gives out light, so as to manifest the colours and make them actually visible. Hence there are animals which are said to see at night, because their eyes have an illuminative power capable of lighting up their objects.[9]

In these explanations, intellectual knowledge is seen to be really and truly a transformed sensation. "Sensualists" agree with us on this point, the only difference between us being that we hold a *total* transformation. It is equally true to say that sensation is only a physiological alteration transformed. But it is a *total* transformation. There are diverse orders, and there must be some elevating power in order to pass from one to the other. In one case it is the activity of sense, an *animated* power: in the other, that of the intellect, a power of an order higher than physical life.

[9] Cf. *Cont. Gent.*, II, Ch. LXXVII.

Intellectual Memory

Are the ideas which are extracted from the images of the imagination stored up in the intellect, or do they merely reappear there when the conditions which gave rise to them are reproduced in the brain? St. Thomas considered this important, because, if the ideas themselves are not preserved, if there remains only the capacity of reviving them by a renewal of the *phantasmata*, what becomes of our thoughts, and the memory of our thoughts, when the soul is separated from its body, and can no longer use its brain, and therefore lacks all experience?

We shall see later that the soul then acquires a new and higher form of experience, but this does not entirely make up for the loss. If, on the other hand, our thoughts remain, they must revive in what will be practically a form strange to their present one. Without an answer to this inevitable question, the doctrine of the soul would not be complete.

In his commentary on the *Sentences*,[10] St. Thomas is hesitant. Later on his thought grew more definite, though certain expressions, and, it is said, certain incidents in his life, reveal a persistence of the doubt. His answer is in the affirmative, and here is his reason:

If a spiritual power is capable of receiving a new impression, it must be able to keep it, because it is hardly likely (*non videtur probabile*) that the result of a spiritual generation should be less stable than

[10] Bk. IV, dist. 50, q. 1, art. 3.

that of the sensitive memory, which preserves its images, despite all kinds of fluctuations. Therefore, *a fortiori*, a spiritual idea should be conserved and not need to be re-acquired by a renewal of its organic conditions.

We repeat that to know is to be, viz., to be something else, and to be something else is to have the *act* of the thing known engrafted on the anterior actuality of the subject. Now, between the mere capacity of being something else and the actual fulfilment of it, which is called its *second act*, there is room for a *first act*, which is the idea, *acquired*, but not yet *lived*: the state of a being formed unconsciously on something else, and ready to awaken to consciousness as soon as the conditions for actual knowledge are realized. Therefore it seems (*videtur*) that every acquired idea is preserved in the soul, and indefinitely, since time has no influence on immaterial things. Hence every acquired idea persists in the life to come, though its use is only relative.

But this is not memory properly so called. Memory concerns the past as past. To think of a thing, even repeatedly, without associating it with time, is not to remember it. But time is the measure of movement, which is a condition of material things, while idea belongs only to the universal, and therefore to the immaterial and immobile, and has nothing temporal in it. Consequently we can have an idea of a past event, but not of a past event, precisely in its proper form, *as past*. The past as past leaves its mark on something sensible, viz., the body. We find again what once was, and how it affected us, by a process of regression, called by St. Thomas *reminiscence* (act

of rememorizing), which includes the notion of a continuum, and consequently of matter.

The separated soul will be disposed by these ideas (granted their survival) to orientate the new ideas which it will receive from above. In that sense it will re-think its former thoughts, and will be conscious of so doing. This is a sort of remembrance, if you like, but it remains true that, strictly speaking and in philosophical terminology, Aristotle is right when he says that the soul will not remember when the body is no more. There is no intellectual memory in the proper sense of the word.

C. Origin of the Human Soul

We have no intention of treating of the intellect's mode of functioning in the formation of the concept and the judgment, in the elaboration of truth and lapses into error, or in the process known as demonstration which starts from *principles*. These questions are outside the scope of this book. The same applies to the will. But we must touch briefly on certain consequences of what has been said, viz., the origin and end of the intellectual soul.

Since *being* is the term of a becoming, which must proceed according to a fixed plan, a thing's mode of becoming will depend on its mode of being. If the soul were only an ordinary form, i.e., the *act* of a body, if it had no other act but to inform the body, then its existence would be co-terminous with that of the composite body, and there would be no reason to postulate a special mode of coming into existence. It would be sufficiently accounted for by the ordinary principles of material generation.

But the soul has an act over and above the act of informing the body, and *to that extent* must be independent of matter. Therefore it cannot be accounted for like a purely physical generation, which consists in a change of form in a pre-existing matter. Therefore the soul is not generated, and, for the same reason, is indestructible.

And yet the soul has not always existed, for its natural being is in the body, and the body has a beginning. We cannot accept the Platonist, Manichæan or Averroist views on this matter without accepting their whole philosophy. Therefore the only alternative is to postulate an absolute beginning to the soul, after not having been absolutely, neither in itself nor in its specific causes. Therefore the soul must have been immediately created by God, Who alone is a sufficient cause to produce it. We express this by a metaphor, and say that the soul is infused into the body. It comes from without, θυραθεν, through the door, as Aristotle says.

The Soul and Generation

What follows will show how we must explain the process of human generation. We know that it is not the soul which operates in the *semen* or in the *ovum*, but a formative power resulting from material dispositions, which are instruments with relation to the principles of generation. This eliminates two errors. First, that the new soul fabricates its own body from the start, and secondly that the parent soul is responsible for the development of the embryo.

To take the latter error first. The principle of

the embryo's development must be intrinsic to it and not merely conjoint. The new being obviously develops of its own accord, by its own laws, and not by the laws of the parent being. Again, it soon acquires sensation, an immanent operation which is eminently subjective and cannot belong to two subjects, of which one is the active cause and the other the recipient.

The first error, though at first sight attractive, is equally unacceptable. To say that the soul is in the *semen* or in the *ovum*, or even in the embryo not yet endowed with its essential organization, is to lose sight of the fact that the human soul is not primarily a spirit, but an *act of an organic body*. Its power surpasses the body, but it depends on the body as on its natural support. It comes, so to speak, when called for, to complete the process of generation, although this completion depends on other influences as well. The body needs the soul, as every matter needs its form, in that upward struggle of the whole creation, which "groaneth and travaileth in pain."[11] Therefore the soul can come to be naturally only when the body is *ultimately* prepared for its act, i.e., possessing all the essentials of a human organism. Before it has this essential organism the body is not capable of having a soul, because at the start it is not a body at all, whilst at later stages it is not a body proportionate to *this* soul, any more than a piece of wood is ready to catch fire as soon as it is brought into contact with the flame.

The animating soul is to the body what sight is to the eye, and therefore it can no more exist before the body than can the faculty of sight exist before

[11] Rom. viii. 22.

the eye. A properly human soul cannot exist before a properly human body, i.e., a body so organized as to lead a human life.

When Does Animation Take Place?

This is a matter for positive science, and science is not very advanced on this point. It is generally agreed that it is from the sixth month onwards that the cerebral cortex, the organ of the higher bodily functions in man, takes on its definite structure, and it is then possible to distinguish the five fundamental layers which are found in the adult, viz., molecular layer, exterior layer, or layer of small pyramidal cells, middle layer of large pyramidal cells, interior layer of polymorphous cells, the whole resting on a white mass of fibres, and on the epithelium (the ependyma). The central nervous system is composed of higher psychic centres, centres of movement and sensation, and reflex centres. It is these last which appear first: they are common to all animals, and their development is seen to be constant. The motive and sensitive centres come next, both in order of differentiation and of development. Lastly, the higher psychism proper to man, which takes longer to come: it gains complete control over the cerebal fibres only about the age of seven or eight years. But the essential fibres are already apparent after six months, and quite clear after eight.

Here again there is a great lack of certitude, which justifies the Church's practice in the matter of baptism, where the safest course is always adopted. But philosophically, for St. Thomas, to put a soul in

a still unformed embryo, much less in the *semen*, is a manifest metaphysical mistake. "We do not put the art of building in flutes."

Successive Souls

It must be granted that the formative power contained in the *semen*, in the initial embryo, is the power of a human soul, in this sense that it is the effect and instrument of human parents, operating according to the laws of their species, which is determined by their soul. It is the power of a human soul also in the sense that it of its nature tends to the production of a soul, although it cannot do this of itself and by itself. But objectively, actually, there is no human soul there. It comes by stages, and in the evolution of the embryo we find the whole kingdom and plan of nature. It is first of all vegetal and leads the life of a plant, growing and being nourished like one. St. Thomas adopts Aristotle's view[12] on this point, but obviously the plant which he speaks of is a human plant: it is vegetal life directed towards the full life of man, with its own characteristics, as may be proved by the facts of heredity. As it develops the embryo acquires sensitive life, which opens the way to intellection. When the proper principle of the latter arrives, it finds a matter adapted and proportionate to its powers. But these diverse stages are all immanent, and therefore require each a functional, and consequently an ontological principle proportionate to it. Therefore there must be, first a vegetal soul, then a higher soul, at once vegetal

[12] Cf. *De Gen. Anim.*, II, III.

and sensitive, and finally, the perfect essential development, a soul at once vegetal, sensitive, and rational.

We must add, however, that this conclusion of St. Thomas would have to be modified if we accepted the hypothesis of transformation, but we need facts a good deal more certain than those which are forthcoming, to convince us. We repeat that St. Thomas's philosophy is in no sense opposed to it. To admit evolution, especially that of slow modifications, which gradually change the specific type until it appears as a new being, is to do away, in the analysis of generation, with the distinction between accidental disposing forms which are continually evolving, and the substantial form which succeeds them. In this case, there would be a continuous evolution, a continual change of form, bringing about vegetal life at one period, then sensation, which leads to intellection (though it does not produce it of itself), instead of a succession of provisional souls, each prepared by some anterior evolution, and brought about instantaneously. It is like saying that to go from one to three you must go through a double scale of fractions, and that two is on the way.

This might easily be. As St. Thomas explains: "forms are said to be unchangeable because they themselves cannot be subjects of change: they are nevertheless subject to change, in so far as their subjects are changeable as regards them. Hence it is clear that they may vary inasmuch as they exist, for they are called beings, not as subjects of being, but because by them something exists."[13]

Thus the subject, in our case the human embryo,

[13] Ia, q. IX, art. 2, ad. 3.

evolves continually, and we may say that it continually takes on a new form, is endowed with a new soul. But, since this soul is only provisional, it is not the *guiding idea* of man: it participates in it, as a thought behind a work of invention participates in its successive, preliminary stages.

In any case the last soul, the definite, rational soul which has powers over and above the power of animating, of being the act or form of the body, cannot just follow on automatically at the end of a work of material organization. Some exterior influence must be brought to bear, some action must come from the world of intelligence, whose power transcends that of matter.

Yet there is nothing miraculous about it. God is "involved in His works," says St. Augustine. What He does ordinarily, in conformity with the plan realized in nature, is not a miracle. But it *is* a creation, in so far as it is a participation in the First Being, brought about by an absolute beginning, without causal continuity, other than preparatory, with preceding material conditions.

The Soul and the Evolutionist Theory

It is worth pointing out that if the theory of evolution were proved by experimental science, and if it managed to explain, experimentally of course, man's arrival on earth in the course of geological ages, St. Thomas's philosophy could easily be accommodated to it. Once admitting the doubtful, though attractive, theory that the phases of the embryo are a miniature of the phases of the life in general, St. Thomas would apply what has been said of the human soul to the formation of humanity in

our first parents. Adam's organism would then be the work of centuries of life slowly developing on the earth. The rational soul would be brought in at its proper time, invisibly, without any observable intervention; naturally, but meaning by that, nature as a whole which includes God, to Whom alone the production of soul can be attributed. This would still not be a miracle, but it *would* be a creation, and the Bible narratives would lose nothing of their value, philosophical or religious.

D. The Survival of the Soul

There remains the problem of the survival of the soul, which must be treated rather carefully, once you admit with St. Thomas, and against all forms of Platonism, the doctrine of the human *compositum*.

We cannot utterly perish. We possess ideas, which are an earnest of immortality. The soul is immaterial and cannot be divided, broken up into its elements and destroyed as the body can. How can we perish, then, when we possess immortality?

But this is just what is called in question. That we possess immortality merely proves that not *everything* in us will perish, but it does not prove that we ourselves shall not. Man is made up of body and soul, and when the body is destroyed the man is no more; not even his name belongs to him, as St. Thomas says unexpectedly: To affirm that the *man* survives is to return to Plato, who taught that man was only an intellectual soul, and that his body was not an essential part of him.

Faith answers this difficulty by the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, which is quite natural, granted that the natural state of the soul is to be in

the body. But philosophy has no recourse to faith: it observes that the man dies, and it cannot affirm that he comes to life again. It must be content with affirming that not everything in man dies. It might add that because the soul is the principal part, and it is customary to name things by their principal parts, it is, broadly speaking, true to say that *we* are immortal. This is not Platonism. Plato held that the soul was united only accidentally to its matter, and literally meant that it is synonymous to say that the soul is immortal and man is immortal.

But there is a still graver difficulty. If the soul preserves its nature and yet loses its functions, of what use is its nature after death? No function at all seems possible without a body, or rather without a properly disposed body. Illness affects the intelligence, and can even suspend its working, by doing away with the organic conditions, on which the senses, imagination and memory depend.

The answer is rather complicated, as it must needs be, and it gave St. Thomas's opponents an opportunity of censuring his Aristotelianism. If the thinking individual is only actually thinking when in possession of interior images, and if these images suppose an organism, and the organism supposes a cosmic environment, how can the soul operate or even be conscious of itself, when the organism and the environment are no longer there? "To exist is to feel one's body," wrote Maine de Biran. If the soul no longer feels its body, it no longer knows that it exists. Will death be only a dreamless sleep? But apart from this awful supposition, how can we imagine this unconscious and inert survival in the plan of nature. To be neither for oneself nor for another, is hardly to be at all.

From this it is only a step to the view that the intellect, separated from matter, is not entirely personal, even in this life, but a sort of common influence, a light that shines for a time in each one of us, and later leaves us mere particles of humanity to die like day-flies in the night. That was the view of Averroes, and he claims the authority of Aristotle. Who knows? Though we still have St. Thomas's commentary on the *De Anima*, and his brilliant study on the *Unity of the Intellect against the Averroists*, they scarcely clear up the positive difficulty of affirming a survival which turns out to be totally indescribable, with only the data of natural psychology to go upon.

Still, it is not as desperate as all that. The actual purpose of the passive intellect, namely to receive ideas from the sensible world, does not exhaust its powers. It is a receptacle of ideas. That these ideas come from sensible objects is beside the point. That is its actual condition, not its necessary one. Its *separate* nature, i.e., independent of matter, renders it impervious to death, and its unlimited receptive nature, which makes its *information* or cognitive determination possible in other conditions, provide the basis of its conscious and active immortality.

Moreover the soul is itself intelligible. It lacks intuition of itself in this life because its union with the body turns and limits its attention to bodily objects. When it is separated from the body and left to itself, why should it not act as an intelligent intelligible and understand itself? Why should not its knowledge extend to all that its nature implies concerning being and the causes of being? That would take it a long way without any external

influence. But further, it could receive from above what it no longer receives from below: from spirit instead of from matter. Psychologically it could, and if morally it *should*, then there is no difficulty. Man with his longings, the moralist preoccupied with his principles, the Christian with his faith, all can be accommodated.

Here is St. Thomas's reply: The functions which depend on the body perish, i.e., the senses, imagination, sensible experience, memory proper, and the passions; but the rational functions do not perish, but are simply re-orientated. "Everything acts according to its being. Although the being of the human soul while united to the body is absolute and independent of the body, nevertheless the body is a sort of covering subject which receives it. Consequently the proper operation of the soul, namely to understand, though not depending on the body, in the sense of being exercised through a bodily organ, has nevertheless its object in the body, namely the phantasms. Hence, as long as the soul is in the body it cannot understand without phantasms, nor remember except by the cogitative and memorative powers which prepare them. Therefore this mode of understanding is destroyed with the memory when the body is destroyed. But the being of a separated soul belongs to it alone, without the body, and hence its operation, which is to understand, is not wholly expended on objects existing, like phantasms, in bodily organs. It understands of itself, in the manner of substances which are totally separate from bodies in their being, and it can be influenced by these separated substances, as by its betters, to understand more perfectly."[14]

[14] *Cont. Gent.*, II, 81.

It will be noticed in this quotation that St. Thomas refers to a faculty of intuition which the soul even now possesses, but which is kept under restraint by its association with the body. Lachelier compares this faculty to "our respiratory power during the life in the womb." When the immortal life begins, this power shows itself, as a new-born baby breathes in its first cry.

But this brings us to another difficulty. If the soul can function like that, of itself, without the body, why has it been joined to a body? Is it "for its own good," as St. Thomas says in contrast with Origen and the Manichees, who regarded it as a fall and a punishment? St. Thomas answers that the soul can function without the body, but that does not make the body useless to it. Placed on the lowest rung of intelligence, it could learn only a very little of truth if left to itself. The body is one of its sources of information, looking out as it does on the world. When the body perishes, the soul returns to itself, and of itself would acquire little. But the world above, which we on earth see only in reflection, is opened to it, and it now receives from above what before came to it from below. Direct rays replace the laborious filtering of abstraction. "The human soul is on the confines of two worlds, on the horizon of time and eternity. As it recedes from the lower it draws nearer to the higher, and when absolutely separated from the body it will be just like separated substances in their manner of knowing, and will receive their influence in greater abundance."[15]

In a word, at the moment of its birth in the body, the soul is reduced to the lowest rank of spirit; after

[15] *Ibid.*

its separation by death it advances to a higher environment, and is brought under the influence of nobler beings. Our body gives us the rights and advantages of a spectator of the world, and makes us active citizens of nature. In leaving the body we leave school to return to our real home. The body nourishes the mind, but rather as a warder feeds his prisoner. Material things develop the soul, but they also envelop it; they enliven it while they imprison it. True progress is to be found only in closer union with God and His Kingdom, in comparison with which this world is only a shadow.

That, to St. Thomas, is how knowledge in us is apportioned to the various domains we successively inhabit. On earth we get everything from experience, i.e., from the world entering into us, the invasion of embodied forms which are disembodied by abstraction. But even while so operating we are already in communication with the world of spirit. The source of light is above, the form is "divine"; throughout nature we unconsciously commune with God. The "vision of God" is, in that sense, a natural truth. All truth comes from God. In one way or another God must be involved in our every thought, with our science and art, with everything, in fact, that implies intelligibility. Our ideas come from above, even though we get them from below, as the reflection of the sun in the sea. Our thought is an ideal reflection, just as being is a real reflection of the divine source which is both ideal and real.

In other conditions, when we have broken the barriers of this world, God and divine things can be reflected in us without the mediation of the reality which envelops us. The intelligible world to which the liberated soul belongs, will nourish thought and

restore to it, full measure and overflowing, what it seemed to have lost. Instead of contemplating ideas in reflection, we shall receive them straight from their source, and contemplate with ourselves. God, the angels and ourselves will be transparent to us, but God in everything and in all.

CHAPTER VIII

MORALITY

A. Foundations of the Doctrine

Our Catholic theories of morality are often accused of being *a priori*, of wearing an abstract air, of being based on arbitrary *commandment* without positive justification, of deriving conclusions from Revelation, instead of establishing them by reason; in short, of lacking the scientific character which is expected nowadays in all branches of knowledge. It is not our purpose to defend other authors, but only St. Thomas, and we affirm that his principles of morality are scientific. They are joined to his metaphysics, and so they should be, since their object, man, is a being, and his law must come under the general laws of being.

St. Thomas begins with what is. Human life is engaged amid an ensemble of things from which man, by likenesses and differences, gets his own character: he is part of a great movement, of which the origin, the end and the means determine his destiny, as they determine the destiny of all things. There we must look for the principles of his actions. Something within him speaks to him: his conscience, i.e., the sum total of impulses subjected

to his rational nature; dictates which his intelligence perceives and to which his conduct must conform.

It is all a question of finality, but of free finality, for man differs from other beings in that he moves himself towards his end, when reason has once recognized it. Hence his responsibility and also his danger. The tragedy of destiny consists in the fact that a man is daily and continually the arbiter of his own fate. At each moment of his conscious life, and indirectly of his unconscious life, he does an act which saves him or damns him.

The good man cannot wander or lose his way unless he turns from the divine course which directs being and brings everything in creation to its proper end. As long as he tends towards his end he is saving his own soul and fulfilling part of nature's universal plan. He must complete his life, as his share in the completion of nature. This is no mystery, but a positive fact.

To complete his life means that a man must recognize the true nature of his life and act accordingly. Morality is simply the art of directing man's free activity so as to realize his end and his place in God's handiwork, as his own instincts, properly studied, prompt him. Or, if you like, morality is the science of what a man ought to be by reason of what he is.

In this epitome of Thomistic morality, certain principal notions stand out and need explanation. The first of these is the notion of the last end or beatitude.

B. Beatitude

Everything acts for an end: all activity is a search for something. If there were no term assigned to an action, implied in the action itself, then a result would not follow from one rather than from another. Natural determinism would be no longer explicable, an absolute chance would prevail, and science would be rendered impossible. But though everything acts for an end, not everything knows its end, and even when it knows it as object, it may not know it as end, i.e., precisely as the result to be obtained by appropriate means. Reason alone can carry out this task, and therefore only the rational being can direct himself to his end.

What is that end? Every being tends, consciously or otherwise, to its own realization, preservation, expansion, and, where possible, complete development. Man is no exception to the rule. His nature, at once multiple and one, seeks to unfold and develop all its faculties in perfect harmony. That, at least, is what his reason wishes when true to itself.

Now harmony consists in the subordination of functions to a principal function; completion consists in full expansion of all in the measure permitted by what is essential. What is essential is the higher life of the soul, by which we are defined, and distinguished from other animals. Therefore our beatitude, in this life and in the next, consists in directing all our faculties to the life of the intelligence.

This, however, does not tell us what the object is. Beatitude, so envisaged, is a form of activity,

and we have still to determine its substance. What objects can make us happy? To what do we turn if we would live well? To answer this question in detail would be to write a whole treatise on the nature of man, for man ought to be what he ought to be, by reason of what he is. But we can give a metaphysical answer, as far as concerns the essentials.

Man is essentially an intelligent being. Therefore the essential object of his beatitude, his supreme ideal, must be an object of his intelligence. And granted that beatitude must be perfect in its own order, we are led to the conclusion that his object must be the most perfect object among intelligible beings, and this is God. Therefore human beatitude consists essentially in the contemplation of God.

St. Thomas thus combines Revelation, which defines beatitude as a vision of God, with the authentic teaching of Aristotle.[1]

Thomism and Aristoteleanism

It is strange at first sight to find St. Thomas relying so much on a pagan philosophy in moral matters, but he regarded it just as one more case of a more general agreement, of which we have already noticed the happy success. Again, a closer examination will show that there are great differences between them. It is quite true that the essence of human beatitude is the contemplation of God, but Aristotle's explanation is set out in a manner calculated to confuse us. Aristotle was

[1] Cf. *Ethics*.

concerned only with this life, and his so-called happiness is restricted to a privileged few, for brief periods and in precarious circumstances. In a world dominated by material things, by rank and birth, only a small minority can lead the higher intellectual life. How can we indulge in it when we are almost entirely engrossed in finding the necessities of life, with little time for contemplation.

But St. Thomas, while realizing the shortcomings of such a theory, did not for that reason abandon the principles. He had wherewith to supplement them and justify their ambition. There is another life. We may not be able to describe what is in store for us, but we believe and hope, and what was for Aristotle an unwarranted optimism, is for us a reality.

Moreover, St. Thomas does not rely only on rational research, he does not construct a merely philosophical heaven, but makes use of the only heaven which is revealed to us, to give definite character to beatitude, and to the moral means which lead up to it. In the intuitive contemplation of God all our desires will be satisfied, because God is the source of everything good. Whatever we derive from the life of the senses, from intellectual, family, or social life, and every other form of temporal happiness, must find its counterpart in God. Above all, faith assures us, by the resurrection of the body, by the *new heaven* and *new earth*, an " accidental " prolongation of the primary and essential beatitude, by which it will be adapted to our standing and to all our needs. It remains to consider how this end can be reached.

C. Human Acts as Means to Beatitude

Since beatitude is the goal of our activity, it must be obtained by suitable acts, i.e., by acts which directly or indirectly lead to it. Since man is rational he will advance towards his beatitude when he acts in conformity with his reason, by obeying the law within him, which is derived from the Supreme Law. The end of a thing is its perfection, and a being is perfected by reaching the end of its proper activity. Therefore our perfection must be attained by the perfection of our rational being. Therefore moral activity and rational activity exactly coincide. To be moral is to act in conformity with reason.

Another Contact with Aristoteleanism

In this matter we again find that Christian thought goes hand in hand with Aristotle. But we find the same lack of completeness on the part of the latter. Aristotle agrees with St. Thomas that an act is moral when it is reasonable, and reasonable when it is of a nature to achieve the end which reason seeks, viz., beatitude. But when it comes to ascertaining whether there is a regular correspondence or link between the end and the act, between moral perfection and morality, Aristotle is silent. His philosophy is nobly but too exclusively rationalistic for him to be able to guarantee any such connection. Man's life is far too complicated; nature, society, even our own internal affairs are far too much given over to

chance to guarantee the end aimed at, however faithful and courageous our efforts.

Things never go smoothly, and our efforts are often frustrated. Not that we expect a reward. But still, virtue is its own reward, only provided it reaches its aim. It is a question of the efficaciousness, and consequently of the justification, of our actions. It is really no more than a paradox to say: "Hope is not necessary for perseverance." Can men launch out on an undertaking with no hope of accomplishing it? Must not an order of facts correspond to the order of our actions? What Kant calls the *reign of ends*, i.e., the consistent fulfilment of our virtuous actions, needs to be guaranteed. Otherwise we have only a chance morality, and all idea of obligation is excluded. As a matter of fact, obligation is so loose in Aristotle that its very existence has been denied.

St. Thomas points out this defect, and supplements it as follows: "Whenever there is any due order to some end, it is necessary that it should lead to the end, and that deviation from it exclude the end. For the things which derive from the end, derive a necessity from the end, in this sense, that they are necessary if the end is to be reached, and they reach the end unless impeded."[2]

A pagan naturalist could not feel the same assurance. We do not see this order, as St. Thomas explains it, realized before our eyes. Nobody would dream of maintaining that visible happiness regularly follows each virtuous act, or that certain happiness follows a virtuous life as a whole. There are too many impediments, too many chance interventions between the quest and the goal. Betwixt

[2] *Cont. Gent.*, III, 140.

the cup and the lip. . . . Fortunes of birth and environment, inner struggles and miseries, conspire to mar the harmony between our acts and their natural ends. The triumph of ungodliness and the oppression of justice have been stumbling-blocks to centuries of inquirers.

But this is an incomplete picture of destiny. Pagan philosophers held to it, and defended it or opposed it as they thought fit. Even Aristotle was aware of it, and discreetly withdrew. He admitted that accidental causes upset the splendid order of his ethics. This order was an ideal, by which men might benefit "as far as it belongs to men." It was a clever subterfuge, but a subterfuge all the same, and we are faced with an antinomy.

On the one hand we are attracted towards beatitude, i.e., towards the harmonious perfection of our whole being, in the contemplation of God. It is a wonderful ideal, and our instincts and nature bear witness that we are made for it. We are told that virtue, or, what is the same thing, rational conduct, is the means to this end. On the other hand we have grave doubts as to whether this means is apt to procure the happiness aimed at. Experience shows that happiness and virtue often lie along different routes. Happiness depends on a host of conditions foreign to virtue, or even opposed to it. Virtue depends only on itself, namely, on its form, which is the moral intention or will to obey reason; but its matter, the object of its effort, can be lost. It is not effective by itself. It does not necessarily reach its end; its object, happiness, may be had almost without wishing it, and it may be wished for in vain. That is the contradiction.

We may avoid it by ignoring man's nature and

contradicting his instincts. We may say with the stoics: There is no true happiness save moral good itself, considered in its pure form. Happiness is exclusively the will to do good, and, since that depends on ourselves, it is within our grasp. Kant also, before he attempted the re-establishment of the postulates of the practical reason, thought that morality was a *pure form*, a "form without matter," an intention independent of all realization, and which would be spoiled by preoccupation with practical results. Hence the *happiness of virtue*, or the satisfaction arising from duty performed, which Kant admitted, has nothing to do with the happiness of man, as man.

Aristotle's doctrine was too positive, and St. Thomas is too insistent on the doctrine of matter and form, potency and act, to lose himself in a philosophy which runs counter to man's very nature. Yet Aristotle could not solve the difficulty. He took it for granted that the will to do good was the only sufficient cause of happiness, the only cause that could make our destiny truly our own. And when he finds his theory contradicted by actual facts he says it is an *accident*, though its prevalence should make it seem rather the rule. But there is no place for accidents in the realm of absolute values, and the moral order, which gives us absolute standards of conduct, must be absolute in itself, and therefore in its sanctions.

St. Thomas had not Aristotle's excuse for ignoring this. He had a remedy: here, as everywhere, he corrects Aristotle's doctrine by perfecting it, which is the best form of correction.

He shows that the purpose of morality is not to satisfy a sort of empty formalism or abstract

dragooning. Its purpose is to constitute man, to preserve him from influences which upset and degrade him, in a word to perfect him. Virtue is a prolongation of instincts, provided that these are true to man's nature.

Nor is he surprised that the *accident* should nullify and frustrate the results. He takes a larger view of it: the doctrine of immortality answers the difficulty. Although virtuous acts do not immediately produce happiness, they are its seeds. They are valuable for it: they *merit* it, and lead to it in due time. They already contain it in a mysterious way, under the form of grace, but that is a question of theology.

It is merit that joins virtue to happiness. "Merit is, as it were, the road that leads from virtue to the happy end."[3] The world does not, of itself, obey the moral law, although it is closely allied to it. God brings them together: virtue becomes the law of the world and sanctions its activities. Providence unites in one far-reaching plan what appeared disparate and divergent. Our works "follow us," and finally determine our fate. They may not be rewarded *en route*, but they are at the terminus. Reality is not moral by itself, but it is moral if taken in its entirety, because it then includes God. The world is a moral harmony in God, and our moral life is thereby established in security, both as regards its effects and its principles. God's providence is in man and in the world, in all groups and in all surroundings. God must be in agreement with Himself. He attracts us to happiness; our effort, united to his, must be invincible. With Him we succeed, without Him we fail. The moral order may be an order delayed in its full perfection, yet it is an order

[3] Sent. II, dist. 35, q. 1, art. 3.

all the same, and a well-established one. A good conscience is the highest force in the world. This theory neither does away with morality nor makes it so autonomous and detached as to be beyond our reach.

This is what the Gospels call the "Kingdom of God," and what the philosopher calls the absolute of the moral order. The kingdom of God is within us, as we are in God and God in us. It is in us by hope and by merit.

From this doctrine St. Thomas draws a conclusion of paramount importance, which was quite unknown to Aristotle. Our moral efforts are directed partly to realize temporal good, but above all, supra-temporal, even supernatural good, i.e., good above the level of our natural actions. And since the events of this life "are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us,"[4] our efforts to secure temporal happiness are of little importance compared with our efforts to merit eternal life.

But this is not to discourage purely natural actions. We merit, it is true, by actions which lead to our ultimate end, but they are actions performed in this life. That we promise them a greater reward does not mean that we condemn their purely natural compensation, since beatitude is promised to those who use this world rightly. Eternity is rooted in time, not opposed to it. And history shows that the greatest saints were the best citizens.

[4] Rom. viii. 18.

D. Pleasure and Goodness

So far we have treated beatitude as man's perfection, as a realization of his specific form, by the accomplishment of his final end. This is its essential character, because it answers to the primary and principal definition of his being. But there is another aspect. We have experience of an accessory reality which also belongs to being, and which to some seems the first element of beatitude, namely pleasure. What is it? What is its relation to human acts, to morality, and to our final happiness?

Pleasure is a Good

According to St. Thomas, pleasure is a secondary function dependent on the others. It is the perfection of a vital action, but not part of its essence, since the action may be defined without it. We can define sight without mentioning the pleasures of vision. Pleasure is a complement of our acts, a sort of psychological reflection, echo, epiphenomenon, or quality, and it results from their perfection, whole or in part. St. Thomas would have agreed with Spinoza's definition of joy as the "passing from a lesser to a greater perfection," and of sorrow as the "passing from a greater perfection to a lesser."[5]

Everyone yearns for what is pleasant to him. Everyone desires to live, and to live as full a life as possible. Aristotle left unanswered the question as to whether pleasure is made for life, or life for pleasure, whereas St. Thomas steadfastly rejects the

[5] *Ethics*, lib. III, c. XI, Scholion.

latter hypothesis. Life is not made for pleasure: in God's plan, pleasure is the repose of the appetite in the pleasurable thing, which it therefore presupposes. The essential thing is the fitness of the object, as judged by the reason, and the fitness of the pleasure is a result of this, and dependent upon it. Pleasure is always a good in itself, if not of itself. It moreover leads to good, in so far as it stimulates us to do virtuous actions. We understand better when we have a liking for study; we travel better over pleasant country; we enjoy music more when we appreciate the harmony; we do virtuous acts of all sorts better when we act with pleasure. The only action that pleasure impedes is one which is alien or contrary to it, when it is a distraction or a preventive. But pleasure which properly belongs to an action stimulates our faculties, concentrates our attention, welds together the soul and its object, and increases our vitality.

We must never condemn or banish pleasure as wrong in itself. On the contrary, we maintain that it is an essential perfection, valuable and extremely good. The joy of God *is* God. It can rise to a high degree of excellence and stability. Even though our pleasures pass away, pleasure itself is not a change as Plato held. Our pleasures are transitory, but pleasure itself is not fragile of itself: it is related to goodness, which by its nature has no limit of value or boundary of time. In this life our pleasures vanish when their object vanishes, and are limited like it. But if some day we find a good which completely satisfies us and which does not fade, then the pleasure which it gives us will be itself lasting and perfect. That is eternal joy.

Consequently Thomism is opposed to every form of

rigorism, Stoicism, Kantianism, or false mysticism, which inveigh against even the moderate enjoyment of pleasant things. Indeed, the refusal to enjoy what is good is a vice—St. Thomas calls it *insensibility*, i.e., a deforming or excluding of sensible enjoyment. It is an offence against reason and against God, because it is a rejection of His order and wise disposition of things. A child who is unwilling to enjoy his father's company can hardly be said to fulfil all his duties. He is wanting in gratitude and love.

Pleasure is not the First Good

But this doctrine, though true and important, needs to be balanced by a complementary doctrine.

Pleasure is a good, but it is not a good on its own account, and therefore it cannot be the first good. Pleasure assists life, but it is not the whole of life, nor even its principal part; it presupposes first of all a happy activity, and by happy I mean answering to what we are, to what our reason and conscience tell us we are.

This is contrary to the partisans of the *Moral of Pleasure*, the hedonists, immoral moralists, represented in antiquity by Eudoxus and Epicurus. Aristotle remarks, and St. Thomas seconds him, that they contradict the general sentiment of mankind. Men love pleasure, it is true, but they require to judge of the object wherein the pleasure is found. "Content to be at ease" is an invidious phrase, yet does it not exactly express the hedonist? A well-balanced man is content to have realized or to possess something good.

Nobody wishes to feel the pride and dignity of

royalty after the fashion of the lunatic who thinks he is a king. Nobody wishes never to grow up, so as to perpetuate his childish pleasures. The criminal does not wish to live for ever in crime. To be men, to enjoy our reason, our human dignity, our entire humanity seems to us preferable to all the joys of an abnormal life. Sight, hearing, memory, knowledge, and love, bring us countless pleasures, but even if we had to abandon all these in order to have pleasure, we would prefer to sacrifice the pleasure.

Nature has attached pleasure to our acts because it obviously desires them, and the more important the act the greater the pleasure. For example, in bodily actions more pleasure follows from acts which concern the species than from those which concern the individual. This is nature's way of showing that the good of pleasure, in God's plan, and consequently according to right reason, is only an added encouragement and help to virtue. To attribute to it an independent or primary value is to abuse it.

There is a limit beyond which any pleasure becomes unreasonable and unjustifiable in moral law. It is good to enjoy truth, but only because truth itself is first of all good. On a lower plane, it is good to enjoy food in moderation, because food is good for the body, which is both valuable in itself and even more so as the instrument of the soul.

Conclusions Regarding Pleasure

Broadly speaking, we may say with St. Thomas that pleasure is worth what its action is worth, and its action is worth what its object is worth. If the object is good the action is happy—happy in

the eyes of reason, happy on the whole, all things considered. Then the pleasure also is good. And *vice versa*.

This means that the pleasure must be in proportion to the being and to the action. Any disproportion means a more or less bad action. To crave for enjoyment for its own sake is wrong, because it is unreasonable, and therefore immoral and against the order established by Providence. The gravity of the sin will depend on the gravity of the object. Excessive enjoyment of the little things of everyday life will be a light fault, while, when pleasure is contrary to life itself, when it upsets vital actions, harms the individual or the community, the gravity is obviously greater.

E. Obligation and Sanction

Here we might end this chapter, as we have touched on the essentials of Thomistic morals. Still, we have hardly so much as mentioned the words *obligation* and *sanction*, which occur so frequently in manuals. The reason is that in Thomism, morals, strictly speaking, have no obligation or sanction. Let us not be misunderstood. We mean that the good is not imposed on the human act from without, like a decree which deprives a man of his own spontaneity of action, or of choosing from the objects which surround him. We mean also that the reward is not from without, by a sort of intervention of something between the act and its natural result. This follows logically from what has been said above.

According to St. Thomas, morality is the art of

attaining our end. There is hardly need to point out now that this end is an objective, ontological good, the full perfection of our being, and the perfect realization of our human nature. *Moral* good is therefore the attainment of this end by a judicious choice and use of means to it. Virtue is only another name for fulfilling the law of activity, which governs us, *as men*. Happiness or misery will follow according as we gain or lose the good sought after. But let us go more closely into the question of moral law and sanction.

The Nature of the Moral Law

For a proper understanding of law as taught by St. Thomas, we must pass from the moral order, which is governed by reason, to the natural order, in which reason is immanent. Both the reason of man and the reason in things are, of course, derived from God.

Law in general is defined as the " rule or measure of action, by which one is led to act or deterred from acting."[6] Laws may differ according to the character of the active cause and of the action, but they will always answer to this common definition: they will always be a sort of framework into which actions are fitted, natural actions naturally, human actions freely. This is the meaning of the Thomistic definition, and is quite distinct from the modern idea of law, as a mere systematic expression of facts, a scheme established *post factum*, with no objective norm.

The world is governed by an intelligent finality:

[6] Ia, IIae, q. 90, art. 1.

even what is inanimate is ideal, in the sense that it has a form, which is a sort of soul. Therefore all action is directed by an intrinsic or immanent law.

The clearest example is that of the living being. No one will deny that there is there an organic plan. Now an organic plan has the character of a law, "of a preconceived and active idea," as Claude Bernard has said, a command of nature. It has the makings of a *right*, of which the right, properly so called, is only a new application, called for by new conditions.

Coming to man, we find that in certain respects he agrees with lower living beings, and indeed with all natural beings. The forms of his activity are the results of the ideality immanent in him. But he differs in an all-important respect. The form or immanent end which determines his activity is not entirely given. He himself is partially responsible for it: he can react on nature and form a practical judgment, i.e., a judgment which guides him by his own initiative, and which consists properly in *arbitrating* on his own particular case. Hence its name of *liberum arbitrium*, free will.

This is a passage from law in the physical or metaphysical sense to law in the moral sense, like the passage from ontological good to moral good. Ontological good is *that which everything desires*: it is the realization or means to realization of every being. Moral good is this same good freely embraced under the guidance of reason. In the same way, law, in the physical or metaphysical sense, is that which every being tends to do by reason of its nature and circumstances. Moral law is that which a rational being, as such, i.e., as freely acting,

tends to do by reason of its nature and circumstances. The difference is that a physical law belongs to irrational things, which are moved, and is imposed, whereas a moral law belongs to rational beings, which move themselves and is proposed. We enjoy something of God's liberty in creating and disposing of things: we form the ideas by which we act, and we move ourselves.

But this power obviously needs a law. There is a rule in every system governed by purpose. Just as God governs natural things through the laws of nature, so He governs rational beings through the moral law. Man is ruled by nature and by reason, but in different ways. I have the power to disobey the moral law, but not the laws of nature. This makes me responsible for my rational acts, and liable to reward or punishment, because I obey or disobey by my own free will, and not by some intransigent fatality. In that sense only am I obliged by the moral law.

This is the philosophical and scientific meaning of obligation. "Scientific" is not too strong a word, for our argument is based on the law of development, which is an object of science, and we have merely adapted it to the special needs of a self-moving subject.

Autonomy

As regards obligation, St. Thomas's morality is not a legalism like that of Kant, and of some Catholic philosophers. For Kant, the good is obligatory because we so conceive it, and impose it upon ourselves as obligatory, by an *autonomous*

will, i.e., a will which does not depend on anything above or below it, and which has no natural or supernatural justification. For certain teachers, including Duns Scotus, the good is obligatory because God has so willed. For St. Thomas the good is obligatory because reason judges it to be the means whereby man may be truly man, and may reach his end. Man's end, though freely sought after, is just as imperative to him as fatality is to other beings.

According to this teaching, God's will does not, as Scotus made out, turn what would be otherwise indifferent into something obligatory, but it makes things to be obligatory in themselves; by the very nature of things. God here acts more as creator than as legislator, or, if you prefer, He is Legislator, *because*, and *in so far as*, He is creator, since for God to impose a law is simply to impose the ideal or end, and to impose the end is simply to impose the nature, in other words, to create.

The autonomy of our reason is left intact, because, in creating, God entrusts each being to itself, and does not absorb it. Law and being both depend on Him, but law only as a consequence of being. What comes from God cannot run counter to Him or be independent of Him, and therefore moral law depends on the eternal law. But once we have acknowledged the true relations between divine and human reason, and the transcendence of the former, which rules out all real comparison in our sense of the word, for there is no common measure, it is correct to speak of the autonomy of reason with respect to the moral law. In this sense we may speak of a morality without obligation, i.e., without extrinsic and, as it were, dictatorial obligation. Morality is not an order coming from without, not even from heaven: it is the voice of reason, recognized as the voice of God. St. Thomas regards the *natural* law, which is the very foundation of the moral law, not as an extrinsic regulation, like the command of a superior, but as a participation in the eternal law, as an immanent law, and, in consequence, as capable of making the reason autonomous.[7]

This power is not embanked by having a source, especially as its source is divine. We may apply what we said of Providence and free will. Just as man is as free under the almighty action of God as if there were no God, so, in moral matter, he is as autonomous as if there were no eternal law. The eternal law is within him, in so far as he really participates in it, and he is thereby responsible for his actions. The presence of God is the hermit's justification.

Nature of Moral Sanction

The same applies to moral sanction. The moment you admit that the moral law is not an order coming from without, but an internal law of action imposed on man by his nature, then you make its sanction the result of autonomous actions. It will be a happy outcome if the rational actions have been good, and *vice versa*.

There is no adequate equivalent in St. Thomas to the word sanction. He usually speaks of recompense or punishment, but he explains that to be recompensed is simply to reach one's end, and to be punished is to miss it.

[7] Cf. Ia, IIae, q. 91, art. 2.

Disinterestedness

Once we grant that virtue is the rational means to happiness, and vice the irrational rejection of this means, we are bound to conclude that virtue produces happiness and vice unhappiness. Those who deny sanctions either have a different idea of morality, and then we must argue with them on more fundamental points, or else they imagine that the means and the end are not interdependent—that you can arrive in London when travelling towards Berlin, and that the right road leads nowhere. What people like to call disinterestedness is really only a refusal to attribute to virtue its justification, and to law its dependence on being.

Natural and Other Worldly Sanctions

There are people who declare that the earthly results, interior or exterior, of virtue and vice are sufficient to satisfy us. We reply that they are not sufficient, because they are precarious, and because moral laxity co-exists with moral effort, although we like their realist and objective point of view. Virtue is made to serve; it is a means, not an end. We respect life because of its value, we guard health because we value it, we study because we value knowledge, we are just because we value peace. Similarly we act virtuously because we value happiness.

The outcome of our actions in this world, the arrival of means at their end, is too limited and precarious to satisfy our moral conscience or our

idea of order. We have rejected Aristotle's optimism and substituted a Christian optimism that is thoroughly philosophical, since it is based on truths such as the existence of God, Providence and eternal life, which may be proved independently of Revelation. The fact that there is a providential God is a divine guarantee that virtue will be rewarded, while the existence of a future life makes possible that ultimate and perfect happiness which the world cannot give.

These are the principles of the Thomistic doctrine of sanctions, a doctrine too complicated to be treated here in full. Its fundamental notion rules out all recompense which is extrinsic to the effort, and it identifies it with the normal result, the natural outcome or end of our actions.

Just as in a true sense Thomistic morality is a morality without obligation, so, in the same sense, it is a morality without sanction. It repudiates the legalism of Kant or Scotus, and takes its stand on the philosophy of dependent beings. It makes sanction not an extrinsic recompense, but the effect of our normal intrinsic action, under the protecting guidance of God.

THE END