

The Metaphysics of Providence:
Aquinas's Natural Theology in
Summa contra gentiles III

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Editor's Introduction

This issue of *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* is atypical in that it contains a single work by a single philosopher and scholar. Norman Kretzmann, the author of the work here presented, was one of the founders of this journal and served as the chair of its editorial board from the journal's inception until his untimely death in 1998. His intimate association with *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* and his dedication to its mission makes the journal an entirely appropriate vehicle for the publication of the work that filled the last year of his life.

In 1991, at the time he was first diagnosed with an incurable cancer, Norman was preparing to embark on an ambitious research project. He planned to explicate and to critically assess and develop what he saw as the rich and promising systematic metaphysical foundation for theism presented by Thomas Aquinas in *Summa contra gentiles*. As the project took shape, Norman envisioned writing three books, a trilogy whose volumes would be devoted, respectively, to Books I–III of SCG. Undaunted by a forbidding prognosis from his doctors and the sometimes debilitating effects of his cancer and the treatment of it, Norman worked with enormous passion, energy, and focus. He delivered the core of the material of the first book as the Wilde Lectures in Comparative and Natural Religion at Oxford in 1994. The first book itself, *The Metaphysics of Theism: Aquinas's Natural Theology in Summa contra gentiles I*, was published in 1997 by Oxford's Clarendon Press. Norman finished the trilogy's second volume, *The Metaphysics of Creation: Aquinas's Natural Theology in Summa contra gentiles II*, shortly after the appearance of the first. Page proofs for the second volume arrived during the summer of 1998, but Norman was at that time unable to take up the task of proofreading. He never saw the book itself, which appeared with the Clarendon Press in 1999.

Norman had finished drafts of four chapters of the third volume and had begun work on the fifth chapter when, in June 1998, his illness finally brought an end to his writing. The third book was to have been titled *The Metaphysics of Providence: Aquinas's Natural Theology in Summa contra gentiles III*. The material published here under that title comprises the finished part of that unfinished book.

It is impossible to say what the remainder of *The Metaphysics of Providence* would have looked like had Norman been able to complete it. He was not working with any sort of outline in mind other than the general outline provided by the structure of SCG III itself. His procedure was to work at each chapter of Aquinas's text in order, developing extraordinarily detailed

paragraph-by-paragraph, sometimes line-by-line, commentary and analysis. Only after that kind of painstaking preliminary work would he select the particular themes and arguments he wanted to give narrative, chapter-length treatment to. The four chapters presented here demonstrate the results of that procedure as applied to the first 24 of the 163 chapters of SCG III. Not even Norman himself could have said in any detail what the focus or content of the unwritten chapters would be. Those things would have emerged for him as he crawled through the remainder of SCG III in his characteristically thorough fashion.

This way of constructing a book manuscript had the consequence that Norman's early "finished" chapters in fact remained works in progress, subject to ongoing revision in light of the results of later chapters. Readers of these four chapters therefore should bear in mind that they reflect Norman's thought at a point considerably short of that at which he himself would have considered it settled. Had he lived to finish the project, readers of the book would have had before them recognizable but perhaps somewhat distant descendants of these chapters.

Norman would surely have considered these chapters still unfinished for another reason. He habitually shared his ideas and work in progress with a large group of friends and colleagues, valued their comments and suggestions, and meticulously revised his manuscripts, typically several times, to take account of what he learned from them. None of these chapters was shared as widely as Norman would have done had the project progressed further. Hence, none has profited fully from the sort of criticism Norman routinely solicited and relied extensively on. He had revised chapters 1 through 3 once, in light of comments from a few of his closest colleagues. The manuscripts show that the last revisions were completed in late May and early June of 1998. Chapter 4 is essentially a first draft; he had received comments on it from a few colleagues but never managed to incorporate into his text any of the changes they might have prompted. In normal circumstances Norman would not have dreamt of allowing these manuscripts to be published in their present form. As things are, we are grateful to have them and to be able to publish this record of his developing reflections on Aquinas's project in SCG III.

Finally, Norman would have regretted the publication of any work of his that did not acknowledge in detail his reliance on and devotion to his friends and colleagues. Unfortunately, it is impossible for me to do here anything like what he himself would have done in that regard. Norman discussed his work regularly with me and showed me all these chapters. He sought and trusted the advice and philosophical judgment of Eleonore Stump more than that of any other philosophical colleague. She provided him detailed comments on all this material. Beyond that I do not know who contributed directly to Norman's thinking about these chapters or in what ways. He would be grieved that those contributions have gone out into the world unidentified and unacknowledged. I trust that his generosity toward

and affection for his friends in life and his own private expressions of gratitude to them can, for each of the unknown contributors to this part of Norman's work, stand in place of the public acknowledgements he was unable to make.

None of us who understood the nature of the diagnosis Norman received in 1991 thought it at all likely that he would have enough time to advance as far as the third volume of the plan he was then only beginning to pursue. Those of us who knew him well consider it a great gift that he was with us for as many as seven more years. That he was able in those years nearly to complete his work on Aquinas's natural theology in *Summa contra gentiles* is a gift to all who care about the advancement of our understanding and appreciation of medieval philosophy and theology.

—Scott MacDonald

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Abbreviations

| | |
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| CT | <i>Compendium theologiae</i> |
| DAM | <i>De aeternitate mundi, contra murmurantes</i> |
| DSS | <i>De substantiis separatis</i> |
| DUI | <i>De unitate intellectus, contra Averroistas</i> |
| In BDH | <i>Expositio super librum Boethii De hebdomadibus</i> |
| In BDT | <i>Expositio super librum Boethii De trinitate</i> |
| In DA | <i>Sententia super De anima</i> |
| In DDN | <i>Expositio super librum Dionysii De divinis nominibus</i> |
| In EN | <i>Sententia libri Ethicorum</i> |
| In Met. | <i>Sententia super Metaphysicam</i> |
| In PA | <i>Sententia super Posteriora analytica</i> |
| In PH | <i>Sententia super Peri hermenias</i> |
| In Phys. | <i>Sententia super Physicam</i> |
| In Sent. | <i>Scriptum super libros Sententiarum</i> |
| QDA | <i>Quaestio disputata de anima</i> |
| QDC | <i>Quaestio disputata de caritate</i> |
| QDM | <i>Quaestiones disputatae de malo</i> |
| QDP | <i>Quaestiones disputatae de potentia</i> |
| QDSC | <i>Quaestio disputata de spiritualibus creaturis</i> |
| QDV | <i>Quaestiones disputatae de veritate</i> |
| SCG | <i>Summa contra gentiles</i> |
| ST | <i>Summa theologiae</i> |

I. FROM CREATION TO PROVIDENCE

1. The Aims of the Book

This book is the third in a series of three volumes. In 1997 and 1999, Oxford's Clarendon Press published my books *The Metaphysics of Theism* and *The Metaphysics of Creation*, which are related, respectively, to Books I and II of Thomas Aquinas's *Summa contra gentiles* (SCG) as this book is to Book III.¹

"Aquinas's Natural Theology"—a subtitle these three volumes share—identifies what I take to have been developed and presented in SCG I–III.² The subtitle may also suggest that this series of volumes is intended primarily as a project in philosophical scholarship, presenting a historical account and critical exposition of Aquinas's thirteenth-century achievement.³ It's certainly true that one reason I've had for undertaking this study is my conviction that Aquinas's systematic natural theology is a philosophically interesting historical subject that has been generally neglected, misunderstood, or simply unrecognized for what it is. And so my plan for these three volumes does include trying to present, explain, and evaluate the treatments of several essential topics in each of the three parts of his natural theology. I hope these books will, in that way, make a contribution to medieval philosophical scholarship.⁴

But other considerations have also motivated me, considerations that make Aquinas's natural theology philosophically important, I think, as well as interesting. They have led me to approach it not merely as the monumental achievement it already was when Aquinas completed it in 1265, but also as the classic version of an ambitious theory that invites extrapolation and sometimes needs correcting in its details.⁵ Viewed in that way, this natural theology is a continuing enterprise for which Aquinas's work has provided rich material developed in promising patterns. So in this book, as in *The Metaphysics of Theism* (TMOT) and *The Metaphysics of Creation* (TMOC), I mean also to engage in that enterprise in ways that will, I hope, encourage the critical cooperation of others in pursuing the development of a wide-ranging natural theology along the lines Aquinas drew.

2. Aquinas's Natural Theology

In my view a great deal—not all—of theology's traditional subject matter is really continuous with philosophy's subject matter and ought to be integrated with it in practice. Most philosophers who lived before the twentieth century would share that view, and no substantive developments in the last hundred years should have obscured it. In the first three quarters of the twentieth century it surely was obscured, but we have recently been witnessing a development in which that view is no longer so hard to find among philosophers. As late-twentieth-century theologians have been moving away from their traditional, doctrinal subject matter, philosophers have been moving in.⁶ And natural theology, a branch of philosophy, interests me especially because it provides the traditional and still central means of integrating (some of) theology with philosophy.

I presented my conception of natural theology in detail in TMOT's introduction and first chapter; I don't think that the details need rehearsing here. But for a concise, general account of natural theology's nature and status, independent of any particular concern with Aquinas's work, I couldn't do better than to offer William Alston's view of the discipline in this passage from his *Perceiving God: The Epistemology of Religious Experience*.

Natural theology is the enterprise of providing support for religious beliefs by starting from premises that neither are nor presuppose any religious beliefs. We begin from the mere existence of the world, or the teleological order of the world, or the concept of God, and we try to show that when we think through the implications of our starting point we are led to recognize the existence of a being that possesses attributes sufficient to identify Him as God. Once we get that foothold we may seek to show that a being could not have the initial attributes without also possessing certain others; in this manner we try to go as far as we can in building up a picture of God without relying on any supposed experience of God or communication from God, or on any religious authority. (p. 289)

The view Alston takes in this passage is broad by comparison with the more familiar notion of natural theology, which limits it to attempts to argue for (or against) the existence of God.⁷ His view could serve well as a sketch of Aquinas's undertaking in SCG I, which Aquinas describes as covering "matters associated with God considered in himself" (I.9.57)⁸—that is, the subject matter of what might fairly be called classical natural theology: the existence of something whose inferred nature constitutes a *prima facie* basis for identifying it as God, and the further aspects of God's nature that can be inferred in working out the implications of that starting point.

But an even broader view of natural theology is called for if it is to include the topics Aquinas goes on to develop in SCG II and III—a view

almost as broad as the one Alston takes up soon after presenting the one we've been considering:

This characterization of natural theology [—the one quoted above—] sticks closely to the classically recognized “arguments for the existence of God,” but it need not be construed that narrowly. It also includes attempts to show that we can attain the best understanding of this or that area of our experience or sphere of concern—morality, human life, society, human wickedness, science, art, mathematics, or whatever—if we look at it from the standpoint of a theistic . . . metaphysics. (p. 289)

The idea of a natural theology that goes far beyond arguments for God's existence is one Alston shares with Aquinas, as can be seen in detail in SCG II and III. I think it's quite likely that Aquinas believes, too, that the explanatory capacity of natural theology is in theory universal—as Alston suggests with his “or whatever.” But the idea Aquinas puts into practice in SCG is less broad than the one Alston outlines here. Aquinas does take up some of the broad topics Alston lists, and a few more besides. But he expressly excludes the concerns of natural science from the scope of the project he's engaging in, and he shows no unmistakable signs of having thought about including art or mathematics.⁹ Still, Alston's implied characterization of natural theology as theistic metaphysics is very like what Aquinas seems to have had in mind generally—as the titles of my books are meant to suggest, and as I think their contents show.

In TMOT, I dealt only with the topics of SCG's Book I, “matters associated with God considered in himself.” In TMOC, I dealt with the topics of Book II, which Aquinas describes as “the emergence of created things from him.” In this third and last volume, I deal with the topics of Book III, “the ordering and directing of created things toward him as their goal” (I.9.57). As even Aquinas's short descriptions of the three parts of his natural theology may suggest, it's intended to integrate a great many topics that would ordinarily be treated separately, and differently, in other branches of philosophy—branches recognizable not only in the Aristotelian philosophy he knew best, but also in the philosophy of the late twentieth century—including, for example, metaphysics, philosophy of mind, epistemology, and ethics.¹⁰ Integrating all those topics by means of natural theology involves developing within this particular branch of philosophy some of the subject matter specifically associated with theology as it developed outside philosophy in the three great monotheisms, in the form of “revealed” or “dogmatic” theology, based on scriptural exegesis. That, of course, is what makes this branch of philosophy natural *theology*: investigating, by means of analysis and argument, at least the existence and nature of God and, in the fuller development characteristic of Aquinas's project, the

relation of everything else—but especially of human nature and behavior—to God considered as reality's primary source and ultimate goal.

But developing parts of that subject matter within philosophy of course requires forgoing appeals to any putative revelation or religious experience as evidence for the truth of propositions, and taking for granted only those few naturally evident considerations that traditionally constitute data acceptable for philosophy generally.¹¹ That's what makes it *natural* theology.

Aquinas's natural theology does, however, make a restricted, philosophically tolerable use of propositions he considers to have been divinely revealed. Often at the end of a chapter in Book I, II, or III, after having argued for some proposition in several different ways, each of which scrupulously omits any reference to revelation, he will cite Scripture by way of showing that what has just been established by unaided reason agrees with what he takes to be revealed truth.¹² (For example, in I.20, after having presented ten arguments to show that God is not in any way corporeal, he observes that "divine authority concurs with this demonstrated truth," citing three biblical passages, including John 4:24: "God is a spirit . . ." [I.20.188].) On those occasions he certainly does not take himself to be introducing a revealed text in order to remove doubts about natural theology's results; they are, after all, the results of "natural reason, to which *everybody* is *compelled* to assent" (I.2.11). "Divine authority" is not invoked as *support* for propositions occurring as premises or conclusions in the logical structure of SCG I–III.¹³

Scripture's systematic contribution to Aquinas's natural theology should be thought of as primarily an aid to navigation, showing him his destinations and practicable routes to them in a rational progression. From any one of the propositions previously argued for in the systematic development of his natural theology, unaided reason could, in theory, validly derive infinitely many further propositions. But Aquinas's systematic natural theology, like the presentation of any well-defined subject matter in a series of connected arguments, is more expository than exploratory.¹⁴ It is designed to show, primarily, that reason *unsupported* by revelation could have come up with many—not all—of just those propositions that constitute the established subject matter of what he takes to be revealed theology. But that design requires that reason be *guided* by what he takes to be revelation. Whatever may be said of natural theology generally, Aquinas's version of it certainly is, as Alston puts it, "the enterprise of providing support *for religious beliefs* by starting from premises that neither are nor presuppose any religious beliefs."¹⁵ So Aquinas needs Scripture in these circumstances as providing the chart that guides his choice of propositions to argue for as well as a list of specifications that can be consulted to see, first, that it is indeed one and the same "truth that faith professes and reason investigates" (I.9.55) and, second, "*how* the demonstrative truth is in harmony with the faith of the Christian religion" (I.2.12). But his distinctive, primary aim in the first three books of SCG is the systematic development of that demonstrative

truth, *up to* the point at which the theism being argued for begins relying on propositions that are initially accessible to reason only via revelation and becomes *distinctively* Christian.

As I see it, then, SCG I–III is Aquinas’s most unified, systematic contribution to the project of arriving at a thoroughly rational confirmation of perfect-being theism generally, of showing the extent to which what had been revealed might have been discovered, the extent to which “the invisible things of God from the creation of the world” might be “clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made” (Rom. 1:20). As such it is addressed to every open-minded, reasoning person.¹⁶

3. Book III in Relation to Books I and II

It is a natural consequence of the systematic continuity of Books I–III that Aquinas’s introductions to the books get shorter as he goes along. At the very beginning of SCG, he uses nine chapters to provide an introduction to the project generally as well as to the specific topics of Book I: matters associated directly with God considered in himself. When, in Book II, he moves beyond those topics to a consideration of God’s externally manifested (or *transeunt*) activity, his introduction to the new material occupies the book’s first five chapters. Partly as a consequence of the fact that those two earlier introductions both help to prepare the ground for Book III’s elaborate investigation of God as the primary governor of creation and its ultimate goal, he needs only Chapter 1 for his specific introduction to Book III.

In introducing Book II, Aquinas makes a point of emphasizing the continuity between it and Book I. Of course, even a casual reader could readily appreciate the general relevance of Book II’s new study of God’s creation to Book I’s just-completed study of God; but Aquinas insists on the indispensability of Book II’s contribution to the *continuing* study of *God*. In Aquinas’s view of the first two books of SCG, it’s not as if in Book I he had developed a rational investigation of God, and then in Book II he shifted his focus in order to investigate creation in that same way. Instead, Book II’s natural-theological study of God’s creation, as Aquinas conceives of it, is a further study of God considered *in his products*, intended to enhance and extend the results of the initial study of God considered *in himself*. That strong continuity is just what should have been expected from Aquinas’s initial statement of his plan for SCG I–III:

So, for us, intending to pursue by way of reason those things *about God* that human reason can investigate, the first consideration is of matters associated with *God considered in himself*; second, of the emergence of created things *from him*; third, of the ordering and directing of created things *toward him* as their goal. (I.9.57)

And so creation and providence, the specific topics of Books II and III respectively, are included among the things *about God* that unaided human reason can investigate.

That single, fixed, primary focus of all three parts of this investigation is what Aquinas's general conception of theology, whether natural or revealed, would also lead us to expect: "the discussion carried on in this science is *about God*, for it is called '*theo-logia*', which means the same as 'discourse about God.' Therefore, *God* is the subject of this science" (*Summa theologiae* [ST] Ia.1.7, sc).¹⁷ And in the first chapter of Book II, Aquinas describes the task for Books II and III combined, founded on Book I's accomplishments, as "the filled-out (*completam*) consideration of divine truth"—that is, the truth *about God* (II.1.856).¹⁸

Exclusive concern with God or the truth about God might seem too narrow for the broad conception of natural theology I've attributed to Aquinas and adopted myself, a conception I've described as a sort of Grandest Unified Theory, with the capacity of being ultimately explanatory of absolutely everything.¹⁹ But that misgiving should be dispelled when we find out what Aquinas thinks is included in the truth about God. Theology, he says, has as its "main aim . . . to transmit a cognition of God, and not only as he is in himself, but also as he is the source of [all] things, and their goal—especially of the rational creature" (ST Ia.2, intro.). And so the subject matter of theology is the truth about *everything*, with two provisos. First, it is about God *and* about everything other than God, but *only* as everything other than God relates to God as its source and its goal. Second, it is about everything other than God as related to God in those ways, but *especially* about human beings, for reasons that aren't hard to supply in general.²⁰ Theology is about God considered in himself and considered in the fundamentally explanatory source-and-goal relationships—primarily the relationships of efficient and final causation—to everything else, especially to the rational creature. It is in this way that the business of theology is the single ultimate explanation of everything, the Grandest Unified Theory, and it is for this reason that Aquinas describes its practitioner as one "whom all the other arts diligently serve" (IaIIae.7.2, ad 3).²¹ And, he insists, universal scope is just what one should expect in a rational investigation of the truth about God:

All things are considered in theology (*sacra doctrina*²²) under the concept of God, either because they *are* God, or because they have an ordered relationship *to* God as to their source and goal. It follows from this that the subject of this science is really God. (Ia.1.7c)

This is the case even though the intended explanatory scope of the fully developed science is universal, as it can be only because its primary subject is God, the absolutely perfect being, the absolutely first principle, the universal primary governor, and the universal ultimate goal.

I hope that my already published studies of Aquinas's Books I and II have helped to clarify what's meant by his characterizations of God as absolutely perfect and as the necessarily existent ultimate source of all other being. My aim in this book is to acquire a critical understanding of his argued claims that God governs all of creation and (less perspicuously) that God himself is (somehow) what all of creation is divinely directed toward.

4. Aquinas's Derivation of Book III's Subject Matter

Aquinas prefaces all three books of his natural theology in SCG with passages from Scripture that serve as mottoes for the three parts of his continuous project. He must have selected them with great care. Coupled with his analyses of them, those biblical passages really do illuminate his planned philosophical investigations. He prefaces Book III with an intricate combination of three passages from two of the Psalms: "The Lord is a great God and a great King above all gods" [Ps. 94/95:3]. "For the Lord will not cast off his people" [Ps. 93/94:14]. "For in his hand are all the ends of the earth, and the heights of the mountains are his. For the sea is his and he made it, and his hands formed the dry land" [Ps. 94/95:4–5] (III.1.1891). The use of the traditional divine titles 'Lord' and 'King' in the first of these passages clearly introduces sovereignty or governance, one of the two divine roles included in the specific subject matter of Book III. And the immediate continuation of Psalm 94/95 in the third passage suggests that being the universal sovereign is a *consequence* of being the universal creator.²³ But neither of those selections from Psalm 94/95 provides any hint of God's role as the ultimate goal of the existence of every created thing, the other principal topic of Book III. Aquinas clearly intends to supply such a hint with his interpolation of the first half of Psalm 93/94:14 as the second of these passages.²⁴ But, even generously interpreted, the passage is applicable to God only as the ultimate goal (somehow), of *human* existence. And while it's fair to grant that this may count as the most important aspect of God's role as the universal ultimate goal, it is also likely to seem a good deal less in need of explanation than the notion of a divine goal for non-human, non-cognitive, non-living nature as well. As we shall see, Aquinas does begin to clarify even that broader, more difficult notion in the body of this introductory chapter, but not until he has sketched a derivation of the subject matter of Book III from the topics of the two preceding books.

He starts the sketch with simple summaries of the accomplishments of Books I and II:

That there is one that is first among beings, possessing the full perfection of all being, which we call God, has been shown in earlier parts [of this work, particularly in Book I]. Out of the abundance of his perfection God imparts being to all existing things, so that he is fully proven

[in Book II] to be not only the first among beings, but also the source of all of them. (1.1862)

What is said about creation in this second sentence is, on the face of it, compatible with either a necessitarian or a non-necessitarian account of God's creating some world or other.²⁵ However, it's immediately apparent that in Aquinas's view the logical transition from creation to providence depends not just on God's being the source of all beings but, more precisely, on Aquinas's own non-necessitarian account of *the way* in which God is so:

Now he bestows being on other things *not by the necessity of [his] nature but rather in accordance with the decision of his will* (as is clear from things said earlier [in II.23]).²⁶ And so it follows that he is Lord (*Dominus*) of the things he has made, since we are in control (*dominamur*) of the things that are subject to our will. (1.1862)

The inference Aquinas carries out in these two sentences is intended to show that the mode of God's creating entails his Lordship, his governance of creation. One of his two premises is unimpeachable: we are in control of the things that are subject to our will. As for the other premise, I've registered my misgivings about the non-necessitarianism he expresses in it, but I'll grant it here for the sake of questioning this argument's validity.²⁷ Since Aquinas makes our sort of control of or dominion over things a part of his argument, it's relevant to point out that we, too, sometimes make things, bring things into being, not by the necessity of our nature but in accordance with the free decision of our will. But while the making of those things is within our control, the things once made are very often not entirely, or even at all, subject to our will or within our control. The building of a house is very largely subject to the builder's will; the house once built is seldom if ever within the builder's control to anything like that same extent. The sentences we write are subject to our will while we're composing them; but they begin to slip out of our control as soon as they're written down where they can be read and interpreted by others. And so it really *does not* follow from the premises Aquinas supplies here that God is Lord of the things he has made. Nothing in these premises taken together guarantees that created things remain within the creator's control once they are in being.

However, Aquinas goes on at once to strengthen his case in a further argument:

But God has *perfect* control over things produced by him, because he needs the help of no external agent or of any foundation of matter in order to produce them; for he is the universal producer of the totality of being. (1862)

Aquinas's explanation of perfect control here alludes to his earlier account of creation as *doubly* universal production: God as the primary producer of *every* other being, producing each of them in complete independence of *any* sort of pre-existent stuff—God as the creator of absolutely everything out of absolutely nothing.²⁸ And, of course, none of our producing is like that. We always do need the help of external agents and the foundation of matter in order to produce anything. Still, it's not clear that even doubly universal production confers on the producer *perfect* control over all the producer's products.

The issue here isn't merely logical. Aquinas, after all, has already argued for the freedom of created wills, a doctrine that will be even more obviously essential to his work throughout Book III.²⁹ And if his observation that "*we* are in control of the things that are subject to our will" means what it needs to mean in order to serve as one of his premises, then nothing outside us, no external agent, should be in control of our wills. How could Aquinas assimilate God's Lordship to our dominion over the things that are subject to our wills if he thought that our wills themselves were externally controlled, even by God himself?³⁰

The impression of theological causal determinism in this passage is strengthened in the remainder of Aquinas's introduction to Book III, as we'll see; but it's a misleading impression. It will obviously be crucial for Aquinas to establish a place for genuine human freedom within divinely governed creation, and it will turn out that he also needs the concept of chance in his account of the divinely governed activities of creatures.³¹ But, in this opening stage of his introduction to providence, Aquinas, intent on establishing a logical connection between creation and providence, isn't yet addressing those issues.

5. The Directedness of Things

In his introductory chapter, Aquinas offers one more argument in support of God's universal, perfect control of creation; but in the course of this last argument to that effect we can begin to see an opening for a measure of divinely ordered independence on the part of creatures.

Now of things that are produced by means of an agent's will, each is directed toward a certain end by the agent, since the proper object of a will is something that is good, and an end.³² It's for that reason that things that proceed from a will are necessarily directed toward some end.³³ (1.1863)

While these observations about agency and will are general, God is the only agent at issue here; thus, this argument, too, is apparently headed in the direction of theological determinism. But the very next sentence contains

the first faint sign of creaturely autonomy in the ordering of nature: “However, each thing achieves [its] ultimate end through its own action, which must be directed toward the end by the one who gave things the principles through which they act” (1.1863). Even creatures that have free wills of their own must get their active principles—their natural faculties for action—and their ultimate ends from their creator; that’s part of what it is to be a creature. Nonetheless, “each thing *achieves* [its] ultimate end through *its own* action,” through its own use of its natural faculties for action, even though that use “must be *directed toward* the end” by God.

The degree of autonomy that is being ascribed to creatures in that sentence depends on the way in which and the degree to which their own action is thought to be necessarily directed by their creator-governor. Aquinas turns his attention to those issues after drawing this conclusion to his argument:

Therefore, it is necessary that God, who is universally perfect in himself, and who by his power imparts being to all beings, be the governor of all beings—himself directed by none [of them], of course. Nor is there anything that is exempt from his governance (*regimine*), just as there is nothing that does not acquire [its] being from him. Therefore, as he is perfect in being and in causing, so is he also perfect in governing. (1.1864)

Although this conclusion tends to reinforce the impression of theological determinism, the glimmer of creaturely autonomy in the argument just before it reaches its conclusion suggests that we might bear in mind the possibility of distinguishing between the (absolutely universal) extent of God’s power over creatures and the (perhaps restricted) degree to which he exercises it. More promisingly, we can suppose what will turn out to be very nearly what Aquinas is going to maintain: that the God-given natures of some creatures entail an irreducible degree of autonomy in their activities.

But even at this stage of Aquinas’s introduction to providence we can gather from the argument we’ve been examining that God’s governance consists in providing for each created thing at least (a) its ultimate end—that is, whatever is best for its nature; (b) the principles or faculties that equip it to act in ways that tend toward that end; and (c) some direction on its way toward its ultimate end. God’s providing (a) and (b) is naturally associated with his creating; only (c) is specifically associated with God’s governing of creation, one of the two principal topics of Book III. But since (a) and (b) are presented here as also concerned with the ultimate end or goal of created existence—the other principal topic of Book III—they, too, are now tied into the new subject matter.

The fact that creating a thing involves (a) building into it a natural tendency toward its ultimate end means that created existence itself entails

a specifying limitation on possibilities. To be a created thing is to be some kind of thing; and to be one kind of thing rather than another is to have one set of specifying potentialities rather than another; and for a thing to achieve its foreordained specific perfection, its ultimate end, is for it to actualize fully its specifying potentialities. But those nested limitations on possibilities are simply a consequence of the distinguishing of created things into species and are not to be confused with theological determinism of a sort that would exclude creaturely autonomy.³⁴ Moreover, (b) God's providing of appropriate principles of action along with other specifying potentialities of created things is all that enables any of them to achieve anything "through its own action." This prerequisite of autonomy certainly can't in itself be considered a curtailment of autonomy. It is, as we've expected, only (c) God's directing of created things on their way to their specifically ultimate goals that could bring with it the kind of theological determinism that would be incompatible with human freedom.

In the remainder of his introductory chapter Aquinas takes a first step toward dispelling the impression of theological determinism by explaining that the universal divine governance has to be manifested differently in its application to different natures. He develops an analysis of the different manifestations of divine governance based on an exhaustive classification of just three very broadly distinguished kinds of created things:

The effect of this governance, of course appears in various ways in connection with various things, in accordance with the difference of their natures. Some things are produced by God in such a way that, having intellect, they bear his likeness and represent his image. For that reason they are not only directed; instead, they also direct themselves toward their requisite (*debitum*) end in accordance with their own actions. (1.1865)

Along with all other created things, intellectual creatures such as human beings are subject to, dependent on, divine direction.³⁵ But simply in virtue of their intellectivity, the respect in which they most resemble God, "they also direct themselves . . . in accordance with their own actions." This autonomy of human beings, entailed by their intellectivity, isn't absolute, of course. The one requisite end toward which we all naturally direct ourselves, however it is to be identified, is an essential aspect of our nature. But our intellects' conceptions of that end are largely up to us, and they can and do vary widely. And there is further room for autonomy in the fact that even those of us who share a conception of the ultimate goal of human existence can and do choose very different means of achieving it.³⁶

Among alternative conceptions of the goal and alternative routes toward it, some are likely to be mistaken; and autonomy of course involves responsibility for mistakes. And so, even in this preliminary survey, Aquinas points ahead to the critical importance of rationality (or its manifestation

in morality) for human beings' self-directed progress toward the goal divinely predetermined for them:

If they submit (*subdantur*) to divine governance in their own directing [of themselves], they are enabled to achieve the ultimate end on the basis of divine governance. But if they proceed otherwise (*secus*) in their own directing [of themselves], they are held back. (1.1865a)

Since Aquinas has just picked out intellectual creatures as distinguished by their degree of autonomy, their submission to divine governance couldn't possibly amount to an abdication of their essential freedom and responsibility in any degree but must, instead, be their freely chosen actualizing of the specifying potentiality that is intellectivity, their approximating more nearly the divine likeness they bear. He is, as I say, pointing ahead and not yet arguing for these claims; but even this preliminary announcement is enough to show us why morality will have to be among the subjects investigated in Book III.

Having provided a sketch of the complicated way divine governance is manifested in connection with intellectual creatures, Aquinas turns to what should be a much simpler introductory account of the directedness of nonintellectual things. "However, other things, lacking intellect, do not direct themselves toward their end, but are directed by another" (1865*b*). The other-directedness of such things is typically not ad hoc (like the archer's directing of the arrow) but is manifested rather in biological, chemical, and physical tendencies built into them by their creator. That much is true of all of them. But Aquinas's account of them is especially simple as regards the heavenly bodies, those nonintellectual things that he, following Aristotle, mistakenly believed to be incorruptible:

Some of those [nonintellectual] things, being incorruptible, cannot undergo any defect in natural being; and so neither can they in any way deviate from the directedness toward the end that has been preestablished for them. Instead, they are unfailingly subject to the governance of the primary governor. Of this sort are the heavenly bodies, the movements of which always go on uniformly.³⁷ (1865*b*)

The outmoded astrophysics that characterizes this passage leaves it almost valueless as a contribution to this preview. But it does contain one incidental hint of important developments to come when it suggests that not only any defect in a thing's natural being but also any deviation in its movement or activity from the directedness that has been preestablished for it would count as a sort of corruption of it.

That broader sense of corruption underlies Aquinas's elaborate analysis of various kinds of badness in III.4–15, and it makes one more appearance here in his introductory chapter in a slightly more developed form, in

his preliminary account of the manifestation of divine governance over nonintellective things that are also corruptible.³⁸ “However, other things, [lacking intellect and] being corruptible, *can* undergo a defect of natural being. It is, nonetheless, made up for by the advance of something else. For when one of them is corrupted, another is generated” (1.1865*c*). Although Aquinas’s concern so far is with corruption only in the sense of a defect of natural being, his account of it is immediately complicated by his introducing a theory of universal compensation for corruption in that sense—as if he’s anticipating a need to defend God’s governance of nature against an accusation of wholesale failure, a very broad version of the problem of evil, one that would arise even if the world contained no instances of suffering, human or otherwise, but was simply characterized by familiar sorts of natural change and decay. In any case, the corruption/generation theory of “natural being” adumbrated here and developed in the early chapters of Book III (as we shall see) is, I think, defensible and will play an essential role in Aquinas’s analysis of the varieties of badness.

But he couples this theory at once with a corruption/generation theory of “proper actions” that will prove to be more problematic. He begins with a claim that needs no special evidence, observing as regards all nonintellective and corruptible things that “in their proper actions they do [sometimes] fall away from the natural order” (1.1865*c*). But, without offering any supporting argument here, he immediately adds the claim that

that defect [also] is compensated for through some good arising from it. From this it is apparent that not even those things that *seem* to deviate from the ordering of the primary governance evade the primary governor’s power. For as these corruptible bodies were established by God himself, so are they perfectly subject to God’s power.³⁹ (1865*c*)

What Aquinas means by this part of his corruption/generation theory and how he means to support it remain to be seen. But at this preliminary stage of our investigation, a wait-and-see attitude seems appropriate, if perhaps a little generous.

6. Aquinas’s Plan for Book III

The single chapter in which Aquinas introduces Book III concludes, as might be expected, with his outline of the book’s 162 remaining chapters. But he sets the stage for the outline by reminding us, again, that he conceives of all three parts of his natural theology as contributions to perfect-being theology, to the study of God.

Therefore, since in the first Book we dealt with the perfection of the divine nature, while in the second Book we dealt with the perfection of

his power in so far as he is the producer and Lord of all things, in this third Book we have still to deal with his perfect authority or majesty (*dignitate*) in so far as he is the end and governor of all things.⁴⁰ (1.1867a)

The chapters of Book III, then, must cover both those aspects of divine providence: God as the ultimate goal of all created existence, and God's variously directing all things toward the goal that is (somehow) himself.

Therefore, we will have to proceed in the following order, so as to deal, first, with God himself in so far as he is the *end* of all things [chaps. 2–63]; second, with his *universal* governance, in so far as he governs *every* created thing [chaps. 64–110]; and, third, with his *special* governance, in so far as he governs creatures that have *intellect* [chaps. 111–163]. (1.1867b)

We will, of course, find subdivisions within those three broad topics as we go along. For now, it will be enough to provide a preliminary sketch of the subdivisions in the first of them. In III.2–15, Aquinas begins the development by focusing on the concept of an end or goal, which he analyzes as necessarily involving goodness, a result that seems to lead him to examine the apparent prevalence of various sorts of badness in the goals and developments of created things. In III.16–24 he undertakes to explain just how God himself is to be considered the ultimate goal of things in general. In III.25–37, he argues for the central importance of human beings' intellectual cognition of God in their achieving the ultimate goal of human existence, and in III.38–47, he explores various conditions that he argues must apply to human cognition in those special circumstances. Finally, in III.48–63, he concludes his development of the first of those three grand topics by trying to show just how an intellectual cognition of God is the principal ingredient in ultimate human happiness.

II. AGENTS, ACTIONS, AND ENDS

1. Thoroughgoing Teleology

Aquinas concludes his introductory chapter by announcing that his first task in Book III, a task to which he devotes sixty-two chapters, is to investigate "God himself in so far as he is the end of all things" (1.1867b). That compressed description of a very big topic is likely to arouse some misgivings. Why should we think that absolutely all things do have ends or goals? Even if we're given good reasons to think that they do, why should we think that all those ends or goals converge in a single end for all things? And even

if we should be convinced of *that*, why should we think that that single universal end must be identified (somehow) as God himself?

So it is encouraging to find Aquinas showing, in the opening sentence of his second chapter, the first substantive chapter of Book III, that he himself thinks that his compressed description requires him to begin by addressing the first of those misgivings: “*Therefore*, the first thing we have to show is that *every agent in acting does intend some end*” (2.1868). The foundational importance of this teleological thesis to all the rest of Book III calls for a close look at Aquinas’s development and defense of it.

The fact that he uses the words ‘agent’ (*agens*), ‘acting’ (*agendo*), and ‘intend’ (*intendit*) in expressing the thesis may suggest that he is construing it too narrowly for it to be considered a claim about *all* things. But it soon becomes clear that in this context, he is using those terms in technically broad senses, such that an agent will be absolutely anything considered as the active subject of any sort of movement or change, from a person’s making a choice to a fire’s hardening a clay pot, and such that ‘intend’ (and ‘intention’) will apply not only to a person’s plan for coping with certain circumstances but also to fire’s propensity for hardening clay in certain circumstances.⁴¹ Still, however he may go on to justify *extensions* of those notions, the *paradigms* of agency, acting, intending, and ends are of course to be found in the deliberate behavior of intellectual beings, “things that are *obviously* acting for an end” (2.1869). For that reason Aquinas borrows the language of his broader descriptions from the way we talk about the manifestly purposive activity of beings like us. His first examples are a doctor acting to restore a patient’s health, and a runner running toward a definite goal. In observing how we talk about such cases he presents his initial account of an end: “we say that the end is that toward which the agent’s impetus tends, since we say that an agent that attains *that* attains its end, while one that falls short of it we describe as falling short of its intended end” (2.1869).⁴²

As a consequence of that account of an end, presented in unexceptionable broad observations regarding the clearest cases, Aquinas considers himself entitled immediately to extend the use of ‘end’ into explanations of the activities of a bigger class of things. The plausibility of the extension is enhanced by the fact that the passage introduces the notion of an end in language that isn’t restricted to intellectual agents. And so, he says, “it makes no difference in this respect whether that which tends toward an end is cognizant [of it] or not; for just as the target is the archer’s end, so is it the end of the arrow’s motion” (2.1869)—that is, so is it that toward which the arrow’s impetus tends.⁴³ In Aquinas’s project of showing that *every* thing considered as an agent acts for an end, incognizant agents are obviously going to make up the biggest and most obviously problematic class. Consequently, it’s important to decide just how much bigger a class of things can legitimately be included already, as a result of this very simple move. The archer joins the doctor and the runner as a paradigmatic agent obviously acting for an end. And if we focus on the feature of this new example that

makes the extension plausible, it seems that the only extension warranted so far is limited to just such incognizant things as are obviously directed by cognizant agents. On that basis, the doctor's ointments and the runner's shoes could join the archer's arrows in the newly broadened class of things that may be said to act for ends. But admitting incognizant instruments deliberately employed by undoubtedly cognizant agents in order to achieve their conscious goals is of course still a long way from accepting, say, a forest fire started by lightning as the sort of thing that in its acting intends an end.

Aquinas's move to include incognizant instruments among agents that in acting do intend some end might suggest that the main purpose of this first argument is to provide support for the universality of the teleology thesis by expanding the class of things that can count as agents whose activities are reasonably explained in terms of ends. He does return to providing that sort of support later in the chapter, but it turns out that this initial expansion—from intellective agents alone to intellective agents and their instruments—is all that he wants along that line for now. What concerns him more at this stage (2.1869–1872) is clarifying and expanding the notion of an end.⁴⁴ But, of course, the acceptability of the thesis depends as much on what's meant by 'end' in it as on expanding the class of things that can be recognized as acting for ends. Since the ends of agents' instruments in their acting are identical with the ends of the agents themselves in their acting,⁴⁵ Aquinas's first expansion of that class hasn't required recognizing as ends any things, events, or states of affairs beyond those we ordinarily recognize as ends. And, of course, his teleology thesis will be much stronger if he can develop and defend it without radically altering the sense or reference of any of the crucial terms that make it up.

Having provided several examples of both cognizant and incognizant agents whose actions are to be explained in terms of definite ends—healing the patient, crossing the finish line, hitting the bull's-eye—Aquinas turns his attention for a moment to the *definiteness* of those ends, and generalizes at once to the definiteness of *every* end of *every* sort of agent:

Now *every* agent's impetus tends toward something definite (*certum*), since not just any action proceeds from any given power, but heating from heat, of course, and cooling from cold. It's for that reason, too, that actions differ in their species on the basis of the variety of active [powers]. (2.1869)

'Every agent's impetus tends toward something definite' has the look of a strong claim, but I think that the perfunctory support Aquinas provides for it helps to show that what he actually intends to claim here is weak to the point of being truistic. Any agent engages in a certain sort of action only if and only to the extent to which it possesses an active power the exercise of which is a necessary condition for its engaging in an action of that sort. The fire on the hearth warms the room not because of its active powers of

lighting space or consuming fuel but just because of its active power of heating air, which is the only possible source of that sort of action on the part of that sort of agent.⁴⁶ The specification of any action on the part of any sort of agent entails that agent's possession of an active power of the appropriate sort. This truistic conclusion constitutes Aquinas's first clarification of the notion of an end.

And he goes on at once to clarify it further, ending this first argument by introducing a distinction between kinds of ends:

Now an action sometimes [A] terminates in something that is brought about (*factum*)—e.g., building terminates in a building, healing in health; but sometimes [B] it doesn't—e.g., intellectual and sensory activity. And if [A] an action does indeed terminate in something that is brought about, then the agent's impetus tends, through the action, toward the thing that is brought about; while if [B] an action doesn't terminate in anything that is brought about, then the agent's impetus tends toward the action itself. Therefore, every agent, in acting, must intend an end: sometimes, indeed, [B] the action itself, but sometimes [A] something that is brought about through the action. (2.1869)

Before evaluating this last part of the first argument, I want to say something about the unusual character of the whole argument. Although Aquinas presents it and the chapter's other arguments as if they were so many alternative sources of support for the chapter's thesis, and although their conclusions are or contain restatements of the chapter's thesis (as would be expected in arguments of that sort), and although each of them does in some way or other support some aspect of the thesis, several of them, including 2.1869, are more importantly presenting clarifications of the notion of an end and thus clarifications of the thesis. Each of these arguments makes its own contribution(s) to the clarification process or offers further support for a clarification made in a preceding argument, and so we can't simply focus on what we take to be the strongest one or two among them. Appreciating all that this first argument has to offer as support for the teleology thesis is easier if we give the argument a conclusion more complex than the one Aquinas provides for it (quoted above)—perhaps something like this: Therefore, *every agent*, not merely intellectual agents but their incognizant instruments as well, *in acting*, whether primarily or instrumentally, *intends*, or in its impetus tends toward, *some end*, which must be something definite, and which can be either something brought about by the agent's acting or the acting itself.

In order to achieve any end, an agent must engage in some action. And so an end of type A, the type in connection with which the notion of an end is probably most familiar, can be construed technically as an *ulterior* end, one to which the agent's impetus tends "*through* the action." Paradigms of type A will involve actions that are naturally necessitated or deliberately

designed to terminate in specifically definite results—for example, fire’s hardening clay, or your going to the store for groceries. On the other hand, intellectual or sensory activities, Aquinas’s paradigms of type B, are so flexible in nature and so nearly constantly engaged in, willy-nilly, that they can’t be considered to be naturally necessitated to terminate in any predetermined set of specifically definite results. But they can of course be deliberately designed to terminate in something that is brought about: you may look in order to find your keys, or think in order to choose among the vegetables in the store. Furthermore, thought and sensation are often, probably most often, engaged in for their own sakes, or at least not for the sake of any definite result. So, at least sometimes, such activities as looking and thinking are engaged in without any ulterior ends—that is, as immediate ends in their own right *and* as ends that are also ultimate, at least in the sense of serving no ulterior purpose.

2. Ultimate Ends

Aquinas’s Chapter 2 is the beginning of his detailed investigation of a large-scale topic: God considered as the universal end of created things. When the chapter’s teleology thesis is viewed in the light of that topic, we can see that every agent will have to turn out to intend not merely some end of its own but one and the same end, which will have to turn out (somehow) to be God himself. And if that extension of the thesis is to have any hope of being taken seriously, it will have to be interpreted as a claim about God not as the immediate but rather as the single ultimate end of all creaturely activities. It seems fair to say that we have no reliable evidence that God is in any way the *immediate* goal of *anything* that creatures do, aside from religious activity. Besides, we’ve already seen Aquinas expressly describing God as creatures’ *ultimate* goal.⁴⁷ For those reasons, it’s especially important for Aquinas’s development of his thesis, even before God has been explicitly reintroduced into it, that he examine the concept of an ultimate end and add it to the aspects of ends he will need as this investigation develops.

He starts that examination with a definition illustrated in terms of paradigmatic agents and ends:

as regards all things acting for an end, we say that the *ultimate* end is that beyond which the agent doesn’t seek (*quaerit*) anything else. For instance, the doctor’s action continues right up to [the patient’s] health; but when that has been achieved, he doesn’t try for (*conatur*) anything further. (2.1870)

This is clear and unobjectionable, as long as we understand that the ultimacy that’s being defined and illustrated here must be thought of as relative (1) to agents (since health as Aquinas introduces it here will not also be a

builder's ultimate end⁴⁸) and should probably be thought of as relative also (2) to agents' other ends—that is, as that beyond which the agent doesn't try for anything further *in one particular line of endeavor*, rather than *at all*.⁴⁹ A *doctor's* action, considered just as such, could have no goal beyond his patient's health, but the intellectual agent who happens to be the doctor will surely have personal goals that lie beyond the health of any and every patient of his (and will almost surely have goals beyond his own health). Health is the undoubted, *absolutely* ultimate end of a doctor's actions considered *only* as medical actions definitive of doctoring. But Aquinas, perhaps ignoring the fact that the ultimacy introduced here isn't absolute, argues for its universal application:

in connection with the action of any agent at all there must be found something beyond which the agent doesn't seek anything else, since otherwise actions would tend to infinity—which is of course impossible. For [if actions did tend to infinity] an agent would not begin to act, since it is impossible to get through infinitely many.⁵⁰ For nothing is moved toward that at which it is impossible to arrive. Therefore, every agent acts for an end. (2.1870)

Despite its conclusion's simplified restatement of the chapter's thesis, this argument seems designed to support the new claim that every agent acts for an *ultimate* end. But, in any case, the argument is flawed. It looks as if it's meant to be based on a Zenonian can't-get-started paradox, like the one in which the runner can't get to the goal without running half the distance and, moreover, can't get to the halfway point without running a quarter of the distance, and so on.⁵¹ What Aquinas actually presents here, however, seems to amount to no more than a case of won't-get-started-if-the-impossibility-of-arriving-is-acknowledged. After all, many people tried to square the circle or to build a perpetual-motion machine. It seems plainly false that “nothing is moved toward that at which it is impossible to arrive,” even if no rational person, considered just as such, is moved toward attaining what that person acknowledges to be unattainable.⁵² And as for “it is impossible to get through infinitely many,” its applicability here is at least dubious. Why shouldn't an agent discover unforeseen *successive* ultimate ends, especially if ultimacy is understood as Aquinas introduces it here? All S wants is one million dollars, and he doesn't try for anything further, and when he gets it he's satisfied—for a while, after which he decides that *now* all he really wants is *two* million dollars, and so on.⁵³ Obviously, such relatively ultimate ends could in theory go on ad infinitum successively, but that sort of progression of infinitely many goals needn't prevent or even deter any agent from getting started. All that would be definitely ruled out by infinity of this sort is the possibility of total, final success. And if this argument is supposed to apply to non-intellective agents, too, it shows signs of an analogous sort of failure. For although Aquinas thinks of getting to

the center of the earth as an ultimate end for every terrestrial body, and although every one of them is indeed moved toward the center of the earth, any body's actual arrival at the center of the earth is a real impossibility.⁵⁴

The concept of an ultimate end is important enough for Aquinas's purposes that he offers two more arguments in support of its universal applicability. The first makes use of the distinction between ends of type A—things, events, or states of affairs brought about by actions—and ends of type B—actions themselves.

If an agent's actions do go on ad infinitum, then it must be that either something that is brought about follows from those actions or not. If something that is brought about does follow, then of course its existence will follow after infinitely many actions. But it is impossible for anything to be if it presupposes infinitely many, since it is impossible to get through infinitely many. But what cannot be cannot be brought about, and nothing can bring about what cannot be brought about. Therefore, it is impossible that an agent begin to bring about something for which infinitely many actions are presupposed. (2.1871)

This part of the argument, dealing with ends of type A, could be adapted to provide solid support for the claim that no agent could *succeed* in bringing about something for which infinitely many actions are presupposed—if there were any purpose to be served by supporting such a claim. But, for reasons brought out in considering this argument's immediate predecessor, it can't support its conclusion about the impossibility of an agent's *beginning* such a process. And so this part of the argument doesn't show us that every agent, or *any* agent, must have an ultimate end of type A.

The rest of the argument does no better as regards ultimate ends of type B:

If, however, something that is brought about does *not* follow from those actions, then the ordering of the actions must be either [1] in accordance with the ordering of active powers—e.g., if a person senses in order to imagine, and imagines in order to think (*intelligat*), and thinks in order to will—or [2] in accordance with an ordering of objects—e.g., I consider the body in order to consider the soul, which I consider in order to consider a separated substance,⁵⁵ which I consider in order to consider God. (2.1871)

I'm interrupting this second part of the argument here in order to raise a question. Aquinas provides no basis at all for his very strong claim that only these two kinds of orderings—of active powers and of objects—are available as bases for the ordering of actions. But even if we leave that claim unquestioned, we can raise a question about the second ordering. Why shouldn't I consider the body in order to consider the soul, and then find myself led by that consideration to a better-informed consideration of the body, which

leads to a better-informed consideration of the soul, and so on, back and forth, indefinitely? This argument is already in trouble, and it gets worse.

But one cannot go on ad infinitum, whether [1] regarding active powers, . . .⁵⁶ or [2] regarding objects (just as not regarding beings, since, as was proved earlier [in I.42], there is one first being). Therefore, it is not possible that actions go on ad infinitum. Therefore, there must be something such that the agent's striving (*conatus*) comes to rest in the possession of it. Therefore, every agent acts for an end. (2.1871)

As for [1], Aquinas's philosophy of mind provides an elaborate rationale for the ordered list of active powers that plays a crucial role in this argument, but I see no reason why the ordering and the finiteness of that list should entail that your own cognitive and volitional acts must follow that order and come to a stop when they reach volition.⁵⁷ Aside from the kind of objection I've already raised, why shouldn't you sometimes follow just that order, but then will to *sense*—in order to imagine, and so on, round and round, theoretically ad infinitum? Although the case made here for the finiteness of a series of actions based on [2] an ordering of objects isn't much better in its details, it has the advantage of including God himself as the object beyond which cognitive and volitional activities really cannot find another. At this stage of SCG no additional argument is needed for the claim that God is the single ultimate end of intellection, but that claim is certainly not all that this argument is out to show, and what else it aims at it misses.

Aquinas's third and last argument concerned with ultimate ends in this chapter is no more successful than the other two, and it provides grounds for a further misgiving. "In connection with things that act for an end, all the intermediaries between the primary agent and the ultimate end are ends in respect of those that precede them and active principles in respect of those that follow them" (2.1872). The further misgiving is stirred by this universalized observation, which seems to imply a simple linear depiction of any individual's active principles and ends. Because of the way Aquinas introduced the concept of ultimacy in this context, and because there are no definite (or indefinite) articles in Latin, it's not quite clear whether he's assigning exactly one ultimate end to each thing that acts for an end (although of course 'ultimate' strongly suggests 'unique').⁵⁸ But if he is, then he seems to be claiming that a successful agent's entire goal-oriented career, from beginning to end, is depicted in a schema as simply linear as this (where ap = active principle):⁵⁹

ap → action → end/ap → action → end/ap → . . . ultimate end.

But, of course, it's much more plausible that the depiction of an agent's goal-oriented career requires a schema characterized by forking paths and

parallel lines—that is, that not every achieved end is transformed into an active principle giving rise to progress in just one direction. Short-run sequences of this sort are very familiar: a need for food leads you to shop, the groceries provide the basis for making a meal, the prepared meal provides an occasion for eating. But *while* shopping, you're thinking about going to a movie that evening, and *while* the meal is being made, you're talking with your spouse about a movie to go to—and so on, and so on. Nonetheless, Aquinas ends this argument by relying on the already challenged rigidity of his ordered list of active powers or principles in order to draw what seems to be a truncated conclusion:

Therefore, if an agent's striving is not directed toward anything determinate (*determinatum*), but its actions go on ad infinitum, then active principles must go on ad infinitum. But that's impossible, as was shown before. Therefore, it is necessary that an agent's striving be directed toward something determinate. (2.1872)

Apart from problems I've already raised about Aquinas's use of his list of active principles in this connection, I don't see why any impossibility should attach to an infinite *progress* of active principles, which is all that's at issue here. And I'm a little puzzled by his focusing in this conclusion not on the ultimacy of ends but on their determinateness, which I take to be the same as the definiteness he's already argued for (in 2.1869).

If, as seems fairly clear, Aquinas's aim in these three arguments (2.1870–72) is to show that agents have to have ultimate ends, he would have done better to make prominent use of a simple, well-known Aristotelian line of thought that appears in these arguments only in a parenthetical reference.⁶⁰ The fact that he uses that line effectively in SCG I makes it seem only odder that he doesn't use it here as well:

In the case of any willer, what is principally willed is a cause of [the willer's] volition. For when we say 'I want to walk in order to be healthy', we consider ourselves to be indicating a [final] cause; and if someone asks 'Why do you want to be healthy?', we will go on assigning causes until we arrive at the ultimate end, which is what is principally willed, which is [in turn] a cause of volition altogether on its own.⁶¹ (74.635)

3. Natural Agents, Likeness, and Efficient Causation

Although Aquinas's claims about ends must eventually suit explanations of all sorts of actions by all sorts of agents, he understandably develops most of what he has to say about them (in 2.1869–72) in terms of the efforts, powers, objects, and aims that we know best—those that are most readily, or exclusively, associated with human beings. However, since the chapter's teleology

thesis—“every agent in acting does intend some end”—needs support most obviously in respect of its universality, it’s not surprising that he also devotes part of the remainder of the chapter to a further and much more sweeping expansion of the class of agents, things whose activities are reasonably explained in terms of ends. He argues now for including within that class not merely intellectual creatures and their nonintellectual instruments but also all “natural agents,” all the way down through olive trees to fires.

Every agent acts either through its [nonintellectual] nature [alone] or through its intellect. Now as regards those that act through intellect, there is no doubt that they act for an end. For when they act, they preconceive in intellect what they achieve through action, and they act on the basis of that sort of preconception. That’s what it *is* to act through intellect. (2.1873)

In opening the argument with this brief review of the paradigmatic sort of agent, Aquinas introduces an account of paradigmatic *intention*: an agent’s intellectual preconception of what is to be achieved through the agent’s action. It is entirely plausible that such a preconception should involve a projected likeness of the intended result, but what Aquinas infers from that feature of paradigmatic intention needs some explaining and defending.

Now just as in a preconceiving intellect there is a whole likeness of the effect that is [to be] arrived at through the intellectual agent’s actions, so in a natural agent there pre-exists a *natural* likeness of the effect—a likeness by which the action is *determined* to this or that effect. For a fire generates a fire, and an olive tree generates an olive tree. Therefore, an agent that acts through its [nonintellectual] nature [alone] tends toward a determinate end through its own action just as an agent that acts through intellect does. Therefore, *every* agent acts for an end. (2.1873)

The argument’s casual assimilation of a natural agent’s substantial form to an intellectual agent’s preconception can seem exaggerated, but all Aquinas really needs here is a rough analogy between kinds of likeness, intellectual (or imagined) and natural. And as long as the natural action at issue is reproductive generation, one thing’s generating another thing of the same kind, it’s not unreasonable to present a natural agent’s substantial form as a likeness that determines the effect—not a preconception, of course, but a species-specific prefiguring. But reproductive generation is only one sort of natural action. A fire doesn’t only start other fires, it also brings about hardness in clay and softness in wax; and neither hardness nor softness appears to be an aspect of fire’s substantial form. Does Aquinas suppose that fire somehow contains likenesses of hardness and softness as well? Yes, he

does. The way he does so and his grounds for doing so are spelled out in Book I, but they're essential to his theory of efficient causation and so worth reviewing here in connection with the development of his theory of agency.⁶²

In several places Aquinas develops a general account of kinds of likeness,⁶³ beginning with the basic observation that if X can literally and truly be said to be like Y in any way at all, then X has some form that Y also has.⁶⁴ Fundamentally, then, likeness is *con-formity*, partial sameness in respect of somehow sharing at least one form. Likeness shows up in many different contexts, of course. But our present concern is solely with likeness in connection with efficient causation or agency, cases in which the preconceived or prefigured effect is also thought of as the end for which the efficient cause, conceived of as an agent, acts. We can, then, focus exclusively on Aquinas's analysis of the kinds of likeness obtaining between an efficient cause and its effect.

He thinks of efficient causation as one thing's (natural or artificial) production of another thing, or event, or state of affairs. He understands this in terms of an agent's (or active subject's) initiating the sharing with a patient (or passive object) of some form the agent possesses antecedently, often in some way quite different from the way in which the patient comes to possess the shared form. (Because I'm adopting Aquinas's understanding of efficient causation for present purposes, I'll write in terms of 'agent causation.'⁶⁵) Some sort of likeness between an effect and its cause is an immediate consequence of this notion of agent causation, since agent causation shares a necessary condition with likeness: If A is the agent and P is the patient, then A antecedently somehow has some form, *f*, that P also somehow has, consequently—even where A is a fire, P is a clay pot, and *f* is hardness. In agent causation the effect that is brought about by A's exercise of some active power is the informing of P with *f*.⁶⁶

Agent causation, then, entails a con-formity between cause and effect:

Since every agent does something like itself insofar as it is an agent, but each thing acts in keeping with a form belonging to it, it is necessary that there be in the effect a [consequent] likeness of a form belonging to the agent. (ST Ia.4.3c)

Clearly, 'likeness' (*similitudo*) is a technical term in this context, closer to 'correspondence' than to 'resemblance' in the ordinary sense, even if in some cases the correspondence may be detailed enough to count as resemblance. The only immediately relevant con-formity between an agent cause and its effect is the presence in the effect of characteristics that could serve to identify or at least to type the agent—physical or metaphysical clues providing the basis for an inductive argument to some aspects of the agent's nature.

Agent causation does not include the generation of *accidental* effects, effects that couldn't also count as ends in the circumstances in which they occur: "what is generated by something *accidentally* is not generated by it in so far as it is of such-and-such a sort, and so in what generates something there

need not be a likeness of what is generated” just because in cases of accidental generation there is no antecedent likeness of the effect, which is at least often what we would call a chance effect.⁶⁷ “For example, the discovery of a treasure has no [antecedent] likeness in the person who finds the treasure accidentally while digging in order to plant something” (In Met. VII: L8.1443). On the other hand, the person’s deliberately digging in order to plant something is an agent’s acting for an end: it does have an antecedent likeness in the digger’s preconception and is an instance of (intellective or artificial rather than natural) agent causation. And if the treasure had been uncovered, instead, by a storm’s uprooting a tree, then (natural) agent causation would account only for features of the cause that could be inferred from the effect, such as the direction and force of the wind, forms belonging to A as powers that constitute in A an antecedent likeness of the effect in P, but a likeness that can’t be construed as a manifest resemblance of the sort that characterizes an olive tree’s generating another olive tree, or yet another tree’s being ignited by the flames of a forest fire.

That strongest sort of likeness possible between an effect and its cause considered just as such—substantial-form likeness—is the kind associated with the sort of agent causation that requires the inclusion of the agent cause and its effect within the same species. Biological reproduction is the paradigm but, as we’ve already seen, not the only instance, since reproductive generation occurs also in non-living things: “if the agent is included in the same species along with its effect, then between the maker and what is made there will be a likeness in form that is in keeping with the same *ratio* as is associated with the species—for instance, [when] a human being generates a human being” (ST Ia.4.3c), or “when the form of what is generated is antecedently in the generator in the same mode of being, and in similar matter—for instance, when a fire generates a fire” (In Met. VII: L8.1444), or when “heat produces heat” (In Sent. I.8.1.2c).

Aquinas uses the word ‘*ratio*’ often and importantly in these discussions in ways that seem to rule out a single fully satisfactory translation for it, mainly because in its various occurrences it conveys a variously proportioned blend of *meaning*, *definition*, *concept*, *model*, and *essential nature*. ‘Theoretical account’ or ‘intelligible nature’ might come close to being acceptable as a single equivalent, but I’ll leave *ratio* in Latin here, occasionally commenting on what I take to be its sense. In the example of human reproduction in these passages the form is evidently humanity, and the *ratio* associated with the species is pretty clearly the *definiens rational animal*, which is necessarily suited to both the agent and its effect because they’re both members of the human species.⁶⁸

‘Mode’ is another term used importantly in these passages on same-species agent causation and elsewhere in Aquinas’s account of likeness, causal and otherwise. Sometimes, as here, it picks out the *way in which* the shared form is realized in the cause and in the effect: flesh and bone in the example of human reproduction. But Aquinas uses ‘mode’ in this context

also to indicate the *degree to which* the shared form is realized in the cause and in the effect. In the examples of human beings or olive trees or fires generating others of their kind, the mode in this second sense is essentially just the same, since the *ratio* is realized completely in both cause and effect.

This strongest sort of causal likeness supports an altogether univocal application of the same species-term both to the agent cause (which is more conveniently designated 'C' here) and to its effect, E (where the effect is P's having been informed with *f*). For that reason Aquinas calls this sort of agent causation *univocal*. The detailed essential likeness of E to its univocal agent cause C and the fact that 'human being,' 'olive tree,' or 'fire' is predicable univocally of both C and E in such cases is founded on three (or four) samenesses: (1) the same form, *f*, is antecedently in C and consequently in E; (2) *f* is associated with the same *ratio* in both C and E;⁶⁹ (3a) *f* is essentially realized in the same way in both C and E, and (3b) *f* is essentially realized to the same degree in both C and E.⁷⁰

Obviously, univocal causation can't be the relationship that accounts for a fire's hardening clay. The fact that in univocal causation the form shared by C and E is realized in the same way and to the same degree is guaranteed by the facts that the relationship between C and E must be the reproductive generation of one member of a species by another member of the same species, and that, consequently, the form that C and E share must be their substantial form. But if C and E are not included in a single species, then E does *not* agree with C "in name and *ratio*. Nonetheless, it's necessary that *some* likeness be found between them, for it's part of the nature of action that an agent does what is like itself, since each thing acts in keeping with its being in actuality (*secundum quod actu est*) [—not in a state of mere potentiality]. That's why the form of the effect is indeed found *somehow* in a cause that [essentially] surpasses its effect, but in another mode, and in connection with another *ratio*. And for that reason [such a cause] is called an *equivocal* cause" (SCG I.29.270). The fire is an *equivocal* cause of hardness in the clay (or of softness in the wax). And if C is an equivocal cause of E, then (1) the same form, *f*, is antecedently in C and consequently in E; but (2') it is *not* the case that *f* is associated with the same *ratio* in C and in E;⁷¹ (3a') it is *not* the case that *f* is essentially realized in the same way in C and in E; and (3b') it is *not* the case that *f* is essentially realized to the same degree in C and in E.

Only the already discounted *accidental* efficient causation could be *purely* equivocal (as natural reproductive generation is purely univocal). Only of accidental efficient causation would it be true also that (1') it is *not* the case that the same form is antecedently in C and consequently in E. Purely equivocal causation is efficient causation by chance as pure equivocation is terminological sameness by chance.⁷² So a fire's hardening clay isn't an instance of *purely* equivocal causation. Adapting Aquinas's use of the sun as his model of an equivocal efficient cause in SCG I.29.270, we can say of the fire that the hardness it causes in the clay must have some sort of likeness not to the fire itself as we ordinarily experience it, but to the fire

understood in terms of its active powers. The form of hardness that is consequently in the clay is antecedently in that one of the fire's active powers that can be provisionally (and truistically) identified as its clay-hardening power. (And, of course, the form of hardness is antecedently also in the clay's passive potentialities to some extent.⁷³) It's in respect of its active powers that the fire, or any other agent, can be said to be somehow like all its equivocal effects, to possess antecedently, albeit in a different mode, the forms that are found consequently in its equivocal effects. To acquire a more fine-grained understanding of the fire's clay-hardening power is to see more clearly just how the form of hardened clay is antecedently in the fire (and in the clay)—that is, just how fire hardens clay.

So, when we look more closely at Aquinas's account that interrelates likeness and causation, an account he has some right to presuppose at this stage of SCG, we can appreciate and, I think, accept the analogies on which he bases his conclusions in 2.1871: "Therefore, an agent that acts through its [non-intellective] nature [alone] tends toward a determinate end through its own action just as an agent that acts through intellect does. Therefore, *every* agent acts for an end."

4. Shortcomings as Evidence of Teleology

The created world as we know it, including ourselves in several different respects, is undeniably marred by many imperfections or shortcomings of various sorts. Aquinas ingeniously uses this feature of reality (and, even more markedly, of our view of reality) as another basis on which to argue for the universality of his teleology thesis. In his view, the fact that we can't deny the prevalence of failures and flaws is one good reason why we can't avoid thinking teleologically.

Shortcomings are found only in things that are for an end. For if a thing falls short (*deficit*) of something it isn't aimed at, that isn't ascribed to it as a shortcoming; if a doctor falls short of healing, that's ascribed as a shortcoming to *him*, but not to a builder, or a grammarian. (2.1874)

This stage-setting part of the argument calls for a terminological comment. The best efforts of the best doctors do sometimes fall short of healing; and while all such shortcomings may be disappointing, not all of them are avoidable, let alone blameworthy. Still, Aquinas's example suggests, even that sort of unavoidable failure to achieve the agent's end counts as a shortcoming in the agent. 'Shortcoming' is my translation here for '*peccatum*.' Because Aquinas also uses '*peccatum*' elsewhere for moral fault or sin, someone could think that even in contexts like this one '*peccatum*' carries connotations of blameworthiness.⁷⁴ But we'll see, as Aquinas develops his general analysis of badness over the next several chapters of Book III, that he approaches even the

worst sorts of moral evil as extrapolations from the least troubling sorts of natural defects, including some that are too familiar or too far removed from us to be considered even disappointments.⁷⁵ Consequently, in his analysis of badness, shortcoming is the genus of evil, and not conversely. And the rest of this present argument shows that a negative assessment as broad and cool as ‘shortcoming’ is needed here, as well.

Now we do find shortcomings in things that are done in connection with art, as when a grammarian speaks incorrectly. But we also find shortcomings in those that occur in connection with nature, as is clear in cases of congenital deformities (*partibus monstruosis*). Therefore, an agent that acts in accordance with nature acts for an end just as truly as an agent that acts in accordance with art and on the basis of a plan. (2.1874)

A grammarian’s speaking incorrectly is presumably always avoidable in theory. If it’s being done for pedagogical purposes, it is an utterly undeplorable shortcoming; and if it is being done unconsciously, it is always deplorable, as some of a doctor’s shortcomings are not. But from the case of the erring grammarian, which edges closer to blameworthiness, Aquinas moves at once to a much worse sort of shortcoming in what seems to be a very different setting, one that involves no *prima facie* eligible target of blame. Medical and grammatical shortcomings are artificial, and the agents to whom they are ascribable are readily identified. Congenital deformities are natural, and the agent (or agents) to which they are ascribable is (or are) not always as unmistakably apparent. Against the background built up in SCG so far, it may seem natural to suspect that God himself must be the agent to whom natural shortcomings are to be ascribed. It will of course be very important to discover and assess what Aquinas has to say on that point, but in any event we neither must nor should look immediately for divine agency in things that occur in connection with nature.⁷⁶ In reproductive generation, the production of another olive tree is an olive tree’s naturally necessitated effect. And, Aquinas is arguing here, our recognition that a blighted, stunted, sterile, or otherwise congenitally defective olive seedling counts as a shortcoming should show us that an olive tree, “an agent that acts in accordance with nature[,] acts for an end just as truly as an agent that acts in accordance with art and on the basis of a plan”—such as a doctor or a grammarian. The production of another olive tree is a reproducing olive tree’s naturally necessitated effect, but the production of a normal, healthy olive tree is the natural *end* of an olive tree in respect of reproductive generation.

5. Determinate Ends as Necessary Conditions of Action

Aquinas’s final argument in support of III.2’s teleology thesis applies more effectively to non-living than to living agents.

If an agent didn't tend toward any determinate effect, then all effects would be indifferent to it. But what is related indifferently to many things doesn't do one of them rather than another. (It's for that reason that no effect follows from what is contingent in either of two ways unless something determines it to one of them.⁷⁷) Therefore, it would be impossible for such a thing to act. Therefore, every agent tends toward some determinate effect, which is called its end. (2.1875)

Buridan's Ass, the untethered donkey that starves to death between two equally tempting piles of hay, each of them precisely ten feet away from the donkey's head, is the paradigm of the sort of agent Aquinas is depicting here: one that is supposed to be incapacitated by an absence of relevant differences among available alternatives. Such force as this argument has stems from its dependence on a version of the Principle of Sufficient Reason.⁷⁸ But no one believes that a real donkey would behave the way Buridan's Ass behaves in the story—which is obviously meant to lampoon rigid rationality—and rational agents are perhaps even less likely than donkeys to be stymied by options that are equally attractive. As Aquinas himself observes elsewhere,

it depends on the simple volition of the artisan that this stone is in this part of the wall, and that one in another part, even though the nature of his art demands that some stones be in this part and some in that part. (ST Ia.23.5, *ad* 3)

When the particular alternatives are all equally suitable in all relevant respects, then simply picking at random, rather than rationally choosing, is what's called for. If decision is a component of the process at all, it's exercised by will alone in an act of "simple volition," without any particular input from intellect. So it seems clear that this argument of Aquinas's doesn't show that a theoretical absence of relevant differences among alternatives makes action impossible for intellectual agents or even for non-human animals. But it might be said to suggest that in such (very rare) cases *something*—such as the mason's aim of finishing the wall, or the donkey's aim of getting rid of hunger pangs—has to intervene to bring about action by determining an end. Genuinely incapacitating indifference is much more likely to be found among non-living things.⁷⁹

6. Some Apparent Exceptions

As I said near the beginning of this consideration of Aquinas's teleology thesis, incognizant natural things make up the biggest and most obviously problematic class of agents to be covered by the thesis. Aquinas has now provided at least a pattern for applying the thesis to any of them, especially

in 2.1873, discussed in sect. 3 above. But intellectual agents like us can provide apparent exceptions of a very different sort, since we may think that introspection provides conclusive evidence that some of the things we do are *not* done for ends. Aquinas provides three kinds of cases: “contemplative actions,” “playful actions,” and “actions that are done absentmindedly (*absque attentione*), such as rubbing one’s beard” (2.1876a).

Suppose I ask you what you’re thinking about, and you tell me “irrational numbers,” and I ask, “What’s the point of that?” You may very well tell me, impatiently, that there’s no *point* to it; it’s just what you happen to be thinking about. But that doesn’t mean that your thinking in that way is acting for no end since, as Aquinas plausibly claimed earlier, the ends for which some activities are engaged in—intellectual and sensory activities especially—are just the activities themselves.⁸⁰ And that’s what he reminds us of here: “We should know that contemplative actions are not for any *other* end; instead, they themselves *are* the end” (2.1876b).

Playful actions haven’t been mentioned before, but they don’t give him any trouble, either. Suppose that I interrupt you while you’re studying and ask you to play a game of checkers, and you agree. And, to guarantee playfulness, suppose that neither of us is interested in or good at checkers, and that we don’t care who wins. Is there really some *end* for which you’re acting as you play the game? Aquinas would say that there is, and I think that his affirmative answer again makes plausible use of his distinction between ends of type A and of type B: “playful actions sometimes [B] *are* an end, when a person plays just for the pleasure there is in playing, and sometimes [A] *are for* an end, as when we play so that we may study better afterwards” (2.1876b).⁸¹

If we think of every movement of our bodies that is under our control as an action of ours, then very many, maybe most, of our bodily actions are absentminded. It’s only this one of the three sorts of putative exceptions for which Aquinas supplies an example, and I think his example unfairly helps his case:

actions that are done absentmindedly are brought about not by intellect [of course] but by some unanticipated event in one’s imagination (*subita imaginatio*), or by some natural principle. For instance, a disordering of the [bodily] humor that gives rise to itching is the cause of one’s rubbing one’s beard, which is done in the absence of intellect’s attention. And these actions do tend toward some end, although outside (*praeter*) the bounds of intellect’s ordering. (2.1876b)

The man may not have realized *that* he was rubbing his beard, much less *why* he was doing so, until he’s asked. But then, surely, he says at once, “Because it was itching.” That’s too easy. Just because of dealing with this topic, I’ve been noticing the positions of my hands as I sit back to read what’s on the computer screen before I go on typing. I notice that some-

times they're on the keyboard, sometimes in my lap; sometimes my arms are folded; sometimes I have my right hand on my chin, sometimes my left; etc., etc. I feel as detached from all such actions of mine as I would if I were observing them in someone else, and Aquinas has certainly not provided enough evidence to convince me that every one of these absentminded positionings of my hands is brought about by some unanticipated event in my imagination, or by some natural principle. Of course, if that language of his is taken to be, not implausibly, a thirteenth-century version of the claim that some brain state of mine accounts for those absentminded, ordinarily unnoticed positions of my hands, I would grant it. And in that case, perhaps, I can even see how one might, on the model of Aquinas's explaining fire's hardening of clay as its acting for an end, go on to claim that the purely absentminded positioning of my hands is to be explained as the achieving of the end of some natural process taking place in my body, although, strictly speaking, *I* can't be identified as the agent of that action.⁸² That is, some movements made by an intellectual agent that give the appearance of deliberate actions, and that in other circumstances certainly could be deliberate actions, may nevertheless be not the actions of an intellectual agent considered just as such but merely naturally necessitated effects of natural principles and processes in the agent's body. The passage quoted just above, in which Aquinas tries to deal with absentminded movements, contains suggestions that might be developed along such lines. But if he had any such developments in view, he ought not to have used as his only example absentmindedly rubbing a beard that itches.

It's a little surprising that Aquinas develops and defends his teleology thesis along the lines we've been examining without even mentioning final causation. But in III.2's final sentence, it emerges as a concept that he has of course recognized as supplying one way in which to read the thesis: "Now on this basis we rule out a mistake made by ancient natural philosophers, who claimed that all things happen because of matter's necessity, entirely removing the final cause from things" (2.1877).⁸³ Aquinas casts this development and defense of the thesis in terms of agents, actions, and ends because those terms are more exactly suited to the purposes of his project in SCG III than is the more abstract 'final causation.'

7. Every Agent's End is Good

Aquinas introduces the thesis of III.3 as something that must be taken up at this stage: "Now on that basis we have to show, further, that every agent acts for what is good" (3.1878). It might occur to someone that this is what Aquinas *has* to show, *further*, because he's dealing "first, with God himself in so far as he is the end of all things" (1.1867*b*), and what he's shown in the preceding chapter, III.2, is that all things do act for an end. Since that end must eventually be shown to be God, there's progress to

be made in showing, further, that what every agent acts for is something *good*. But that interpretation of this particular move would be mistaken in two ways.

In the first place, there's a scope-ambiguity in the teleology thesis that forms the basis for this new thesis. 'Every agent intends some end' may be read either as (I) 'For every agent, x, there is some end, y, such that x intends y' or as (II) 'There is some end, y, such that for every agent, x, x intends y.' (I) is clearly the interpretation that has been at issue in III.2, and anyone prepared to say that Aquinas has at least made considerable progress in developing and defending his teleology thesis will also be taking interpretation (I) for granted. However, although interpretation (I) is the one at issue so far, and although it's much less implausible than (II), it certainly does look as if Aquinas will need to establish (II) eventually on his way to showing that God himself is the one and only end of all things. And there's a related ambiguity in the goodness thesis of III.3 that can, on one interpretation, make it look like a bold move in the direction of (II). For '*omne agens agit propter bonum*' might be read not merely as 'every agent acts for what is good' or '. . . a good' or '. . . something good,' but, more narrowly, as 'every agent acts for the good' or even '. . . goodness.'

But, in the second place, Aquinas's development and defense of the goodness thesis in III.3 shows unmistakably and from its very beginning that at this stage he intends only the first and less implausible of those two interpretations of it.⁸⁴

In his first argument for the goodness thesis Aquinas reveals not only what he means by it but also how he understands it to be based on the teleology thesis. "For the fact that any and every agent tends toward something determinate makes it clear that every agent acts for an end. But that toward which an agent tends determinately must be appropriate (*conveniens*) for it, since the agent wouldn't tend toward it if it weren't somehow appropriate for itself. But whatever is appropriate for anything is good for it. Therefore, every agent acts for something good" (3.1879). It is, of course, this argument's use of 'appropriate *for it*,' 'appropriate *for itself*,' and, most directly, 'good *for it*' that show clearly that Aquinas intends the goodness thesis in its more plausible sense. The argument's first premise might be read as implying that Aquinas takes the argument from determinateness to be the most effective support for the teleology thesis, which would be surprising.⁸⁵ But I think he uses it here just because it strikes him as providing the most convenient basis on which to make the transition to the goodness thesis. The fact, if it is a fact, that societies and other systems tend toward disorder doesn't constitute a counter-instance to the strong claim in the first premise. Systems may not count as agents, even under Aquinas's very broad notion of an agent. More importantly, even disorder itself is not indeterminacy but may be considered a determinate end toward which a thing (or an arrangement of things) can tend determinately.

Clear and helpful though this first argument is, it raises a problem that

is apparently deepened by developments later in the chapter. For, aside from separated or purely intellectual substances, every created thing, including every human being, eventually dies or otherwise ceases to exist.⁸⁶ ‘Simple corruption’ is Aquinas’s generic designation for the end of individual creaturely existence: “All corruption occurs through a separation of form from matter—*simple* corruption through the separation of the *substantial* form, of course, but corruption *in a certain respect* through the separation of an *accidental* form” (II.55.1298). Coffee’s cooling or clay’s hardening is corruption of the coffee or the clay in a certain respect as a human being’s dying, the separating of the soul from the body, is simple corruption. Because all material created things are constantly subject to corruption in a certain respect and eventually succumb to simple corruption, it seems right to say that every material created thing tends toward its own corruption, which is something determinate. Against that background, look again at these sentences from the argument we’re considering: “But that toward which an agent tends determinately must be appropriate for it, since the agent wouldn’t tend toward it if it weren’t somehow appropriate for itself. But whatever is appropriate for anything is good for it” (3.1879). Now Aquinas emphatically denies that the corruption of any thing is good for that thing. As he says later in this same chapter, “all natural agents, to the extent of their power, resist corruption, which is bad for each and every thing” (3.1885).⁸⁷ If any thing’s corruption is bad for it, and if every material created thing tends toward its own corruption, then it isn’t true that “that toward which an agent tends determinately must be appropriate for it.”⁸⁸

What’s gone wrong here? It’s not that Aquinas thinks that an agent can’t tend toward and resist the same thing at the same time, since he of course believes that a person can resist temptation.⁸⁹ And I can’t see how ‘tends *determinately*’ might make the crucial difference, since there’s nothing indeterminate about an agent’s simple corruption or about its tending toward that end. Nor do I think that I’ve created the problem by interpreting ‘tends toward’ too broadly, since Aquinas’s use of that term here must cover all the naturally necessitated tendencies of non-living agents as well as the deliberated, freely chosen plans of intellectual agents. Still, what a thing tends toward does seem to include the actualizing of its passive potentialities as well as of its active powers, and the natural corruption of a thing, especially its simple corruption, results essentially from the actualizing of some of its passive potentialities rather than being brought about by its exercising its active powers. So perhaps this problem is caused by Aquinas’s use of ‘tends toward’ here rather than, say, ‘acts for,’ another term he often uses in this context.⁹⁰

I want to consider just two others of the nine arguments supporting the goodness thesis in III.3. The seventh argument provides simple but effective support for the thesis by drawing on the notion of badness, which occupies Aquinas’s attention over the next thirteen chapters.⁹¹

Avoiding what is bad and seeking what is good have the same nature, in the same way as moving down and moving up have the same nature.⁹² But we find that all things avoid what is bad. For things that act through intellect avoid something because they apprehend it as bad, while all natural agents, to the extent of their power, resist corruption, which is bad for each and every thing. Therefore, all things act for something good. (3.1885)

Things that act through intellect, including us, may sometimes, at their best, avoid what they apprehend as bad for future generations, or bad absolutely, even though advantageous for themselves. But each of them must, if the individual is to survive, avoid on most occasions what the individual apprehends as bad for itself. And since corruption “is bad for each and every thing,” and since a human being’s avoidance of corruption entails eating, and since eating entails the corrupting of something else, an agent’s avoiding of what is bad for itself will often entail not merely its seeking what is good for itself but, thereby and at the same time, what is bad for something else. However, as we’ve seen in discussing Aquinas’s broad and cool sense of ‘*peccatum*,’⁹³ and as I discuss in detail in Chapter III below, his analysis of badness is characterized throughout (quite properly, I think) by clinical detachment—an approach that provides grounds for rationally accepting certain sorts of badness even while acknowledging their badness. Not surprisingly, this approach is less easy to appreciate at the level of moral judgment than at the metaphysical level. But, as we’ll see, the analysis develops from the metaphysical level, where we begin by understanding that “every actuality has the defining characteristic of goodness (*boni*), since badness (*malum*) is found only in a potentiality that falls short of actuality” (3.1883),⁹⁴ and that the generation of any one thing involves the corruption of another,⁹⁵ and that for very many things, including us, their preservation involves the destruction of very many other things.

As Aquinas’s seventh and fifth arguments in defense of his goodness thesis introduce the notion of badness, so the eighth introduces the notion of chance, which is also important in his consideration of providence in Book III.

Whatever results from any agent’s action but is apart from (*praeter*) the agent’s intention is said to happen by chance or fortune. Now in the works of nature we observe that what is for the better is what happens either always or usually (*frequentius*). For instance, in plants the leaves are arranged in a way that protects the fruit, and the parts of animals are disposed so that the animal can protect itself. Therefore, if this sort of thing happens apart from the intention of a natural agent, it will be by chance or fortune. But that’s impossible, since it is not things that happen always or often (*frequenter*) that are by chance or fortuitous, but rather those that happen very seldom (*in paucioribus*) [*Physics* II 5, 196b10-17]. Therefore, a natural agent tends toward what is for the

better. And, much more obviously, so does one that acts through intellect. Therefore, every agent in acting intends something good.⁹⁶ (3.1886)

The value of this argument, as I see it, lies not in the support it provides for the goodness thesis but in what it tells us about Aquinas's notion of chance. It presents two aspects of that notion: (1) what results from any agent's action but is apart from the agent's intention happens by chance; (2) what happens by chance happens very seldom. (1) looks too broad and too strong to be true. What about the practical joker who really didn't intend to injure his victim by pulling her chair out from under her as she was sitting down? Would Aquinas really be prepared to say that her injuries are just bad luck? No, as he shows later, when he refines (2), the frequency condition, in a way that affects (1) and limits the range of acceptable excuses:

it's important to know that not *everything* that is apart from intention must be fortuitous or by chance. . . . For if what is apart from intention is something that always or often results from what is intended, then it will *not* happen fortuitously or by chance. For instance, in the case of a person who intends to enjoy the sweetness of wine, if drunkenness follows from the drinking of the wine, that will *not* be fortuitous or by chance. If that resulted in [only] a few cases, however, then it would be by chance.⁹⁷ (III.5&6.1902)

As for (2), what happens by chance happens very seldom, it's clearly more fundamental to his notion than (1) is, as can be seen in the later passage just quoted. And it seems unobjectionable. If lightning strikes the same spot always or very often, then we'll look for a causal explanation of a result that we're not in those circumstances prepared to describe as chance. But in applying his notion of chance to phenomena of natural selection, Aquinas seems to be making a mistake in reasoning. He cites the facts that in plants the leaves are arranged always or usually in a way that protects the fruit, and that the parts of animals are disposed always or usually so that the animal can protect itself. But these facts could, for anything Aquinas says here, result from a unique chance mutation in the past that was advantageous for the individual plant or animal in which it occurred—a mutation such that the progeny of those individuals had an advantage in surviving and reproducing, with the result that the once-unique, chance characteristic is now found in members of those species always or usually.⁹⁸

One reason for thinking that this criticism may not apply so neatly to this argument is that, immediately after introducing those examples of natural goods, Aquinas says that "if this sort of thing happens apart from the intention of a natural agent, it will be by chance or fortune." Since 'a natural agent' could just as readily be translated as 'the natural agent,' other

things being equal, someone might be inclined to think that Aquinas is here alluding to God as the governor of his creation. But since ‘*agens naturale*’ in this discussion has until now meant some *created* natural agent, that would constitute a very surprising and confusing shift in Aquinas’s terminology.⁹⁹ Besides, in this case other things are *not* equal, as can be seen from the way Aquinas distinguishes between natural and intellective agents at the end of the argument: “Therefore, a natural agent tends toward what is for the better. And, much more obviously, so does one that acts through intellect.” And God, of course, is the paradigmatic, perfect intellective agent.¹⁰⁰

III. BADNESS

1. The Badness Thesis

‘Badness’ is not a good word. It sounds faintly infantile, perhaps especially now, at the end of the twentieth century. Still, ‘imperfection’ and its bland companions are too broad to serve all the purposes of this investigation, while ‘evil,’ ‘wickedness,’ ‘immorality,’ ‘sinfulness,’ and the like are even more clearly too narrow. ‘*Malum*’ is almost the only word Aquinas uses, adjectivally or as a nominalized adjective, for the central notion in III.4–15, a series of chapters that has sometimes been called a treatise *de malo*.¹⁰¹ And ‘bad’ and ‘badness’ are the only English words that strike me as coming close to playing all the roles Aquinas assigns to ‘*malum*.’ With that semi-satisfactory bit of terminological equipment we can start an investigation of his treatise on badness.

It begins in III.4 with what I’ll call the badness thesis: “Now on that basis it is apparent that the badness in things, events, or states of affairs occurs apart from the intention of their agents (*Ex hoc autem apparet quod malum in rebus incidit praeter intentionem agentium*)” (3.1889). I’ve expanded Aquinas’s one word ‘*rebus*’ into the phrase ‘things, events, or states of affairs.’ It’s usually translated most safely as ‘things,’ but I think that the generality implicit in it needs to be spelled out in that way here, and occasionally elsewhere. Aquinas’s reference to “the badness in things, events, or states of affairs” rather than merely badness for the agent appears to generalize and objectify the kinds of badness at issue. The introductory formula ‘on that basis,’ already familiar from the beginnings of many earlier chapters in SCG I–III, refers in this case to the goodness thesis for which he argued in the preceding chapter. If, as his first formulation of the goodness thesis maintains, “every agent acts for what is good,” then no agent acts for what is bad; and so the badness that does undeniably mar many things, events, and states of affairs can’t be what their agents act for; it must therefore occur apart from their agents’ intention. Viewed in this way, the

badness thesis is a corollary of the goodness thesis.¹⁰² But that observation on the apparent logical status of the badness thesis doesn't explain Aquinas's taking up badness, especially in such detail, at this point in the development of his natural theology, where it might look like a detour on the road toward the conclusion that God is (somehow) creation's single ultimate end.

As we've seen, the notion of badness was introduced in Aquinas's chapters 2 and 3, but not in ways that seemed to call for immediate development.¹⁰³ So why does it become his topic here? It's not hard to imagine an explanation. Since the overall aim of III.2–63 is to show that all creation is (somehow) directed toward God, and since III.3's arguing that all created things aim at what is good for them seems to constitute one important step toward achieving that aim, the mere fact that some of the arguments of III.3 involved acknowledging the occurrence of bad results might give Aquinas reason enough to turn and face that apparent difficulty at once. For how *could* a world created and governed by perfectly good God,¹⁰⁴ a world in which every agent, intellectual and natural alike, acts for what is good, involve any badness at all?¹⁰⁵

By now we have some reason to find Aquinas's goodness thesis plausible, understanding it in the form in which he defends it in III.3, as the claim that every agent in acting always intends to bring about what is good for the agent. But the badness thesis seems on the face of it to be outrageously false, even if (or perhaps especially if) we temporarily think only of human beings as the agents at issue. For it seems to mean that none of the badness that occurs so abundantly in the things, events, and states of affairs that make up our world ever comes about as the intended result of any human being's action. There can't have been any time in human history when such a claim is likely to have been taken seriously, and every passing year carries its own burden of what certainly looks like still more overwhelming counter-evidence. So we also have some reason to wonder whether the badness thesis really does mean what it seems to mean.

As a first step in examining and evaluating the badness thesis as it stands, we can consider those not-so-rare occasions on which an agent, A, recognizes as soon as the deed is done that what he apprehended as good for himself turns out, quite apart from his intention, to be bad for himself. For instance, the interesting-looking person A introduces himself to turns out to be boring and offensive.¹⁰⁶ Such disappointed-agent cases—cases of mistaken apprehensions that are immediately recognized as such by the disappointed agent—do appear to confirm the badness thesis.

But suppose that we shift our attention to satisfied-agent cases, cases in which A is perfectly satisfied with the results of his action, convinced that its results are indeed good for himself in just the way he intended. Won't it sometimes happen in satisfied-agent cases that the state of affairs A intended to achieve and does achieve is clearly bad for someone else? A urgently needs money, firmly believes that stealing it is the only way he can

get it, and steals all of B's money. A certainly seems to have intended and acted for something good for himself, to have achieved just what he set out to achieve, and to be perfectly satisfied with the result. The result is bad for B, without a doubt; it counts as a little of the badness that really occurs in things, events, or states of affairs. But that aspect of the outcome—that badness—can also be seen in this example to have been apart from A's intention, which was directed only at something good (for A). If A could have got the money easily without harming B or anyone else, he would have done so. Viewed in that way, a very big sub-class of satisfied-agent cases that might at first appear to provide evidence against the badness thesis can also be understood to confirm it.

But aren't there also satisfied-agent cases in which the resultant badness for someone or something other than the agent must be considered to have been an integral part of what the agent *intended*, cases in which the resultant badness for others is *essential* to the outcome that the agent apprehends as *good for himself*? Revenge provides a handy paradigm. Cases of revenge can't be brought under the badness thesis simply by declaring that the *primary* intention of the vengeful agent is to achieve what's good for the agent—justice, for instance—and that *consequently* the resultant badness for the victim occurs apart from the agent's intention. Agents deliberating about their actions of revenge may, like King Lear, reject various options just because their *intended* outcomes aren't *bad enough* for the targets of the vengeance.

I will have such revenges on you both
That all the world shall—I will do such things,—
What they are, yet I know not; but they shall be
The terrors of the earth.¹⁰⁷

If the terrors of the earth don't qualify as part of the badness that might occur in things, events, and states of affairs—real, objective badness—what would? And it seems that no one could with a straight face try to explain that these terrors—whatever they might turn out to be—would be apart from Lear's intention. What's more, although Lear doesn't manage to carry out his threats, his angry, vengeful intentions seem typical of the intentions of ordinary, prosy, often-successful agents of revenge everywhere. So, if we focus just on satisfied-agent cases of revenge as clear counter-instances, how can we agree with Aquinas that the badness in things, events, or states of affairs always occurs apart from the intention of their agents?

Of course, we can't treat that question as merely rhetorical. But since Aquinas presents some apparent counter-instances of his own and tries to explain them away in III.5&6, we can and should postpone trying to answer it. Meanwhile, it's helpful to take account of two of this chapter's four arguments, which provide some important clarifications of the badness thesis they're intended to support.

2. Clarifying the Thesis

In the second argument Aquinas supplies a three-level analysis of badness: in effects, in the actions producing those effects, and in the principles or sources of those actions.

A defect in an effect and in the action [producing that effect] is a result of some defect in the principles of the action. (For instance, a congenital deformity results from some corruption of the semen, and lameness results from a curvature of the leg bone.¹⁰⁸) But an agent acts to the extent to which it has an active power, not to the extent to which it suffers a defect in the power; and the way it acts is the way it intends an end. Therefore, it intends an end in a way that corresponds to the power. Therefore, anything that results [from the action] but corresponds to a defect in the power will be apart from the agent's intention. Now this [effect corresponding to a defect in the power] is bad. Therefore, badness [in the effect] happens apart from [the agent's] intention. (4.1891)

The principles or sources of an action are, for instance, the active power that an agent must have in order to engage in that sort of action, and any instrument, natural or artificial, that is required for exercising that power.¹⁰⁹ As Aquinas presents it here, this three-level analysis of badness applies to some disappointed-agent cases, but it also seems to call for the introduction of a third kind of case.

A defect is a shortcoming, a potentiality that isn't appropriately actualized at the appropriate stage of development or that has lost its appropriate actualization—for example, a leg bone that failed to grow properly or that was injured after having developed. And, as we've seen Aquinas claiming, "badness is found only in a potentiality that falls short of [complete] actuality" (3.1883).¹¹⁰ A defect in the effect is a result of a defect in the action, which is a result of a defect in the principles of the action. Where walking is the effect and limping is the defect in it, an explanatory defect must be found in the action producing that effect—moving one's body in a certain way—and that defect must in turn be explained by a defect in the active powers required for that sort of moving or in the requisite natural instruments—for example, bones and muscles.

Aquinas's example of the lame person isn't a satisfied-agent case, and it's almost as clearly not a disappointed-agent case either, since lameness brought about by a curvature of the leg bone is not the sort of defect that's likely to come as a surprise to an agent who intends to walk normally. Congenitally lame people (and lame people typically) are instances of what might be called the admittedly-defective-agent case. Since very many actions and effects that are objectively recognized as defective in some respect are produced by agents who would readily acknowledge the defects in their relevant principles of action, the admittedly-defective-agent case is an im-

portant supplement to the two cases already identified. The agent impaired by a curvature of her leg bone intends to walk to the best of her ability, knowing very well the defect in her principles of action. She can't seriously intend to walk *without* limping, but it makes good sense to say that she doesn't *intend* the limp in her walk (as an unimpaired actress might intend to limp in playing a part).

Analogously, a piano student might intend to play a Beethoven sonata to the best of her ability. Suppose that she does just that, but it's a bad performance. She didn't *intend* to play the sonata *badly*, but she knew that even if she played it as well as she could, there would be defects in the effect. We can suppose that she played it better than she ever had before, and that she's pleased about that. But it was still a flawed performance, and she knows it. Considered just as the best she could do, her action is precisely what she intended. What's bad about it really is apart from her intention. And so admittedly-defective-agent cases subjected to Aquinas's three-level analysis also confirm the badness thesis.

Defects in an agent's principles of action are very often well known to the agent, as in these examples of admittedly defective agents. But even if the only principles of action at issue are the immediately relevant active powers or instruments (as in these examples), a long-standing defect in them may have gone unnoticed by the agent, or a defect may occur suddenly and unexpectedly. In such circumstances Aquinas's analysis as spelled out in 4.1891 applies to disappointed-agent cases as well. Suppose that A intends to throw the ball to B so that B can easily catch it. A wouldn't form that intention without believing that he has the power to carry it out—that is, A “intends an end in a way that corresponds to the power.” But suppose that A is surprised and disappointed to discover that he isn't strong enough to throw the ball that far. Since A “*acts* to the extent to which he *has* an active power, *not* to the extent to which he suffers a *defect* in the power,” and since “the way the agent acts is the way he intends an end,” the disappointing badness in the effect clearly does occur apart from A's intention. A's acting, strictly so-called, is his throwing the ball; A's failing to throw the ball all the way to B is not his acting but the defect in his acting, which stems from a hitherto-unrecognized defect in A's principles of action. More confirmation for the badness thesis.

But suppose a vengeful A intends to throw the ball at B hard enough to hurt him, and A succeeds. If the badness in this satisfied-agent case is also going to be analyzed as a defect, the principle of action in which the initiating defect is found is going to have to lie beyond the immediately relevant active powers, on a fourth level of which A is now oblivious (and which Aquinas's analysis has so far not revealed).¹¹¹ As far as this A is concerned, the three-level analysis of defects introduced in 4.1891 would disclose no defect at all in his act of revenge, the badness in which seems clearly *not* to occur apart from A's intention.

All such apparent counter-instances to the badness thesis could be

turned aside if the thesis were weakened in a way that would make it more precisely a corollary of the goodness thesis Aquinas actually argues for, which, as we've seen, turns out to be a claim only about what is good *for the agent*. We might weaken the badness thesis and align it more closely with the goodness thesis if we revised it to look like this, for instance: Any aspect of things, events, or states of affairs that is perceived by their agents as bad for their agents occurs apart from the intention of their agents. I don't think that this weakened version is *unquestionably* true, but it certainly would be easier to support than the thesis we've been considering. Satisfied-agent cases of revenge wouldn't count against the weakened version in any way, nor would the weakened version suggest any of the misgivings I've been raising against the thesis as Aquinas presents it in 4.1889: "The badness in things, events, or states of affairs occurs apart from the intention of [their] agents." But if he means no more than what the relativized, weakened version expresses, he ought not to have expressed the thesis so generally and objectively. Moreover, while the relativistic character of his goodness thesis was revealed almost at once, in the first argument supporting it (in 3.1879), none of the arguments we've considered for the badness thesis have indicated that it's to be given a relativistic interpretation.¹¹² Finally, the one supporting argument still to be considered seems to show that it is to be interpreted just as objectively and generally as Aquinas's wording of it suggests, as we'll now see. In that case, it will of course *not* be a corollary of the relativistic goodness thesis, and it will remain vulnerable to the counter-instances and misgivings that have so far been raised against it.

3. The Most Fundamental Application of the Thesis

Aquinas's first, perfunctory supporting argument (4.1890) applies indifferently to intellective and natural agents,¹¹³ the fourth (4.1893) is expressly concerned with intellective agents like us,¹¹⁴ and the second (4.1891) seems to be appropriately considered in terms of intellective agents, as we've seen. His third argument, however, is expressly and almost exclusively concerned with inanimate natural agents (and patients) in ways that reveal his conception of the manifestation of badness in the most fundamental stratum of created being:

The movement of what is movable and its mover's moving [of it] tend toward the same [end].¹¹⁵ Now what is movable tends *per se* toward what is good; it is [only] *per accidens* and apart from intention that it tends toward what is bad. This is especially apparent in connection with generation and corruption. For matter that is under one form is in a state of potentiality to another form and to the privation of the form it now has. (4.1892)

Here, near the beginning of this long argument, it's already apparent that its focus is on the most basic things, events, and states of affairs that make up the physical world. Matter as Aquinas conceives of it is completely passive, the fundamental patient, the paradigm of what is always and essentially movable and never itself a mover of anything.¹¹⁶ And, as we've seen, his explanation of generation/corruption is in terms of matter's potentialities being actualized in the possession/privation of various forms.¹¹⁷

The example Aquinas provides at this point in the argument is drawn from antiquated natural science, but it can easily be recast, retaining much of his language.¹¹⁸ For instance, since marble is metamorphosed limestone, we can say of one cubic foot of limestone at the beginning of the process of metamorphosis that it is in a state of potentiality both to the privation of the substantial form of limestone and to the possession of the substantial form of marble. And such a transmutation of the matter that now has the form of limestone is terminated in both the privation and the possession at once: in the possession of the form of marble in so far as a certain quantity of marble is generated, of course, but also in the privation of the form of limestone in so far as the cubic foot of limestone is corrupted.¹¹⁹

Now, as we've already seen, Aquinas maintains that "all natural agents, to the extent of their power, resist corruption, which is bad for each and every thing" (3.1885).¹²⁰ And his argument at this stage seems to have presented matter as disposed equally toward the fundamental goodness of acquiring a substantial form in generation and the fundamental badness of losing a substantial form in corruption. But the argument already includes the claims that "what is movable"—for example, matter—"tends *per se* toward what is good," and that "it is [only] *per accidens* and apart from intention that it tends toward what is bad." And so he has to explain how these claims apply to his analysis of a transmutation such as limestone's metamorphosis into marble.

"However, matter's intention and appetite is not for the privation but for the form. For it doesn't tend toward what is impossible, and it is impossible for there to be mere matter, under a privation of being. On the other hand, matter's being under a form is possible. Therefore, the fact that matter terminates in a privation is apart from [its] intention, although it does terminate in it in so far as it achieves the form it intends, from which the privation of the other form necessarily results. Therefore, the transmutation of matter in generation and corruption is *per se* ordered toward the form, while the [*per accidens*] privation results apart from intention" (4.1892).¹²¹ In creation's lowest metaphysical stratum goodness is manifested as matter's actualization, its possessing some substantial form or other.¹²² Consequently, the badness contrary to that goodness is manifested as matter's being deprived of the substantial form it had; and that kind of badness is an inevitable *per accidens* concomitant of absolutely every substantial transformation. No rational being can even disapprove of, much less condemn, most of the badness of corruption and privation that is ubiqui-

tous in that way and is never found apart from the corresponding goodness of generation and possession.¹²³ Still, even in this substratum, where neither intellectual agents nor even living natural agents need be considered, Aquinas applies his badness thesis. For “matter’s *intention and appetite* is not for the privation but for the form,” and so “the fact that matter terminates in a privation is *apart from its intention*”; in short, “the privation”—the badness to be found even in this substratum—“results *apart from intention*.” If this application of the badness thesis is to make sense, Aquinas needs at least to show us how to make sense of the notion of matter’s intention.

Formless matter—“mere matter, under a privation of being”—is *prime matter*, “pure potentiality.”¹²⁴ As a theoretical element of Aquinas’s Aristotelian metaphysics prime matter is indispensable; however, it can’t occur just as such in nature because it’s logically impossible for unactualized pure potentiality to exist in actuality. But, for every quantity of actually existent (formed) matter, a loss of *any* form, considered just as such, is a change in the direction of the loss of *every* form, which is the status of prime matter, a status that is unattainable in reality. Now it is naturally impossible that matter should have a natural appetite, or intention, or disposition for what is impossible; “and it is impossible for there to *be* mere matter, under a *privation* of being.” That’s why matter’s natural tendency, or intention, has the *opposite* orientation, toward the possible. And so “the transmutation of matter in generation and corruption is *per se* ordered *toward the form*.” Consequently, the kind of badness that consists in the inevitable privation of a form, which accompanies every acquisition of another form, is merely the naturally necessitated concomitant of a kind of goodness and results only *per accidens*, apart from matter’s natural intention.¹²⁵

The remainder of this important third argument generalizes and summarizes what has already been argued:

And it must occur similarly in connection with all [species of] movement or change; and so in any movement or change there is generation and corruption in a certain respect.¹²⁶ (For instance, whenever something is altered from white to black, something white is corrupted and something black comes to be.¹²⁷) Now, matter’s being perfected through a form and a potentiality’s being perfected through its proper actuality (*actum proprium*) is good; but a potentiality’s being deprived of the actuality it ought to have (*actu debito*) is bad.¹²⁸ Therefore, everything that is moved intends in its movement to achieve what is good; but it [sometimes] achieves what is bad, apart from intention. Therefore, since every agent and mover [also] tends toward what is good [as was argued in III.3], what is bad comes about apart from the agent’s intention. (4.1892)

Although the argument’s final conclusion again has to do with the intentions of agents, the argument contributes to the universalizing of the good-

ness and badness theses by applying them not just to agents but also to (natural) patients, and especially to matter itself, the fundamental patient in created reality.

Aquinas's unwavering thoroughness in applying his badness thesis all the way down to creation's lowest metaphysical stratum illuminates his conception of badness in a way that will help us understand his applications of it to all the more familiar and more threatening kinds of badness, such as pain and suffering, natural disasters, and moral evil. But this most fundamental application of the thesis may also seem either to debase language or to strain credulity. Can anyone seriously claim to discern *badness* in the geological process that is on the one hand the generation of marble and on the other hand the corruption of limestone? Or in the biological process that is on the one hand the generation of healthy tissue in a newborn baby and on the other hand the digestive corruption of its mother's milk? Matter's loss of the substantial forms of limestone or of milk is entirely as natural as is its acquisition of the substantial forms of marble or of flesh and bone. And since we think of those transmutations as improvements, why shouldn't we evaluate not just the acquisitional but also the privational aspects of those transmutations as *good*? More pointedly, aren't we forced to recognize that the privational aspects, too, are indispensable to natural processes and therefore clearly not in any sense apart from nature's intention?

4. Challenging the Thesis

Those misgivings about Aquinas's badness thesis are only the latest additions to a list that has been growing since we began considering the thesis. So it is altogether appropriate that in the next, conjoint chapter 5&6 he raises three objections that encapsulate all the misgivings I've expressed and more besides, following them immediately with a further analysis of badness on which he bases his rejoinders to the objections. His objections are particularly effective because they grow out of undeniable, ordinary characteristics of badness that seem to be either ignored or expressly contradicted in his thesis.

The first of the objections might be called the argument from the *prevalence* of badness. As we've already seen, it's part of Aquinas's conception of chance that "whatever happens apart from an agent's intention is said to be fortuitous and by chance" (5&6.1896).¹²⁹ Therefore, if Aquinas's thesis is correct, at least well-informed, thoughtful people should describe all badness as fortuitous and by chance; but they don't: "the occurrence of badness is *not* said to be fortuitous and by chance" (5&6.1896). Furthermore, as we've also seen, Aquinas's second defining characteristic of a chance event-type is that it happens very seldom;¹³⁰ but badness happens either

always or very often. For in nature corruption is *always* adjoined to generation. And even as regards agents that act through will, wrong-doing (*peccatum*) happens *very often*; for it is as hard to act in accordance with virtue as it is to find the center of a circle (as Aristotle says in *Ethics* II [9, 1109a24–26]).¹³¹(5&6.1896)

Summing up the prevalence argument: What happens apart from any agent's intention happens by chance, and what happens by chance happens very seldom; but badness doesn't happen very seldom, and so badness doesn't happen apart from any agent's intention; and so the badness thesis must be false.

I'll call the second objection the argument from the *voluntariness* of badness—an argument that comes close to raising the misgiving I found in satisfied-agent cases of revenge.¹³²

In *Ethics* III [7, 1113b14–17; b21–25; 1114a11–12] Aristotle expressly says that malice (*malitia*) is voluntary. And he proves this by the fact that a person voluntarily does unjust things and that it makes no sense [to suppose] that a person voluntarily doing unjust acts does not will to be unjust (or that a person voluntarily engaging in debauchery does not will to be incontinent), and by the fact that lawgivers punish bad people as doing bad things voluntarily. (5&6.1897)

It may seem odd that this voluntariness argument appeals to Aristotelian authority for what would ordinarily be considered commonplace truths, but that feature of it is made appropriate by what seems to be Aquinas's astonishing contradiction of such truths in his badness thesis. Agent's *intention*, the crucial notion in the thesis, isn't mentioned in the body of the voluntariness argument. But the argument plainly relies on the natural assumption that nothing that an agent does voluntarily could be done apart from the agent's intention—an assumption that is brought out in the argument's conclusion: "Therefore, badness is evidently *not* apart from volition or intention" (5&6.1897).

The third and last of the three objections Aquinas raises here against his own thesis is an argument from the *naturalness* of badness, one that grows directly out of the most fundamental application of the thesis, as we've just been seeing.

Every natural movement or change has an end that is intended by nature. But corruption is a natural change, just like generation. Therefore, its end, which is privation and has the defining characteristic of badness, is intended by nature just as are form and goodness, which are the end of generation. (5&6.1898)

And so, once again, it must be false that the badness in things, events, or states of affairs occurs apart from the intention of their agents—whether the agents at issue are intellective or natural.

5. Elucidating the Thesis

These arguments from prevalence, from voluntariness, and from naturalness strike me as incorporating, explicitly or implicitly, the misgivings and objections that are likely to have occurred to a careful reader of III.4 (and III.3). It also seems to me that Aquinas has not provided an account of badness (or of goodness) from which his solutions to these arguments could be readily inferred—neither in the preceding four chapters of Book III nor in the preceding two books of SCG. As if partially acknowledging this situation, he prefaces his rejoinders to the three objections with a further analysis of badness that constitutes an important supplement to everything he's said so far on these topics: "Now in order that the solution of those arguments may be made clearer, we have to consider that badness can be considered either in connection with some *substance* or in connection with its *action*" (5&6.1899).

Aquinas devotes most of his supplementary analysis to the badness of substances (S-badness), the sort with which his investigation so far has been almost exclusively concerned. The badness of actions (A-badness) is obviously very important, especially in connection with morality, but his treatment of it here is much briefer, as we'll see. His fundamental criterion of S-badness is very simple (and could be even simpler): a substance is bad (imperfect, defective) in some respect and to some extent if and only if "it lacks something that [1] is natural for it and that [2] it ought (*debet*) to have" (5&6.1899).¹³³ He confirms this criterion by showing that it systematizes ordinary attitudes.¹³⁴ Wings are no more [1] natural to a human being than hands are to a bird, and so there's nothing bad about the facts that human beings don't have wings and birds don't have hands. Fair hair *is* [1] natural to a human being, as bright coloration is to a bird; but since fair hair is no more [2] required for every normal human being than bright coloration is for every normal bird, there's nothing *bad* about being a brunette or a peahen. But, of course, "if a person doesn't have hands, which it's [1] natural for a human being to have and which a human being [2] must (*debet*) have if it's complete (*perfectus*)," *that's* bad; although, as we've just been shown, "that's something that is *not* bad for a *bird*" (5&6.1899). As these examples indicate, Aquinas's distinction between [1] and [2] makes good sense. The distinction does no work in his analysis of the badness of substances, however, since it's only a lack of something that a substance [2] must have in order to be a complete, normal specimen that constitutes S-badness, and every type-[2] lack must also be a type-[1] lack (though not vice versa). Consequently, although Aquinas continues to employ both [1] and [2] in this discussion in helpful ways, his criterion of S-badness could in theory be reduced to just a type-[2] lack. But he does offer at least a terminological reduction of his own, when he uses his analysis in terms of [1] and [2] to explain what has already seemed apparent in his treatment of badness: "in *privation* understood properly and strictly there is always the defining characteristic of badness," because "every

privation, if ‘privation’ is taken properly and strictly, is a privation of something that someone [or something] [1] is naturally suited to have and [2] ought to have” (5&6.1899).¹³⁵ On that basis Aquinas can now use just ‘privation’ to cover both type-[1] and type-[2] lacks.

More importantly, this strict sense of ‘privation’ enables him to supplement the most fundamental application of the badness thesis in a way that helps to make sense of it. His initial observation that the generation involved in every substantial change is good while its inevitably concomitant corruption is bad is essential to his account of badness. It even has a kind of initial intuitive appeal. But it’s so rudimentary that it gives rise to such apparent counter-examples as I raised regarding the “badness” of the corruption of mother’s milk—the privation of its substantial form—that is simply a necessary condition of the generation of healthy tissue in the baby. He can now refine the application so as to avoid that sort of absurdity.

Since matter is in potentiality to all forms, it is of course [1] naturally suited to have them all. However, *none* of them is something that matter [2] *ought* to have, since matter can be perfect in actuality without any one of them you choose. (5&6.1900)

Consequently, matter’s lack of any one form at all is not, speaking strictly, a privation *for matter*. When matter was here and there actualized by the form of velociraptor and nowhere by the form of chickadee, it was no better and no worse than it is now, when matter is here and there actualized by the latter form and nowhere by the former.

To evaluate matter in this way is to assign matter a standpoint, to invite the reader to consider the goodness and badness of the case from what might be called matter’s point of view. Is the extinction of the dinosaurs *bad for matter*? No. But Aquinas’s assigning of standpoints will show just as clearly that the extinction of the dinosaurs is *bad for the dinosaurs*. And, as might be expected by now, he applies this device all the way down, past living things and ordinary non-living things to elemental forms:

However, each of those forms is something that some one of the things that are constituted out of matter [2] ought to have. For matter cannot be water unless it has the form of water, nor can it be fire without the form of fire. Therefore, the privation of such a form, considered from the standpoint of matter (*comparata ad materiam*), is *not bad for matter*; but considered from the standpoint of the thing of which it is the form, the privation is *bad for it*—as the privation of the form of fire is bad for a fire,

which upon being deprived of that form is promptly extinguished (5&6.1900). Considered from the standpoint of the thing whose substantial form it is, the privation of a thing’s substantial form or of anything else that

that thing [2] ought to have “will be bad *unconditionally*,” “because privations as well as possessions and forms are said to *be* only in so far as they are *in a subject*” (5&6.1901a).¹³⁶

But, as we’ve just been seeing, the thing that [2] ought to have that form and all its normal accoutrements is not the *only* subject in which the possession or the privation occurs. When the dinosaurs became extinct, the privation of form occurred not just in the subjects that were the various species of dinosaur, for each of which it was bad unconditionally, but also in the genus *animal*, a subject for which that mass extinction happened not to be bad unconditionally (since many other species of animals happened to survive). And that same privation occurred most fundamentally in matter itself, the subject for which that privation is not bad at all.

However, if a privation is not bad considered from the standpoint of the subject in which it is, then it will be bad *for something* and *not* unconditionally. . . . Therefore, [considered just as such,] a human being’s being deprived of a hand is *unconditionally* bad, but [some] matter’s¹³⁷ being deprived of the form of air [e.g., by the action of fire¹³⁸] is *not* bad *unconditionally* although bad *for the air*.¹³⁹ (5&6.1901a)

Viewed against the background of Aquinas’s detailed analysis of badness in substances, his analysis of badness in actions (A-badness) looks surprisingly short. In some respects the discrepancy in length is justified. For instance, in his analysis of A-badness he refers simply to a type-[2] lack, a simplification he’s entitled to, as we’ve seen. And we are entitled to expect that much of what he had to say about S-badness will apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to fill out his short account of A-badness. That expectation is in fact justified, but his use of new terminology here may well put it in doubt.

Now where *action* is concerned a privation of the ordering or well-adaptedness (*ordinis aut commensurationis*) that the action [2] ought to have is bad for the action. And since for each and every action there is an ordering and a well-adaptedness that it ought to have, it’s necessary that that sort of privation in action is *unconditionally* bad. (5&6.1901b)

We’ve already seen Aquinas using the notion of ordering in connection with action, but what’s meant by ‘well-adaptedness’ here?¹⁴⁰ The most pertinent explanation of an action’s well-adaptedness is the one that Aquinas supplies in the detailed analysis of action he develops in the course of his most systematic investigation of morality, in ST IaIIae:

Everything that is ordered toward an end must be proportioned to that end, and an action is proportioned to an end on the basis of a kind of

well-adaptedness that is effected through the *circumstances* that the action ought to have.¹⁴¹ (7.2c)

As might be expected, where *moral* badness is concerned, the privation of the requisite ordering or well-adaptedness is associated with bad reasoning on the part of the agent's intellect guiding the agent's will:¹⁴² "vices and sins . . . are deprived of the well-adaptedness of reason that they ought to have—[but] deprived in such a way that reason's ordering is not entirely removed from them"¹⁴³ (ST IaIIae.73.2c).¹⁴⁴ However, although considerations of ordering and well-adaptedness are important to Aquinas's moral evaluation of actions, they seem to be only tangentially relevant to the ways in which he deals with A-badness in his rejoinders to the three objections. In those rejoinders, as we'll see, he introduces additional bases on which to evaluate actions, morally and otherwise, along with further elucidation of concepts that are essential to his account.

6. Defending and Refining the Thesis

Aquinas's opening move in dealing with the first objection, the prevalence argument, amounts to refining the frequency condition in his account of chance.¹⁴⁵ To qualify as genuinely fortuitous, an outcome must be something that happens "very seldom" in connection with the type of action being performed by a particular agent on a particular occasion, as well as something that happens "apart from the agent's intention" on that occasion—for example, drunkenness as a result of wine-tasting. But if there is a particular agent such that "what is apart from intention [in such an action of his] is something that always or often *results* from what *is* intended, then it will *not* happen fortuitously or by chance" (5&6.1902). This sensible refinement of the frequency condition enables Aquinas to undermine the prevalence argument by amending its first premise: What happens as a result of an agent's action but apart from the agent's intention happens by chance *only if the unintended consequence is not also a regular consequence of the agent's performance of an action of that type*.

This refinement obviously applies most readily, and very usefully, to unintended consequences of *human* actions, as is shown by the example of unintended but predictable drunkenness with which Aquinas introduces it. But the prevalence argument carefully applied its objection not only to volitional action, which goes bad very often, but also to the fundamental natural action of generation or transmutation, which, as Aquinas has explained, *always* involves "the badness of natural corruption" (5&6.1903). His refined frequency condition now provides a way around the absurdity of classifying the inevitable as fortuitous. The corruption that is concomitant with intended generation really is almost always apart from the intention of the generating agent. We, for instance, intend only to feed ourselves,

and not also to corrupt the food we eat. But that sort of natural corruption is necessitated, not fortuitous: it “*always* results, because [the acquisition] of one form is always connected with the privation of another” (5&6.1903). And so, in the light of the refined frequency condition, the first apparent absurdity brought out in the prevalence argument is dispelled. What happens by chance does happen very seldom, in a sense that has now been more fully explained; but, for reasons that have now been brought out, it’s not true that whatever happens apart from any agent’s intention happens by chance. The badness of natural corruption occurs both apart from the intention of the generating agent and necessarily.

Of course, not all natural badness is of that most fundamental, all-pervasive sort. We also encounter “the sort of privation that deprives what is generated of what it ought to have . . . , as in the case of congenital deformities” (5&6.1903). And since cases of that sort do ordinarily satisfy even the refined conditions of chance occurrences, they typically “*will be* by chance, as well as unconditionally bad” for the children whose deformities they are (5&6.1903).¹⁴⁶ We’ve already seen that Aquinas ascribes the badness of congenital deformities to a defect in one or more of the principles of reproductive action: “some corruption of the semen,” or what we would describe as genetic defects.¹⁴⁷ And so this kind of case leads him from the consideration of S-badness that has concerned him so far in the prevalence argument to a consideration of A-badness in natural action.

He begins by explaining it in the general terms of his three-level analysis: “the badness of action in the case of natural agents occurs as a result of a defect in active power” (5&6.1904).¹⁴⁸ But his refined frequency condition again provides the basis for a significant distinction: “this sort of badness does result apart from [the agent’s] intention. However, if such an agent suffers that defect of power either always or often, this sort of badness will not be by chance, because it results necessarily from that sort of agent” (5&6.1904).¹⁴⁹ Even in the thirteenth century, before any detection of genetic defects in prospective parents was possible, a pattern of birth defects in a family would have been enough to alter the perceived status of what would otherwise have been considered chance events, to transform natural into moral badness, to render blameworthy what would otherwise have been only deplorable, even if devastating.

This consideration of A-badness is illuminating, but it does not yet address the prevalence argument’s charge that “even as regards agents that act through will, wrong-doing happens very often”, and so it cannot plausibly be described as apart from the agent’s intention. As a first move toward squaring this sad truth with his goodness thesis—that every agent always acts for something good—Aquinas introduces an important refinement of his account of action and intention.¹⁵⁰ Actions, he observes, must all take place in the realm of particulars. Consequently, when a voluntary agent deliberates about an action, “it’s not universals that move [the agent], but rather particulars”; and so, in agents concerned with the particular things,

events, and states of affairs that provide the context for action, “the intention is for some *particular* good” (5&6.1905).

Some action-types are such that “wrong-doing results very seldom from what the agent intends—as when someone shooting at a bird kills a man”; and *that* sort of outcome apart from the agent’s intention simply *is* “bad by chance” (5&6.1905). But there are also many action-types such that the particular “good that is intended is either always or often *conceptually* (*secundum rationem*) conjoined with the privation of some good. And then moral badness follows either always or often” (5&6.1905). Aquinas’s example is of “someone who wants to use a woman for pleasure.” This intended particular good of the agent’s pleasure is conceptually conjoined with the privation of other particular goods and of certain universal goods as well, such as justice, chastity, or respect for persons.¹⁵¹ A *conceptually* conjoined privation of good is conjoined with the action-*type* and not just with some defect in some particular agent’s active power, and so no rational agent can be excused for failing to see the badness beyond the particular good he or she intends in such a case.¹⁵² Even if the conceptually conjoined privation of good is quite apart from the agent’s intention, this sort of badness, unlike the hunting accident, “does *not* result by chance” (5&6.1905).

Why, then, does such wrong-doing happen “very often”? What explains the fact that an ordinarily rational agent frequently overlooks the badness conceptually conjoined with the particular good he or she intends—especially since, as Aquinas observes, “a privation of some good is a conceptual consequence of *very many* such goods” (5&6.1906)? “The fact that someone may very often intend the sort of [particular] goods of which privations of good are conceptual consequences results from the fact that very many people live by their senses. For the things that we can sense are presented to us plainly and move us more effectively in connection with particulars, with which activity is concerned” (5&6.1906).¹⁵³

Aquinas’s thorough, effective rejoinder to the prevalence argument provides a background against which his rejoinder to the second objection, the argument from the voluntariness of badness, may look peculiar. It depends on drawing a sharp distinction between volition and intention, which, as we’ve seen, were not distinguished in the voluntariness argument itself. “*Intention*,” Aquinas now tells us, “has to do with an *ultimate* end, which a person wills for its own sake. *Volition*, on the other hand, has to do also with what a person wills for the sake of something else, even if he wouldn’t will it unconditionally” (5&6.1907). And he clarifies the distinction with a familiar Aristotelian example:¹⁵⁴

a person who throws a cargo into the sea because of [considerations of] safety doesn’t *intend* the jettisoning of the cargo, but rather the safety [of the ship]; and he *wills* the jettisoning of the cargo—not unconditionally, but because of [considerations of] safety.¹⁵⁵ (5&6.1907)

The distinction is clear enough for present purposes and obviously useful.

But how well does this account of intention suit the sorts of things Aquinas has been saying about intention so far, especially in his rejoinder to the prevalence argument? He has, after all, just been alluding to agents whose intended particular goods are “enjoying the sweetness of wine” (5&6.1902), or experiencing sexual pleasure (5&6.1905). It’s easy to grant that each of these particular goods is an end “which a person wills *for its own sake*,” but it will be only in that weak, relativized sense that either of those ends could count as “*ultimate*” for those agents.¹⁵⁶ And the third example of an intended particular good Aquinas uses in his rejoinder to the prevalence argument seems not to conform to even that accommodating interpretation of this account of intention: cases in which “wrong-doing results very seldom from what the agent intends—as when someone shooting at a bird kills a man” (5&6.1905). This agent’s *intention* is the killing of the bird. But since he’s a thirteenth-century hunter and not a nineteenth-century aristocrat, the killing of the bird is surely *not* what the hunter wills for its own sake, *not* his ultimate end even in that weak, relativized sense. That Aquinas himself sometimes ignores his precise sense of ‘intention’ seems likely (and unsurprising).

Still, it is just that precise sense on which his rejoinder to the voluntariness argument rests:

even though what is bad [in human action] is *apart from intention*, it is nonetheless *voluntary*, as the second argument proposes: not *per se*, however, but voluntary *per accidens*. . . . [F]or the sake of some sensory good to be attained a person *wills* to do a disordered action, not *intending* the disorder or willing it *unconditionally*, but rather [only] for the sake of that good. And so malice and wrong-doing are said to be voluntary in the same sense as throwing the cargo into the sea is said to be voluntary. (5&6.1907)

The emotions of the person jettisoning the cargo must be more like those of a parent disciplining a beloved child than like those of a satisfied agent of revenge, but emotions aren’t at issue here. Aquinas’s intention/volition distinction dispels the misgiving raised by revenge in the typical case in which the vengeful agent’s “ultimate” end is the particular good of retribution, perhaps associated with the universal good of justice, while the badness, the harm to the victim, is what the agent wills only *per accidens*, only conditionally, only for the sake of the intended good. This clinically detached analysis is usefully applicable beyond revenge, even to cases of the most depraved, unprovoked sadism, in which the particular good of the agent’s pleasure is really all that’s *intended*, all that’s willed *for its own sake*.¹⁵⁷

The third objection, the argument from the naturalness of badness, is as exclusively concerned with non-voluntary agents as the second is with

voluntary agents; but Aquinas begins his rejoinder to the naturalness argument with the claim that its solution “is clear *in the same way*” (5&6.1908). He can’t mean that its solution is based on the intention/volition distinction. We are familiar by now with his very wide application of ‘intention,’ but he never ascribes volition to non-cognitive, inanimate agents. His claim about the sameness of this third solution is justified at a more general level, on the basis of an analogous distinction between absolute and accidental intention, as he shows in his analysis of a natural process that might now be recognized as evaporation:

The change involved in corruption is never found without the change involved in generation; consequently, neither is the end involved in corruption found without the end involved in generation. Therefore, nature does not intend the end involved in corruption *apart from* the end involved in generation, but rather *both at once*. For nature’s *absolute* intention is not that the water *not* exist but rather that the air *exist*—the air whose existence precludes the water’s existence. Therefore, it is the air’s existing that nature intends *as such*, while it intends the water’s not existing only in so far as that is conjoined with the air’s existing. In this way, therefore, nature does not intend privations as such but [only] *accidentally*. Forms, however, it does intend as such.¹⁵⁸ (5&6.1908)

This rejoinder’s assumption that nature is universally orientated toward being and hence toward goodness rests on Aquinas’s account of the transcendental identity of being and goodness, which he develops in detail elsewhere¹⁵⁹ and occasionally alludes to in this context.¹⁶⁰

7. What Badness Could Not Be

That only God, or God’s essence, is “being itself” is one of the cornerstones of Aquinas’s natural theology.¹⁶¹ That only God, or God’s essence, is “goodness itself” is that same cornerstone viewed from another angle.¹⁶² And so it’s one of the first principles of Aquinas’s theistic metaphysics that there is exactly one essence that is good in itself and as such foundational to all created goodness and being.¹⁶³ “However,” he says, “on the basis of these considerations [of the badness thesis] it’s apparent that *no* essence is *bad* in itself” (7.1910).

In chapter 7, he offers eight arguments in support of that new thesis, and six more in the conjoint chapter 8&9. Some of them contribute to an understanding of his theory of badness, as we’ll see. But his very first, very short argument in chapter 7 is enough by itself to show just why the new thesis is indeed apparent on the basis of his considerations of the badness thesis.

For, as was said [in 5&6.1899], badness is nothing other than a privation of that which is [1] natural for someone or something and which it [2] ought to have. . . . A privation, however, is not an essence, but is rather a negation in a substance.¹⁶⁴ (7.1911)

That is, S-badness is the absence from a particular substance of something that a substance of that type must have in order to be normal or complete. A privation is no more an essence than a compound fracture is a bone, but a privation can no more occur without an essence than a compound fracture can occur without a bone. “Therefore, badness is not an essence in things, events, or states of affairs” (7.1911).

The familiarity of that line by this stage is likely to lead a careful reader to think that this new thesis doesn’t need all the support Aquinas provides for it—at any rate not these days, when Manicheism no longer worries anyone. But the Manichean cosmic dualism of balanced good and evil principles was still a theological force to be reckoned with when Aquinas was writing SCG, soon after the Albigensian Crusade against the Cathars, who were heavily influenced by Manicheism. The motivation for Aquinas’s painstaking refutation of the claim that badness *is* an essence is revealed in the concluding paragraph of his chapter 7: “Now on this basis we rule out the mistake made by the Manichees, who claim that some things are bad in their very natures” or essences (7.1920).¹⁶⁵

The fifth of chapter 7’s eight arguments provides the fullest support for the new thesis, in a way that treats S-badness in terms that are by now familiar but with new thoroughness:

Every essence is [1] natural to some thing. For if the thing is in the category of *substance*, then its essence *is* the very nature of the thing. On the other hand, if it is in a category of *accident* [—such as quality or quantity—] then it must be *caused by* the principles of some substance, and in *that* way it will be [1] natural to that substance. (It may, however, *not* be natural to some *other* substance—as heat [in the category of quality] is natural to fire although not natural to water.¹⁶⁶) But whatever is bad in itself cannot be natural to anything, since being a *privation* of that which [1] naturally inheres in something and [2] is [naturally] owed to it belongs to the defining characteristic of badness. Therefore, badness, since it is a privation of [1] what is natural, cannot be natural to anything. For that reason, too, whatever inheres in something naturally is good for it—and bad for it if it is lacking. Therefore, no essence is bad in itself.¹⁶⁷ (7.1915)

In chapter 8&9, Aquinas marshals six objections against his thesis that no essence is bad in itself, followed by his rejoinders to them. The thesis has already been well argued within Aquinas’s privation-theory of badness, and these objections themselves seem unthreatening. But some of his rejoinders introduce new and important parts of the theory. The first objection, for

instance, relies on a technicality regarding the formalities of specification in order to try to show that badness itself “is an essence, and [1] natural to some things, events, and states of affairs,” basing that conclusion on a view Aquinas shares:

[that] badness is a specifying differentia in some genera—in *habits*, for instance, and in *actions properly subject to moral evaluation (actibus moralibus)*.¹⁶⁸ For just as a virtue, considered in respect of its species, is a *good habit*, so is the vice that is contrary to it a *bad habit*, considered in respect of its species. And the same sort of thing holds as regards the *actions* associated with virtues and with vices. (8&9.1922)

It seems open to Aquinas to dismiss this objection merely by pointing out that what makes a vice specifically bad is just its privation of that aspect of the contrasting virtue which makes the virtue specifically good—as in stinginess and liberality, for instance. Instead, he takes the necessity of replying to it as an occasion for widening and deepening his subsidiary account of *moral* badness (and goodness). An action derives its species from the active principle that gives rise to it. So, for instance, a natural action is specified as heating just because its natural principle has the form of heat. But the essential active principle of moral and immoral actions is will, and a will has no specifying form of its own.¹⁶⁹ Instead, the essential active principle of an action properly subject to moral evaluation is a will-with-an-object. But, as we’ve seen, “a will’s object is an end, and something good. For that reason, actions properly subject to moral evaluation derive their species” not from their active principle’s unique fixed form, but rather “from an end” (8&9.1928)—where a will’s end on one or another particular occasion of action might be thought of as providing that active principle with its specifying form for that occasion.

Since will’s object is invariably “an end, and something *good*,” these observations so far may seem only to make it harder to understand how Aquinas thinks that some human actions (and the habits that help to govern them) will be correctly specified as *bad*. But it shouldn’t come as a surprise to find that the explanation depends on evaluating the end in different respects. A human agent’s end will be evaluated as good or bad in an overarching, universal respect depending on the degree to which it contributes to the full actualization of the agent’s specifying potentialities as a rational being.

The primary differentiae as regards actions and habits that are properly subject to moral evaluation must be goodness and badness, because goodness and badness are spoken of in respect of a universal ordering toward an end or in respect of a privation of [that] ordering. Now for each single genus there must be a single primary measure, and *the measure of morality is reason*.

That is, the measure of moral goodness and badness for human beings is rationality, the differentia of the human species and the aspect of humanity that makes human beings and their actions and habits properly subject to moral evaluation. Aquinas continues:

Therefore, some things are called good or bad in morality on the basis of *reason's* end. Therefore, in morality, whatever gets its species from an end that is in accordance with reason is called *good in respect of its species*, while whatever gets its species from an end contrary to reason's end is called *bad in respect of its species*. (8&9.1928)

Any form of overindulgence, as that designation indicates, “gets its species from an end *contrary* to reason's end” and so is “bad in respect of its species.” Nonetheless, any particular overindulgent end, “even though it *annuls* reason's end,” is, like *every* end of *every* volition, “something *good*—for example, what gives sensory pleasure, or something else of that sort” (8&9.1928). It would undercut both Aquinas's goodness thesis and his badness thesis if this certifying of a will's particular irrational end as good meant no more than that the agent's reason evaluates it incorrectly. And so he goes on to explain that things, events, and states of affairs that give sensory pleasure

are good for some animals, and even, when they're moderated in accordance with reason, for a human being. And what's bad for one animal or human being can be good for another. So not even *badness considered as a specifying differentia in the genus of morality* implies anything bad in respect of its *essence*. Instead, it implies something that is *good in itself* but *bad for a human being* in so far as it is a *privation of the ordering of reason, which is a human being's goodness*. (8&9.1928)

And so, as Aquinas concludes in another of these rejoinders,

moral badness is both a genus and a differentia—not in so far as it is a privation of the good of reason (because of which it is called badness), but in virtue of the nature of the action or habit that is ordered toward an end that is opposed to reason's [naturally] appropriate (*debito*) end. (8&9.1930)

But, since “everything that acts is a real thing,” as the fourth objection notes, and since Aquinas's privation-theory of badness denies that badness, considered just as such, is something real in its own right, there seems to be a difficulty over this recognition of badness as a genus and differentia of *action*. Aquinas agrees, of course, that

a privation, considered just as such, is not the principle of any action. That's why Dionysius says quite correctly (in Chapter IV [§31.242] of *De divinis nominibus*) that badness opposes goodness only by the power

of goodness, while in itself it is powerless and weak—the principle of *no* action, so to speak.¹⁷⁰ (8&9.1931)

Nonetheless, he explains,

when the privation associated with a contrary form and a contrary end is added to a form and end that have the defining characteristic of goodness, the action that results from such a [composite] form and end is attributed to the privation and the badness—*per accidens*, of course, [since the privational form can be an active principle only in virtue of its parasitic status], only by the power of goodness.¹⁷¹ (8&9.1931)

8. How Goodness is the Cause of Badness in Nature

Continuing that line of thought, Aquinas is led to argue for a thesis that, taken out of context, has a distinctly counter-intuitive ring to it: “what is bad is caused only by what is good” (10.1934). But at this advanced stage of the development of his privation theory he’s within his rights to say that this thesis “can be inferred from things already put forward” (10.1934). For even “if the cause of something bad is badness” at some relatively superficial level, “goodness itself must be the *primary* cause of anything bad” because (as we’ve just been seeing) “badness acts only by the power of goodness” (10.1935).

Most of the long chapter 10 Aquinas devotes to this thesis is, appropriately, given over to explaining just *how* goodness must be the cause of badness, in nature and in morality. At the outset of the chapter he offers only four arguments in direct support of the thesis, and the one that draws most instructively on things already put forward is the third (10.1937): “Whatever is properly and *per se* the cause of anything tends toward the effect that is proper to it”—as fire tends toward heating, for instance.

Therefore, if something bad [considered just as such] were *per se* the cause of anything, then it would tend toward *its* proper effect—namely, something bad. But that’s false, for it was shown [in III.3] that *every* agent intends something good.¹⁷²

The goodness thesis applies even to an agent that is itself in some respect or other something bad. “Therefore, what is bad [considered just as such] is not *per se* the cause of anything, but only *per accidens*,” as we’ve seen Aquinas explain more than once.¹⁷³ Only something that is itself a primary feature of reality, as opposed to a real defect in some primary feature of reality, can be a *per se* cause “But every *per accidens* cause is traced back to a *per se* cause. Therefore, what is bad is caused by what is good.” This combination of *per se* and *per accidens* causation is at the center of Aquinas’s

explanation of the occurrence of badness, and it needs the detailed analysis he now provides for it.

A *per se* cause is a real agent, a real power, a real instrument, real (proximate) matter, a real form, considered just as such; and all such instances of being, considered just as such, are *good*. But we've just been told that every bad effect has some such good thing as its *per se* cause, in the sense that some such good primary feature of reality must be the positive anchor to which the negative bad effect is traced in a fuller causal explanation.¹⁷⁴ Explaining the badness of limping as the effect of the badness of the bone's curvature is enough for most practical purposes. But a fuller explanation will account not merely for the defect in the walking but also for the walking without which the defect couldn't occur; and that will involve a reference to the lame person's power of walking, something good that is the *per se* cause of the motion that happens to be impaired. Still, the *mode* of causation in which something bad is caused by something good must be *per accidens*. "Bad and good are opposites, but one of a pair of opposites cannot be the cause of the other except *per accidens* . . . ; and so it follows that what is good can be an active cause of what is bad only *per accidens*" (10.1939)—the way an agent's power of walking, altogether unimpaired in itself, can be an active cause of limping *per accidens* in virtue of imparting motion to a defective instrument.¹⁷⁵

On this basis Aquinas develops an etiology of badness, first in nature and then in morality. The badness that is brought about *per accidens* in nature stems from a defect associated either with the natural agent or with the natural effect.

It's associated with the *agent*, indeed, as when the agent suffers a defect of *power*, from which it follows that its action is defective and the effect [of its action] is deficient, . . . [or] from a defect in an *instrument* or in anything else that is required for the agent's action. . . . For an agent acts by means of both: both its power and an instrument. (10.1940)

Suppose that A's natural instruments for walking—bones and muscles—are in perfect condition but that A is drunk, suffering a defect of power. The alcohol-induced defect in A's power of walking only partially explains A's staggering: A wouldn't be staggering if A couldn't walk. "An agent acts not in so far as power is *lacking* to it but rather in so far as it *has* any power, since if it lacked power entirely, it wouldn't act at all" (10.1940). The *per se* cause of A's walking *and of his staggering* is his power in so far as it remains intact. But that badness in his walking "results from an agent cause only in so far as it is *deficient in power*, and in that respect it is *not efficient*." "That's why it's said that badness doesn't have an *efficient* but rather a *deficient* cause" (10.1940).¹⁷⁶ And so A's power of walking causes his walking *per se* but his staggering *per accidens*.

Explanations of natural badness associated with *the effect* may be seen

as concerned with the “anything else that is required for the agent’s action” mentioned by Aquinas in considering instruments as loci of natural badness associated with the agent.¹⁷⁷ “For if the *matter* [that enters into the effect] is not disposed to receive the agent’s impression [of some form], then a defect necessarily results in the effect” (10.1941)—as when a defect in the marble results from a defect in the limestone. While this sort of badness associated with the effect still qualifies as deplorable in varying degrees, the sort “associated with the *form* of the effect” (10.1942) is the familiar, fundamental, inevitable, scarcely recognizable much less deplorable “badness” that “occurs *per accidens* in so far as the privation of another form is necessarily connected with [the acquisition of] any form, as a consequence of which the corruption of some other thing results from the generation of any one thing” (10.1942). Summing up this etiology of natural badness in a way that amends the thesis, “it’s clear in these ways that, where natural things are concerned, what is bad is caused by what is good, [but] only *per accidens*” (10.1943a).

9. How Goodness is the Cause of Badness in Morality

“However,” Aquinas says, “it seems to be otherwise as regards morality” (10.1944a). Particular differences between his accounts of natural and moral badness emerge in the synopsis of his moral psychology and ethics which this sentence introduces, as we’ll see. But the broadest difference is the one he states at the outset, in what amounts to a thoroughgoing rejection of consequentialism in ethics:

if moral fault¹⁷⁸ is carefully considered, it is found to be . . . unlike [natural badness] . . . in that moral fault is considered in connection with *action alone*, and *not* in connection with any *effect* brought about [by action] . . . Therefore, moral fault is considered *not* on the basis of the matter or form of *the effect* but results *solely* from *the agent*. (10.1944b)

The only basis Aquinas supplies here for this distinction is a comparison of morality with the arts. Like nature itself, “the arts are *factive*,” or productive; “that’s why flaws (*peccatum*) are said to occur in the arts as they do in nature” (10.1944b), because “art imitates nature in respect of its operation” (10.1943b). Morality, on the other hand, is “not factive but active” (10.1944b).¹⁷⁹ The principal object of evaluation in the arts and crafts is the product or effect. On the basis of that principal evaluation the artisan-agent may well be evaluated, too, as a source of badness (or goodness) in the effect; but *the action* by means of which the artisan brings about the effect in matter is typically not an object of evaluation at all. It’s only the outcome of the artisan’s action that counts. In morality, on the other hand, the immediately accessible object of evaluation is the external *action* itself,

rather than any of its effects or consequences. But because the *moral* badness or goodness of the action results solely from the *agent*, the principal object of moral evaluation is the agent considered just as such—that is, the agent analyzed into the agent’s internal principles of action.

Since some badness in nature and in the arts also stems from agents, moral badness is not unlike those other sorts in stemming from the agent (even though moral badness stems from nothing else). However, before Aquinas begins his account of the principles of actions that are properly subject to moral evaluation, he notes a respect in which the evaluation of a moral agent evidently differs from that of a natural agent, at least as regards the agent’s active power. “For *moral* fault,” unlike natural badness, “seems *not* to result from a defect of power, since weakness associated with a power either entirely removes or at least diminishes moral fault” (10.1944*a*). This is because a defect in an active power *necessitates* a corresponding defect in the associated action; and, as we’ve seen, “a moral fault must be voluntary, not necessary.” Consequently, “weakness warrants not punishment, which guilt deserves, but rather mercy and forgiveness” (10.1944*a*).¹⁸⁰ As we shall see, this mitigating consideration has a role to play in the development of his etiology of moral badness.

In his occasional allusions to morality earlier in this treatise on badness, Aquinas seems content simply to identify *will* as the active principle of moral and immoral actions.¹⁸¹ Its role is of course essential, but he’s now ready to explain that “in connection with actions properly subject to moral evaluation we find *four* active principles, in an ordered relationship to one another” (10.1945). Their relationship is complex: one of these principles or powers somehow moves or is moved by another in the system, but, as we’ll see, a power moved by another power in one way may move that same power in another way. Suppose we consider an overt action—A’s raising his hand to cast a vote—and trace the chain of active principles back from the occurrence of that external physical movement. The internal principle immediately connected with the external movement that is the terminus of A’s action is what Aquinas calls “the executive power” or “the motive power,” the active principle “by which various parts of the body are moved to execute will’s command” (10.1945).¹⁸² The motive power appears to be what we would identify as neurophysiological apparatus of various sorts. Since the motive power is whatever makes will’s command effective in the agent’s body, “this power is moved by will, which is another principle” (10.1945).

The motive power’s moving of the body is an instance of efficient causation, and so is will’s moving of the motive power. But will itself is an *appetitive* power, which must be moved by *final* causation, as we’ve seen.¹⁸³ And so the internal principle that in turn moves will must do so by providing will with an object that moves it by attracting it as an end. Consequently, what moves will in this hierarchy of principles is not some power itself acting directly on will (as will moves the motive power), but rather “the *judgment* of an apprehending [or cognitive] power, which

judges that this or that," some object apprehended by it, "is good or bad" (10.1945). The goodness or badness of the object represented to will in such judgments are the aspects of the object that move will—"one sort moving it to pursue, the other to avoid" the apprehended object. Finally, in another instance of efficient causation, "the apprehending power itself is moved by the apprehended thing" (10.1945). And, as we've just been seeing, in judging that that apprehended thing is good (or bad) for the agent, the apprehending power makes it an object for will, in that respect involving even the apprehended thing among the internal principles of A's external action.¹⁸⁴

So in the full explanation of A's raising his hand to cast a vote, the first active principle is (1) the (sound of the reading of the) motion, which is (2) apprehended by A's sensory cognition and understood by his intellect or reason, which judges the motion to be bad and presents it as such to (3) A's will, which responds to that evaluated object by moving (4) A's motive power to move his arm to vote against the motion.¹⁸⁵

In morally evaluating A's action, it would be a mistake to focus on (4) the external bodily movement, "for external acts of that sort pertain to morality only if they are *voluntary*" (10.1946a), as not every external bodily movement is. And if, as in A's case, the external act *is* voluntary, then the moral evaluation of *it*

already *presupposes* [an evaluation of] moral goodness or badness: . . . if the act of *will* is good, then the external act is also called good; but if the former is bad, the external act is bad. However, if the external act is defective because of a defect that does not pertain to will [—if A misheard the voting instructions—] that defect would have nothing to do with moral badness (*malitiam*). (10.1946a)

Mishearing "is a fault not of morality but of nature. Therefore, *that* sort of defect in the executive power" or in the external act it triggers "either totally excuses or diminishes moral fault" (10.1946a).

It would be a much more blatant mistake to look for the proper object of moral evaluation at the other end of this process. (1), "the act by which a thing moves an apprehending power, is immune from moral fault, since what is audible moves the sense of hearing (and any object moves any passive power) in accordance with a natural order" (10.1946b).¹⁸⁶ Natural order is subject to disruption, as in the possibility of A's mishearing, but the result is only natural badness.

Offhand, (2), the apprehending, interpreting, and evaluating of the external object is a much more likely object of moral evaluation. But, as Aquinas sees it,

even the act of an apprehending power, considered in itself, lacks moral fault, since a defect in it, like a defect in the executive power,

excuses or diminishes moral fault. For weakness and ignorance equally excuse or diminish shortcomings (*peccatum*).¹⁸⁷ Therefore, we're left with the conclusion that moral fault is found primarily and principally in [(3)] an act of will alone. And for that reason, too, it is because an [external] act is voluntary that it is reasonably called moral or immoral. Therefore, the root and origin of moral shortcomings is to be sought in an act of will. (10.1946c-d)

So it's crucially important to have a precise identification of this act of will. We've already come across a plausible candidate in will's act of commanding the motive power, but I want to postpone trying to decide the issue until we've seen what else Aquinas has to say along these lines.

10. A Difficulty in the Etiology of Moral Badness

Suppose that A's voting against the motion is morally bad—unjust, let's say. Then, as Aquinas points out, "this inquiry seems to give rise to a difficulty" (10.1947a). His inquiry so far has located the source of the moral badness of the external act in the agent's will, which must, therefore, be thought of as defective in some respect on this occasion. But in what respect? If the defect in A's will were natural, he says, it would "*always* inhere in the will"; and in that case A's will, in acting, would "*always* fall short (*peccabit*) morally" (10.1947a). But, he seems to be saying, no human will is *always* defective: "acts of virtue show this to be false" (10.1947a). "Therefore, so that it doesn't follow that a will falls short in *any and every* act, we have to say that the preexisting defect in the will is *not natural*" (10.1947a).¹⁸⁸ The only apparent alternative is that the defect is *voluntary*. "However, if the defect *is* voluntary, it's *already* a moral shortcoming"; and in that case, since we're out to identify the source of the moral badness, "*its* cause will again remain to be sought; and so reason will fall into an infinite regress" (10.1947a). In that case, then, the inquiry will after all *not* have located the source of the moral badness. If the presence of moral badness is to be accounted for at all, the defect *must* be voluntary. Still, "so that we're not forced into an infinite regress," the voluntary defect in A's will that is the source of the moral badness in A's external action must itself be, "nonetheless, *not* a *moral* shortcoming" (10.1947b). In this perplexing situation, Aquinas's next sentence provides a ray of hope: "Of course, we have to consider just *how* that can be the case" (10.1947c).

His extension of the inquiry aims at identifying an antecedent defect in the will that is both voluntary and not a moral defect (even though he's just said that "if the defect is voluntary, it's already a moral shortcoming"). He sets the stage with an entirely plausible general account of the appropriateness or defectiveness of activity on the part of any *secondary* agent or active principle, one that

acts by means of the power of its *primary* agent. When a secondary agent remains ordered under its primary agent, therefore, it acts in a way that is not defective. But it is defective in acting if it happens to be deflected from the primary agent's ordering, as is clear in the case of an instrument when it falls short of the agent's movement. (10.1948)

Take, for example, the badly tuned piano that mars the effect of the pianist's flawless movements. The goodness of a secondary active principle consists in its fulfilling its ordered relationship to the principle or principles to which it is secondary. A's motive power, for instance, would be defective in acting if A's arm did not go up in response to the command of A's will.

But, of course, the secondary active principle at issue here isn't any external instrument, or A's motive power, but A's will. And "in the ordering associated with actions that are properly subject to moral evaluation" will has been depicted as ordered under *two* other principles: "an apprehending power and the apprehended object, which is the end" (10.1948).¹⁸⁹ So Aquinas appears to be identifying two kinds of relevant defect in a moral agent's will: (I) a disruption of its properly ordered relationship to the apprehending power or (II) a disruption of its properly ordered relationship to the apprehended, evaluated object.¹⁹⁰

In this inquiry so far Aquinas has alluded to apprehending powers only generally, but he now needs to introduce his familiar distinction between two types of them. "Not just any apprehending power is the mover appropriate for any appetite, but this one for this one, and another for that one. Therefore, just as the mover proper for the *sensory* appetite is the sensory apprehending power, so the mover proper for *will*," since will is, as he often remarks, the *rational* appetite,¹⁹¹ "is reason itself" (10.1948). Consequently, one source of defect I in an agent's will is its being confronted with an object that has been evaluated only by the agent's sensory cognition, the apprehending power to which will is not properly ordered. But mere confrontation isn't yet disruption. "A defect in its ordered relationship to reason," defect I, actually "occurs, of course, when, for instance, will, in response to a sudden *sensation*, tends toward a good that is pleasant in a *sensory* way" (10.1950) without regard to the *reasonableness* of intending that good. In such a case a will introduces disorder into the system of active principles by allowing itself to be moved by the judgment of an inappropriate primary agent. Although Aquinas is not completely explicit about this, it seems clear that a will's tending toward—that is, intending—such a good in such circumstances is always both voluntary and morally bad. And the threatening infinite regress can be avoided in connection with defect I by distinguishing will's morally bad *intending* of such a good from its not yet morally bad *confronting* of an object evaluated by sensory apprehension alone.

Since will is moved by either the sensory or the intellectual apprehending power not directly but only by being presented with an object that attracts or repels it, there can be relevant disorder in an agent's system of

active principles even “when will tends toward action moved by an apprehension of *reason*” (10.1949). Of course, if reason’s apprehension and judgment result in reason’s “representing a good *proper* for will,” and will then actually intends that good, “an appropriate action results. But when will breaks out into action either [I] in response to an apprehension of the *sensory* apprehensive power, or [II] in response to an apprehension of *reason itself* representing some *other* good, different from will’s proper good, then the result is a moral shortcoming in will’s action” (10.1949).¹⁹² For “reason can apprehend many goods and many ends,” but “the end and primary mover for will is not just any good but a certain determinate sort of good” (10.1949). Aquinas does not further specify here the determinate sort of good that is proper for will, but for present purposes it’s probably enough to recognize that it must at any rate be a good that it’s *rational* for the agent to pursue on a given occasion, all things considered. And not even reason itself—ordinary, limited human reason—can be guaranteed to represent that sort of good to will on every occasion.

A defect in will’s ordered relationship to its proper end occurs, however, when, for instance, reason arrives by [faulty] reasoning at some good that is, either at this time or in this respect, not good, and will nonetheless tends toward it as toward its proper good. (10.1950)

So Aquinas’s continuation of his inquiry has identified two kinds of defect in will that precede any moral shortcoming in a voluntary external action: “a defect in will’s ordered relationship” either “to reason” (defect I) or “to its proper end” (defect II) (10.1950). But if these antecedent defects are to have the sort of explanatory power Aquinas is looking for, each of them must be *voluntary*, as we’ve seen. To show that they are voluntary, he has to provide more detail about will’s powers. In the first place, and most generally, “it is in the power of will itself to will and not to will” (10.1950). So, as regards defect I, a will confronted with “a sudden sensation . . . [of] a good that is pleasant in a sensory way” (10.1950) *can refrain* from intending that good. Consequently, if that will does go on to intend that sensory good without regard to its reasonableness, it does so voluntarily.¹⁹³ By the same token, as regards defect II, a will that intends an inappropriate good presented to it by reason does so voluntarily.

But Aquinas ascribes other, more precisely orientated powers to will that apply only in connection with defect II in cases in which will remains properly related to reason: “in the second place, it is in will’s power that reason actually consider or stop considering, or [in the third place] that reason consider this, or that” (10.1950). So will’s moving of reason is, like its moving of the motive power, an instance of efficient causation. A’s will need not intend any positively evaluated object presented to it even by A’s reason but can, in theory, always cause reason to stop considering that object (or objects of that sort), or to consider something else. Consequently,

if A's will does go on to intend a good presented to it by A's reason, it does so voluntarily, for more reasons than one.

Both kinds of antecedent defect, then, are *voluntary*, thereby satisfying the first of the two requirements Aquinas laid down. But if the yawning infinite regress is to be avoided, each kind of defect must, at some stage of its development, also be not morally bad. Aquinas's treatment of this crucial requirement here is frustratingly terse:

Nonetheless, neither is this defect morally bad. For if reason considered *nothing* at all, or considered *any* good at all, there is no [moral] shortcoming until will tends toward an inappropriate end—which is already an act of will.¹⁹⁴ (10.1950)

What's clearest about this passage is its identification of the primordial morally bad act of will. The act of will in which "the root and origin" of moral badness in the external act is to be found is even more fundamental than will's commanding the motive power. As Aquinas has frequently suggested in this extension of his inquiry, it's will's intending—tending toward—an inappropriate good.

And in that light it seems clearer that reason's considering "nothing at all" is meant to characterize the morally neutral internal state of affairs that must precede defect I—will's being confronted by a good evaluated by sensory apprehension alone—while reason's considering "any good at all" characterizes the morally neutral precondition of defect II—will's being confronted by a good that has been evaluated by reason, correctly or incorrectly. The voluntariness of those morally neutral preconditions depends on will's powers to alter them: to cause reason to consider the sensory good with which will is being confronted, to cause reason to stop considering the good it is representing to will, or to reconsider it, or to consider something else.¹⁹⁵ "In this way, therefore, it is clear that, as regards both natural and moral matters, what is bad is caused, only *per accidens*, by what is good" (10.1951).

11. The Rest of the Treatise on Badness

Aquinas's treatise on badness in SCG III occupies chapters 4–15. In my investigation of the treatise, I've focused on the material he develops in chapters 4–10, although I've referred to some relevant passages in the final six chapters. As I see it, the philosophical climax of the treatise is reached in III.10, and most of the developments in the remaining chapters are readily inferable from what's already been established. In the light of Aquinas's arguments in III.4–10, it should already be clear that "badness is based on goodness" (III.11), that "badness cannot entirely demolish goodness" (12), that "badness does have some sort of cause" (13), that "badness

is a cause *per accidens*" (14), and that "there is no consummate badness (*summum malum*)" (15).¹⁹⁶

Aquinas's reasons for producing this elaborate treatment of natural and moral badness at this very early stage of the development of his account of providence remain to be seen.

IV. GOD AS NATURE'S GOAL

1. Reorientation

At the end of Book III's first, introductory chapter, Aquinas divides his projected investigation of divine providence into three big topics, the first of which he characterizes as having to do with "God himself in so far as he is the end of all things," God's omega-aspect (1.1867*b*).¹⁹⁷ Since III.64 is unmistakably the beginning of Aquinas's investigation of the second big topic, God's universal governance, it looks offhand as if he intends to devote chapters 2–63 to his treatment of God as the universal goal.¹⁹⁸ In the first two of those chapters Aquinas does carry out a general investigation of the nature of agents, actions, and ends that makes an altogether appropriate preamble to a consideration of his thesis that God is (somehow) the unique, universal, ultimate goal of the actions of created agents.¹⁹⁹ However, as we've just seen, Aquinas's chapters 4 through 15 constitute a treatise on badness. God is mentioned only briefly in the twelve chapters that make up the treatise, and it's unclear how, if at all, Aquinas intends his analysis of badness to contribute to his consideration of God as goal.²⁰⁰ So, setting aside the uncertainly relevant treatise on badness, it seems right to say that Aquinas's investigation of God's omega-aspect occupies not III.2–63 but just III.2–3 and 16–63.²⁰¹ Within that latter series of chapters, he devotes III.16–24 to God as the goal of created things generally, the topic of this chapter, and III.25–63 to God as the ultimate goal of human beings specifically.

In chapter 16, Aquinas resumes the line of development that seems to have been interrupted by the treatise on badness, and he does so in a way that apparently acknowledges the interruption. In view of his having argued in chapter 2 that "every agent acts for an end" and in chapter 3 that "every agent acts for something good," it surely looks as if the main reason for arguing in chapter 16 that "something good is the end of each and every being" (16.1985) must be to remind the reader of what has already been established, before the treatise on badness. And, in fact, each of III.16's four paragraphs is closely related to one or more paragraphs in III.2 and 3.²⁰² Apparently, then, the primary function of III.16 is to reset the stage for a resumption of the account of agents, actions, and ends designed to lead to an explanation and justification of Aquinas's thesis that God is nature's

goal. Chapter 16 adds nothing substantive to the line of development begun in III.2–3, not even a reference to God, who goes unmentioned also in those two chapters at the head of the line.

2. Reintroducing God

On the basis of chapter 16's review and reorientation, Aquinas begins again in chapter 17 to move forward along the main line of development in at least two respects. For one thing, he now uses 'ultimate end' in an absolute, universal sense (as he typically wasn't using it earlier in Book III).²⁰³ This is already apparent in the chapter's thesis, that "*all* things are in an ordered relationship to a *single* good as their ultimate end" (1989). Improbable as this thesis seems at first glance, it does have the look of a natural step to be taken by someone trying to show that God is nature's goal, in whatever sense Aquinas means to defend that claim. For another thing, it's in chapter 17 that Aquinas explicitly reintroduces God as essential to the universal teleological account he's developing in Book III. Although the chapter's thesis stops short of identifying the "single good" it refers to, every one of the chapter's eight arguments explicitly identifies it as God himself.

The first of those arguments is an attempt to identify the single good as God by inferring the identification from considerations developed in III.2–3 and reviewed in III.16. The argument has two fatal but instructive flaws. In the first place, its opening inference is plainly invalid:

If nothing tends toward any thing as an end except in so far as that thing is good, then it must be that what is good, in so far as it is good, is an end. Therefore, whatever is the *highest* good is above all (*maxime*) the end of *all* things.²⁰⁴ (17.1990)

In order to support the crucial subconclusion derived in the second sentence, this opening inference needs more than it provides in its one premise; and some of what it needs it really cannot get. For instance, the inference would look stronger if it included a premise that can be found explicitly in another of the chapter's arguments: "all things are found to be ordered in various degrees of goodness under a single highest good" (17.1993). But of course this premise itself needs support. It seems very unlikely that all goods can be plausibly ordered in such a way that the various rankings plainly converge as they go up, even if we leave the ranking principles altogether implicit and intuitive. Consider just physical and intellectual pleasures, and take it for granted that the latter goods generally outrank the former, whatever the ranking of goods within each sort might be. The pleasure of proving a mathematical theorem, then, is a higher good than the pleasure of scratching an itch. But, even so, it doesn't follow that proving a theorem is for *all* things a higher good than scratching an itch.

Of course it's as plausible as it is inane to say, in very broad terms, that just as God is even better than theorem-proving, so is he far, far better than itch-scratching. However, the ranking of goods, even as crudely as that, isn't all that's at issue here.

What else is at issue might be described as the truth or falsity of the single, conditional premise. Its antecedent, "nothing tends toward any thing as an end except in so far as that thing is good," may be granted on the basis of III.3, but its consequent, "it must be that what is good, in so far as it is good, is an end," seems plainly false. For something to be X's end, it must be not only something good but also something that X intends or at least can intend (in the broad sense of 'intend' Aquinas is using in this investigation).²⁰⁵ And Aquinas would agree that if X is a cat, X *cannot* intend any intellectual pleasure; and so no such higher good can be an end for a cat. But if that whole range of higher goods, or ends, is closed to cats, then what's to show that any cat could tend toward the *highest* good? What's to show that "the highest good is above all the end of *all* things," including cats? Even if we grant that all ends are goods, we have reason to deny, or at least to doubt, the premise's overstated consequent—namely, that all goods are ends.

Five more of the arguments of III.17 are like this first one in that they set out to infer the identification of the single good as God.²⁰⁶ None of them is as flawed as the one we've just been looking at, but neither is any of them convincing. The most interesting of these five is the chapter's eighth and last argument, based on the etiological ordering of the four causes:

- 1 The end takes first place among the other kinds of causes,
 - 2 and all the other kinds of causes derive from it their function-
 - 3 ing as actual causes. For an *agent* does not act except for an
 - 4 *end* (as was shown [in III.2]), but it is by an agent that *matter*
 - 5 is brought to the actuality of a *form*. So matter becomes
 - 6 actually the matter of this particular thing, and, similarly, a
 - 7 form becomes the form of this particular thing, through the
 - 8 action of an agent and, consequently, through an end. More-
 - 9 over, since nothing is moved toward a proximate end except
 - 10 for the sake of an ulterior end, a *posterior* end is the cause of
 - 11 a *preceding* end's being [actually] intended as an end. There-
 - 12 fore, the *ultimate* end is the *first* cause of everything. But
 - 13 being the first cause of everything is necessarily associated
 - 14 with the first being, which is God (as was shown above [in
 - 15 II.15]). Therefore, God is the ultimate end of all things.
- (17.1997)

The etiological ordering of causes (in lines 3–8) might seem to be borrowing plausibility unfairly just because in place of efficient causes in general it features "agents," which we're naturally inclined to think of as cognitive agents, who act for ends in the full-fledged sense in which we do. Still, Aquinas's arguments in III.2 for broadening the concepts of agent and of end entitle him to this usage here.²⁰⁷

But the crucial principle in lines 9–10 is harder to justify on the basis of anything we've seen so far. Consider this example from the fourth of Aquinas's arguments in III.17:

Among all ordered ends the ultimate end must be the end of all the preceding ends. For instance, if a potion is made up to be given to a sick man, and it's given in order to purge him, and he's purged in order to be made thinner, and he's made thinner in order to be healthier, then [his] health must be the end of the thinning, of the purging, and of the other things that precede it in this ordered series of ends. (17.1993)

In the example, the man's health is "the ultimate end" referred to in the first sentence, albeit only a *relatively* ultimate end.²⁰⁸ It doesn't strain imagination to take the example just one step further in a recognition that the man's health is achieved for the sake of his happiness. But this familiar sort of ordering of ends does tend to come to a stop at the point at which we recognize a person's happiness as the ultimate end of the person's activity, and that individual ultimate end is obviously far from being either universal or readily identifiable as God.²⁰⁹ Nevertheless, Aquinas proceeds in that same fourth argument (following the example) as if he has grounds on which to move from this ordering of mundane, individualized ends to God himself as the universal end:

Now all things are found to be ordered in various degrees of goodness under a single highest good, which is the cause of all goodness. Consequently, since goodness has the defining characteristic of an end, all things are ordered under God as ends preceding an ultimate end. Therefore, the end of all things must be God. (17.1993)

The flaw in this generalizing part of the argument is its dependence on what I've just identified as the overstated consequent in the premise of the first argument's opening inference, represented here in the claim that "goodness has the defining characteristic of an end."

Aquinas's arguments in chapter 17, in which he tries to derive the identification of God as the universal ultimate goal from general considerations regarding ends or goods, are all unsatisfactory. However, there are also two arguments of a stronger sort in III.17, a sort that works directly from claims already established about the nature and activity of God.²¹⁰ One of those two arguments, the chapter's sixth, deserves a closer look. It depends on four established theses: (1) "the primary agent of all things is God (as was proved in the second book [in II.15])"; (2) "the end of God's will is nothing other than his own goodness [argued in I.74]"; (3) God's goodness "is God himself (as was proved in the first book [in I.37–8])"; (4) "there can be nothing that does not have its being from God (as was proved in the second book [in II.15])" (17.1995).

In the first part of this sixth argument, Aquinas prepares the ground for the introduction of these theses by developing some general points about agents and ends:

An ordering among ends follows from an ordering of agents. For just as the highest agent [in an ordered series of agents] moves all the secondary agents, so all the ends of the secondary agents must be in an ordered relationship to the highest agent's end. For the highest agent does whatever it does for the sake of its end, but the highest agent activates the actions of all the lower agents by moving all of them toward their actions and, consequently, toward their ends. From this it follows that all the ends of the secondary agents are ordered by the primary agent toward its own end. (17.1995)

At this point in the argument, Aquinas introduces theses (1), (2), and (3), enabling him to conclude that “all things whatever that are made by God, whether directly or by means of secondary causes, are ordered toward God as toward their end” (17.1995); for (1) God is the universally primary agent, (2) whose end is his own goodness, (3) which is identical with himself. Finally, then, on the basis of thesis (4), that absolutely everything must have its being from (or be directly or indirectly made by) God, “*all* things are in an ordered relationship toward God as toward their end” (17.1995).

Of all the arguments Aquinas offers in chapter 17, the sixth is the strongest, partly because in it he relies on previously well-argued theses about God. Despite the already noticed problems about the ordering of goods and of ends, there can't be similar problems about a single ordering of *agents*, given what Aquinas has established in SCG so far. Even if there are disparate orders of secondary agents, such that there is no single *non-divine* agent that is primary relative to all those orders, at this point in Aquinas's natural theology God is to be acknowledged as the universal primary (and omniscient and omnipotent) agent, linking all orders of secondary agents to himself as ultimately primary—like the supreme commander of a far-flung army the various units of which are controlled directly by obedient sub-commanders who have no power over or even knowledge of any of the other units.

This sixth argument also offers the first glimmer of light on what might be meant by saying that *God himself* is a goal or end. I've regularly inserted a parenthetical 'somehow' into my statements or quotations of Aquinas's thesis that God is the unique, universal, ultimate goal of created things,²¹¹ just because it seems offhand to make no sense to identify a *person* as the goal of other agents' activities.²¹² Where X is a person, we know what it would mean to have as a goal X's forgiveness or X's love, becoming more like X, knowing X better, living one's life with X, etc., etc. But what could it mean to have as one's goal just X herself or himself? A beginning of an answer to this question is suggested here: All the ends of all secondary agents are ordered by the universally primary agent toward its own end; the

universally primary agent = God; God's own end = God's own goodness = God himself; therefore, the ends of all secondary agents are ordered toward God himself.

At least two features of this beginning of an answer are worth noting. In the first place, since the identification of God's goodness with God himself depends on God's unique absolute simplicity,²¹³ it's no wonder that the identification of any *other* person as a goal should make no sense. In the second place, if the full explanation of Aquinas's thesis is going to develop along this line, then it looks as if no secondary, created agent—not even a human being or a purely intellective substance—need have God himself as its *consciously* intended end. According to this beginning of an explanation, God himself is the consciously intended end only of God, the universally primary agent himself, and only in a sense that depends entirely on God's own absolute simplicity. On this view as presented so far, then, every created thing has God himself as its ultimate end only on the basis of a technicality that no creature need be aware of, much less understand. In fact, it seems so far that Aquinas's universal teleology doesn't require that any creature, however advanced, be aware even *that* God himself is its ultimate end. As described so far, the mechanism of this teleology will draw all things to God whether or not any of them knows it or wills it.

3. How God is the Absolutely Ultimate, Universal, Unique End

In these circumstances, it's especially appropriate that Aquinas opens the very next chapter by acknowledging that “we still have to find out *how* God is the end of all things” (18.1999). With characteristic thoroughness, he first distinguishes two kinds of ends, one of which God himself could not be. As we've seen, ends come first in the etiological ordering of causes: without a final cause to move it to action, no potential efficient cause brings about any effect.²¹⁴ But at least some agents can be moved by a kind of end that does not yet exist outside the agent's intention, something that the agent's action is intended to bring into existence. All final causes are etiological first, but this kind of end or final cause is also *existentially last* in the ordering of causes:

there is a kind of end that is posterior in being, even though in respect of intention it does have first place causally. This happens, of course, in connection with any end that an agent by its own action *brings about* (*constituit*). For instance, a doctor brings about [someone's] health by his acting on a sick person. All the same, that person's [presently non-existent] health *is* the doctor's end. (18.2000)

The unhealthy patient's healthiness is the end that moves the doctor to act so as to bring that end into existence; it's what the doctor intends before he actually does anything to bring it about; it's the goal that moves him to do the

things he does in order to bring it about. But the patient's healthy state actually exists only after (and because) the doctor has carried out his intention. Obviously, God as the end of all things can't be an end of *this* kind.

But there is another kind of end that takes precedence in *being* just as it does in *causing*, as when we call that an end which something intends to *acquire* (*acquirere*) by its action or motion. Fire, for instance, intends to acquire a higher place through its movement; and a king intends to acquire a city through battle. God, therefore, is the end of things in the sense of something that is to be *attained* (*obtinentum*) by every single thing in its own way.²¹⁵ (18.2000)

If, as seems plausible, ends to be brought about and ends to be attained or acquired are the only two kinds of ends there are, then God himself must of course be an end of this second kind.

But *how*, exactly, is God himself to be attained by a created thing? Surely not in anything like the way the crown of the tree is finally attained by the fire that inexorably burns its way upward, and even more surely not in the way the conquered city is finally possessed by the victorious king. In classifying God as an end to be attained rather than brought about, this argument supplies what is hardly needed at this stage of Aquinas's natural theology.²¹⁶ In its two examples of ends to be attained, it seems more obfuscating than illuminating. And, at the very end, it bundles into its conclusion an important point that has neither been argued for nor explained: "God . . . is to be attained by every single thing in its own way." On the contrary, as we saw in the preceding section, the sixth argument of III.17 leaves the impression that God himself is everything's end in a way that has nothing to do with any distinctions among kinds of things and the various ways in which they might be thought to have God as their ultimate end. This first argument of III.18 can't be said to have supported its whole conclusion, nor does it make much progress in showing just *how* God is the end of all things. None of the chapter's three other arguments surpasses the first in that latter respect.²¹⁷ In the end, chapter 18's contribution to explaining how God himself is the universal end reduces to the simple, utterly obvious observation that God must be an already existent end to be attained rather than an as yet non-existent end to be brought about.

However, III.18 merely opens the inquiry into ways in which created things may be said to have God himself as their end. In III.19 Aquinas advances the inquiry by making a different use of III.18's distinction between kinds of ends, as can be seen in a careful reading of the new chapter's opening sentence: "Now from the fact that created things acquire (*acquirunt*) divine goodness they are made (*constituuntur*) like God" (19.2004). In other words, for every created thing, divine goodness is an already existent end to be acquired; and a thing's acquiring that end to any degree entails its bringing about an end of the *first* kind—namely, bringing it about that the thing

itself is (thereby and to a corresponding degree) like God. Now it's certainly true that when X attains to Y's goodness to any extent, X becomes like Y to that extent. So becoming like God is an end that is logically posterior to acquiring divine goodness; and "therefore, if all things tend toward God as toward their ultimate end in order to achieve (*consequantur*) his goodness,²¹⁸ it follows that *the ultimate end of things is to become like God*" (19.2004).²¹⁹

In that final clause we have the start of a new sort of answer to the question of what might be meant by identifying God himself as the ultimate end. If some degree of some aspect of God's goodness is the ultimate end to be achieved and, consequently, becoming like God in some respect and to some degree is the ultimate end to be brought about, then God himself, the exemplar that is the criterion for all such likenesses, is the indispensable super-ultimate end—an end that, considered just as such, can neither be brought about nor attained. If one of Scott's students wants more than anything else to achieve some measure of Scott's goodness at what he does and thereby to bring it about that she becomes like him in that respect, then within that limited context Scott himself is in that same way the indispensable super-ultimate end. So far, so good.

But this new sort of answer depends on the claims that "all things tend toward God as toward their ultimate end in order to achieve his goodness" and that "created things acquire divine goodness." Since every end is a good of some kind, there's no reason why acquiring some measure of even *divine* goodness couldn't be an end, even for creatures. But, more pertinently, we've already seen Aquinas claiming that *every* goodness of *any* sort is an aspect of the perfect divine goodness,²²⁰ and there's another such claim in chapter 19 itself.²²¹ In making these sweeping claims about the acquisition of divine goodness as a universal end, he's depending on that conception of all goods as aspects of perfect goodness itself; and so he needn't be ascribing to *any* creature a direct intention to acquire some share of divine goodness considered just as such. A created thing's consequent assimilation to God can, therefore, also be an ultimate end that is utterly unrecognized under that description even by a rational creature that is well on its way to bringing it about in some respect or other. Still, since Aquinas's account ascribes the same ultimate end also to all incognizant beings, which are necessarily incapable of recognizing any end toward which they are tending, the fact that the ultimate end goes unrecognized for what it is also by very many intellectual creatures does not in any way damage his theory.

As Aquinas views it, a created thing's bringing about in itself a likeness to God might be described more precisely as its extending and enhancing the requisite modicum of divine likeness without which the thing could not have existed to begin with. "Now all things have their being from the fact that they are made like God, who is subsistent being itself; for all [created] things exist only as participants in [divine] being" (19.2006). But even in the respect in which divine likeness is a concomitant of a thing's existing at

all, and so a necessary possession of absolutely everything there is, it is nonetheless also each thing's *end*, since

it is quite apparent that things have a natural appetite to be.²²² It's for this reason that if they can be corrupted by something, they naturally resist the things that corrupt them and tend in a direction in which they might be preserved. . . . Therefore, all things have an appetite for being made like God, as for their ultimate end. (19.2006)

On this basis, then, and in this sense and to this degree absolutely every created thing might be said to have as at least part of its ultimate end *sustaining* its fundamental if slight existential likeness to God.

4. How Created Things are Assimilated to the Divine Goodness

After Aquinas's chapter 17 argues *that* God is the end of all things, chapter 18 sets out to show *how* God is the end of all things. Chapters 19 and 20 are paired in just the same way: after III.19 argues *that* all created things intend to become like God in respect of goodness, III.20 is supposed to show *how* they can accomplish this. Although we can by now acknowledge a respect in which it makes sense to identify God *himself* as the (super-)ultimate end of all things, *assimilation* to God is the absolutely ultimate end that any created thing can bring about (even if not altogether by itself) in acquiring some measure of God's *goodness*.²²³ Consequently, Aquinas is now less likely than he was at first to identify the ultimate end as God himself, but to say instead the sort of thing he says at the outset of III.20: "it's clear that to become like God is the ultimate end of all things" (20.2009). And since "any and every being's end is something good," as III.16 argues (based on III.3), "strictly speaking, things tend toward becoming like God in so far as God is *good*" (20.2009), rather than in so far as God is, say, omnipotent or omniscient.

Of course, in virtue of absolute divine simplicity, no such distinctions apply strictly to the nature of God, in which omniscience = omnipotence = goodness = God himself, "because for God, to be, to live, to be wise, to be blessed, and whatever else evidently pertains to perfection and goodness—the *totality* of the divine goodness, so to speak—is the divine being itself" (20.2010).²²⁴ And, of course, although all created things have a natural tendency to acquire a measure of divine goodness, they

do not attain goodness in the way goodness is in God, even though each and every thing does imitate the divine goodness in its own way. . . . So if each [created] thing is good in so far as it is, but none of them is its own being, then none of them is its own goodness. Instead, each of them is good by participation in goodness, just as it is a being by participation in being itself. (20.2010)

So Aquinas's first move in explaining how created things acquire divine goodness is to preclude anyone's supposing that X's acquisition of divine goodness could in any case amount to X's being its own goodness as God is his own goodness (or goodness itself). That is (as he has argued before), no created thing could be absolutely simple.²²⁵

Aquinas draws a primary distinction among three grades of substances (20.2011c)—*divine* (and thus absolutely simple), *separated* (from matter but metaphysically complex), and *composite* (involving matter as well as form). This hierarchy is based on the ways in which a substance has (or is) goodness. The divine substance *is* its goodness; a separated substance “participates in goodness in keeping with *that which it is*”—that is, a form alone; “while a *composite* substance participates in goodness in keeping with *something belonging to it*” as a component (20.2011c). He then draws more immediately relevant distinctions within what he calls the third grade of substances, the composites. These comprise all the things that make up the physical universe: all material objects, all terrestrial and celestial bodies. What he has to say about differences among levels of terrestrial things, from the simplest (which he identifies as the elements) to the most complicated (human bodies) as regards the ways in which they share in and thus manifest the divine goodness is often insightful, and certainly essential to the development of his project in natural theology. But his sharp metaphysical distinction between all heavenly bodies on the one hand and all earthly bodies on the other, based on Aristotelian astronomy, is utterly untenable.²²⁶ However, although Aquinas makes a great deal of that distinction, I think it can be set aside without doing irreparable damage to his account of earthly bodies or even to his view of the way God governs the physical universe.²²⁷ So, setting aside his distinction between heavenly and earthly bodies, I will consider only his account of the material substances he characterizes as “the elements and the things composed of the elements” (20.2012b), ignoring (as much as possible) the fact that in his view these are only the earth itself and such material substances as are found in the earth, on the earth, and above the earth (but below the lowest of the celestial spheres, the sphere of the moon).

The elements and all the things composed of them constitute the lower half of the third (lowest) grade of substances (the upper half being made up of the heavenly bodies). Their location at the bottom of this metaphysical hierarchy is determined by a feature of their matter-form (m-f) composition. In substances of this sort “the form does not fill up the *whole* potentiality of the matter” (20.2012b).²²⁸ What this means can be seen by considering the two consequences he attributes to this ordinary, less-than-saturated sort of m-f composition. First, in the *whole* matter of any physical object “there still remains a potentiality for *another* form”; second, “in *another part* of the matter there remains a [further] potentiality for *this* form” that the object already has (20.2012b). That is, physical objects are essentially susceptible to (1) alteration—a change of forms—and (2) inten-

sification (or diminution)—an increase (or decrease) in the extent to which an object's matter is permeated by a form the object has. Aquinas does not say whether he means substantial or accidental forms, and he provides no examples.²²⁹ But clear examples involving accidental forms aren't hard to find. By putting the end of an iron bar over a flame, I can alter its form from cold to hot; and by then turning it around and putting the other end over the flame, I can extend the form of heat into more of its matter.

As Aquinas sees it, this less-than-saturated sort of m-f composition characteristic of ordinary material substances means that they must be at the bottom of the heap also as regards their capacity for acquiring a likeness to the divine goodness. Their metaphysical composition is uneven, as we've just been seeing, and Aquinas identifies the gaps as privations: "a privation is a negation in a substance of that which can inhere in the substance" (20.2012*b*). So "it's obvious that adjoined to this form that does not fill up the whole potentiality of the matter there is a *privation* of the form" (20.2012*b*). It's such privations, or unactualized potentialities, that underlie the mutability of material substances, "since it's obvious that motion [or change] cannot occur where there is no potentiality for anything else" (20.2012*b*). And it is this feature of material substances that relegates them to last place among substances also as regards their capacity for goodness. For,

since it's obvious that badness is the very privation of goodness, it's plain that in this last order of substances there is mutable goodness that is mixed together with the opposing badness—the sort of thing that can't happen in the higher orders of substances. Therefore, this kind of substance, which we've described as being in the last mode [of substances], is the last grade in respect of goodness just as it is the last grade in respect of being. (20.2012*b*)

It's mildly interesting that Aquinas goes so far here as to introduce the concepts of privation and badness that are central to the treatise on badness in III.4–15, since this is his first allusion to any of that material after chapter 15. But he might have done better to make his point more generally, based only on material substances' mutability, presumably in respect of goodness as in other respects. For while his claim that "badness is the very privation of goodness" looks as if it needs no support, the notion of privation he must rely on here is unacceptably weak by the standards he carefully and emphatically develops in the treatise on badness when he's dealing with the badness of substances. Here he says broadly—too broadly—that "a privation is a negation in a substance of that which *can* inhere in the substance." On that criterion, every brunette suffers a privation of blondness (and vice versa)—the very sort of absurdity he rejects in III.5&6.1899. There he says that only "in privation understood *properly and strictly* is there always the

defining characteristic of badness,” because “every privation, if ‘privation’ is taken properly and strictly, is a privation of something that someone [or something] [1] is naturally suited to have and [2] *ought* to have”—the very terms in which he defines the badness of substances earlier in the same passage.²³⁰

Having distinguished grades of goodness among kinds of m-f composites generally (celestial and terrestrial), Aquinas goes on to draw finer-grained distinctions of that sort among kinds of ordinary (terrestrial) material substances. In devising an order of goodness that’s supposed to provide a ranking of the composite itself, its form, and its matter, he’s making good on his claim that “a composite substance participates in goodness in keeping with something belonging to it” as a component (20.2011*c*).

For since the matter considered in itself is a being in potentiality, while the form is its actuality, and the composite substance is actually existent through the form, the *form* will of course be *good in itself* while the *composite substance* will be *good in so far as it has the form*, but the *matter* will be *good in so far as it is in potentiality to the form*. . . . (In this connection it’s apparent that ‘good’ is in a certain respect wider in scope than ‘being’).²³¹ (20.2013)

If this ranking is really there to be extracted, I suppose that Aquinas’s reason for spelling it out may be to try to show that it isn’t just each composite created thing considered as a whole that is assimilated to the divine goodness, but even its metaphysical components considered just as such. He sees God as the goal (through likeness to the divine goodness) not just of each of nature’s primary substances but also of the ultimate metaphysical components of each of them—an extremely, perhaps excessively, generous sense in which to claim that God is the ultimate end of *all* things.²³²

Perfect goodness is of course essentially and uniquely associated with absolute simplicity, and we’ve already seen several indications that when goodness and being as they occur below that summit are considered altogether universally, the higher degrees of accessible goodness correspond to lower degrees of complexity of being—as in Aquinas’s three grades of substances.²³³ But when we’re considering ordinary m-f composite substances, the relationship between goodness and simplicity is inverted. The highest degrees of goodness theoretically within the range of such beings are accessible only to the most complex m-f composites.

God is in possession of the highest perfection of goodness in his very being. A created thing, on the other hand, possesses its perfection not in unity but in multiplicity.²³⁴ . . . God is said to be powerful (*virtuosus*), wise, and active in one and the same respect, but a created thing

[possesses its versions of such attributes] in various respects. And the more distant from the first goodness a created thing is found to be, the more that created thing's perfect goodness will require greater multiplicity. . . . [N]onetheless, lower [corporeal] substances—such as the elements—are found to be *simpler* than some of their superiors—such as animals and human beings—because they cannot attain the perfection of [sensory] cognition and of intellect that animals and human beings do achieve. (20.2014)

It's only such living corporeal things as attain a certain level of complexity that can be animated by a sensory soul, and it takes a still higher level of corporeal complexity to provide the proximate matter for an intellective soul.²³⁵

Aquinas seems to think that he needs to explain how created things that exist can, nonetheless, be in a position to *attain* goodness—perhaps because he argues that anything is good to the extent to which it is, and that perfect being is perfect goodness.²³⁶ Thus, he says that

although God in keeping with his simple being has his goodness perfect and whole, created things do *not* attain to the perfection of their goodness only through their being, but through several things. For that reason, even though each of them *is* good in so far as it is, it cannot be called good *without qualification* if it lacks other things that are required for its goodness. For instance, a man who is destitute of virtue and given over to vices is indeed called good *in a certain respect*—namely, in so far as he is a being, and in so far as he is human. *Without qualification*, however, he is called not good but bad. Therefore, for no created thing is it the same to be and to be good without qualification, even though each of them is good in so far as it is. (20.2015)

Consequently,

things are ordered toward God as their end not only in respect of [their] substantial being but also in respect of things that are accidental to them and pertain to their perfection, and even as regards their proper operation, which also pertains to the perfection of a thing. (20.2016)

The special importance of a created thing's operation as a determinant of its goodness (or of its likeness to the divine goodness) is borne out in the rest of Aquinas's account of God as nature's goal.²³⁷

5. How Created Things are Assimilated to God Through Causality

When we first encounter Aquinas's thesis that God himself is the universal, unique, ultimate goal for all created things, it looks like a powerful but

mysterious claim—one that needs to be explained before the challenge of justifying it can be taken up. But now, given the explanation Aquinas has been developing for it, its justification is looking surprisingly easy, even perfunctory. It turns out, at least so far, that God himself is each thing's goal only in so far as each thing has a natural tendency to become assimilated to God. Moreover, it turns out that each thing *is* assimilated to God—wittingly or unwittingly, willingly or unwillingly—in so far as it (a) has being, (b) has goodness (consequently) in the respects in which and to the extent to which goodness is being's essential concomitant, (c) has goodness in respect of certain essential or accidental characteristics that pertain to the excellence of the sort of thing it is, and (d) has goodness in respect of the operations that are proper to that sort of thing. Given this explanation of the thesis so far, absolutely every thing ineluctably achieves its ultimate goal, at least in respects (a) and (b), merely by showing up in the real world. And it seems that any natural thing that we would be likely to call good of its kind, when we have absolutely no theological considerations in mind, would count as having achieved its ultimate goal in respects (c) and (d) as well. So far, then, God's omega-aspect and the return of all created things to their creator seem not grandly, cosmically climactic, as those descriptions and Aquinas's thesis make them seem, but anticlimactic to the point of being unnoticeable.²³⁸ Aquinas hasn't quite finished his account of the assimilation of non-human created things to God, but if it comes to little more than this in the end, we should be not just disappointed, but instructed, too. If his account falls short of our expectations, it won't have failed to live up to any promises he's made about it. For all the grandeur of its mode of expression, his thesis that absolutely every created thing has God himself as its ultimate goal certainly admits of the interpretation he's giving it.

In III.21 Aquinas presents what at first seems to be an addition not only to (a)–(d) as aspects of creaturely likeness to God but even to goodness generally as a respect in which creatures are assimilated to God: “things intend a divine likeness *also* in their being *causes* of other things” (21.2017). However, as the chapter's arguments show, the novelty of this claim is only apparent. It really is a corollary of the claim about the assimilation of created things to God by way of their acquiring goodness.²³⁹ More particularly, it's a gloss on (d) above, as can readily be seen in a combination of the chapter's first and third arguments: “A created thing tends toward a divine likeness through its operation,” as was pointed out in 20.2016 above. “But it's through its operation that one thing becomes a cause of another. Therefore, things intend a divine likeness also in being causes for other things” (21.2018). Not just goodness itself but also

an ordered relationship to goodness [not yet fully attained or not wholly the agent's own] has the defining characteristic of goodness (as is clear from things already said [in 20.2013]). But each thing has an

ordered relationship to goodness in virtue of being a cause of something else. This is because goodness is caused only *per se*, while badness is caused only *per accidens* (as has been shown [in III.10]).²⁴⁰ Therefore, to be the cause of other things is good. But in keeping with any and every good to which anything tends, it intends a divine likeness, since any and every created good is a result of participation in divine goodness. Therefore, things intend a divine likeness in their being causes of other things. (21.2020)

I introduce these two arguments only because they bring out the lack of real novelty in the claim that things are assimilated to God also in respect of causality. I don't think they're very good arguments, even if we're thoroughly comfortable with Aquinas's technically broad use of 'intend.'²⁴¹ In the first argument (21.2018), for instance, even if we accept its two premises (quoted just above), the conclusion follows only in case we *restrict* the meaning of 'intend' to having an *unwitting* tendency toward bringing about some thing, event, or state of affairs. The same restriction applies in the third argument (21.2020), which also involves difficulties over the etiology of badness.²⁴²

Other arguments in the chapter, those that don't expressly treat creaturely causality as simply an aspect of creaturely goodness, are a little more interesting if not a great deal better as arguments. For instance, Aquinas founds the fourth of the chapter's six arguments on the plausible claim that "the principles through which an effect *is a cause* of other things are conferred on it by the [effect's] agent just as are the natural principles through which the effect *subsists*" (21.2021). He provides an example drawn from the univocal causation that is characteristic of biological reproduction: "just as an animal while it is being generated gets from its generator a *nutritive* power, so also does it get a *generative* [or reproductive] power."²⁴³ Therefore, the effect tends toward a likeness of the agent not only as regards its species but also as regards its being a cause of other things." But the claim could be exemplified as well by artificial production. The causal powers that belong to any thing you make are simply consequences of the ingredients you use and the way you combine them, even when you make a dinner that, apart from your intention and to your great distress, sickens you and your family with food poisoning.²⁴⁴ Consequently, on the basis of that fundamental claim interpreted as it is in such examples, the conclusion that "an agent *intends to assimilate its patient to itself* not only as regards the agent's being but also as regards its *causality*" may seem to go too far, unless the only agent at issue is omniscient, omnipotent God himself. The argument's final conclusion does suggest such an aim:

things tend toward a likeness of God as effects tend toward a likeness of the agent (as was shown [in III.19]). Therefore, there is a natural intention in things to become like God in being causes of other things.

But that's not what the rest of the argument suggests, especially because Aquinas's only example involves biological reproduction, a kind of causation that is definitely not God's own.²⁴⁵

6. How Different Sorts of Things are Differently Directed Toward Their End

In discussing Aquinas's chapter 18, I pointed out that the conclusion of one of its arguments contains the claim that "God . . . is to be attained by every single thing in its own way" (18.2000), a claim that is not only unsupported by that argument but seems also to conflict with the impression that Aquinas's account had been making until then: that God himself is everything's end in a way that has nothing to do with any distinctions among kinds of things and the various ways in which they might be thought to have God as their ultimate end.²⁴⁶ The impression has only been deepened through chapters 19, 20, and 21. However, in III.22 Aquinas is finally ready to explain in just what respects and to what extent he thinks certain kinds of non-human things are differently directed toward their ultimate end.

In his view, the relevant differences among kinds of things are to be found only in fully developed individuals of those kinds. At the end of III.21 he says that before X "can cause another thing," X must have attained its full natural development. Unless he's thinking of X's causing another thing solely in terms of biological reproduction, this claim seems ludicrously false: a two-year-old can make a mud pie. But even if he has tacitly decided that the only kind of causality that entails being assimilated to God is the causing of another thing, thinking of it in terms of reproduction alone would inappropriately narrow the claim to cover only living beings.²⁴⁷ Still, he concludes on that basis that "although a created thing tends toward a divine likeness in many ways, this one, whereby it seeks (*quaerat*) a divine likeness through being a cause of other things, comes to it *last*" (21.2023). The "many ways" he mentions here clearly refer to all modes of assimilation to God, including all the respects in which a thing is or can be good, as well as a thing's simply being.²⁴⁸ But in III.22 the different ways in which he thinks different things are directed toward their ultimate end are confined to various sorts of *operations*:

from things already said it can be made quite clear that the *final* aspect through which each and every thing is directed toward its end is its operation—but in various ways, corresponding to the variety of the operation. (22.2024)

It's hard enough to see what Aquinas means at the end of III.21 by picking out a thing's acquiring the ability to cause other things as the culminating stage of its development, but here, at the beginning of III.22, he seems to

be advancing an even less plausible version of that claim, one in which a thing's operation *generally* depends on its full development.²⁴⁹ I don't have a satisfactory explanation of these implausible claims, but I think that their implausibility doesn't affect Aquinas's main purpose in III.22, where the developmental status of a thing's ability to perform operations is not an issue.

Since his aim in this chapter is to sort out the different ways in which different things are directed toward their ultimate end, it would be natural to expect that the differences he notes among operations will be fairly specific, or at least not as unspecific as they turn out to be. However, the basic distinction he lays down is about as broad as any distinction among operations could be. “[1] One sort is *the operation of a thing as a mover of something else*—for example, heating and cutting” (22.2025). This, of course, is the very familiar, ubiquitous, transeunt sort of activity—doing something to something else—that Aquinas has already discussed in some detail in SCG II in connection with his account of God's creative activity.²⁵⁰ “[2] Another sort is *the operation of a thing as moved by something else*—for example, being heated and being cut” (22.2025). Even though Aquinas is cataloging “operations” (*operationes*) here rather than activities or actions (*actus* or *actiones*), it may seem very odd that the sheer *passivity* of being heated or being cut is included among the very few kinds of *operation* on the basis of which Aquinas means to sort out the different routes taken by different things on their way to their ultimate goal. But his notion of operation really does seem to have been broad in just that way, as may be seen in, for example, QDA 12c: “a power is nothing other than a thing's principle of operation, whether it is action or passion.” “[3] Another sort of operation is *the perfecting of an actually existing agent without any tendency to bring about a change in anything else*” (22.2025). As this rather odd description may suggest, and as his examples later in this passage confirm, this type-3 operation, which he discusses elsewhere under the designation ‘immanent activity,’ is typified in sensation, or in mental activity.²⁵¹ So for present purposes his basic distinction among kinds of operation associated with kinds of things appears to be (1) transeunt activity, (2) passivity, and (3) immanent activity. Offhand, this is an unlikely basis on which to achieve his aims in this chapter. To pick out only one of its more obvious drawbacks as a sorting device, among non-human created things, at least all the higher animals are characterized by *all three* of these kinds of operation, and absolutely all animals, plants, and non-living things seem to be characterized by at least *the first two* of these three kinds.

The peculiarities of this basic distinction among kind of operations are not superficial, but some of the special difficulties in the text immediately following the distinction may be superficial in the sense that an emendation of the text would remove them. Still, I haven't seen just what such an emendation should be.²⁵² Here is a literal translation of the text presented in the best editions: “of which they differ in the first place from passivity and

from moving (*motu*), in the second place from action (*actione*) that brings about a change of external matter” (22.2025). The very next sentence—“Intellection, sensation, and volition are instances of this sort of operation”—provides some basis for retrospectively imposing on the disordered passage a reasonable facsimile of what must be its intended sense: (3) Immanent activity differs in the first place from (2) passivity (and from moving), in the second place from (1) action that brings about a change of external matter. But this rewriting leaves me uncertain why Aquinas would bother spelling out in this way the difference between the type-3 operation and the other two types, and what exactly he means by including “moving” in this list.²⁵³ It’s true that the type-1 operation is a kind of moving (as distinct from being moved), and when it’s introduced at the beginning of 22.2025, it’s described as such; but it’s much more precisely described in the final clause of this later sentence. Although the parenthesis in my rewriting of the passage is awkward, I think that developments in the rest of the chapter make it look like what Aquinas may have intended here.

Aquinas considers his opening distinction among types of operation, along with these immediately following comments on the distinction, to have provided him with grounds on which to move forward with the claim that

it’s obvious that things that either [2] are merely moved or [3] operate without moving or making anything [are things that] tend toward a divine likeness in so far as they are [A] perfected in themselves. But those that [1] make and move something, considered just as such, tend toward a divine likeness in being [B] causes of other things. Finally, [1a] those that *move [other things] as a result of being moved [themselves]* intend a divine likeness in both respects [A and B]. (22.2025)

It seems clear that A and B, the two kinds of divine likeness sorted out here, are those that have until now been distinguished as goodness and causality, respectively. So it seems right to say that the type-2 and type-3 operations promote divine likeness only in respect A—at least in the sense that they surely don’t do so in respect B. It’s almost as clear that the type-1 operations may be said to tend toward divine likeness in respect B. But I see no reason why type-1 operations shouldn’t also be recognized as promoting divine likeness in the other respect: a knife that is having its potentiality for cutting actualized is thereby having its goodness enhanced, at least in a technical sense Aquinas recognizes, by bringing into second actuality what is otherwise merely its first actuality.²⁵⁴ And it’s surprising to find that he considers even heating and cutting as instances of the causing of *other things*, so that even the sun’s warming a stone would somehow qualify as its causing another thing. We’ve seen the notion of causing other things acquire importance as this account has developed, partly because there’s some point in supposing that it’s only productive efficient causality of that sort that would contribute to a created thing’s likeness to God the creator. If

merely heating or cutting something else are modes of causality that also confer divine likeness in respect B, then Aquinas's use of reproduction in his examples of respect B, along with some of the things he's said earlier about it, seem misleading.²⁵⁵

But it's the last sentence of the passage quoted above that contains the most obviously novel and most difficult ingredient in the advance Aquinas is making here, in a claim that also sets the stage for the remainder of the chapter. As my numerical designation '1a' is intended to show, I'm inclined to think that these things that move other things as a result of being moved themselves are supposed to be a subgroup of 1, the things that move other things, so that the only other subgroup, 1b, would have to be self-movers, things that move other things on their own and not as a result of being moved by something else.²⁵⁶ In any case, it's only the members of 1a that Aquinas describes as intending a divine likeness in *both* respects: A, becoming perfected in themselves, and B, causing other things. And so it's obviously their being actually moved by something else that constitutes their advancing toward their own perfection, considered just as movers whose very nature requires their being moved by other things in order to fulfill their role of moving still other things. We'll see more clearly what Aquinas means by this claim, although not in a way that will explain all its peculiarities.

Some of the difficulties we've been encountering in connection with III.22's preliminary distinctions among agents and patients, operations and movements, are a consequence of the abstractness of the distinctions. We need examples. Aquinas begins to supply them at once, in ways that may seem surprising as well as elucidating: "terrestrial bodies, in so far as they are moved with natural movements,²⁵⁷ are considered as *merely moved*—not as *movers*, however, except *per accidens*" (22.2026). So all the material substances we know best, including our own bodies, considered just as bodies, appear to belong in group 2, things whose only natural operation is being moved by something else. In science's persistent, perhaps perpetual, hunt for deeper and deeper explanations of corporeal events and states of affairs, such a view of the natural world is certainly accepted and even relied on. Even in our own case (which isn't specifically at issue yet), Aquinas and many contemporary philosophers who accept the existence of self-movers wouldn't identify the human body or any part of it as a *self-mover*. Recognizing a *person* as a self-mover in no way precludes our wanting to know what *besides* her face *caused* her frown—in psychological terms at least, but perhaps also in physiological terms. Neither her face alone nor her body considered in its totality moves itself or anything else, except *per accidens*, as a result of first having been moved. Heating and cutting, Aquinas's paradigms of type-1 operations, of course involve terrestrial bodies on the active as well as on the passive side. But the bodies that bring about heating and cutting *per se* and not just *per accidens* are more than inert terrestrial bodies. They are animated.

In Aquinas's philosophy of mind, the part or aspect of a person that

moves any corporeal part or aspect of her—such as her mouth when she talks, or her hand when she shifts gears—but isn't moved in turn by something else, can't itself be corporeal. A body moves only when and as something else moves it.²⁵⁸ That's one of the reasons Aquinas has for maintaining that the distinctively human rational soul, including intellect and will, must itself be incorporeal.²⁵⁹ And it's on the basis of such considerations that he explains the exclusively *per accidens* status of (mindless) terrestrial bodies considered as movers: "For the fact that a falling stone sets in motion something that was in its way is accidental. It's like that in the case of alteration, too, and the other sorts of movement" or change, such as increase and decrease in size, that are brought about by the movements of terrestrial bodies (22.2026). The billiard-ball model of cause and effect suits this account perfectly as regards local motion, and modifying it to suit other sorts of change as described here does not require much imagination.

But Aquinas's main topic in III.22 is the different ways in which different sorts of things acquire their likeness to God, and his detailed analysis of the lowly role of terrestrial bodies in the world's causal scheme now yields a definitive account of the only way in which they can become like God. Because they are all members of the purely passive group 2, "the end of their movement is that they attain to a divine likeness in so far as they are [A] perfected in themselves," and they are perfected in so far as they have "[A1] their proper form and [A2] their proper location" (22.2026). Theoretically, their various changes or movements contribute to their attaining A1 and A2.

Matter, for instance, "tends toward its perfecting" via alteration, "in virtue of acquiring actually a form that it earlier had potentially, even though it [then] ceases to have another form that it earlier had actually" (22.2027). In this account, then, the perfecting of matter consists not in its acquiring some one superb, consummate form, but simply in its continuing to actualize its fundamental potentiality of taking on (and putting off) forms.²⁶⁰ Although matter isn't, strictly speaking, a terrestrial *body*, its metaphysical character and its role as a component of every terrestrial body make it a paradigm for Aquinas's claims about the fundamentally passive status of terrestrial bodies in this connection.

A little later in III.22, in another account of matter's part in the process of divine assimilation, he does suggest another sort of perfecting for matter, one that involves its ascent through ranked forms to the summit of terrestrial forms:

the more advanced (*posterior*) and the more perfect any actuality is, the more fundamentally matter's appetite is drawn toward it. And so the appetite of matter by which it seeks form must tend toward the ultimate and most perfect actuality matter can attain. . . . For *prime* matter is in potentiality first of all to the form of an *element*, but matter existing under the form of an element is in potentiality to the form of a

mixture,²⁶¹ for which reason elements are the [proximate] matter of a mixture. And [some] matter considered under the form of a mixture is in potentiality to a *vegetative soul*, since it is of such a body that a soul is the actuality. And, again, a vegetative soul is [sometimes] in a state of potentiality to a *sensory* soul, while a sensory soul [may be in potentiality] to an *intellective* soul. (22.2030a–b)

Without my bracketed interpolations, the last two sentences of this passage on the hierarchy of terrestrial forms can be misleading. Vegetative (or nutritive) souls are the forms only of mixed, not elemental, bodies; but obviously not *every* mixture constitutes proximate matter for a vegetative soul. A grain of salt has absolutely no potentiality for existence as a plant—no more in Aquinas's view of nature than in ours. Similarly, the generative succession from a vegetative to a sensory soul is confined to the embryonic development of animals. What animates dogwood has absolutely no potentiality for animating dogs. And the succession from a sensory to an intellective soul takes place only in the pre-natal development of human beings.²⁶²

Although the details of this passage are less clear than they should have been, it does at any rate lay the foundation for the clearly stated natural hierarchies that immediately follow it:

The process of [human] generation shows this. For in [human] generation there is first of all a fetus living the life of a plant, later the life of an animal, and finally the life of a human being. But, among things that can be generated and corrupted [i.e., terrestrial bodies] there is no next, nobler form to be found after *that* form. Therefore, the end of *all* generation is a human soul, and matter tends toward that as toward its ultimate form.²⁶³ Therefore, the elements are for the sake of (*propter*) mixed bodies, which are for the sake of living things, among which plants are for the sake of animals, animals for the sake of the human being. Therefore, the human being is the end of all generation. (22.2030c–d)

These hierarchies of generation are bolstered by a hierarchy of preservation that can, much more clearly than the generative hierarchies, be empirically confirmed:

mixed bodies are sustained through appropriate qualities of [their] elements, plants are nourished by mixed bodies, animals have their nourishment from plants, and some more highly developed and stronger animals from others that are less highly developed and weaker. (22.2031b)

Taking off from this platform of hierarchies, Aquinas details the natural supremacy of human beings in ways that show that no other terrestrial

created things are their equals or superiors in what might be thought of as a chain of creaturely command:

a human being uses all kinds of things for its own benefit—some for food, others for clothing. That's why a human being is brought into the world naked by nature, as able to prepare clothing for itself from other things. And that's why nature prepared no food appropriate for a human being other than [human] milk, so that it might seek out food for itself from various things. But a human being uses still other things for transportation, since people are found to be weaker than many animals in swiftness of motion and in strength to bear burdens—other animals having been prepared, so to speak, to help human beings. And, in addition to all these things, a human being makes use of sensible things for the perfecting of its intellectual cognition. (22.2031c)

Much of this account of human terrestrial supremacy is stage-setting for the detailed examination to come of the distinctively human assimilation to God.²⁶⁴

7. Glancing Skyward

However, the detailing of human excellence in III.22 is interwoven with a feature of Aquinas's account of nature that is irredeemably false and, from our point of view, likely to seem incongruous with what he has to say here about human beings. For the only created things to which he here expressly assigns type-1a operations—the only type of operation so far assigned that counts as moving other things *per se*, the only type that, he says, assimilates its agent to God in *both* respects A and B—are the heavenly bodies. He makes this assignment largely on the basis of Aristotelian astronomical theories that can't any longer be taken seriously.²⁶⁵ These theories lie behind his taking it for granted in III.23 that (i) the heavenly bodies have an indispensable role as movers of terrestrial bodies, especially as regards their generation. They also lead to the chapter's lengthy development of the thesis that (ii) the movers of the heavenly bodies must themselves be incorporeal, intellectual substances. Since the falsity of Aquinas's account of the heavenly bodies isn't merely superficial, and since the account seems not to be nearly so important to his natural theology as he believed it to be, I won't examine it in any detail. But I want to make just a few remarks about his view of the heavenly bodies as (i) movers contributing to terrestrial developments and as (ii) movers that are themselves dependent on being moved by intellectual substances.²⁶⁶

John Russell provides a very helpful summary of the problems Aquinas thought were best solved in terms of his thesis that (i) heavenly bodies are movers contributing to terrestrial developments:

(1) the inadequacy of the Aristotelian four elements with their limited set of properties—warm or cold, moist or dry, heavy or light—to explain the great diversity of inorganic compounds; (2) the particular difficulty of explaining how entirely new properties such as magnetism, or life, could emerge spontaneously from these elementary properties; (3) the tendency of terrestrial bodies to belong to a limited number of well-defined species, which suggested that every member of a given species must have been determined by a single universal causal agent; (4) the stability and order of the universe as a whole, which seemed to go far beyond the capacities of matter as such. All these considerations pointed to some higher unifying cause which transcended the limitations of the terrestrial realm.²⁶⁷

Of course, Aquinas could have brought on omniscient, omnipotent God himself as a *deus ex machina* whose direct, ubiquitous intervention would effortlessly dispel all these problems and more, in the style of seventeenth-century occasionalism.²⁶⁸ But to do so would have required him to suppose that God had given the vast perpetual motion machine that surrounds the earth no practical purpose in creation commensurate with its complex grandeur.²⁶⁹ At the end of the twentieth century, a natural-theological account of terrestrial processes doesn't face all the problems Russell sets out, mainly because we aren't faced with the special difficulties presented in the four-elements theory. But the problems in his list that are still recognizable could now be given nonoccasionalist explanations that are, like Aquinas's, attempts to identify and describe the device through which the creator organizes and controls nature. Putting the matter in appropriately broad terms, the theoretical role played by Aquinas's heavenly bodies has been taken over by the basic physical-chemical structure of the universe and the laws of nature.

As for (ii), the thesis that the heavenly bodies' terrestrial causality depends on its being the case that "the prime mover of the movement of the heavens is something intellective" (23.2034), Aquinas first develops and defends it in six complex arguments (23.2035–40), the most illuminating being perhaps the second of them, in 2036. He devotes most of the rest of the chapter to arguing that the movement of the heavens is "natural" despite having "something intellective" as its source.

Nonetheless, it must not be denied that the movement of the heavens is natural. For any movement is said to be natural in virtue not only of an active but also of a passive principle. . . . [T]he movement of a heavenly body is not natural, but rather voluntary and intellective, as far as its *active* principle is concerned. As far as its *passive* principle is concerned, however, it is natural, since a heavenly body has a natural aptitude for that sort of movement. (23.2041)

Although no twentieth-century natural theology could incorporate any of the details of Aquinas's account of the source of astronomical move-

ments, any theistic cosmology would have to include some version of the main thesis of Aquinas's chapter 23, that "the prime mover of the movement of the heavens is something intellectual" (23.2034)—namely, God—even if that intellectual prime mover plays that role only via a divinely instituted system of natural laws. And so the chapter's concluding paragraph is especially reassuring, although it doesn't offer precisely this (as yet unimagined) option among its acceptable interpretations. Aquinas's lack of commitment to any particular one of the interpretations is appropriate and attractive, an apparent indication that he had a keen sense of the radically speculative character of the details of his account of the nature and operations of the heavenly bodies:

Now as long as it has been established that heavenly movement stems from an intellectual substance, it makes no difference for present purposes whether [a] a heavenly body is moved by an intellectual substance conjoined with it, which is its soul, or [b] by a separated substance; or whether [c] each of the heavenly bodies is moved by God directly, or [d] none of them is moved by God directly but by means of created intellectual substances; or whether [e] only the first is moved by God immediately but the others by means of created substances. (23.2045)

8. How Even Nonintellectual Things can Acquire a Divine Likeness

From very near the beginning of this investigation of Aquinas's thoroughgoing teleology with its unique, universal, ultimate goal, it has been obvious that the difficulties of applying it to nonhuman nature and, further, to noncognitive and nonliving nature would be even greater than those associated with applying it to us.²⁷⁰ Nevertheless, Aquinas has largely bypassed this special difficulty so far, primarily by imposing a broadened, technical sense of such terms as 'agent' and 'intend' in order to include incognizant created things within his account.²⁷¹ He has, of course, noted some relevant differences between cognizant and incognizant agents;²⁷² but he has also, and perhaps more often, sketched an all-inclusive account of the way God's directing of created things—cognizant and incognizant alike—toward their goal is an extension of his having created them.²⁷³ God's general governance of creation consists in providing for every sort of created thing at least (a) its ultimate end—that is, whatever is best for its nature (and, as we'll soon see, for something else as well); (b) the principles or faculties that equip it to act in ways that tend toward that end; and (c) some direction on its way toward its ultimate end. God's providing (a) and (b) is naturally associated with his creating, and (c) is

specifically associated with God's absolutely universal directing of created things. According to Aquinas,

The effect of this governance of course appears in various ways in connection with various things, in accordance with the difference of their natures. Some things are produced by God in such a way that, having intellect, they bear his likeness and represent his image. For that reason they are not only directed; instead, they also direct themselves toward their requisite end in accordance with their own actions. (1.1865)

Along with all other created things, human beings are subject to, dependent on, divine direction. But simply in virtue of their intellectivity, the respect in which they most resemble God, to some considerable extent "they also direct themselves."

However, before turning to develop his detailed account of the divinely directed but distinctively human approach to nature's unique, universal, ultimate goal, Aquinas tries to sum up his completed account of God as the goal of nonintellective nature. As might be expected, the summing-up depends heavily on his theory of the natural instruments or intermediaries through which divine direction is imparted to all terrestrial things, events, and states of affairs—his theory that mistakenly identifies those intermediaries as the heavenly bodies and their movements.²⁷⁴ But much or all of what he wants to say along those lines in his chapter 24 could also be said, much more plausibly, if the heavenly bodies and their movements were replaced throughout with the basic physical-chemical structure of the universe and the laws of nature.²⁷⁵

In line with the account of heavenly bodies presented in III.23, Aquinas speaks here of the mover of any heavenly body as "an intellective substance." But it's clear, even in III.23, that any such created intellective substance could be no more than an instrument for carrying out the plan of the supreme intellective being that creates and governs the universe. So the intellective movers that figure in III.24 can all be thought of as no more than stand-ins for God as the prime mover and universal governor whose action ultimately explains the character and operations associated with any natural intermediaries, however they may be identified.

For instance, the first argument in III.24 is to the effect that the "principal agent" of "the forms and movements of terrestrial bodies" must be an intellective being working through natural instruments. In the argument as Aquinas wrote it, those natural instruments are of course identified as the heavenly bodies, but it would work quite as well if the principal agent were identified immediately as God and the natural instrumentation were identified as the physical structure and laws of the universe. The modified conclusion might then read this way: Therefore, the forms and the movements of terrestrial bodies are caused and intended by God as the principal

agent, but by the physical structure and laws of the universe as the [agent's] instrument.²⁷⁶ But at least one of Aquinas's arguments in III.24 needs no revising to be read as presenting the explanation of the teleological character of incognizant nature in terms of God and the basic structure and laws of nature:

it isn't hard to see how natural bodies that lack cognition are moved toward and act for an end. For they tend toward an end as they are directed toward it by an intellective substance, in the way an arrow tends toward a target as directed by an archer. For just as the arrow gets its inclination toward a determinate end from the archer's shooting it, so do natural bodies get an inclination to natural ends from natural movements, from which they get their forms, powers, and movements.²⁷⁷ (24.2049)

Of course, by 'natural movements' in this argument Aquinas means those associated with the heavenly bodies, but the designation can easily be applied to the most basic physical things, events, and states of affairs, whose natural occurrences or changes are codified in the laws of nature.²⁷⁸

Aquinas's summing-up explanation of goal-seeking among nonintellective things concludes with two accounts designed to show how such created things can be said to acquire divine likeness in being (A) perfected in themselves and (B) causes of other things.²⁷⁹ And the way he puts these accounts here shows, more clearly than before, just how likeness in respect B may be seen as an outgrowth of likeness in respect A.

He begins by explaining, in connection with A, that it makes no difference whether we say that

even things that lack cognition can [i] operate for an end, [ii] seek what is good on the basis of natural appetite, [iii] seek a divine likeness, or [iv] seek their own perfection. . . . For in virtue of the fact that they [iv] tend toward their own perfection, they [ii] tend toward what is good, since anything is good to the extent to which it is perfected. But in so far as anything [ii] tends toward what is good, it [iii] tends toward a divine likeness, since anything is assimilated to God to the extent to which it is good. But this or that particular good thing is desirable in so far as it is a likeness of the first goodness. Therefore, anything [ii] tends toward its own good because it [iii] tends toward a divine likeness, and not vice versa. And so it's clear that all things [iii] seek a divine likeness as [i] their ultimate end. (24.2051)

Having summarized and clarified his account of divine likeness in respect A—in respect of a creature's acquisition of perfection, or goodness—Aquinas takes up the *diffusiveness* of goodness, codified in the Dionysian principle, and turns it into a bridge from A to B, likeness in respect of causing other things.²⁸⁰

On this basis it's clear that to the extent to which anything is more perfect in power and more outstanding in its grade of goodness, to that extent it has a more general appetite for goodness and seeks it more and carries it out more in connection with things remote from itself. For *imperfect* things tend only to the good of *their individual selves* [—as in acquiring food—] *perfect* things to the good of their *species* [—as in producing and defending offspring —] *more perfect* things to the good of the *genus* [—as in the sun's equivocal causation of terrestrial effects]²⁸¹—but *God*, who is *most perfect* in goodness, to the good of *the totality of being*. That's why some people say, and not inappropriately, that goodness, considered just as such, is diffusive, because the better anything is found to be, the more it diffuses its goodness to more remote things.²⁸² And . . . it must be that God, who is most perfect in his goodness and most universally diffusive of his goodness, is in his diffusiveness the exemplar of all diffusing agents. However, in so far as anything diffuses goodness into other things, it becomes a cause of other things. From this it is clear also that anything that tends toward being a cause of other things tends toward a divine likeness and all the same tends toward its own goodness. (24.2053)

In III.16–24 Aquinas repeatedly and emphatically identifies God as the unique, universal, ultimate end of created things. He also provides a reasonable amount of detail regarding the inner structure of nonintellective nature's possession of and tendency to acquire more likeness to God, having identified likeness to God as the mode in which God himself, the exemplar of such likeness, can be nature's goal in practice. And he provides grounds on which to attribute “ends,” “appetites,” “intentions” or “tendencies,” and “actions” to minerals and plants as well as to non-human animals, lower and higher. But, of course, he doesn't claim that any of those created things literally cognizes or desires God or its own likeness to God. On the contrary, especially in the summing-up in III.24, he emphasizes the need for divine direction and impetus to make this universal teleology work:

it isn't hard to see how natural bodies that lack cognition are moved toward and act for an end. For they tend toward an end as they are directed toward it by an intellectual substance, in the way an arrow tends toward a target as directed by an archer.²⁸³ (24.2049)

By this stage in Aquinas's account we can readily provide a short description of the goal of all created things as he sees it: in theory, God himself; in practice, likeness to God in respect of goodness or causality. Why do they all intend that goal? Because God directs them toward it. Why does God direct them toward it? As Aquinas has repeatedly shown in his account, that goal is made up entirely of things that are variously good for various created things, and so God's motive might reasonably be identified as the creator's benevolence toward his creatures. Yes, but if that were the whole

story, there'd be no need to tell it in terms of an ultimate end for created things, or to stress the identification of that end as itself divine. Something more than benevolence to creatures lies behind the story Aquinas has been telling. To put the issue in terms he himself provides, what is the cosmic archer's target? What would motivate God to organize nature so as to manifest a manifold likeness of his goodness?

When the question is put that way, it suggests the answer in terms of a concept we've already seen to be important in Aquinas's explanation of God's creating. "Speaking absolutely, . . . God's goodness has no need of things that stand in an ordered relationship to it, *except for purposes of manifestation*, which can be carried out appropriately in various ways" (QDV 24.3c).²⁸⁴

It pertained to God, therefore, *to introduce his likeness among created things most perfectly*, to the extent to which that is compatible with created nature. But created things cannot attain a perfect likeness of God on the basis of just one species of created thing²⁸⁵ because, since a cause surpasses its effect, what is in the cause simply and as one is found complexly and as many in the effect, unless the effect belongs to the species to which the cause belongs. . . . Therefore, in order that a perfect likeness of God might be found in created things in the way that pertains to a created thing, there had to be multiplicity and variety in them.²⁸⁶ (SCG II.45.1220)

It seems that all the detailed development of the account of the ways in which nature's unique, universal, ultimate end is attained is to be understood as Aquinas's portrayal of the way God's manifold manifestation is worked out within nature itself.

Although manifold manifestation does not appear clearly as an element in the account Aquinas provides in these chapters of SCG, it certainly is a part of the parallel discussion in CT I.100–103, written soon after SCG. For instance, here are the last sentence of 101 and the beginning of 102:

It's for this reason, then, that all things have been made: in order to be assimilated to the divine goodness. From this, therefore, we must extract the reason for the diversity and distinction among things. For since it was impossible for the divine goodness to be represented perfectly, because of the [metaphysical] distance of each and every created thing from God, it was necessary that it be represented through many things, so that what is lacking in one may be supplied in another. (101.197–102.198)

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Notes

1. Some of the material in the opening sections of this chapter is adapted from TMOG, chap. 1, sects. 1–3.

2. Very near the beginning of SCG, in his general introduction to the entire work, Aquinas says,

It is difficult to argue against mistaken views associated with particular people, . . . because some of them—Mohammedans and pagans, for instance—do not agree with us about the authority of any scripture on the basis of which they can be refuted. . . . And so it is necessary to have recourse to natural reason, to which everybody is compelled to assent, even though natural reason cannot do the whole job of dealing with divine matters [i.e., with God and with everything else as related to God]. (I.2.10–11)

For the interpretation of references in this form, see n.8 below. In the first three of SCG's four books Aquinas takes natural reason to be a sufficient basis on which to do a very large part of the whole job—from establishing the existence of God through working out details of human morality. It's for that reason that I'm treating SCG I–III as the paradigm of a fully developed natural theology. (Aquinas does not, however, use the Latin equivalent of 'natural theology' to designate this undertaking. On the history of natural theology see esp. Webb (1915) and Gerson (1990). The insufficiency of natural reason Aquinas mentions at the end of the quoted passage accounts for SCG's fourth and last book, in which, beginning again with God and working his way down through rational creatures, he addresses in particular just those few, distinctively Christian doctrinal propositions to which reason would have no initial access without the revelation he accepts—propositions such as the doctrines of the Trinity, of the Incarnation, of the resurrection of the body. He does this, he says, with the aim of showing that even those propositions "are *not opposed to natural reason*" (IV.1.3348).

3. By far the best available historical account of SCG is in Gauthier (1993).

4. Just after I had delivered the series of lectures that prefigured the first of these three volumes, I was surprised to hear a friendly reviewer describe the lectures as "a commentary on the first book of Aquinas's *Summa contra gentiles*." I didn't then and don't now intend anything so comprehensive and detailed as a commentary would have to be. My aim is rather to produce a selective, critical analysis of Aquinas's natural theology, occasionally extrapolating from it in ways that strike me as consonant with the already impressively wide-ranging theistic metaphysics he developed in SCG I–III.

5. See "A Chronology of Aquinas's Life and Works" provided as an appendix in both TMOT and TMOG.

6. Perhaps the fullest, clearest evidence of this development can be found most conveniently in the thriving journal *Faith and Philosophy*, founded in 1984 and associated with the Society of Christian Philosophers.

7. See, e.g., Alvin Plantinga's discussion of natural theology in his "Reason and Belief in God," which begins by identifying it as "the attempt to prove or demonstrate the existence of God" (Plantinga and Wolterstorff (1983), p. 63).

8. My many references to SCG are in this form. The initial Roman numeral

indicates a book of SCG: I, II, III, or IV. (Since the vast majority of my references in this volume are to Book III, that particular Roman numeral will often be omitted from the references.) The two subsequent Arabic numerals, preceded by dots, indicate first the chapter and then the section as numbered in the edition of the Latin text that is best for practical purposes: *S. Thomae Aquinatis, Doctoris Angelici, Liber de Veritate Catholicae Fidei contra errores Infidelium seu "Summa contra Gentiles"* (Textus Leoninus diligenter recognitus), ed. C. Pera, O.P., with the assistance of P. Marc, O.S.B., and P. Caramello, O.S.B., in three volumes (Rome: Marietti, 1961–1967). In this book all quotations from Aquinas in English are my translations, and those taken from SCG are translated from the text supplied in that "Marietti" edition. The only complete published English translation currently in print of SCG III is contained in Bourke (1975)—the third volume (bound as two) of a five-volume complete translation.

9. See, e.g., II.4.872, discussed in TMOC, chap. 1, sect. 8.

10. "For human philosophy considers them [i.e., natural things] in their own right" rather than in their generic role as advancing and enhancing natural theology's investigation of God, "which is why we find different parts of philosophy corresponding to different kinds of things" (II.4.871).

11. Throughout SCG Aquinas freely introduces as premises of his arguments not only propositions he has argued for earlier but also many propositions he treats as *principles*, as needing no support within this project itself. As might be expected, Aquinas gets these principles almost entirely from Aristotle. No doubt he takes some of them to be self-evidently true, and surely he's sometimes within his rights to do so—e.g., "A conditional proposition with an impossible antecedent can be true," or "Substance does not depend on accident, although accident depends on substance." I believe that he takes all the others to have been successfully argued for by Aristotle. For instance, when in Book I he invokes the Aristotelian thesis of the incorporeality of the human intellect, something he hasn't even discussed in preceding chapters, he justifies doing so by pointing out that "*it has been proved* that intellect is not a corporeal power" (I.20.183)—which must be an allusion to Aristotle's own arguments to that effect in *De anima* III (an allusion of a sort that his thirteenth-century academic contemporaries would have had no trouble picking up). Since the natural theology Aquinas is developing evidently has, by his own lights, the status of a science subordinate to metaphysics proper, to *Aristotelian* metaphysics, there's every reason why he should—indeed, must—help himself to Aristotelian first principles and argued theses in developing his subordinate science. (On natural theology's status as a subordinate science in this sense, see TMOT, chap. 1, sects. 5 and 6.)

12. My references to *unaided* reason in connection with Aquinas's natural theology are intended as short for 'reason guided but unsupported by revelation,' or 'reason which revelation has provided with topics but not with premises.'

13. James F. Anderson gives a different, and misleading, impression in the Introduction to Anderson (1975):

Assuredly, there is a metaphysics—a straight philosophy—of creation contained in Book II of the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, but the Book is not merely a metaphysics of creation. . . . St. Thomas uses arguments purely natural in character, *as well as arguments appealing to the revealed word of God*. (p. 13, emphasis added)

Although Anderson gives no example of the latter sort of argument at that point, the only such example he does give, later in the Introduction, is clearly not what he thinks it is:

St. Thomas, as we shall see, does not limit himself to the so-called purely rational order. He proceeds to argue [in II.92], on Scriptural as well as rational grounds, that such substances are exceedingly numerous . . . Scripture itself bears witness not only to the existence but to the very great number of separate substances: ‘Thousands of thousands ministered to Him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before him’ (Dan. 7:10). Certainly there are rational and natural considerations. . . . But it is the Word of God which is fully conclusive in this matter. (p. 19)

In fact, Aquinas introduces the passage from the Book of Daniel only at the end of the chapter, after having produced all his non-scriptural arguments for the chapter’s thesis, in just the way he handles biblical passages generally in his natural theology: “Now Sacred Scripture bears witness (*attestatur*) to these things, for in Daniel 7[:10] it says . . .” (II.92.1794). Bearing witness to or confirming the conclusions already argued for is very different from being “fully conclusive in this matter.”

14. In this respect as in others it seems likely to have been intended to approximate the idea of an Aristotelian science.

Aristotle does not pretend to be offering guidance to the scientist—or, for that matter, to the historian or the philosopher—on how best to pursue his researches or how most efficiently to uncover new truths. . . . Rather, it [Book A of the *Posterior Analytics*] is concerned with the organization and presentation of the results of research: its aim is to say how we may collect into an intelligible whole the scientist’s various discoveries—how we may so arrange the facts that their interrelations, and in particular their explanations, may best be revealed and grasped. In short, the primary purpose of [Aristotelian] demonstration is to expound and render intelligible what is already discovered, not to discover what is still unknown. (Barnes [1975], pp. x–xi)

15. Alston (1991), p. 289, quoted more fully above; emphasis added here.

16. For what clearly deserves to be the last nail in the coffin of the stubborn tradition that Aquinas wrote SCG as a manual for Dominican missionaries to Jews and Arabs, see Gauthier’s “Appendice: La Légende ‘Missionnaire’,” in Gauthier (1993), pp. 165–76.

17. My references to *Summa theologiae* will be in this form, beginning with the traditional designation for the Part (*Pars*)—Ia (*Prima*), IaIIae (*Prima secundae*), IIaIIae (*Secunda secundae*), or IIIa (*Tertia*). The first Arabic numeral following any one of those designations indicates the Question in that Part, and the next Arabic numeral, following a dot, indicates the Article belonging to that Question. A ‘c’ immediately following the second Arabic numeral indicates that the passage belongs to Aquinas’s Reply in that Article (the “body” [*corpus*] of the Article); ‘obj. 1’, ‘obj. 2’, etc., indicates one of the “Objections” (opposing arguments); ‘sc’ indicates the “sed contra” (the citation of an authority or generally acceptable consideration contrary to the line taken in the Objections), and ‘ad 1’, ‘ad 2’, etc., indicates one of Aquinas’s Rejoinders to the Objections.

18. A minor problem associated with the term ‘divine truth’ is discussed in TMOC, chap. 1, sect. 4. I translate ‘*completam*’ here as ‘filled-out’ rather than ‘complete’ mainly because of Aquinas’s careful disclaimer about the possibility of acquiring complete knowledge of God by the methods of his natural theology (or, indeed, by any means available to human beings). Even the “consideration focused

on God's substance," which makes up most of SCG I (chaps. 28–102) "will not be complete (*perfecta*), however, because there will not be cognition of *what he is in himself*"—i.e., we cannot on that basis provide a complete account of God's essence (I.14.118).

19. See TMOT, e.g., pp. 24; 27–28.

20. Aquinas's specific reasons for focusing on human creatures emerge in more detail in TMOC, chaps. 8–10, and more of them will appear in this consideration of Book III.

21. See also the discussion of SCG II.4 in TMOC, chap. 1, sect. 8.

22. For a discussion of the special sense of '*sacra doctrina*', see TMOT, chap. 1, sect. 5, "ST and *sacra doctrina*," and sect. 6, "*Sacra doctrina* and natural theology."

23. That Aquinas himself reads the passage this way is clear from his comment on it later in III.1, where he describes the psalmist as giving us "the reason for this universal governance: because it is necessary that the things that have been established by God be also governed by him. And that's why the psalmist says 'For the sea is his,' etc." (1866*c*).

24. His intention becomes clear when, later in III.1, he claims that the psalmist "describes for us, second, the manner of God's governance": first, "as regards intellectual beings, which by following the [divine] governance achieve the ultimate end, which is God himself. That's why the psalmist says that 'the Lord does not reject his people'" (1866*b*).

25. For a discussion of this distinction and some of its ramifications, see TMOC, chap. 4, esp. sects. 1 and 6, where I argue for a necessitarian account of God's creating something or other and try to show that Aquinas himself is often at least inclined toward such an account himself. See also, Kretzmann (1991a), pp. 208–28

26. Discussed in TMOC, chap. 4.

27. See n.25 above.

28. See TMOC, chap. 3: "Creation as Doubly Universal Production."

29. See, e.g., TMOC, chap. 7, sect. 5.

30. Naturally, Aquinas does understand external direction as a limitation on autonomy, as is clear from something he says a little further on in this chapter about God's universal governance: "it is necessary that God . . . be the governor of all beings—himself directed by none [of them], of course" (1.1864, discussed below).

31. See, e.g., chap. II below, sect. 7. Aquinas has already taken the concept of chance seriously in his account of creation; see TMOC, chap. 6, sect. 8.

32. The sense in which Aquinas intends this claim about the connection between will and goodness will become clearer in II below. But see also TMOT, pp. 202–3, 206, 208–9, 211–12; and TMOC, chap. 7, sect. 4.

33. Aquinas is aware that some of the things that proceed from our wills seem to be idle or frivolous, and not directed toward any end. For his explanation of such apparent exceptions, see chap. II below, sect. 6.

34. On distinguishing as an aspect of creating, see TMOC, chap. 6, "The Origin of Species."

35. Aquinas also recognizes purely spiritual—"separated"—substances, such as angels and demons, among creatures that have or, more precisely, simply are intellects. See TMOC, chaps. 7 and 10.

36. Although, as we'll see, Aquinas considers divine directedness to be an absolutely universal characteristic of created things, he naturally takes more than one opportunity to spell out the way in which autonomy sets human creatures apart from others within God's governance. In his Commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, for instance, he uses a different division of the whole of creation as a basis on which to survey it in this respect.

Nonetheless, ‘well’ and ‘badly’ are associated with quality especially in connection with animate things, and above all in connection with those that have [what Aristotle calls] ‘*prohaeresis*’—i.e., choice. This is because what is good has the nature of an end, and, of course, things that act on the basis of choice act for an end. Now acting for an end is especially suited to animate things, since *inanimate things* act for or are moved toward an end not as cognizant of the end or as steering themselves toward it. Instead, they are directed by another, the one who gave them their natural inclination—as an arrow is directed toward an end or goal by an archer. *Animate non-rational things*, however, do indeed cognize an end and seek it with animal appetite; they also move themselves locally toward an end as things having some judgment of an end. But their appetite for the end and for means to the end is determined for them on the basis of natural inclination, and for that reason they are more acted on than acting. It’s for that reason, too, that there is in them no free judgment (*judicium liberum*). *Rational beings*, however, the only ones in which choice occurs, cognize both an end and the proportion [to the end] of things that contribute to it. And so, just as they move themselves toward an end, so do they also move themselves toward seeking the end or the means to it. It is for that reason that there is free choice in them. (In Met. V: L16.1000)

See also, e.g. ST IaIIae.1.2.

37. It may be worth noticing that Aquinas here flatly categorizes the heavenly bodies as nonintellective, whereas in Book II, under the influence of Aristotle, he seems to have been more tentative about associating intellects with them. See, e.g., TMOc, chap. 8, sect. 10.

38. See chap. III below.

39. Aquinas expressly interprets Ps. 94/95:4 as confirming this claim, saying that the psalmist proclaims “as regards corruptible things that, even if they sometimes stray from their proper actions, they are not excluded from the power of the primary governor, when the psalmist says that ‘in his hand are all the ends of the earth’” (1.1866*b*).

40. It’s a little odd to find God’s role as Lord included as part of the subject matter of Book II rather than of Book III, but I suppose that universal Lordship is at least a natural consequence of omnipotence, which, unlike God’s governance, is investigated in Book II (see TMOc, chap. 2, sects. 4 and 5).

41. See, e.g., 2.1873, where olive trees and fires are recognized as agents; 2.1869, which introduces natural heating and cooling as actions; 4.1892, which speaks of “matter’s intentions”; and 10.1937, where ‘intends’ is assimilated to ‘tends toward’ (*tendit in*). See also ST IaIIae.12.1c: “‘Intention’ signifies tending toward something, as the very sound of the noun indicates.”

42. The medieval Latin word ‘*impetus*’ has a sense very close to the sense that has been retained in the technical meaning of the English word ‘impetus’: the property possessed by a moving body in virtue of its mass and motion. In using ‘*impetus*’ in this context Aquinas seems to be thinking of a feature of the clearest kind of case for identifying an agent’s end—one in which the agent is overtly, observably aiming at achieving a recognizable goal. Bourke translates *impetus* as ‘inclination’ (in Bourke, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*), but that seems too broad, applicable to a latent or dormant tendency as well. In the English Dominican Fathers’ edition, ‘*impetus*’ is translated as ‘movement,’ which strikes me as an oversimplification in the opposite direction (English Dominican Fathers [1928]).

43. See also SCG II.23.994.

44. See sects. 3–6 below.

45. Cf. SCG II.21.975: "Every instrumental agent carries out the action of its principal agent through an action that is proper and natural to itself."

46. Of course, the truistic character of this observation makes it look ludicrous as an explanation. No one needs to be told that the fire warms the room because of its power to warm the room. What we might want to know is the detailed nature of that power. What is it about fire that gives it that power? How, exactly, does the fire warm the room? Still, those are *further* questions, and a truism can no more be faulted for not being profound than for not being true. Fire plainly does have such a power; and it's that power, whatever it turns out to be in detail, to which Aquinas wants to call attention.

47. See, e.g., III.1.1866*b*.

48. See 2.1874, discussed in sect. 4 below.

49. Since Latin has no articles, definite or indefinite, what I've translated as 'the ultimate end' in the first sentence of this passage could (and conceivably should) be translated as 'an ultimate end,' a reading that would suggest this second kind of relativity. Aquinas's use of 'ultimate end' in III.1 seems clearly to be absolute rather than relative; see 1.1865*a* and I above, sect. 5.

50. For the impossibility of getting through infinitely many see Aristotle, *Physics* III 5, 204b7–10; VIII 8, 263b3–6; *Metaphysics* XI 10, 1066a35–b1; *Posterior Analytics* I 22, 82b38–39. For other applications of this principle, see TMOC, chap. 5, esp. sect. 7.

51. See, e.g., Aristotle's *Physics* V 9, 239a10–13; also V 2, 233a21–b31.

52. See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* II 2, 994b13–15: "no one would try to do anything if he were not going to come to a limit. Nor would there be reason in the world; the reasonable man, at least, always acts for a purpose; and this is a limit, for the end is a limit." See also SCG I.38.312: "where final causes are concerned there is no infinite progress, since infinity is incompatible with an end."

53. "The ultimate end of anything is what the thing tries to achieve through its activities" (SCG II.83.1675).

54. It's a real impossibility for any one body, and it's a *logical* impossibility for all bodies at once, even though Aquinas would say that it's the ultimate end of all bodies at once. Cf. III.4.1892, where Aquinas relies on the principle that natural processes cannot tend toward what is impossible (discussed in chap. III below, sect. 3).

55. I.e., an altogether spiritual (immaterial) intellectual substance, such as an angel.

56. I omit the following phrase, which introduces a complication that is unnecessary here: "(just as not regarding the forms of things, as is proved in *Metaphysics* II [2, 994a5-19; b9–11], since a form is the principle of acting), . . ." But see below.

57. See TMOC, chaps. 7, 8, and esp. 9. See also Bagnall (1982); Kenny (1993); Kretzmann (1993); Stump (1998): 287–307; and Stump (1999a).

58. See n.49 above.

59. See also In Met. V: L2.771.

60. See n.56 above. As Aristotle observes, "the final cause is an end, and the sort of end which is not for the sake of something else, but for the sake of which everything else is" (*Metaphysics* II 2, 994b9–10). And so "final causes cannot go on ad infinitum—walking for the sake of health, this for the sake of happiness, happiness for the sake of something else, and so one thing always for the sake of another" (994a5–10).

61. See also, In EN I: L9.110–11. Aquinas's treatment of ultimate ends in these arguments seems to be influenced by an aspect of his concept of ultimate ends that he doesn't make explicit here. Cf. SCG I.74.636: "For any being engaged in willing, what is *principally* willed is its ultimate end; for the end is willed *per se* and is that for the sake of which other things get willed." Also II.30.1079:

Now necessity follows from a final cause in two ways. In one way, in so far as [a final cause] is first in the agent's intention. And in that respect there is necessity in the same way from the end and from the agent, since an agent acts to the extent to which it intends an end—both natural and volitional [agents]. For in the case of natural things an intention of the end belongs to the agent in keeping with its form, through which the end is suited to it. That's why a natural thing tends toward an end in keeping with the power associated with its form—the way a heavy body tends toward the center [of the earth] in accordance with its weight. In the case of volitional things, however, will alone inclines to acting for the end in so far as it intends the end

...

See also, TMOC, chap. 4, sect. 9. That passage from SCG II.30 may prefigure the very simple but illuminating distinction Aquinas makes near the beginning of ST IaIIae.1.1, "A human being's ultimate end": "Even though an end is last in [the order of] execution, it is first in the agent's intention" (*ad 1*). Such a distinction seems to underlie his arguments for an ultimate end in III.2, esp. when it is conjoined with this passage from ST IaIIae.1.2c:

It is necessary that all agents act for an end. For where causes that are ordered in a series are concerned, if the first of them is removed, it is necessary that the others be removed. However, among all causes the first is the final cause. The reason for this is that matter doesn't acquire a form except in so far as it is moved by an agent, since nothing brings itself from potentiality into actuality. But an agent moves only as a result of intending an end. For if an agent weren't determined to some effect, it would no more do one thing than another. Therefore, in order for it to produce a determinate effect, it's necessary for it to be determined to something definite, which has the defining characteristic of an end. Now that determining is brought about in other things through natural inclination, which is called natural appetite, just as it is brought about in a rational nature through the rational appetite, which is called will.

See also, ST IaIIae.6.1c.

62. These matters are developed more fully in another connection in TMOT, pp. 144–57.

63. See, e.g., SCG I.29; QDP 7.7c; QDV 23.7, *ad 11*; ST Ia.4.3c.

64. See, e.g., SCG I.29.273: "what is said to be *like* something is what possesses a quality or form of it"; ST Ia.4.3c: "likeness is associated with agreeing in or sharing a form."

65. My use of this term here is broader than but includes its standard contemporary use, especially in discussions of free will, where 'agent causation' is regularly contrasted with 'event causation'.

66. See also ST Ia.44.4c:

Every agent acts for an end. Otherwise it would be only by chance that one sort of thing would follow from the agent's action rather than another. Now the agent's end is the same as the patient's, considered just as such, but in different ways. For it is one and the same thing that the agent intends to impart and that the patient intends to receive.

Herbert McCabe observes that the notion that effects are like their causes is one "that the modern reader is likely to find most puzzling," but the puzzlement should

be reduced if not eliminated by limiting the application of the notion to agent causation. As McCabe very helpfully observes,

[Aquinas's] typical causal proposition . . . is not concerned with two events but with a thing, a form, and a subject into which the form is introduced by the thing. His general causal proposition would be something like 'A brings it about that *F* is in *B*', where *A* is a thing, the efficient cause, *F* is a form and *B* is the 'material cause', the subject upon which *A*'s causality is exerted. According to St. Thomas what *F* depends on the nature of *A*, so that if '*A*' is a name expressing the nature of *A*, the meaning of '*F*' will be related to the meaning of '*A*'. What the effect will look like will depend not only on *F* but also on *B*." (McCabe [1964], p. 101)

67. For more on chance, see sect. 7 below; also TMOOC, chap. 6, sect. 8.

68. See, e.g., ST Ia.13.5, obj. 1: "univocal agents . . . agree with their effects in name and definition," and esp. Ia.13.1c: "the name 'human being' by its signification expresses the essence of a human being as it really is (*secundum quod est*), for it signifies its definition declaring its essence, since the *ratio* that a name signifies is its definition." In notes to this passage the editors of the Marietti edition of ST say, "The *ratio* here is the objective concept (or that which we understand of any thing formally—*per se*, primarily), since it is what is cognitively primary about a thing (*principium cognoscitivum rei*)." They also cite Ia.15.3c and Aristotle's *Metaphysics* IV 7, 1012a21–24 with In Met. IV: L16.733. See also SCG I.72.625: "the form of a generating fire, by which it acts, belongs to the same species as the form of the generated fire, which is the end of the generating."

69. See Aristotle, *Categories* 1, 1a6. Translated from the Latin version Aquinas would have read: "But those that have a name in common and the same *ratio* of substance corresponding to the name are called univocal—e.g., animal: a human being and a cow."

70. By 'essentially' here I mean to exclude individuating distinctions.

71. See Aristotle, *Categories* 1, 1a1. Translated from the Latin version Aquinas would have read: "Things that have only a name in common but a different *ratio* of substance corresponding to the name are called equivocal—e.g., animal: a human being and a picture [of a human being]."

72. E.g., 'ball' for a spherical object and for a formal dancing party. What we have in this case, considered etymologically, is two words that just happen to be spelled and pronounced the same.

73. Aquinas sometimes emphasizes this aspect of the causal explanation. See, e.g., In DDN IV: L16.502.

74. See, e.g., III.5&6.1896, discussed in chap. III below, sect. 4. But see also, e.g., III.10.1949, where he carefully specifies *peccatum morale*; also In DDN IV: L22.589: "'*Peccatum*' is used in connection with nature, with the arts, and with will, whenever an action doesn't achieve the end it should achieve (*debitum finem*)—as when nature produces a congenital deformity, when a scribe doesn't produce good writing, and when a will doesn't bring about a virtuous act."

75. Esp. in III.4.15; see chap. III below.

76. See, e.g., III.4.1891: "a congenital deformity results from some corruption of the semen . . ."; also chap. III below, sect. 1.

77. I.e., disposed equally to either of a pair of contrary outcomes, such as heads or tails. But Aquinas's use of this notion here seems to require a more elaborate example, such as a stick balanced across a fence paling in such a way that it must fall on one or the other side of the fence when "something determines it to one of them."

78. For a discussion of the principle in another connection, see, e.g., TMOT, pp. 106–12.

79. See my example in n.77 above.

80. In 2.1869; see sect. 1 above.

81. Evidently f-ing “just for the pleasure there is in” f-ing is not to be distinguished from f-ing for its own sake.

82. It seems also possible that Aquinas’s account of chance events could be adapted to account for such bodily movements. And, as we’ve seen (in sect. 3 above), if they were accounted for in that way, they would simply be put outside the class of actions, so that the question of their ends couldn’t arise. But nothing Aquinas says in the passage under consideration suggests any such treatment of them.

83. See Aristotle, *Physics* II 8, 198b10–16.

84. The line he takes in the chapter’s arguments is what retrospectively determines the sense of ‘*bonum*’ in the thesis. Elsewhere in the chapter ‘a good’ or ‘something good’ will often turn out to be what’s wanted. But in the translation of the thesis itself, before the arguments have sorted out the sense of ‘*bonum*,’ ‘what is good’ strikes me as more nearly preserving the initial ambiguity. And in 3.1883 ‘*bonum*’ seems best translated as ‘goodness’ (see below).

85. In 2.1869 (see sect. 1 above), 2.1872 (see sect. 2 above), and 2.1875 (see sect. 5 above).

86. “Any states that are proper to matter and form considered just as such—e.g., being generated and being corrupted, and others of that sort—are propria of material substances and in no way go together with created immaterial substances” (II.54.1296). Cf. the thesis of II.55: “every intellectual substance is incorruptible” (55.1297). See also TMOC, chap. 7, sect. 9, “Incorruptibility”; and chap. 10, sects. 7 and 8.

87. The whole argument is quoted below in this same section. See also SCG I.37.306, “each thing in keeping with its own nature fights against [its own] corruption”; and, in this same chapter of Book III, “the very fact of being is good, and it is for that reason that all things seek being” (3.1881). Of course, the being that is sought by any thing is its own, and the being of that thing is good primarily for itself, since in fact an agent’s preservation of its being will often entail the simple corruption of something else.

88. Of course, the corruption of X is often appropriate or good for some Y, or even a necessary precondition for Y’s existence, since the corruption of any one thing is the generation of another (*Physics* III 8, 208a9–10), as Aquinas often remarks (see, e.g., SCG I.89.746 and III.1.1865c, quoted in chap. I above, sect. 5). And it’s not hard to see how the simple corruption of X may be appropriate for organisms competing with X, or for X’s ecosystem. But Aquinas’s argument requires appropriateness *for the agent itself*, and, as we’ve just seen, he recognizes that it’s each and every corruptible thing itself for which its corruption is bad.

89. Where intellectual agents are concerned, there will of course often be a difference between what an agent *acts for* and what it *tends toward*, perhaps especially as the agent noticeably tends toward death. But tending toward is what’s ostensibly at issue here.

90. And I suppose it’s possible that Aquinas’s ‘*tendit ad*’ is somehow narrower in meaning than ‘tends toward,’ its natural English equivalent.

91. See chap. III below.

92. This analogy seems confused. He must mean something like ‘in the same way as moving away from one thing and moving toward another have the same nature.’

93. In sect. 4 above.

94. As we’ll see in chap. III below, the principle previewed in this passage is indeed fundamental to Aquinas’s analysis of all sorts of badness in III.4–16.

95. See n.87 above. See also 1.1865*c* and chap. I above, sect. 5.

96. Cf. Aristotle, *Physics* II 8, 198b10-199a8. On actions apart from intention, see also TMOC, chap. 6, sect. 8.

97. See chap. III below, sect. 6.

98. For further discussion, see TMOC, chap. 6, "The Origin of Species," sect. 8, "Not by chance."

99. Given the ways in which Aquinas has used his notion of natural agent so far in this discussion (see, e.g., 2.1873, discussed in sect. 3 above, and 2.1874, discussed in sect. 4), I suppose that the natural agent in the case of the protective placement of the leaves might be identified as the fruit tree, exercising one of its (God-given) active powers. I'm less sure how to provide a plausible identification of the relevant natural agent in the case of the defensively well-equipped animal.

100. See, e.g., SCG I.44.378, where God's intellectual agency is associated especially with establishing ends for non-intellective created things. See also TMOT, chap. 6, "Intellect"; and TMOC, chap. 4, sects. 6 and 7.

101. E.g., by the editors of the Marietti edition, who consider the treatise to extend through III.16, which seems mistaken. The editors quite rightly point out that In DDN 4: L13-23, written concurrently with or just after SCG, contains a good deal of material fundamental to an understanding of this treatise on badness.

102. Aquinas's first argument for the badness thesis (4.1890) verges on the trivial just because it presents the thesis as a corollary: "It's obvious that whatever results from an action but diverges from (*diversum ab*) what was intended by the agent occurs apart from [the agent's] intention. But what is bad diverges from what is good, which is what every agent intends [as was argued in III.3]. Therefore, what is bad comes about apart from [the agent's] intention."

103. See 2.1883, 1885; 3.1879, 1883, 1885; also chap. II above, sect. 7.

104. On Aquinas's understanding of and arguments for God's goodness, see SCG I.37-41; also TMOT, chap. 7, sects. 5-9.

105. This question, a simple form of the problem of evil, isn't explicitly considered in III.4-16. See II.41.1178; and cf. In DDN IV: L23.593-596, a consideration of "how there can be bad things, events, or states of affairs while divine Providence exists." It makes sense to postpone speculation about Aquinas's reasons for developing a treatise on badness here in the expectation that they'll emerge in the course of our investigation, but I haven't identified them in III.4-16.

106. Aquinas deals with mistakes of this sort in the fourth and last of his arguments for the badness thesis in III.4:

In agents that act through intellect (or some sort of estimative power [found in higher species of nonhuman animals]) intending follows apprehending, since intention tends toward whatever is apprehended as an end. Therefore, if such an agent achieves something that doesn't have the species [or form] that was apprehended, that result will be apart from the agent's intention. For instance, if someone intends to eat honey but eats gall instead, believing it to be honey, that will be apart from his intention. (4.1893)

(The remainder of this fourth argument offers no significant illumination of the thesis or support for it.) See also In Met. V: L3.781:

But because someone could object that an end isn't always something good (since some people acting in a disordered way occasionally set up something bad as an end for themselves), Aristotle replies that it makes no difference to the thesis whether an end is unconditionally good or [only] apparently good. For whoever acts, acts for something

good, speaking [of acting] *per se*; for that is what he intends. But a person acts for something bad *per accidens*, in so far as he happens to think that it is good. For no one acts for anything intending something bad.

107. Shakespeare, *King Lear*, Act II, scene iv.

108. For Aquinas's account of semen as an instrument of reproduction, see SCG II.86–89, discussed in TMOC, chap. 10, sects. 2 and 3.

109. See also ST Ia.49.1c:

Badness in an action is of course caused by a defect in one of the principles of the action—either in the principal agent or in an instrumental agent. For instance, a defect in an animal's motion can occur either on account of a weakness in the motive power, as in little children, or on account of a disability only in the instrument, as in lame people.

110. See chap. II above, sect. 7. See also SCG I.39.321: “Badness either *is* a privation or *involves* a privation; and the [immediate] subject of a privation is a potentiality.”

111. But see 10.1945, discussed in sect. 9 below.

112. See chap. II, sect. 7 above.

113. See n.102 above.

114. See n.106 above.

115. This premise, familiar from 2.1869 (see II above, sect. 1), isn't hard to grant. It seems also to have been intended in 3.1887:

Everything that is moved is brought to the terminus of the movement by its mover and agent. Therefore, the mover and what is moved must tend toward the same thing. But since whatever is being moved is in a state of potentiality, it tends toward actuality and so toward what is perfect and good, since through movement it leaves potentiality for actuality. Therefore, in moving and acting both the mover and the agent always intend what is good.

116. TMOC contains more than one discussion of Aquinas's conceptions of matter. See, e.g., chap. 3, sects. 2 and 3; chap. 4, sect. 4; chap. 6, sect. 9; and chap. 7, sect. 8.

117. In SCG II.55.1298, discussed in chap. II above, sect. 7: “All corruption occurs through a separation of form from matter—simple corruption through the separation of the substantial form, of course, but corruption in a certain respect through the separation of an accidental form.” Correspondingly, all generation may be described as occurring through an imposition of form on matter—simple generation through the imposition of a substantial form, of course, but generation in a certain respect through the imposition of an accidental form.

118. “For instance, when matter is under the form of air, it is in a state of potentiality to the form of fire and the privation of the form of air. And the transmutation of the matter is terminated in both at once: in the form of fire in so far as fire is generated, of course, but in the privation of the form of air in so far as the air is corrupted.” See also, In DDN IV: L16.492:

It's clear that fire generates fire and corrupts air, since in fire the form of fire (which pertains to good) is conjoined with the privation of the form of air (which pertains to badness). Now the fact that fire generates fire isn't a consequence of its lacking the form of air but rather of its hav-

ing the form of fire; otherwise whatever lacked the form of air would produce fire, which is false. Instead, it corrupts air in so far as a privation of the form of air is necessarily adjoined to the form of fire.

Aquinas didn't know that burning is rapid oxidation, but we might give this example an anachronistically correct interpretation by reading it along those lines.

119. See also ST Ia.49.1c:

Now badness in some thing, event, or state of affairs (but not in the agent's proper effect) is sometimes caused by the agent's power, but other times by a defect in the agent's power or in the matter. It's caused by the agent's power or perfection, of course, when the privation of another form follows necessarily from the form intended by the agent.

In the continuation of this passage Aquinas develops a more detailed version of the example quoted in n.18 above.

120. See chap. II above, sect. 7, esp. n.87.

121. See also, II.41.1176:

What is altogether nonexistent is neither good nor bad; but whatever is good, insofar as it is (as has been shown [in 41.1171]). Therefore, it must be that anything is bad insofar as it is a nonbeing; but *that* is a being that is [to some extent] deprived of being (*hoc autem est ens privatum*). Therefore, what is bad, insofar as it is so, is a being that is deprived of being; and the badness itself is that very privation. Now privation has no *per se* agent cause, because every agent acts insofar as it has form; and so the *per se* effect of an agent must be something having form, since an agent does something like itself (except *per accidens*). Therefore, we are left with the conclusion that badness does not have a *per se* agent cause but happens *per accidens* in connection with effects of *per se* agent causes.

122. On the metaphysical connection of goodness with being see, e.g., II.41.1171–76; also, Aertsen (1996); MacDonald (1991); Stump and Kretzmann (1988).

123. See also In DDN IV: L15.490:

For the corruption of one thing is the generation of another, so that whatever is corruptive of existing things is also generative of existing things. But everything that is generative of existent things contributes to the perfecting of the the universe. Therefore, it follows that [quoting Dionysius] 'badness contributes to the completing of all'—i.e., of the universe. . . . That badness contributes to the beauty and perfection of the universe is not absurd, in so far as good things follow *per accidens* from bad things, as Augustine says in his *Enchiridion* [*Ad Laurentium sive de Fide, Spe, et Caritate*, n.3, cap. IX]. (ML 40, 236)

See also In DDN IV: L16.495. But see also SCG III.11.1955:

Something is called bad because it is *harmful* [Augustine, *Enchiridion* 12], but only if it is harmful to what is good. For to harm what is bad is good, because the corruption of what is bad is good. However, formally speaking it wouldn't harm what is good unless it were *in* what is good; for blindness harms a man in so far as it is in him. Therefore, what is bad must be in what is good.

124. SCG I.17.140*d*. See also I.43.361, where prime matter is described as “mere potentiality” and as “infinite in its potentiality”; and II.43.1195: “Prime matter cannot pre-exist by itself before all formed bodies, since it is nothing other than mere potentiality. For every case of existing in actuality is dependent on some form.”

125. Since the privation of a form is a fundamental badness, some people might suppose that prime matter, lacking any form at all, must also be the primary badness.

But that’s impossible, since they say that the primary badness is what brings about all instances of badness; but [quoting Dionysius] ‘matter existing on its own, without quality and form,’ can’t bring about anything. For the source of acting is a form, through which something exists in actuality . . . (In DDN IV: L21.560)

126. See n.117 above.

127. It’s not hard to see how qualitative alteration as a species of movement or change involves generation/corruption in a certain respect. It takes a little more imagination to see how generation/corruption in a certain respect is involved in the other Aristotelian species of movement or change recognized by Aquinas—quantitative increase/decrease and local motion.

128. A potentiality’s proper actuality and the actuality it ought to have are clearly the same, but it seems important to bring out the special force of the latter expression because of the role it plays in III.5&6.

129. See 3.1886: “Whatever results from any agent’s action but is apart from the agent’s intention is said to happen by chance or fortune,” discussed in chap. II above, sect. 7.

130. See 3.1886 and chap. II above, sect. 7. See also Aristotle, *Physics* II 5, 196b10–17; 8, 198b10–199a8. In this special context the expression ‘very seldom (*in paucioribus*)’ is used simply as a negation of ‘in every case or in most cases.’ A chance event-type such as a fair coin’s turning up heads doesn’t happen very seldom in the ordinary sense of ‘very seldom,’ but it wouldn’t qualify as fortuitous if it did happen in every coin-toss or in most of them.

131. What Aristotle actually says is that “it is no easy task to be good; for in no case is it an easy task to find the middle. For instance, to find the middle of a circle is not for everyone, but for the person who knows . . .”

132. In sects. 1 and 2 above.

133. Because Aquinas applies the two parts of this criterion throughout his account of badness, I’ll use these numerical designations to indicate these parts through sect. 7 of this chapter.

134. See 7.1911: “As was said,” in this passage, 5&6.1899, “badness is nothing other than a privation of that which someone or something [1] is naturally suited to have and [2] ought to have—for that’s how everybody uses the word ‘bad’.”

135. Notice that this passage can be construed as a refinement of a crucial passage in the argument from naturalness considered just above.

136. See also 11.1954:

Whatever is bad is some sort of privation . . . ; but a privation and the form that is removed thereby are in the same subject. But the subject of a form is a being that is in a state of potentiality to the form, which is good; for potentiality and actuality are in the same genus. Therefore, privation, which is bad, is in something good as its subject.

137. The Leonine edn. has *materia* here (p. 14, col. b, line 25) and lists no

variants. The Marietti edn. has the same reading (5&6.1901a, line 6). The text should read *materiam*.

138. See n.18 above.

139. See also 5&6.1909, the summary conclusion Aquinas draws from his rejoinders to objections to the badness thesis:

From things already set out it's clear that what is unconditionally bad is entirely apart from intention where the works of nature are concerned, as in the case of congenital deformities. On the other hand, what is bad not unconditionally, but rather relative to something or someone, nature intends not as such but [only] accidentally.

See sect. 6 below.

140. For example, in his most fundamental application of the badness thesis (4.1892), discussed in sect. 3 above, and, in a more fully developed way, in 2.1871, discussed in chap. II above, sect. 2; see also 2.1876b, discussed in chap. II above, sect. 6.

141. On "circumstances" as a basis for the evaluation of actions, see all of ST IaIIae.7. The list of relevant circumstances Aquinas supplies in 7.3 includes *who* does the action, *what* is done, *where*, *by what means*, *why*, *how*, *when*, *the object* of the action, and its *purpose*. Think, for instance, of you as the one who does the action and of talking as the action, and then notice how standard moral evaluations of your talking would differ, depending on variations in the other circumstances.

142. On Aquinas's analysis of intellective action see sects. 9 and 10 below; also, e.g., TMOT, pp. 202–8; TMOC, chap. 7, sect. 4. See also, Stump (1997): 576–97

143. If reason's ordering were *entirely* removed, no human action, bad or good, could take place at all.

144. Cf. esp. ST IaIIae.71.6c:

A human action has badness as a consequence of lacking the requisite well-adaptedness. But all well-adaptedness of any thing, event, or state of affairs is assessed (*attenditur*) on the basis of some rule, so that it will lack well-adaptedness if it deviates from that rule. Now there are two rules of human volition. One is proximate to and homogeneous with volition—namely, human reason itself. But the other one is the primary rule—namely, the eternal law, which is, so to speak, God's reason.

145. I've already made use of this refinement in chap. II above, sect. 7.

146. The badness of natural corruption is entailed by transmutation. Supposing that it is apart from God's intention, it isn't preventable in created nature even by omnipotent, perfectly good God. But the same can't obviously be said about the natural badness of congenital deformities, for instance; and so Aquinas seems to be storing up a problem of natural evil for himself with cases of this sort.

147. In 4.1891, discussed in sect. 2 above.

148. See sect. 2 above.

149. In Aquinas's antiquated embryology, the male parent typically is considered the agent of reproduction; but, even in his own account, there is sometimes the suggestion that both parents should be thought of as the agent. See TMOC, chap. 10, esp. sect. 2.

150. See chap. II above, sect. 7.

151. Obviously not every action of this type involves adultery in the narrow sense, but Aquinas identifies the related universal as "the disorder of adultery", which he describes elsewhere as involving lust, avarice, and injustice. See, e.g., ST IaIIae.72.2, *ad* 4; IIaIIae.154.1, *ad* 2.

152. See also In DDN IV: L 22.586:

Suppose someone objects that what a sinner does appears good to the sinner, and that he therefore seems to sin out of ignorance and so to be excused from sin. We have to reply that this kind of mistake, in which someone thinks that what is not good is good, has to do with ignorance of choice, in which one is ignorant in particular of what one knows in general. For a man who knows in general that adultery is bad judges in particular that it is good to commit an adulterous act now, in so far as in his will the good of pleasure outweighs the good of honor, to which the badness associated with the pleasure is opposed. For that reason, this kind of ignorance is a consequence of a disorder in the will rather than a cause of a disordered will. And that's why Aristotle says in *Ethics* III [2, 1110b25–27] that such a person does indeed act wrongly *in* ignorance, but not *out of* ignorance. And so he is not excused, neither entirely nor partially.

153. See also QDP 3.6, *ad* 5; ST Ia.49.3, *ad* 5; IaIIae.71.2, *ad* 3.

154. *Nicomachean Ethics* III 1, 1110a8–19.

155. For some discussion of such cases, see Kretzmann (1988): 189–214.

156. On relativized ultimate ends see chap. II above, sect. 2.

157. See also In DDN IV: L16.507.

158. See also 7.1916:

Now a form, considered just as such, has the defining characteristic of goodness; for it is the principle of action, the end that every maker or doer intends, and the actuality by which each and every thing having a form is completed (*perfectum*).

Also In DDN IV: L15.490, quoted in n.123 above; and QDM 1.1, *ad* 10.

159. See n.122 above.

160. See, e.g., 3.1883: “every actuality has the defining characteristic of goodness, since badness is found only in a potentiality that falls short of actuality”; 7.1912: “Now in so far as a thing has being it has something of goodness; for, if the good is what all things seek, then ‘good’ must indicate being itself, since all things seek being”; 7.1917: “everything that is, in whatever way it is, is good in so far as it is a being.” Also II.41.1171–76, quoted in n.122 above.

161. See, e.g., SCG I.23.214, 24.223, 25.229, 25.232, 27.252; also TMOT, p. 127.

162. See esp. SCG I.38, “God is goodness itself.” The proposition that constitutes the title and thesis of I.38 is used repeatedly in important ways throughout Books I–III. See, e.g., TMOT, pp. 203, 211, 215, 224, 238, 242, 249n.; TMOC, chap. 4, sect. 8.

163. See, e.g., 7.1918:

In the second book of this work it was proved that all being, in whatever way it is, is from God [II.15]. But in the first book we showed that God is perfect goodness [I.28, 38, 41]. Therefore, since the effect of what is [perfectly] good cannot be bad, it is impossible that any being be bad *in so far as it is a being*.

164. See *Metaphysics* IV 2, 1004a10–16; also 11.1953.

165. See also II.41.1180; 83.1656c; III.15.1984.

166. Heat is a *proper* accident (or *proprium*) of fire, a quality that is a consequence of the essence of fire, but only a *common* accident of water, a quality that it's natural for water either to have or to lack. See, e.g., ST Ia.3.4c:

Whatever is in anything besides its essence must be caused either by the principles of the essence, as [a thing's] proper accidents are the consequence of [its] species—e.g., the ability to laugh is a consequence of humanity and is caused by principles essential to the species—or by something extrinsic [to the essence], as heat in water is caused by fire.

167. See also 11.1953 and 15.1978.

168. Aquinas typically uses '*actus morales*' or, more often, just '*moralia*' as a generic term. To avoid misunderstanding, in translating I'll sometimes spell out the designation in this way, sometimes refer to moral *and immoral* actions, and sometimes use just 'morality.'

169. See, e.g., QDC 3c:

Now as regards all voluntary acts, what plays the role of the end confers the form (*est formale*). This is because each and every act receives its form and species in accordance with the form of the agent—e.g., heating in accordance with heat. But *the form of a will is its object*, which is something good, and an end—just as what is intelligible is the form of an intellect.

170. See In DDN IV: L22.579; also L 16.504.

171. See also III.14, "Badness is a cause *per accidens*."

172. Note the assimilation of *tending toward* to *intending*; see chap. II above, n.41.

173. See, e.g., 4.1892 (sect. 3 above); 5&6.1907, 1908 (sect. 6 above); 8&9.1931 (sect. 7 above). He also devotes all of III.14 to this topic.

174. See also III.11: "Badness is based on goodness."

175. See also 11.1957. The example Aquinas uses here (and often elsewhere) strikes me as not well suited to his purpose: "the way a cold thing heats, as is said in *Physics* VIII [1, 251a31-32]," where Aristotle says that "a cold thing in a sense causes heating by turning away and retiring"—in the sense in which a cold wind can be an active cause of warming *per accidens* by changing its direction?

176. See Augustine, *De civitate Dei* XII 7.

177. See 10.1940, discussed just above.

178. The term Aquinas uses in this context is *morale vitium*, sometimes *moris vitium*. *Vitium* would ordinarily be translated as 'vice,' but it's clear that it has a broader meaning here. See, e.g., 10.1946a, where *vitium moris* is contrasted with *vitium naturae*.

179. Aquinas actually ascribes "not factive but active" to *virtutes morales*. But it makes no apparent sense to contrast the arts with moral virtues, or to describe in this way only moral *virtues*, or even moral goodness generally.

180. See also QDM 3.11.

181. See, e.g., 8&9.1928, discussed in sect. 7 above.

182. In Aquinas's review of the four active principles at the end of 10.1945, he describes the motive power itself as executing the command rather than as transmitting it to the body, which then executes it; and he describes the command as the command "of reason." I'm inclined to think that these discrepancies are not important.

183. See, e.g., 8&9.1928, discussed in sect. 7 above; 5&6.1905 and 1907, discussed in sect. 6 above. Also TMOT, chap. 7, "Will"; TMOC, chap. 7, sect. 4, "Intellects and wills." See also Gallagher (1991): 31–66; and Stump (1997).

184. See, e.g., 10.1948, discussed below: "the apprehended object, which is the end."

185. For fuller accounts of this process as described by Aquinas elsewhere, see, e.g., Donagan (1982): pp. 642–54; Gallagher (1994): 247–77; Kenny (1993), Kretzmann (1993); Stump (1997)

186. Aquinas's example has 'visible' and 'seeing.'

187. It seems obvious that while a defect in the motive/executive power can only be weakness, a defect in an *apprehending* power can be either weakness or ignorance. But Aquinas uses ‘weakness’ and ‘ignorance’ in special, narrow senses: “a defect of intellect is ignorance, just as a defect of the executive power is weakness” (QDM 1.3, *ad* 12). On the mitigating effects of ignorance see also, e.g., ST Ia-Iae.76.3 and 4.

188. Furthermore, although Aquinas doesn’t say so here, if the defect were natural, it would excuse or diminish any apparently moral fault in the act of will (and, consequently, in the external action). It’s on those grounds that he rules out another explanation of the defect in the will of a wrong-doer: “We have to say, also, that it is *not by chance or fortuitous*, since [otherwise] there would be *no* moral shortcomings in us; for things that occur by chance are unpremeditated and outside the range of reason” (10.1947*b*).

189. See also 16.1988: “Will, which is the appetite for a precognized end, tends to anything only under the aspect of goodness, which is its object.”

190. Strictly speaking, these two kinds aren’t wholly distinct, since defect I, as when will is moved to action by sensory considerations without regard to rationality, always involves defect II as generally described here. But I’ll follow Aquinas’s lead and consider only the *interesting* cases of defect II—cases in which reason itself presents will with an inappropriate end.

191. See, e.g., II.47.1237: “An appetite for good is in *all* things . . . In those that have intellective cognition, however, it is called *intellective* or *rational* appetite, which is *will*”; also TMOC, chap. 7, sect. 4.

192. A dramatic expression—*in actionem prorumpit*—clearly meant to indicate the disorder in these two sorts of acts of will.

193. See also QDM 1.3c:

however enticing the external sense-perceptible object may be, it is still in will’s power to accept it or not to accept it. For that reason, the cause of the badness that results from its being accepted is not the alluring, enjoyable object, but rather the will itself.

194. Cf. QDM 1.3, *ad* 13: “The defect in the will that is presupposed before [moral] shortcoming is neither guilt nor punishment. Instead, it acquires the nature of guilt from the very fact that *will applies itself to action* with that sort of negation.”

195. For a fuller account of this difficulty and a solution that differs in some of its details, see QDM 1.3c, esp. the last two paragraphs (“*In omnibus enim . . .*”).

196. The single argument in direct support of this chapter’s thesis is appropriately simple: “If badness remains, then a subject for badness must remain. But the subject of badness is something good. Therefore, something good always remains” (12.1959). But Aquinas then introduces an elaborate counterargument, which I suppose represents part of a contemporary discussion. Only after introducing an unsatisfactory rejoinder to it and explaining its unsatisfactoriness does he produce his own refutation of the counter-argument, covering both nature and morality. Among the more interesting features of the chapter is this explanation of the way “goodness is said to be demolished by badness”:

what is bad happens apart from the intention of the agent, which always intends some good—[a good] from which the exclusion of some other good that is opposed to the intended good follows. Therefore, the more the intended good (from which something bad follows, apart from the agent’s intention) is amplified, the more the potentiality for the contrary good is diminished. (12.1962)

197. In III.17.1998 Aquinas quotes Rev. 22:13 (“I am Alpha and Omega, the

first and the last”) to show Scripture’s agreement with his arguments in that chapter that God is the end of all things. See sect. 2 below.

198. See chap. I above, sect. 6.

199. On III.2–3 see chap. II above.

200. The only references to God or the divine are in an argument in 7.1918 and in Scriptural passages cited in 7.1919, and none of them has to do with God’s omega-aspect.

201. The Marietti editors treat chap. 16 as the final chapter of the treatise on badness; but all indications (including the closing words of III.15 and the opening words of III.16 and 17) point to its being, instead, the beginning of Aquinas’s return to the main line of development.

202. For 16.1985 (esp. as regards cases in which the action itself is the end), see 2.1869 and 3.1882; for 16.1986, see 2.1870–1871 and 3.1880; for 16.1987, see 3.1882; for 16.1988, see 3.1884. See also chap. II above for discussions of III.2 and 3.

203. See chap. II above, sect. 2.

204. After this opening inference, the first argument goes on to identify that highest good as God, relying on arguments in SCG I.42. I have no quarrel with that part of it.

205. See chap. II above, sect. 1.

206. See 17.1991–4 and 1997.

207. See chap. II above, n.61; also sects. 3–5.

208. See chap. II above, sect. 2.

209. See also SCG I.74.635, quoted in chap. II above, sect. 2.

210. 17.1995 and 1996.

211. See chap. I, sects. 3, 4, 6; chap. II, sects. 1 and 2; chap. III, sect. 1.

212. Aquinas’s seventh argument in III.17 is an attempt to show that “the ultimate end of any maker, in so far as he is a maker, is *himself*” (17.1996). The first part of the argument strikes me as vague and unconvincing. It’s based on these considerations: “We use things made by ourselves for our own purposes; and if a person sometimes makes something for some other purpose, it is traced back to his own good as useful, pleasant, or honorable” (17.1996). Even if this argument were accepted, it would provide some plausibility only for cases in which the person who is himself or herself the end is also the person whose end he or she is. And that sort of reflexive teleology would contribute nothing to an understanding of the way in which God himself might be a creature’s goal. In the second part of the argument Aquinas applies it to God’s case: “God is the productive cause of all things. . . . Therefore, he himself is the end of all things” (17.1996). But God can’t be the ultimate end of his own making as created makers are said to be. For, as Aquinas points out in 18.2003,

God . . . does not act as if to gain anything by his action, but rather in such a way that something else is benefited by his action. This is because God is not in a state of potentiality so that he can gain anything, but in a state of perfected actuality only, on the basis of which he can benefit things.

213. See SCG I.18; also TMOT, pp. 121–29, 169–70, 216, 242–44, 251; TMO, chap. 2, sect. 4; chap. 5, sect. 4; chap. 6, sect. 5; chap. 7, sect. 7; also Stump and Kretzmann (1982).

214. In 17.1997, discussed in sect. 2 above.

215. The concluding sentence of this passage reads this way: *Deus igitur sic est finis rerum sicut aliquid ab unaquaque re suo modo obtinendum*. (The Leonine edition lists no variants.) In Bourke’s translation, it is rendered as “Therefore, God is not the end of things in the sense of being something set up as an ideal, but as a

preexisting being Who is to be attained.” This is an uncharacteristically loose paraphrase rather than a translation, but it actually suits the argument better than the conclusion Aquinas provides for it.

216. III.18.2001, the chapter’s second argument, supplies just the same result.

217. For part of the fourth argument (18.2003), see n.212 above.

218. The eds. of the Leonine and Marietti edns. refer to III.18 as the source of this antecedent. III.17 seems a little more likely, though by no means certain. In any case, it would seem safer and more natural to say that all things tend toward the acquisition of goodness and thereby, wittingly or unwittingly, toward a likeness to God.

219. On created things’ likeness to God generally, see TMOT, pp. 154–55.

220. See, e.g., 17.1993: “all things are found to be ordered in various degrees of goodness under a single highest good, which is the cause of all goodness”; 17.1994: “the highest good, which is God, is a common good, since the good of all things taken together depends on him. Now the good by which any and every thing is good is its own particular good and the good of other things that depend on it”; also I.90.753 (TMOT, p. 237); and esp. I.40; also, e.g., QDV 21.4 and ST Ia.6.4.

221. “Every thing tends through its motion or action toward some good as its end (as was shown above [in III.3 and 16]). But something participates in goodness to the extent to which it is assimilated to the first goodness, which is God. Therefore, all things tend through their motions and actions toward a divine likeness as toward their ultimate end” (19.2008).

222. Aristotle makes this sort of claim specifically about human beings in *Nicomachean Ethics* IX 7, 1168a7–8; 9, 1170a21–22.

223. See sect. 3 above.

224. On simplicity, see sect. 2 above, esp. n.213.

225. In 20.2011*b* he misleadingly calls separated substances (e.g., angels) simple, meaning only that they are the simplest possible created things, those whose components are “form and actuality” (or, as he puts it in SCG II, “substance and being”; see TMOC, chap. 7, sect. 7) rather than the matter and form that are the components of all familiar, corporeal created things. He again describes separated substances in uncharacteristically godlike terms in 20.2014: “the first and highest good is altogether simple, and substances close to it in goodness are equally near it as regards simplicity.”

226. See Russell (1967), 27: “St. Thomas’s theory of the heavenly bodies is now completely outdated and has disappeared from scholastic [i.e., twentieth-century Thomistic] philosophy without leaving any visible trace.” Russell’s article is a discussion of Litt (1963) of which Russell says that it quotes in full “all the explicit references to the heavenly bodies in St. Thomas’s writings” and comments on them, “so that the work constitutes a valuable source-book for this little known aspect of medieval cosmology” (Russell p. 27.). As for the thoroughgoing untenability of the theory, just a few salient aspects of it should provide evidence enough:

the [fifty-five] spheres [in which the stars and planets were thought to be embedded] and the stars or planets [themselves] were regarded as being composed of a special sort of matter which was radically different from all terrestrial matter. The two types had nothing in common with each other. Terrestrial matter was essentially changeable and corruptible. . . . Celestial matter, on the contrary, was intrinsically immutable. Its essence was completely and permanently actualized here and now; the potentiality for intrinsic change was simply not present in its nature. The only change it could undergo was local motion and the only possible type of [celestial local] motion was uni-

form rotation about a fixed centre. . . . Each celestial body was an individual unique in its own species . . . a perfect and indestructible actuation of its essence. . . . Each celestial sphere was moved by a created intelligence or spirit. (Russell (1967), pp. 27–28)

[W]hat sort of certainty did Thomas attribute to his doctrine of the heavenly bodies? He plainly regarded many of the details as speculative but in its essentials he never seems to have entertained the least doubt about it. He seems to have accepted as certain that these bodies are incorruptible, that they must have uniform circular motion, and that they must control all terrestrial physical processes and must themselves be controlled by created Intelligences. (Russell (1967), p. 32)

See also, Bourke (1975), III:84 n.1.

227. See sect. 7 below.

228. Aquinas thinks that the forms of heavenly bodies *do* fill up the whole potentiality of their matter; see 20.2012*a*.

229. He also doesn't draw any formal distinctions between these two consequences, although it seems clear that (2) intensification is applicable (a) to accidental forms only, and (b) not always to them. That is, (a) where *F* is a substantial form, such as *cat*, no part of the matter it informs provides a further potentiality for any more of that form; and, (b) where *f* is an accidental form, such as *hot*, there may be ordinary substances that are as *f*s as they can be without being corrupted—i.e., losing the substantial forms they have and acquiring others instead.

230. See chap. III above, esp. sect. 5.

231. Cf. ST Ia.5.3, *ad* 3, and Bourke (1975), III:79 n.5.

232. Although the assimilation of human beings to God is not yet specifically at issue, the fact that they are composite beings whose components are differently related to God after death might provide another reason for developing this ranking.

233. In 20.2011*c*; see sect. 4 above.

234. The “perfection” of a created thing, as used here, doesn't mean its theoretically best development but merely the characteristic that specifies it, what I've called its specific perfection (see, e.g., TMOT, pp. 141, 155–57, 170–71, 174–75, 193–94, 198–99). Rationality is the perfection of every human being, regardless of its various degrees of development or utilization in various individuals. But, as this passage and others quoted in the remainder of sect. 4 suggest, a created thing typically has many “perfections” or good qualities besides those that specify it.

235. See TMOc chap. 10, sect. 3.

236. See, e.g., ST Ia.5.1. Also TMOT, pp. 200–201; Stump and Kretzmann (1988); MacDonald (1991).

237. The level of that importance seems to call for ‘and especially (*et maxime*)’ rather than ‘and even (*et etiam*)’ near the end of 2016.

238. Cf. TMOT, pp. 245–50.

239. Aquinas provides a somewhat different account of the relationship between these claims in ST Ia.103.4c:

A created thing is assimilated to God in two respects: in so far as it is good (in respect of the fact that God is good), and in so far as one created thing moves another one toward goodness (in respect of the fact that is the cause of goodness for other things).

240. This is the first explicit reference to anything that was developed in the treatise on badness. In itself it's obviously very far from showing that the elaborate analysis of badness developed in III.4–15 is intended to serve Aquinas's further purposes in SCG III.

241. See chap. II above, sect. 1.

242. Discussed in chap. III above, sects. 8 and 9.

243. Both these powers are essential to the nutritive, or vegetative, soul, which animates every animal embryo from the instant of conception, before the development of its sensory soul, which replaces the nutritive soul as the animal's substantial form but includes its own versions of the powers of the nutritive soul. See TMOC, chap. 10, sects. 2 and 3.

244. See, e.g., III.3.1889 "the badness thesis," discussed in chap. III above, beginning in sect. 1. Aquinas could have strengthened his position in III.21 by introducing some examples of thwarted intentions and applying the lessons of his treatise on badness.

245. See TMOT, pp. 149–57.

246. See sect. 4 above.

247. In fact, however, he evidently conceives of causing other things much more broadly. See 22.2025, discussed below in this section.

248. See (a)–(d) in sect. 5 above.

249. I suppose he could mean that the capacity for performing the operation or operations *distinctive* of a species is acquired by a member of the species only when it attains maturity. But, again, this seems much too narrow a notion of operation for his purposes here. More importantly, it isn't the notion of operation he actually uses in III.23.

250. See TMOC, chap. 1, sect. 5.

251. See TMOC, chap. 1, sect. 5.

252. In the Leonine and Marietti editions, the text reads as follows: *quorum primo differunt a passione et motu; secundo vero, ab actione transmutativa exterioris materiae*. The *quorum* looks as if it could well be a scribal error for *quae*. (These chapters do not survive in the autograph of SCG.) The Leonine indicates no variants for *quorum*. But it does report that all but one of its sources has *primae* and *secundae* where the edition has *primo* and *secundo*. *Primae* and *secundae* suit *quorum* much more readily than do *primo* and *secundo*; but then other problems arise, such as identifying the referents for *primae* and *secundae*, 'the first' (fem. pl.) and 'the second' (fem. pl.)—what? Operations? But only one sort of operation is listed first and only one sort second. Bourke's translation reads this way: "And these last differ, first of all, from passion and motion, and secondly from action transitively productive of change in exterior matter." Bourke's choice of the opening three words helps to make at least superficial sense of the rest of the passage; but he's evidently reading *quae*, 'which' or 'these,' for *quorum*, 'of which [things].' Even if Bourke's silent emendation is accepted, what would be the referent of 'these last'? Surely not just the type-3 activity, the description of which uses no plurals. The English Dominican Fathers' version has this: "in the former respect these differ from passion and movement, and in the latter from an action which effects a transmutation on some external matter"—justifying the plural 'these' by having translated the immediately preceding singular *operatio* as 'operations' and evidently reading *quae* for *quorum*.

253. The word I'm translating as 'moving' here would ordinarily be translated more broadly as 'movement.' But movement, or change, is a feature of all three of these types of operation.

254.

Each moved thing, in so far as it is moved, tends toward a divine likeness so that it may be [A] perfected in itself, and since anything is perfected in so far as it is actualized, the intention of anything that is in potentiality must be to tend through movement to actuality. (22.2030a)

Your ability to read English is something you have in second actuality only when you're actually reading English; but you have it in first actuality even while you're unconscious. On first and second actuality see, e.g., TMOOC, chap. 2, sect. 3.

255. See sect. 5 above and the earlier parts of this sect. 6.

256. On self-movers, see, e.g., TMOT, pp. 74–76; also 23.2036.

257. I.e., with movements that don't have intellect and will among their proximate causes; see 23.2041, quoted in sect. 7 below.

258. See, e.g., TMOOC, chaps. 8 and 9; also Kenny (1993); Kretzmann (1993); Stump (1995); and Stump (1998).

259. See the references cited in the immediately preceding note.

260. Some of the things Aquinas says here about matter seem odd. For instance, immediately following the quoted passage he says that "in that way matter successively takes on *all* the forms to which it is in a state of potentiality, so that its *whole* potentiality is reduced to actuality successively—something that couldn't happen all at once" (22.2027). If 'matter' means the whole of it, then there's no reason why it can't take on all sorts of forms, including contrary forms, at once—oxygen here, carbon there. But if it's just some particular quantity of matter he has in mind, then surely no such quantity "successively takes on *all* the forms to which it is in a state of potentiality." In fact, I can't see any reason why that should be said of even the whole of even prime matter.

261. In this context, "mixtures" include all the things we would recognize as chemical compounds.

262. See TMOOC, chap. 10, sects. 2 and 3.

263. In this connection it may help to be reminded that although the human soul is the lowest-ranking subsistent form, Aquinas considers the heavenly bodies and the separated forms to be products not of generation but only of direct, particular creation.

264. In III.25–63.

265. See 22.2027–29 and n.226 above.

266. See Litt (1963); also TMOOC, chap. 8, sect. 10.

267. Russell (1967), p. 33.

268. Aquinas reviews an earlier version of occasionalism in In Sent. II.1.1.4c, where he says that the question whether anything other than God brings about any thing, event, or state of affairs gives rise to three positions, one of which is that "God directly does (*operetur*) everything, so that nothing else is a cause of anything." The adherents of this position went so far as to claim that

it is not the fire, but God, that gives heat, nor is a hand moved unless God causes its movement, and so forth. But this position is stupid. It strips away the order of the universe and the proper operation of things. It also destroys the judgment of the senses.

269. I don't consider that declaring the glory of God and showing his handiwork (Ps. 19:1) are *practical* purposes.

270. See, e.g., chap. I above, sect. 4; chap. II above, sect. 1.

271. See, e.g., chap. II above, sect. 1.

272. See, e.g., III.1.1865, discussed in chap. I above, sect. 5; also 2.1873, discussed in chap. II above, sect. 3.

273. See, e.g., 1.1863:

each thing achieves [its] ultimate end through its own action," through its own utilization of its natural faculties for action, even though that utilization "must be directed toward the end by him who [in creating] gave to things the principles on the basis of which they act.

Also 1.1864:

Therefore, it is necessary that God, who is universally perfect in himself, and who by his power imparts being to all beings, be the governor of all beings—himself directed by none [of them], of course. Nor is there anything that is exempt from his governance, just as there is nothing that does not acquire [its] being from him. Therefore, as he is perfect in being and in causing, so is he also perfect in governing.

See also chap. I above, sect. 5, where these passages are discussed.

274. See sect. 7 above.

275. See Richard Swinburne (1968); Swinburne (1979), chap. 8; Davies (1983), p. 45; also TMOT, p. 108 n.30.

276. The original conclusion reads like this: “Therefore, the forms and the movements of terrestrial bodies are caused and intended by an intellectual substance as a principal agent but by a heavenly body as by an instrument” (24.2046).

277. See also 17.1995, discussed in sect. 2 above.

278. On natural movements, see n.61 above.

279. See 22.2025, discussed in sect. 6 above.

280. “Goodness is by its very nature diffusive of itself and (thereby) of being.”

See TMOT, pp. 223–25.

281. On the sun as an equivocal cause, see TMOT, pp. 150–53.

282. See n.280 above. Aquinas himself is one of the people who say this sort of thing, as can be seen in the very next sentence quoted here. See also, e.g., SCG I.37.307, 75.644; ST Ia.19.2c.

283. Quoted more fully earlier in sect. 8 above.

284. See TMOC, chap. 6, sect. 10, where this passage and others representative of manifold manifestation are discussed.

285. This helps to explain Aquinas’s frequently mentioning that various kinds of created things have to achieve a likeness to God in their own way. See, e.g., 18.2000 (in sects. 3 and 6 above), 20.2010 (in sect. 4 above), 1.1863 (in n.273 above), and 1.1865 (in sect. 8 above). See also II.46.1233: “the perfection of the universe of created things consists in a likeness to God, just as the perfection of any effect consists in a likeness to its agent cause.”

286. See also 1221: “there wouldn’t be a perfect likeness of God in the universe if there were only one level of all beings. Therefore, there is distinguishing among created things in order that a likeness of God may be attained more perfectly through many than through one”; 1222: “in order for there to be a perfect imitation of God in created things, it had to be the case that various levels would be found among them”; 1224: “it pertains to the perfecting of the universe that there are not only many individuals but that there are also various species of things and, consequently, various levels among things”; 1226: “a product made by a supremely good artisan must not lack the highest perfection.”

