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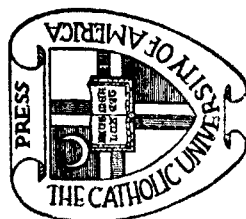
THE THEORY OF EVIL
IN THE
METAPHYSICS OF ST. THOMAS
AND ITS
CONTEMPORARY SIGNIFICANCE

A DISSERTATION

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BY

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*To the Incomparable Virgin,
chosen by the ever adorable Trinity
from all eternity to be
the most pure Mother of Jesus.*

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ABBREVIATIONS OF TITLES OF ST. THOMAS'
WRITINGS AS USED IN THIS WORK

- Comp. Theo.—*Compendium Theologiae ad Fratrem Reginaldum*.
 C. G.—*Summa Contra Gentiles*.
 De Ente et Ess.—*De Ente et Essentia*.
 De Malo.—*Quaestiones Disputatae de Malo*.
 De Pot.—*Quaestiones Disputatae de Potentia Dei*.
 De Prin. Nat.—*De Principis Naturae*.
 De Quat. Op.—*De Quatuor Oppositis*.
 De Sub. Sep.—*De Substantiis Separatis*.
 De Ver.—*Quaestiones Disputatae de Veritate*.
 De Virt. in Comm.—*Quaestiones Disputatae de Virtutibus in Com-*
muni.
 In Doct. de Trin.—*In Librum Beati de Trinitate Expositio*.
 In De Div. Nom.—*In Librum Beati Dionysii de Divinis Nomi-*
bus Commentaria.
 In Joan.—*In Joannem Evangelistam Expositio*.
 In Meta.—*In XIII Libros Metaphysicorum Commentaria*.
 In Phys.—*In VIII Libros Physicorum Commentaria*.
 In Post. Anal.—*In Libros Posteriorum Analyticorum Commen-*
taria.
 In Sen.—*Commentaria in IV Libros Sententiarum Magistri Petri*
Lombardi.
 Sum. Theo.—*Summa Theologica*.

Quotations from the *Summa Theologica* and the *Summa Contra Gentiles* are taken from the Leonine edition. All other quotations from St. Thomas' writings are from the Vivès edition.

When reference is made to works of St. Thomas which are divided into questions and articles, the reference is to the body of the article unless it is otherwise indicated.

INTRODUCTION

IN our days there are two statements so often repeated and, in themselves, so evident that to document them would be pedantry. The first is that these are catastrophic times, times in which more evil prevails than the world has ever before seen in a single era. The second statement is that Thomistic philosophy, as the *philosophia perennis*, a body of truth independently of temporal limitations, is immediately and constructively relevant to the speculative and practical problems of every age, including our own. It is the object of this dissertation in general, but of these first few pages in particular, to show the relation between these two apparently unrelated statements.

In regard to the first statement, it is repeated by Scholastic and non-Scholastic philosophers alike. Moreover, such is the present situation that both optimists and pessimists subscribe to its truth, these two types being now distinguished by the hope of the former and the despair of the latter. The un-Christian optimism of nineteenth century individualism, a by-product of secularism, evolutionary theories, and material progress, is rapidly being replaced by a spirit of pessimism, born of frustration, disappointment, and fear. What is still worse, in many parts of the world the forces of evil have left men, not only materially, but also spiritually bankrupt. Consequently, if aid is to be given to these people, it must include goods of the spirit and, if there is to be any real recovery, above all it must take place also on the spiritual level, for man does not live by bread alone.

In regard to the second statement, Thomistic philosophy is based on being and its first principles. It does not depend essentially upon the empirical sciences, but uses them often for illustration and sometimes for points of departure. Therefore, the antiquation of the methods and conclusions of the positive sciences of any particular period does not affect the validity of the fundamental tenets of this philosophy. The nature of being and its principles are eternally the same. Consequently, a philosophy or metaphysical theory based upon being as such is always con-

temporary. One does not go back to St. Thomas, one simply goes to him. It follows, then, that Thomism may quite properly offer an explanation and answer to the difficulties presented to the modern world by the presence in it of evil. Thus, the two beginning statements are seen to be related as question and answer.

Unfortunately Scholastics and non-Scholastics are not agreed on the second statement, as they are on the first. It is the hope of the writer that in some small way this work may contribute to bringing about that agreement. To that end brief critiques of modern positions in regard to the subject of evil have been incorporated into this work to show the greater realism, practicality, and consistency of the Thomistic theory of evil and to emphasize its contemporary significance.

However, this work is not primarily a critical study. It is, before all, a metaphysical investigation, a study of the nature of evil, the modes in which it finds expression, and its relation to cause, as revealed in the metaphysics of St. Thomas. From this prime objective follow certain natural limitations. Although the problem of evil is one of the most urgent and vital questions of our times and Thomistic philosophy indicates the most satisfactory answer, the apologetic possibilities of the subject have been subordinated to its metaphysical aspects. Similarly, the ethical and theological implications of the problem have not been treated fully because of the limitations of metaphysics as a science of reason and because of the practical limitations of one volume. Furthermore, although the problem of evil has a history that begins even before that of the human race, the historical aspects of the question have been largely neglected, except in a few instances where the historical background helps to elucidate the Thomistic position and emphasize the importance of its contribution.¹ However, since the account of any theory is incomplete

¹ For a brief history of the problem of evil, cf. Rudolf Eisler, "Böse," *Wörterbuch der Philosophischen Begriffe und Ausdrücke*, (Berlin: Ernst Siegfried Mittler und Sohn, 1899), Vol. I, pp. 110-12. For a very thorough, very excellent treatment of the history of this subject, cf. R. A. Tsanoff, *The Nature of Evil*, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1931. However, we do not agree with some of the criticisms in the latter work.

without mention of the historical influences which contributed to its formation, such relationships involved in the Thomistic theory of evil are treated in the concluding chapter in order that the account may be complete and yet the focus on the metaphysics of the question will not be disturbed. Finally, a metaphysical study presupposes some fundamental metaphysical principles. Therefore, in order to give the Thomistic theory of evil in its total setting, the preliminary chapter is devoted to a résumé of general metaphysics with special emphasis on those topics most relevant to the discussion of evil. Of these particular topics, the most important is the treatment of goodness, for without the good, no study of evil is possible.

The writer welcomes this opportunity to acknowledge a very great debt of gratitude. First of all she would like to express her deep appreciation to the Sisters of her Community, and most particularly to Mother Mary Francesca, the Mother General, for the privilege of attending the Catholic University of America and for their constant and invaluable encouragement and support. She is also grateful in a very special way to her beloved parents. In addition, she would like to thank the Reverend Doctor Charles A. Hart, under whose direction this study was undertaken and completed, and the Very Reverend Doctor Ignatius Smith, O.P., Dean of the School of Philosophy, the Reverend Doctor Jules A. Baisnée, S.S., and the Reverend Doctor Leo A. Foley, S.M., who by their careful reading of the manuscript and helpful suggestions contributed greatly to this work. To the librarians of The Saint Mary College, Xavier, Kansas, of the John K. Mullen Library of the Catholic University of America, of the Library of Congress, and of the Dominican House of Studies, Washington, D. C., the writer is indebted for their gracious assistance. Acknowledgment of appreciation is also due to the publishers who so kindly gave permission to quote from their publications. Finally, the writer would like to say a special word of thanks to those Sisters who so generously gave of their time and talents in the preparation of the manuscript for printing.

CHAPTER I

FUNDAMENTAL METAPHYSICAL PRINCIPLES

I. THE MEANING AND METHOD OF METAPHYSICS

"ALL men by nature desire to know." Aristotle goes on to say that an indication of this is the delight men take in their senses, especially in the sense of sight. But a still greater indication in our day is the development and use of scientific instruments to extend man's knowledge to fields and objects hitherto inaccessible to him. Thus, the whole study of microorganisms is made possible by the powerful microscopes of the modern laboratory. Contemporary astronomy depends upon the huge telescopic eyes which bring distant planets and stars into seemingly close view, and modern physics has its cyclotrons which reveal the inner secrets of the formerly impregnable atom. Analogously, the science of metaphysics also has its proper and essential instrument. This instrument is unique inasmuch as it is the only instrument suitable for the object of metaphysics and it is spiritual, created, not merely invented, and is self-reading and therefore ultimate. Obviously, we are speaking here of the human intellect.

Metaphysics is the philosophic science which studies the *reality* of things in its most ultimate aspects. Its focus is on that which makes a thing to be real, therefore, we say more precisely in Scholastic terminology that metaphysics is the study of being as being, or of being as existing. Its proper object is the actuality as such of a thing without regard to the dimensions, color, etc., which, as it were, are fused with this actuality. Now being as being cannot be seen with a microscope, nor a telescope, nor can it be measured with a micrometer, nor picked up with radar. It is accessible to man only by means of his intellect. Being is the natural object of this faculty¹ and it is that which the intellect first knows.² Thus, the importance of the intellect as the

¹ *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 78, a. 1; q. 79, a. 2.

² *Ibid.*, I, q. 5, a. 2; q. 11, a. 2, ad 4; I-II, q. 94, a. 2; *De Ver.*, q. 1, a. 1.

self-reading instrument of metaphysics is evident. This does not mean, however, that metaphysics is an idealistic web of arbitrary principles and their consequent conclusions, the product of a mind out of touch with sensible things. On the contrary, this philosophical science is the most real of all the sciences, and the senses are indispensable to it for providing the material from which the ideas of the intellect are wrought and for reporting the modes of existence of finite, corruptible things.³

From the data of the senses the intellect abstracts the essences or quiddities of material things, i.e., by the light of the active intellect it considers the specific form of a particular object, apart from the individual sensible matter in which it is actually embedded, yet as a kind of thing to which existence in matter is essentially due, and which cannot be understood without reference to matter.⁴ The quiddity of material things is, therefore, said to be the proper object of the intellect⁵ and to be attained by the first degree of abstraction. But this form of being is not the object of metaphysics, otherwise every intelligent person would be a natural born, practising metaphysician.⁶ Metaphysics, like the science of mathematics, requires further abstraction. Where the latter, however, rests on the second level of abstraction which involves only the additional suppression of common sensible matter, the former science requires that its object be considered apart from all dependency upon matter, and this is the third and final degree of abstraction.⁷ The intellectual production of this last process is a concept of being as being; it is the consideration of all things with special focus on their being or modes of existence.

There is a peculiar difficulty about the metaphysical concept, however, because being is attributed to everything which can or

³ *De Ver.*, q. 12, a. 12, ad 3; cf. Jacques Maritain, *A Preface to Metaphysics*, (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1940), pp. 22-24.

⁴ *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 85, a. 1, & ad 1.

⁵ *Ibid.*, a. 6.

⁶ Cf. Maritain, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-43.

⁷ *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 85, a. 1, ad 2; *In Boet. de Trin.*, q. 5, a. 1; *Proemium in Meta.*; *In I Phys.*, lec. 1.

does have existence. Therefore, if the concept of being is going to be adequate for the science of metaphysics and be conformable to all being, it must include every positive or potential reality, even those specific and accidental differences which set off one being or kind of being from others.⁸ With the universal concept of the ordinary first act of understanding this would be impossible, for this idea embraces only one specific class of objects. In contrast, the concept of being which metaphysics employs contains all forms of being, and on account of this it is called transcendental as going beyond any particular class. Furthermore, it is able to do this because being is an analogous concept. Such a concept is one which can be affirmed of diverse objects which are partly the same and partly different. Analogous predication is usually distinguished by contrasting it with univocal and equivocal predication. There are two types of analogy, i.e., analogy of attribution and analogy of proper proportionality. It is the latter type which is used in metaphysics. This kind of analogy is so named because the nature signified by the concept and its term is possessed intrinsically by each object of which it is predicated, not, however, in exactly the same way, but "according to a certain proportional similitude."⁹ Thus, the being of God is to God, as the being of an angel is to an angel, as the being of a man is to a man. Nevertheless, it is *being* in each instance and, in diverse modes proportioned to the nature of the object, it is intrinsic to each analogate.¹⁰

Since the third abstraction results in a transcendental, analogous concept, we may suspect that this abstraction is not the same as the abstraction of the universal or of mathematical being. Indeed, Maritain and others refer to it as the *imitation* of being. The Schoolmen, in general, call it an abstraction of confusion, while Renard prefers the term, abstraction of indefiniteness. This means that with this third degree of abstraction no specific nature

⁸ Cf. *In I Meta.*, lec. 9, for St. Thomas' statement of this difficulty.

⁹ Henri Renard, S.J., *The Philosophy of Being*, (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1943), p. 97.

¹⁰ *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 13, a. 5; cf. Gerald Phelan, *St. Thomas and Analogy*, Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1941.

is sharply perceived, but that all natures or essences are retained as things or objects which are related proportionally to existence. Thus, the possibility of analogous predication is evident, since the concept can change the relations within itself according as it is predicated of different objects.¹¹ It follows from this that the concept of being is not perfectly one. However, it mirrors truly the structure of the being of experience and it is the product of a natural act of the intellect.

Thus far we have considered the definition of metaphysics, its instrument, and the process of the instrument whereby it attains its object. The method of the science follows from this. Being, we have said, is the natural object of the human intellect. It is the first thing known, the best known, and into it all that we know can be resolved.¹² St. Thomas maintains that the intellect reporting its object, i.e., being, is just as trustworthy as the senses reporting their object, i.e., perceptible reality.¹³ Therefore, the study of being required by metaphysics can be made by contemplating the concept of being and the judgments which can be made concerning it.

2. ACT AND POTENCY

The first problem to be considered in the study of being as being is the nature of being itself. The first question concerning this is whether there is one being and, therefore, one nature to be studied, or many beings, thus presenting many natures for investigation. Space does not permit a historical résumé of this question. The account should already be familiar to every student of metaphysics or of the history of philosophy. We shall plunge immediately into the Thomistic answer. Beings suggest an ultimate unity or oneness among themselves because they all have perfection, especially the perfection of existence. On the other hand, experience testifies that beings are many and diverse. This is because perfection is limited by the capacity of the respec-

¹¹ Cf. Renard, *op. cit.*, pp. 89-91.

¹² Cf. p. 1, n. 2.

¹³ *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 85, a. 6.

tive nature of each thing to receive it. On the highest, most abstract level, namely, that of being as such, the principle of perfection is called *act* and the limiting or receiving principle is called *potency*. Wherever there is multiplicity or change of any sort, there is present the principle of limitation or potency, and thus all finite beings are composites of act and potency. There is, however, one being which is without limitation, without change, and is all-perfect. This Being is God, Who is pure act. Therefore, every being is either pure act or a composition of act and potency. From this arises one of the most fundamental Thomistic principles, namely, that act and potency divide being and every kind of being.¹⁴ These two principles account for the fact that being appears as one and as diversified; in other words, beings are similar in certain respects, but are essentially different. Thus, the proportional analogy of the concept of being is a faithful report of the true structure of being as it is divided by act and potency. Therefore, by means of this one concept a valid study including all being can be made.

Several important, major corollaries of this doctrine will appear in the course of this development. At present it should be noted that these two intrinsic principles of being, act and potency, are really distinct, but are, nevertheless, transcendently related. Wherever they are found they have such a mutual exigency that in finite beings the one is incomplete without the other and they have their being from their union with each other. Furthermore, this doctrine is applicable not only in the order of being where it explains the nature and structure of being itself, but also, by analogy, it is applicable in any order where there is multiplicity or change. Therefore, it should also be considered in relation to the orders of existence, of essence, and of activity.

In the order of existence, it is evident that there are beings existing in many specifically different classes. Now *existence*, or "to be," considered in itself is not limited nor diversified, for it is perfection and act. Therefore, where it is limited in reality, there must be some distinct principle or source of limitation by which existence is received and made to conform to some spe-

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, I, q. 77, a. 1.

cific mode. On the existential level, this principle, analogous to potency in the order of being, is called *essence*. An essence is that which makes a thing to be the kind of thing it is. It designates the class to which a thing belongs; it is the quiddity of a thing.¹⁵ Essence itself is a certain perfection, and it is that which the intellect recognizes and understands in a thing. However, in reality essence requires a further act for its completion in being as potency to act, and, like these two latter principles, they are transcendently related, but are really distinct.¹⁶ In union they form a being, thus being defined as "that to which existence is due," *id cui* (essence) *competit esse* (existence).

There is found in reality, however, a further multiplication of being, for among material beings there are specific classes containing many members which share a common metaphysical nature, yet enjoy individual existences. Clearly, this is multiplication in the order of essences. This is the metaphysical counterpart of the epistemological problem of the universals. Once more the explanation is based upon the Thomistic doctrine of potency and act. Within the essence of corporeal beings there must be a principle to account for the perfection of the essence and another to explain its restriction or limitation. The first is called *form*, and the second is *matter*, the limiting potency. These co-principles are also distinct, but transcendently united in the corporeal essence.

Matter in itself is pure potentiality, which is not existing being, but an ordering to existence. It follows, therefore, that matter is never experienced simply as matter, but always in association with some actualizing form. Even in the first moment of its creation and in the instances of substantial change, matter is never left bare without some conjoined form. Thus, "the generation of one form is the corruption of another." Furthermore, one substantial form all other such forms possible to it are held in abeyance. Therefore, "the presence of one form is the priva-

¹⁵ *De Ente et Ess.*, c. 1.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, c. 5.

tion of another." Matter, however, is for the sake of form and must always be proportionate and suitable to the act informing it. Although matter of itself has only potential existence, when it is united with some form in a composite essence which receives the act of existence, it functions as the real principle of being that it is.¹⁷ From it flows, as it were, certain characteristics exhibited by the whole being, such as quantity, weight, corruptibility, etc. Furthermore, matter performs its work of limitation and individuation by means of certain "determinate dimensions," but under these conditions it is no longer prime matter, but is called by St. Thomas *signate matter*.¹⁸ A further understanding of the nature of matter will develop in the treatment of its co-principle, form, and later in the second chapter where matter is contrasted with privation and negation. Its historical significance in regard to the problem of evil will be considered in Chapter Four.

Form is defined as "the first intrinsic and actual principle of a corporeal substance or essence."¹⁹ Form perfects matter and together they compose the essence which receives the act of existence. Neither matter nor form have existence of themselves.²⁰ They are not beings, but principles by which something is able to come into being. Form is a specifying principle and it is by means of its form that a thing is known and can be defined. The human intellect, as we have indicated, is so designed that it understands things by abstracting their respective forms from matter. Therefore, the intelligibility of a thing depends upon its form. Since form is an actual principle, the degree of intelligibility of a thing corresponds to the degree of its actuality. It follows from this that matter, in itself, is wholly unintelligible to man, since matter as such is pure potentiality. However, it is known and understood by virtue of its relation to form. Finally,

¹⁷ Cf. *De Prim. Nat.*

¹⁸ *De Ente et Ess.*, c. 2; *In Boet. de Trin.*, q. 4, a. 2, ad 4.

¹⁹ Renard, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

²⁰ An exception to this must be made for the human soul which in view of its higher activities must be considered a subsisting form. However, even this form is incomplete in its perfection unless it is united to the human body.

since form gives species, but the division of the species into individual members is due to matter, it follows that if there are beings with simple essences devoid of matter, each one of these beings will be a unique species in itself, without any multiplication of individuals within the species. Such is the situation in regard to the angelic beings.

Considering the doctrine of potency and act in its application to the order of activity, we find that this doctrine explains how one being can remain its own essential self and yet undergo many changes of development and operation. Thus, a child learns subjects and skills, grows into manhood, etc., but still remains the same unique person. This experiential fact postulates a further composition, this time of substance and accident. *Substance* is that which remains fundamentally the same in the changing individual, i.e., the existing essence which retains its identity and, thus, the identity of the individual. A substance is in act, has its own perfection, and possesses being of itself in the sense that it does not require a subject of inherence. However, there are further perfections and actualities which are not essential to the substance, but for which it has capacities. Therefore, substance is in the position of potency to these additional perfections which are called accidents and which are related to the substance as further acts. Although accidents have their own respective essences and their own modes of existence, it is according to their nature that they are educed from the potency of the substance which is their subject, and that they depend upon the substance as the principle of their being. Consequently, an *accident* is defined as that to which is due existence, not in itself, but in another as the subject of its inherence. This does not mean, however, that an accident and its subject are absolutely and simply one. Just as potency and act, essence and existence, matter and form are really distinct, so also are a substance and its accidents. But a substance and its accidents are not transcendently united as are the other pairs, since both substance and accident have their respective essences and modes of existence. The union of these two is called a *unum per accidentis* in that the unit formed is an imperfect unit when compared to the composites formed by transcendental unions.²¹

²¹ *De Ente et Ess.*, c. 6.

3. PRINCIPLES OF BEING

Thus far we have considered only the nature of the object of metaphysical study. If, however, metaphysics, as it is claimed, is a demonstrative science, not only the nature of being, but also its principles and properties must be investigated.²² Our immediate concern is with the principles of being; its properties will be considered in the following section. Just as the study of the nature of being was made by means of the intellect contemplating its natural object, in a similar manner, the principles of being are naturally known. But whereas the understanding of the nature of being results from the first operation of the intellect, the principles of being are derived from the second intellectual operation, i.e., the formation of judgments or propositions. With confidence in the operation of the intellect upon its object, we assume with St. Thomas that the judgment act expresses all the truth possible about any subject and, therefore, it is reliable and adequate for this further study of being.

St. Thomas says:

In these things which fall before the apprehension of all, a certain order is found. For that which first falls before the apprehension is being, the understanding of which is included in all things whatsoever anyone apprehends. And, therefore, the first indemonstrable principle is that *the same thing cannot at the same time be affirmed and denied*. This is founded upon the nature of being and non-being, and upon this principle all others are founded, as it is said in the fourth book of the *Metaphysics*.²³

This first principle of being is commonly called the principle of non-contradiction. Other statements of it are these: A being

²² *In III Meta.*, lec. 5; *In I Post. Anal.*, lec. 17.

²³ *Sum. Theo.*, I-II, q. 94, a. 2. "In his autem quae in apprehensione omnium cadunt, quidam ordo invenitur. Nam illud quod primo cadit in apprehensione, est ens, cuius intellectus includitur in omnibus quaecumque quis apprehendit. Et ideo primum principium indemonstrabile est quod *non est simul affirmare et negare*, quod fundatur supra rationem entis et non entis: et super hoc principio omnia alia fundantur, ut dicitur in IV *Metaphys.*" Cf. *In IV Meta.*, lec. 2 & lec. 6; *In XI Meta.*, lec. 4 & lec. 5; *C. G.*, II, c. 83.

cannot not be; A thing cannot both be and not be at the same time in the same mode. A restatement of this principle yields the principle of excluded middle, which says that between being and non-being there is no middle ground. The meaning of the principle of non-contradiction is obvious and its importance can be adjudged from the above remark by St. Thomas. A third principle derived from the understanding of being is called the principle of identity. It is stated variously: Being is being; Whatever is, is; whatever is not, is not; Each being is what it is; Every being is of a determinate nature. The significance of this principle is the recognition that this understood essence is in actuality this thing posited in existence. Thus, being (essence) is being (existing thing). As Maritain points out, there is a conceptual difference between the subject and predicate of the principle of identity so the apparent tautology is avoided.²⁴

These three principles, i.e., the principle of non-contradiction, the principle of excluded-middle, and the principle of identity, are the primary principles of thought and being. They are indemonstrable and are obtained by analytic judgments concerning the concept of being. One of the mooted questions among Scholastic philosophers is the designation of the absolutely first among these principles. Renard holds that the principle of non-contradiction is first and that the other two principles are only restatements of this first principle.²⁵ Maritain, on the other hand, says the principle of identity is the first in the ontological order, while the principle of non-contradiction holds first place in the logical order.²⁴ DeRaeymaeker distinguishes between the psychological order and the practical order and gives the principle of identity first position in the former and non-contradiction first in the latter.²⁶ Buckley maintains that the principle of non-contradiction precedes the principle of identity because the former refers to the act of being, which is the ultimate principle of intelligibility, while the latter is concerned primarily with the essence of

²⁴ Cf. Maritain, *op. cit.*, pp. 90-97.

²⁵ Renard, *op. cit.*, pp. 107 f.

²⁶ L. DeRaeymaeker, *Metaphysica Generalis*, (Louvain: Warny, 1935), Vol. I, pp. 100 f.

being.²⁷ A résumé of the arguments in support of these positions would take us too far afield. Instead we must continue the consideration of the principles themselves and examine the next principle of being, namely, the principle of sufficient reason.

Since, according to the principle of non-contradiction, being and non-being are not the same, there must be some factor or reason which posits a thing on the side of existence, rather than non-existence. A being must have something more than has a non-being. This existential fact is formulated into the principle of sufficient reason, which says that every being must have a sufficient reason for its existence. Maritain gives the following formal enunciations of this principle: "Everything which is, to the extent to which it is, possesses a sufficient reason for its being," and "Whatever is, is intelligibly determined; whatever is, has that whereby it is."²⁸ This principle, like the three primary principles from which it follows, is transcendental or applicable to all being, for every being has a sufficient reason for its existence, either from itself, as in the case of the Infinite Being, or from another, as exemplified by finite beings.

The application of the principle of sufficient reason to the beings of our experience yields the principle of causality. The most fundamental natural impulse in all beings is the desire for their respective proper perfections. This implies that every being strives to maintain itself in existence and resists, as much as it is able, anything harmful to its existence. But in spite of this constant and unsparring effort, we see individual beings disappear and new forms take their place. Obviously, these beings were not the source of their own existence, otherwise they would not, contrary to their natural inclinations, suffer themselves to be destroyed. In other words, the reason for their existence is not found in themselves. Therefore, it must be in another and this "other" is called an efficient cause. The same conclusion is evi-

²⁷ George M. Buckley, *The Nature and Unity of Metaphysics*, (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1946), pp. 193-199. Cf. also: James B. Sullivan, *An Examination of First Principles in Thought and Being in the Light of Aristotle and Aquinas*, (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1939), pp. 55 ff.

²⁸ Maritain, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

dent if we recall the composite structure of finite beings which was revealed in our first consideration of the concept of being. Act is not ordered to potency; on the contrary, potency is ordered to act. However, of itself, potency cannot move to act, for this would amount to the possession of the act before receiving it, thus either repudiating the principle of non-contradiction, or eliminating the presupposed potency. From this follows the Thomistic dictum, "Whatever is moved, is moved by another," or "Nothing is reduced from potency to act except by a being already in act." Consequently, composite being in itself is not the complete explanation of its own existence. It requires something more to provide the sufficient reason for its being and to account for the coming together of its two distinct principles, potency and act. Thus, it is clear that every finite or contingent being must have an efficient cause.²⁹ This principle, unlike the principle from which it is derived, does not include all being, but only finite and limited things. Nevertheless, it is an analytical and necessary principle, and by means of it the existence of the Infinite Being can be demonstrated, as St. Thomas shows in his "second way."³⁰

A second application of the principle of sufficient reason yields the principle of finality. Not only must there be a sufficient reason why this thing exists rather than not existing, but also there must be some explanation why it acts in one way rather than in another, since action in itself is indifferent to direction, which indifference must be removed before action can take place. Why is it that fire always heats water, instead of freezing it? Why does this man choose to act rather than to refrain from acting? The explanation lies in the fact that actions are produced by agents. From the principle of identity we know that every agent or being has a certain determined nature. Since operation follows nature, the action of an agent likewise will be definite and determined. That to which an action is determined is called an end. Therefore, the principle of finality is formulated as "every agent acts for an end."³¹ This principle is

²⁹ For another argument based upon the participation of being, cf. *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 44, a. 1.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, I, q. 2, a. 3.

³¹ C. G., III, c. 2; *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 44, a. 4; I-II, q. 1, a. 1 & a. 2.

analytically necessary and is transcendental, being applicable by analogy to both Creator and creature.

Since actions reflect the nature of their active principles, as the principle of finality indicates, beings may be graded according to the perfection of their actions. Using this criteria, we see a hierarchical universe of beings reaching from the lowly level of prime matter, which is only ordered to act, through those beings which merely exist, through the vegetative life, through the sentient beings, through the rational level where both transient and immanent actions mark the relatively high place of man in the scale of beings, through the angelic orders which are still higher, to that Being Whose actions are completely immanent and, therefore, are most perfect, indicating the absolute and unsurpassed perfection of God. Thus, it is illustrated that "the order of agents is as the order of ends." Since this hierarchy is composed of agents and their actions, there is nothing dead or static about it. Every agent in the universe is either striving to acquire additional being or acting to reproduce or reflect its own perfection in other beings. Hence, the universe is seen as formed in the harmony and order of a dynamic scale, throbbing with the activity of each grade and of each individual within each grade and straining toward the Supreme End and Purpose of the whole cosmos.

These remarks suggest several observations which are important for a theory of evil. The first is that the activity of beings in perfecting or being perfected suggests a kind of superfluity of being which can be desired and be bestowed upon one being for its perfection by another being. This bespeaks the nature of goodness, the proper understanding of which is essential to the comprehension of evil. This will be treated in greater detail in the following section. Secondly, it is an experiential fact that the universe is a dynamic, hierarchical unity. A hierarchy is an order in which diverse grades of beings are arranged under one governor.³² Now wherever there is order, there is end or purpose; also, there is coordination of parts to form a whole and the subordination of each part and all parts to the end of the whole.

³² *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 108, a. 2; cf. I, q. 47, a. 2.

In the case of the universe, this whole is organic or functional, which means that each individual part, each member of each order has its proper end or function and, at the same time, contributes to the end and good of the whole. This latter contribution is achieved through the subordination of the lower orders to the higher, the less noble to the more noble.³³ Therefore, the beauty and perfection of the universe lies in its order. Furthermore, the universe has a definite end which is ordained by its Creator, and the perfection of each part is to perform its function and contribute to the higher forms of good and to the good of the universe as a whole. The significance for a theory of evil of this realistic view is that it enables one to see evil not only as the absence of the good of being, but also as an absence of the good of order. Moreover, it indicates a supreme purpose in the universe which may include and give reason to what contemporary philosophers call "superfluous evil." Furthermore, it points the way to the reconciliation of conflicting goods, a problem which besets modern thinkers. Finally, this view shows the relative character of the evil of nature and its goodness, absolutely considered. That this realism is essential to a sound theory of evil is abundantly proved by the vagaries of those who, while neglecting it, have sought to give an explanation of evil.

These principles which we have been examining are what might be called the cognitional principles of being. They are axioms which follow upon the concept of the nature of being. They remain, however, the causal principles. These principles account for the actual existence of a being. They are distinguished from a principle in general by the fact that what follows from them proceeds, not "in any manner whatsoever," but of necessity, and that there is an influx of reality between the causal principle and the effect consequent upon it. Both Aristotle and St. Thomas maintain that there are four kinds of causes, namely, material, formal, efficient, and final, and to these all others may be reduced.³⁴

³³ *Ibid.*, I, q. 65, a. 2.

³⁴ Aristotle, *Physics*, II, 3, (194b-195a, 2); Aquinas, *In II Physics*, lec. 5.

The material and formal causes are intrinsic and constitutive in corporeal beings. They are the forementioned principles of matter and form considered as they function in a real, concrete being. From the previous discussion of matter and form, we learned of the transcendental relation between these two intrinsic causes and of the influence they exert upon each other.—the form perfecting, actuating, and specifying the matter, and the matter individuating the form. In this intercommunication and mutual exigency lies the contribution which the material and formal causes make to corporeal being, because, in virtue of this, the composite essential to the existence of such a being is formed. The material cause may be described as that out of which something is made. The formal cause is that pattern in a thing according to which it is made and defined.

The efficient and final causes are extrinsic to the being caused and are often referred to as agent and end, respectively. In discussing the principles of efficient causality and finality, we have seen the necessity for these two causes. The efficient cause or agent is "that which by its action produces the being."³⁵ The causality of this cause is its productive action or efficiency which is defined as "the actuality of an active power with a term distinct from the actuality itself whether the term is intrinsic or extrinsic to the agent."³⁶ This is an incomparably richer understanding of efficiency than the modern notion that efficiency is merely succession. It should be noted that St. Thomas is careful to avoid any idea of motion as essential to efficient action in order that the motionless efficiency of God may be included in his doctrine of efficiency. A corollary from his definition of efficiency is that a being acts only inasmuch as it is in act, since the action is according to the active power belonging to the agent and the actualization of the power depends upon the fullness of being of the agent.

The final cause is that purpose for which something is done. Although it is in the intentional order, the final cause is a real

³⁵ Rehard, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

³⁶ Charles A. Hart, Unpublished Lectures, 1946-47. Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America.

being, the predicated concept must express a different view, so to speak, of it, if the judgment is not to be a mere tautology. As we shall see later, there are five such concepts, namely, oneness, truth, goodness, thing, and something. However, the last two concepts, while capable of predication for all being, have so little to add to the understanding of being that we may properly neglect them. On the other hand, oneness, truth, and goodness, transcending the categories, are found to be necessarily connected with all being and to express a different aspect of the same fundamental being. In virtue of this, oneness, truth, and goodness are designated the transcendental attributes of being.

Considering the relationships proper to being in its position as the subject of a judgment, we see that there are but two general relationships for being as the subject. These are being related to itself (*omne ens in se*) and being related to other beings (*unumquodque ens in ordine ad aliud*).⁴³ If being is considered in relation to itself, i.e., being considered absolutely, we can only affirm or deny something about the being itself. The judgment must be expressed as either "Being is P," or "Being is not P." Now the only absolute affirmation that can be made of being as subject is to declare every being its own essence. No other affirmative assertion concerning being related to itself is sufficiently extensive to include all being. Therefore, the affirmative proposition is stated, "Being is its own essence (*res*)."⁴⁴ From this is obtained the concept, *thing*, which, though it is as wide as the concept of being itself, adds very little to the understanding of it. *Thing* emphasizes essence, while being stresses existence. This differentiation is not sufficient to make *thing (res)* a transcendental property in the full sense. Hence, we shall neglect *thing* as a distinct attribute of being because it differs so little from the concept we are studying. We next consider the only other way being may be judged absolutely, namely, in a negative proposition.

This inquiry brings forth the realization that being is undivided—it is one. The only absolute negation that can be stated of being in itself, and which, therefore, can be asserted of all

⁴³ Cf. *ibid.*, q. 1. a. 1.

being, is that "being is not divided." But this does nothing other than emphasize the integrity of being, its unity. This property is termed the *oneness* of being.⁴⁵

This oneness has no reference to the one of number, for the numerical one is a univocal unit based on quantity. As such, it could not be predicated of the transcendental, analogous concept of being. The oneness of being refers to the indivision of being in regard to its own essence. By this, the notion of indivision, oneness contributes to the concept of being. It may be objected that composite beings, since they have constituent parts may be divided. Therefore, they are beings lacking indivision, hence lacking oneness. However, upon reflection it is seen that a composite being as such is one. Whereas if it is separated into its parts, there is no longer any such being to be considered. It is clear, then, that the oneness of being is truly transcendental, for it applies to all beings, simple and composite, insofar as they truly exist.⁴⁶

Continuing the investigation, we must consider being in its second relationship, namely, that of beings to each other. This may be studied from two vantage points. If a being is regarded as distinct from every other being, we see that this being is not that being. It is something other (*aliquid*). Hence, *something* is another concept of being. Its separation and distinction from every other being is what makes a being to be *something*. But this notion is already contained in the concept of the one, for inasmuch as a being is one, it is separated from every other being outside its unity. Therefore, the concept of something adds nothing new to our knowledge of being as having unity, and it does not receive a place among the transcendental attributes.

On the other hand, being considered, not from the point of distinction, but in view of its agreement or suitability to other beings, can be accommodated only by the human soul, which can adapt itself to all being and, in a certain way, become all being by somehow conforming to it. Thus, a new universal relation is

⁴⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, q. 1. a. 11.

⁴⁵ *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 11, a. 1; *De Pot.*, q. 9, a. 7.

⁴⁶ *De Ver.*, q. 1. a. 1.

possible between all being and the soul that can become all being. The soul, however, possesses two powers, that is, two ways of relating itself to all being, namely, the intellect and the will. The consideration of being as related to these two powers reveals two further properties of being, i.e., the truth and goodness of being. Since a thing must be known by the intellect before it can be desired by the will, the truth of the intellect is logically prior to the good of the will and, therefore, the truth merits consideration before the good.

Truth is the conformity between the intellect and the thing known. An object is said to be true, or to possess the attribute of truth, if it corresponds to the judgment of it in the intellect. Hence, there are "true friends," "true descriptions," etc. The true friend possesses the qualities attributed by the mind to its idea of what a friend should be. A description is true because it reveals the picture or the situation as the mind knows it to be or to have been. These examples are analogies representing the ontological or real truth of things whereby things are conformed to the intellect of God. But we also say the judgment of the intellect is true when it reports reality as it is. Here the conformity necessary for truth is that of the intellect with reality. This is logical truth. If the mind should judge, "That is a tree," when in reality the tall, wooden object is a telephone pole, the judgment is false. The intellect is making a false representation, for the judgment involving the tree does not correspond to the actual existence of the telephone pole. St. Thomas says, "Thus truth is primarily in the intellect, and secondarily in things according as they are related to the intellect as to a principle. . . . Truth is the equation of thought and thing."⁴⁷

Being and truth are convertible because they are fundamentally the same for inasmuch as a thing has being, it has intelligibility, i.e., it can be in conformity with the intellect; it is knowable. Inasmuch as it is true, it must be intelligible and, therefore, it must have being, since the natural object of the intellect is being.

⁴⁷ *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 16, a. 1. "Sic ergo veritas principaliter est in intellectu; secundario vero in rebus, secundum quod comparantur ad intellectum ut ad principium."
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Truth differs logically from being in that it denotes the relationship of conformity which is only implicit in being apart from the intellect to which it conforms.⁴⁸

The next consideration is that of being suited to the will. Being as the object of the appetitive faculty is signified by the term, "good." From the time of Aristotle the good has been defined as that which all things desire. According to this, it does not seem possible that the good extends to all being and, thus, is transcendental, for surely there are ugly and harmful beings which are not objects of desire but rather of aversion. However, the difficulty is resolved by the following observation from St. Thomas:

Every being, inasmuch as it is being, is good. For every being, inasmuch as it is being, is in act and in some way perfect, because every act is a certain perfection, but the perfect has the nature of desirability and of the good. . . . Wherefore it follows that every being as such is good.⁴⁹

This does not mean that every being is necessarily good also in its relation to every other being. But every being considered in itself is good, for every being by virtue of its actuality possesses some perfection and its own perfection is desirable to it. Every being is good *in itself*. This distinction is of paramount importance in the treatment of the problem of evil. It follows, then, that goodness is truly transcendental and convertible with being, for it posits being and is contained in all that has being. However, the good differs logically from being, inasmuch as the good contains the notion of desirability, while this note is only implicit in being apart from the appetite.

This foundation of the good directly upon being itself makes goodness something objective and absolute. Herein lies the outstanding contribution of Thomistic philosophy to contemporary

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, I, q. 16, a. 3, ad 1.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, I, q. 5, a. 3. ". . . omne ens, in quantum est ens, est bonum. Omne enim ens, in quantum est ens, est in actu, et quodammodo perfectum: quia omnis actus perfectio quaedam est. Perfectum vero habet rationem appetibilis et boni. . . . Unde sequitur omne ens, in quantum huiusmodi, bonum esse."

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axiology, which is infested with relativistic subjectivism. Moreover, whatever is said of the nature of good, to a certain extent, reverberates throughout a corresponding theory of evil, since, as we shall see, evil is so dependent upon the good. Therefore, if goodness has a definite nature, then the nature of evil must be something more determined than a relation which changes with every individual and every context. From the last quotation above, it seems that the goodness of a being lies in the perfection of the being. In a sense this is true and it provides the absolute-ness of the good. However, perfection taken simply and isolatedly is not sufficient to constitute the full nature of goodness, for if it were, there would be no accounting for the experiential fact that the same thing can be good for some things and bad for others. Desirability is the keynote of the good, therefore, the perfection which is the absolute in goodness must be related to an appetite as an object or end. But no being desires what is not suitable to it and every being desires that which perfects it. Consequently, the perfection which is the root of goodness has also the aspect of perfectiveness, i.e., of being able to bestow actuality and goodness upon others by the attractiveness of its own perfection. This latter feature of the good, however, has the character of a relation. Therefore, goodness is seen as something absolute which causes a relation. It is "perfection connoting perfectiveness."⁵⁰ Thus, there is provision for progress, development, and dynamism in Thomistic axiology, yet there is a solid, permanent foundation for values, anchored in the very being and reality of things, and ultimately in the Source of All Being and Reality.

Unless there is such a doctrine of absolute good and objective value to which a proposed theory of evil can be related, as we have already observed, there can be no real understanding of the nature of evil. Without absolute values as a foundation, an attempted answer to the problem of evil is determined ultimately to end in frustration because such an answer is unreal. Even more futile, however, is the effort to study the nature of evil apart from any formal theory of the good. Nevertheless, this is the

⁵⁰ Charles A. Hart, Unpublished Lectures, 1946-47. Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America.

major fault of the book which Prof. E. S. Brightman acclaims as "one of the best philosophical discussions" in recent literature of the problem of evil. We refer to R. A. Tsanoff's *The Nature of Evil*. Concerning this fatal defect in the theory of evil presented in Tsanoff's work, Fr. Gerald Phelan has expressed the viewpoint of a Scholastic philosopher and, at the same time, has given an insight into contemporary philosophy. Fr. Phelan writes:

For the man whose philosophy flows in the broad stream of the Christian tradition, the Problem of Evil is a corollary to the Problem of Good. Not so for the "modern" philosopher. With the banishment of metaphysics in favor of science or epistemology or psychology, modern philosophers got into the habit of putting the cart before the horse in practically every problem. They have tried to explain reality by appearance, thing by thought, being by change, morality by utility, sanity by psychoses, the normal by the abnormal, truth by error, goodness by evil. So we get a book on the Nature of Evil by an author who has never told us what he thinks about the Nature of Good. Naturally, he does tell us a great deal about his opinions on Goodness in the course of this work, but only as a consequence of his ideas about Evil. A clear case of "ignotus," if there ever was one!

Tsanoff especially requires a sound theory of value and of the good, for he defines evil as "degradation," the yielding of the higher to the lower on the aesthetic, natural, or moral level. He says:

... evil is literally *degradation*, the surrender of the higher to the lower in the scale of being, the effective down-pulling incursion of the lower against the higher. This definition of evil would apply irrespective of the judgment as to what in any specific case is higher or lower; for such difference of judgment would involve a corresponding difference of judgment as to what in the circumstances is evil, and would reaffirm this fundamental conception of the nature of evil.⁵¹

The author does not fail to realize that this concept of evil must be linked with some notion of value. Moreover, he recognizes

⁵¹ Gerald B. Phelan, "Review of *The Nature of Evil*, by R. A. Tsanoff," *The New Scholasticism*, Vol. 5, p. 261.

⁵² Radoslav A. Tsanoff, *The Nature of Evil*, pp. 392 f.

that "this cosmic concourse is a scale or hierarchy of activities," and this, he says, is presupposed in the valuation of things. He writes, "The first axiom of the philosophy of value is: there is a hierarchy of being, or there is a higher and lower in the world, some things are preferable, better, worthier than others."⁵³ In spite of this seemingly objective basis, however, Tsanoff continues in the *modus loquendi* of a complete relativist. The significance of "higher" and "lower" he explains in the anthropocentric generalities typical of contemporary, non-Scholastic philosophy: "The meaning of the terms 'higher' and 'lower' is itself ever-expanding: signifying difference in complexity and range of categories, enhanced self-realization and self-judgment."⁵⁴ In regard to the nature of value itself, Tsanoff writes:

The world discloses value only in and to personal experience. Values are personal in reference and connotation. This main principle, which commands weighty support, has found classical expression in Green's formula: Values are always "relative to value for, of, or in a person."⁵⁴ The realm of value is too vast and complex to be thus forced in the frame of any such *x* and *y*. . . . truth, for instance, and not only may but characteristically does lose, in another context, its truth character and is disclosed as error. And likewise with the other values. The value-character of reality, in other words, is not to be sought in individual things or aspects or qualities that stay put, that can be isolated and exhibited for praise or execration. Good and evil, truth and error, beauty and justice and the rest are what they are always in relation, in certain contexts, and in different contexts and relations may and do disclose a metamorphosis: the sheep turn out to be also goats!⁵⁵

Therefore, it seems that, in reality, Tsanoff's concept of value is divorced from his knowledge of the hierarchical nature of beings, and flows rather from his attempt to formulate a definition of evil sufficiently broad to include all that he recognizes from experi-

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 392.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 389.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 388 f.

ence as evil. He states that evil is "the surrender of the higher to the lower in the scale of being." This is part of the truth concerning the nature of evil, but with Tsanoff it loses its meaning because in his development he destroys the possibility of objective, definite determination of the "higher" and the "lower." What does it mean to say that evil is a surrender of the higher to the lower, if one's concept of evil and of value is so relative that one does not know with certitude what is higher and what is lower? Finally, because Tsanoff fails to establish the valuation of things and the nature of the good objectively and because he lacks a stable basis for understanding the nature of evil, his theory becomes the target of his own criticism, for he remarks, "It is a sound principle of criticism that a philosophy of life, however large the body of particular evidence on which it bases its conclusions, however close the abstract consistency of its principles, yet falls short of adequacy so long as it cannot account for itself."⁵⁶ By way of contrast, we might observe calmly without boast that Thomistic philosophy in general and its theory of evil in particular, not only is substantiated by the particular evidence of experience, not only is renewed by the abstract consistency of its principles, but above all it can account for itself as a whole and in its individual doctrines, because it is founded on the rock of reality.

Having seen the effect upon a theory of evil of the failure to understand the nature and objectivity of goodness, we continue now our discussion of the Thomistic doctrine of good. Since by its nature the good has the aspect of a desired end toward which an appetite is striving and also the aspect of a perfection, various philosophers have classified the good according to these two factors. The Angelic Doctor, considering good as the object and end of striving, divides it into the useful (*utile*), the delight-giving (*delectabile*), and the virtuous (*honestum*).⁵⁷ The useful good is something desired as a means to an end, e.g., money with which to buy an automobile. The delight-giving good consists in the pleasure or state of rest enjoyed with the possession of the object

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 364.

⁵⁷ *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 5, a. 6.

desired. For instance, if the prospective car-owner has as his goal the feeling of pleasure and pride in owning the automobile, this sentiment would be a pleasant or delight-giving good. Finally, the thing desired for its own sake is classed as the virtuous good. In our example, this would be the automobile itself. This division is important in the field of moral philosophy, for the delight-giving should be secondary to the virtuous, and the useful subservient to both of them. Furthermore, in regard to the Thomistic theory of evil, it should be noted that the Angelic Doctor says, "The useful good is ordered to the delight-giving and the virtuous as to an end. Thus, there are two principal goods, namely, the virtuous and the delight-giving, to which are opposed two evils: fault to the virtuous, and punishment to the delight-giving."⁵⁸ The nature of these two kinds of evil will be considered at length subsequently in Chapter Three.

Considering the good in its nature as a perfection making perfect, some writers have made three further designations of the good, i.e., ontological good, physical and moral good. The first is the good a being possesses by virtue of its actuality. This has been discussed above. Ontological good is an absolute good. Physical and moral good, however, have a relative character. Physical good is that which answers the requirements of the nature of a being. Foods, sleep, etc., are physical goods for man. A moral good is something in accord with the moral law and the nature of moral beings, e.g., a kind deed, a virtue. In addition, these relative goods may be divided into real and apparent goods. As these names imply, a real good is one that is truly good, and an apparent good is one that seems to a finite intellect to be good, but is actually harmful.

Thus far we have seen oneness, truth, and goodness take their places in just that order as the transcendental properties of being. This is not a purely subjective, arbitrary arrangement. It follows naturally from the nature of the transcendentals themselves. As we have said, the oneness of being connotes its indivision. The

⁵⁸ *De Malo*, q. 1, a. 4, ad 12. "... bonum utile ordinatur in delectabile et honestum, sicut in finem; et sic duo sunt principalia bona, scilicet honestum et delectabile; quibus opponuntur duo mala; culpa quidem honesto, poena vero delectabili."

true expresses the relationship of being to the knowing intellect, i.e., conformity, and good implies the desirability of being. Now, absolutely speaking, the true is prior to the good.⁵⁹ But the true is consequent upon intelligibility. Yet the intelligibility of a thing depends upon its unity. Therefore, the order of the transcendentals is first oneness, then truth, and finally, goodness.

The good presupposes the true, but the true presupposes the one, because the nature of the true is perfected by the apprehension of the intellect. Each thing, however, is intelligible insofar as it is one; Wherefore, of those names of the transcendentals such is the order if they are considered in themselves, that after being is the one, then the true, then after the true, the good.⁶⁰

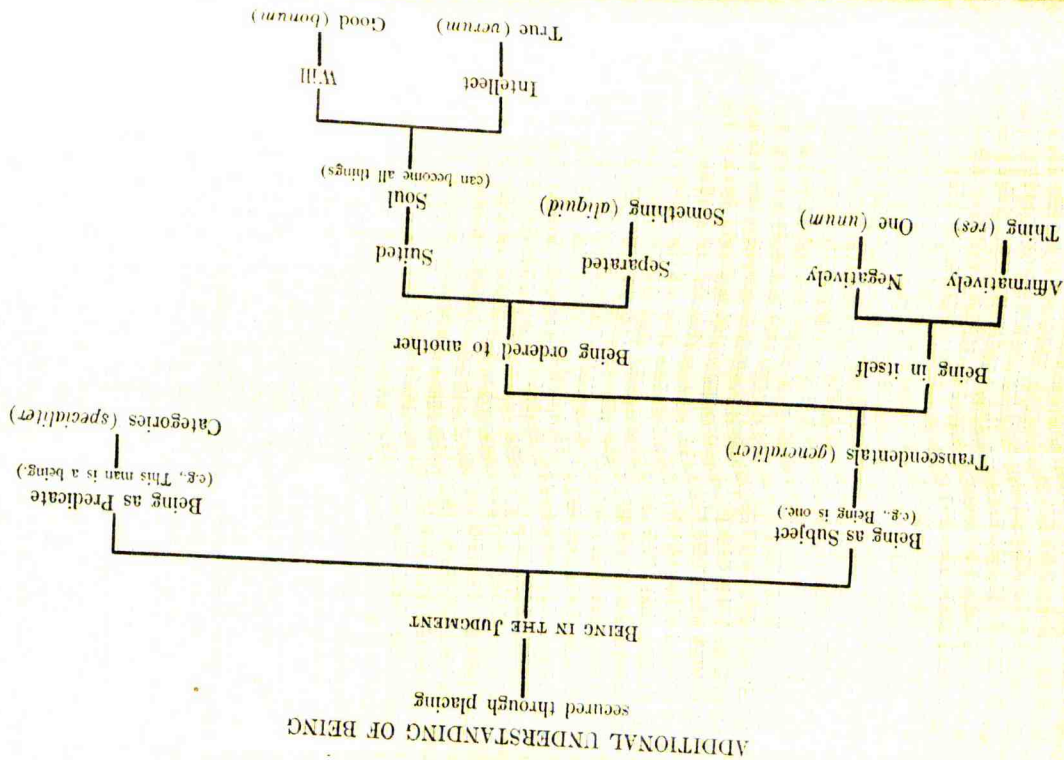
This objective order of the transcendentals, as well as their development by means of the judgment act, can perhaps best be seen by considering it in the following schema, which concludes our consideration of fundamental metaphysical principles. (See chart on page 28.)

SUMMARY

This first chapter has been an attempt to present the elements of general metaphysics which are presupposed in a metaphysical study of the nature of evil. The topics most relevant as a foundation to our problem are the following: first, the nature of being, its meaning as something positive and in some degree perfect, and its extension, in order that evil as a kind of non-being can be properly understood and that several misconceptions concerning the source and activity of evil can be removed; secondly, the nature of cause and the meaning of causality with special note of its relation to being and actuality; thirdly, the unity of purpose and the hierarchy of beings in the universe. Finally, and most important is an adequate understanding of the good, since only by means of the good can evil be known.

⁵⁹ *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 16, a. 4.

⁶⁰ *De Ver.*, q. 21, a. 3. "... bonum praesupponit verum, verum autem praesupponit unum, cum veri ratio ex apprehensione intellectus perfectatur; unumquodque autem intelligibile est in quantum est unum; Unde istorum nominum transcendentium talis est ordo, si secundum se considerentur: quod post ens est unum, deinde verum, deinde post verum bonum."



However, since Thomistic metaphysics is organic in its structure, to present these foundation topics enumeratively and apart from their relation to metaphysics as a whole is to present them distordedly or, at best, only partially. It seemed better, therefore, to include in Chapter One a digest of the science of metaphysics as a whole, giving its broad outlines and placing particular emphasis on those elements most relevant to the subsequent discussions concerning evil. After the introductory paragraph, then, there were brief considerations of the definition of the science of metaphysics and the method it employs, the abstraction required for the metaphysical concept of being and the analogous character of this concept. There next followed an investigation into the structure of being which revealed composition in finite beings on four different levels. In each instance, there is a perfecting principle and one that limits and individuates. On the level of being as such the former is called act and the latter, potency. On the level of existence they are existence and essence respectively. In the order of essence the two principles are called form and matter, and in the order of activity they are accident and substance. The nature of each of these various principles was examined and several Thomistic theses concerning them were developed.

After considering being itself in that manner, we next took up the principles of being, first, those cognitional or axiomatic principles which are derived from a consideration of the concept of being in the judgment and, secondly, the causal principles. Of the former we discussed the principles of non-contradiction, excluded-middle, identity, sufficient reason, efficient causality, and finality. Developments of these last two principles indicated proofs for the existence of God and the dynamic order of the universe. The causal principles are the material, formal, efficient, and final causes of being. Each of these was considered in turn and its precise causality revealed.

The final section of the chapter was devoted to the properties of proper accidents of being. This section consisted mainly of an exposition of St. Thomas' plan of the transcendentals as it is found in the *De Veritate*, question one, article one. Since the chief objective of this section was to reveal the nature of the good

and to show its position in relation to being and the other properties of being, only a bare indication of the categories of being was given. The five transcendental notes of being were mentioned, but *res* and *aliquid* were neglected because they offered so little additional information about being itself. The oneness of being and its truth was considered in more detail, while still greater emphasis was given to the good, since it is so essential to the understanding of evil. The good was seen to be being considered as the object of an appetite. It adds to being the note of desirability. In itself the good is "perfection connoting perfectiveness." The objectivity of the good, deriving from its perfection and foundation in being, was noted. Later, mention was made of the Thomistic and modern divisions of goodness. Finally, the objectiveness of the order of the transcendentals was established and the whole plan summarized schematically.

CHAPTER II

THE NATURE OF EVIL.

I. THE DEFINITION OF EVIL.

It is the peculiar nature of evil to be unintelligible except in terms of its opposite;¹ consequently, the foregoing treatment of goodness was a necessary propaedeutic to our discussion of the nature of evil. Any definition or explanation of evil presupposes, either implicitly or explicitly, an understanding of the concept of goodness. Thus, St. Thomas writes, "Therefore by the name of evil there must be signified some absence of good."² Good, however, is convertible with being.³ Hence, an absence of good is,

¹ *C. G.*, I, c. 71. "Nam bonum est quasi ratio cognitionis mali. Unde cognoscuntur mala per bona sicut res per suas definitiones: non sicut conclusiones per principia.

"... Quia malum non dicitur esse nisi in quantum est privatio boni. Unde secundum hunc solum modum est cognoscibile: nam unumquodque, quantum habet de esse, tantum habet de cognoscibilitate."

Sum. Theo., I, q. 14, a. 10, ad 4. "Sed malum non est per se cognoscibile: quia de ratione mali est, quod sit privatio boni. Et sic neque defini, neque cognosci potest, nisi per bonum."

Ibid., I, q. 48, a. 1. "... unum oppositorum cognoscitur per alterum, sicut per lucem tenebra. Unde et quid sit malum, oportet ex ratione boni accipere."

² *Ibid.* Cf. *De Malo*, q. 1, a. 1. "... alio modo potest intelligi ipsum malum, et hoc non est aliquid, sed est ipsa privatio alicujus particularis boni."

Sum. Theo., I, q. 49, a. 1. "Malum enim est defectus boni quod natum est et debet haberi."

C. G., III, c. 9. "... sed malum privatio est boni, in quantum est malum."

In I Sen., d. 46, q. 1, a. 3, ad 4. "... malum consistit in privatione ejus quod est debitum et natum haberi, sicut est caecitas."

Comp. Theo., c. 114. "Est igitur hic considerandum: quod sicut nomine boni intelligitur esse perfectum, ita nomine mali nihil aliud intelligitur quam privatio esse perfecti."

³ Cf. Chapter I, p. 21.

in a sense, an absence of being. Evil, therefore, must be some kind of non-being. But the kinds of non-being, St. Thomas tells us, are threefold, namely, negation, privation, and matter.⁴

Matter is "the first intrinsic and potential principle of a corporeal essence." As we have seen,⁵ matter is that which limits or determines form, and the two together, transcendentially united, compose the essence which receives the act of existence in corporeal beings. Furthermore, in *De Principiis Naturae*, St. Thomas shows that matter is a natural antecedent in the generation of things and an enduring substrate in their existence and corruption.⁶ Hence, it is truly a principle *per se* and a reality. However, matter can neither exist nor be known apart from form because in itself it is pure passive potency.⁷ As such, matter is classed among the kinds of non-being, for "to be in potency is as not to be because what is in potency does not exist (actually)."⁸ Yet potency is ordered to act and exists for act, hence, by virtue of this relation to existing reality, the pure potency which is prime matter has a share in being. It is the "non-being which in a certain way is."⁹

Farther removed from reality is negation, for a negation is such is the simple absence of being or perfection, a *non ens simpliciter*. It is characteristic of simple negation that the absent

⁴ *In XII Meta.*, lec. 1. "Dicitur enim non ens tripliciter. Uno modo quod nullo modo est; . . . Alio modo dicitur non ens ipsa privatio, quae consideratur in aliquo subiecto: . . . Tertio modo dicitur non ens ipsa materia, quae, quantum est de se, non est ens actu, sed ens potentia."

⁵ Cf. Chapter I, p. 6.

⁶ For an illuminating discussion of this point, cf. Sister Mary Consilia O'Brien, O.P., *The Antecedents of Being*, Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1939.

⁷ *De Prin. Nat.* "Et quia omnis definitio et omnis cognitio est per formam; ideo materia prima non potest per se defini nec cognosci, sed per comparationem ad formam; . . ."

In VIII Meta., lec. 1. ". . . materia vero non potest intelligi sine intellectu formae, cum non apprehendatur nisi ut ens in potentia ad formam."

⁸ *De Quat. Op.*, c. 5. ". . . esse in potentia est quasi non esse, quia quod est in potentia non est, . . ."

⁹ O'Brien, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

perfection neither properly nor naturally belongs to the being in question.) In this instance, there is in the being no potentiality for that which is said to be negated. For example, the absence of sensation in a tree is a simple negation because feeling is not naturally due a tree. Again, non-existence is a negation in a non-being or in a logical being because actual existence is owed to neither of them. Since simple negation neither asserts anything nor connotes any special relation to a particular class of beings, it can be affirmed equally of real, possible, or imaginary beings. On the other hand, there is a particular type of negation which denotes not merely the absence of a form, but the absence of a form naturally due a being and without which the being is less perfect. Negation with this privative aspect is a *privation*. Since it is the lack of an opposite attribute, privation is restricted to those beings which by their nature should be endowed with the missing habit or perfection, for "blindness is not said except of one whose nature it is to see." Thus, St. Thomas explains:

Negation, however, is twofold: a certain simple kind by which it is said absolutely that this is lacking to that [*non inest illi*], the other is negation in a class [*in genere*], by which something is not negated without a sense of qualification [*absolute*], but within the bounds of some class; as blind is predicated not simply of that which does not have sight, but within the genus of animal which is fitted by nature to possess vision. . . . negation asserts only the absence of something, namely, that which it removes, without this qualification, that it specifies a subject. Wherefore absolute negation may be affirmed truthfully as much of a non-being to which it belongs to have affirmation, as of a being which is fitted by nature to have that which is negated and does not have it. For non-seeing may be said as much of a chimera, as of a stone, as of a man also. But in privation there is a certain nature or determined substance of which the privation is asserted, for not every non-seeing thing may be called blind, but only that which is fitted by nature to have sight.¹⁰

¹⁰ *In IV Meta.*, lec. 1. "Negatio autem est duplex: quaedam simplex per quam absolute dicitur quod hoc non inest illi. Alia est negatio in genere, per quam aliquid non absolute negatur, sed infra metas alicuius generis, sicut caecum dicitur non simpliciter, quod non habet visum, sed infra genus animalis quod natum est habere visum, . . . negatio dicit

Consequently, even though privation asserts nothing, it, nevertheless, implies or determines its subject, and it is fittingly defined as "negation in a subject."

In contrast to the universality of simple negation, privation has an aspect of particularity inasmuch as true privation is characterized by certain definite factors. There must be the absence of a due perfection, the aptitude of a subject for the perfection, and the being which, since it is the subject of the potency, is likewise the subject of the privation.¹¹ In itself privation is nothing real; it is an *ens rationis*. But because it contravenes a reality, i.e., a due perfection, existing or potential, and because it has an exigency for specific subjects which are real beings, privation is more than simple non-being.¹² It has definite, malevolent ties with reality; it is the absence that is conspicuous.

This privative absence, considered according to the habitus it opposes, may be either a pure privation or a partial privation, a privation *in via*.¹³ With the former, the whole perfection is removed, as in the case of death or blindness. The latter, however, though it places obstacles and hindrances to the full actualization of the power, yet leaves something of the perfection and does not destroy it utterly. Such is the condition in near-sightedness or in illness. Commenting on the fifth book of the *Meta-*

tantum absentiam alicujus, scilicet quod removeat, sine hoc quod determinet subjectum. Unde absoluta negatio potest verificari tam de non ente quod est natum habere affirmationem, quam de ente quod est natum habere et non habet. Non videns enim potest dici tam chimæra quam lapis quam etiam homo. Sed in privatione est quædam natura vel substantia determinata, de qua dicitur privatio; non enim omne non videns potest dici caecum, sed solum quod est natum habere visum." Cf. Sum. Theo., I, q. 17, a. 4.

¹¹ *In II Sen.*, d. 34, q. 1, a. 5. "Ad rationem autem cujuslibet privationis tria requiruntur: scilicet habitus oppositus, et subiectum tam habitus quam privationis, et habitus in subiecto ad receptionem habitus; . . ."

¹² Cf. Franciscus de Sylvestris, *Comm. in II Contra Gentiles*, c. 41. In *Opera S. Thomae*, ed. Leonina, Vol. XIII, p. 363. "Dicitur ulterius quod tale non ens est aliquid, et est aliquo modo ens, ratione scilicet substrati: quia dicit *negationem in subiecto*."

¹³ Cf. *De Malo*, q. 1, a. 1, ad 2; *Sum. Theo.*, I-II, q. 48, a. 8, ad 1.

physics, and again in the *Summa Theologica*, St. Thomas gives other classifications of privation according as the consideration is primarily of the negation itself or of the aptitude of the subject. In a final division he gives a definitive statement of the nature of privation: "In a third sense, privation means the absence of that which something ought to have, in which sense, privation signifies imperfection."¹⁴ Because true privation always bears this significance, the Angelic Doctor later remarks, "Just as every form has the nature of good, so also every privation, as such, has the nature of evil."¹⁵ Here is the non-being of evil, here is the essential notion in its formal definition: "This is the essence of evil that it is the privation of good."¹⁶

2. THE BEING OF EVIL

With evil properly defined as a privation of good, the question, "What is evil?" is satisfied. There remains, however, a second query bearing on the nature of the subject, i.e., "Where is evil?" Is it a real thing with substantial existence in the extra-mental world, or is it entirely in the mind, a mere unpleasant fancy, or is there no evil at all and this is truly "the best of all possible worlds"? The first of these alternatives belongs to the Manichæans, ancient, medieval, and modern. The second is frequently espoused by some contemporary religionists, and the last is the sanguine delusion of the now rare extreme optimist, successor and heir of Leibnitz.

When inquiring of the being of something, as this question does, we must first realize that there are two modes of being, i.e., that which a thing has in nature, and that which a thing has in the mind. Furthermore, a thing possessing the first mode of being belongs also to the second, but the converse is not necessarily true.¹⁷ The first mode is real, existential, positive being, the kind

¹⁴ *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 33, a. 4, ad 2.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, I, q. 48, a. 1, ad 1. ". . . quia sicut omnis forma habet rationem boni, ita omnis privatio, in quantum huiusmodi, habet rationem mali."

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, I, q. 14, a. 10. ". . . hoc sit esse mali, quod est privatio boni, . . ."

¹⁷ *In II Sen.*, d. 34, q. 1, a. 1. "Quaecumque ergo dicuntur entia quantum ad primum modum, sunt entia quantum ad secundum modum: quia omne

with which Aristotle was concerned when he classified all reality into the ten categories. The second mode is the being attributed to a thing receiving mental consideration. It has been said that the first object of the intellect is being and into being it resolves all of its concepts.¹⁸ In accordance with this natural function, the intellect, when considering things which in reality signify an absence of being, such as privations, etc., endows them, as it were, with a kind of being called logical, and in its judgments treats of and expresses them as positive beings. Concerning these two modes of being, the Angelic Doctor writes:

As it is said in the fifth book of the *Metaphysics*, being is spoken of in two ways; in one way according as it is that which signifies the entity of a thing. According to this way it is divided into the ten categories, and, thus, is convertible with things. No privation is a being in this mode, wherefore neither is evil. In the other way, that is called being which signifies the truth of a proposition which consists in composition, the sign of which is this word, *is*. This is the being which answers the question, *whether a thing exists*; and, thus, we say blindness is in the eye, or whatever other privation. And in this manner even evil is said to be a being.¹⁹

It is evident, then, that evil has the being of an *ens rationis*. It is a logical being; it belongs to the second mode. Does evil also belong to the first mode absolutely considered? In several writ-

quod habet naturale esse in rebus potest significari per propositionem affirmativam esse, ut cum dicitur: color est vel homo est. Non autem omnia sunt entia quantum ad secundum modum, sunt entia quantum

¹⁸ *De Ver.*, q. 1, a. 1. "Illud autem quod primo intellectus concepit quasi notissimum, et in quo omnes conceptiones resolvit, est ens" Cf. Chapter I, p. 4.

¹⁹ *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 48, a. 2, ad 2. ". . . sicut dicitur in V *Metaphys.* prout dividitur per decem praedicamenta: et sic convertitur cum re. Et hoc modo, nulla privatio est ens: unde nec malum. Alio modo dicitur ens quod significat veritatem propositionis, quae in compositione consistit, cuius nota est hoc verbum *est*: et hoc est ens quo respondetur ad quaestionem *an est*. Et sic caecitatem dicimus esse in oculo, vel quaecumque aliam privationem. Et hoc modo etiam malum dicitur ens." Cf. *De Ente et Ess.*, c. 1; *In II Sen.*, d. 34, q. 1, a. 1.

ings St. Thomas proves repeatedly that, considered in itself, it does not.²⁰

When the nature of evil is properly understood, it becomes very clear that evil as such cannot be a positive being. A completely evil being, pure evil incarnate, is as contradictory as a square circle. Because some thinkers have failed to realize this, history has witnessed the errors of Zoroaster, Manes, the Albigenses, and their kindred spirits among modern philosophers. Evil considered in itself is the privation or absence of good; it is universally opposed to good.²¹ Hence, in whatever is of the nature of goodness, evil as such can have no share. From this fundamental understanding it follows that evil cannot exist as a positive being. In three ways this is shown by St. Thomas in his professional treatise on the nature of evil and sin.

First, it must be remembered that "the good is what all things desire"; anything desirable partakes of the nature of goodness. It also has the nature of an end. But the order of ends is as the order of agents, so that if there is a first agent cause uncaused which is the universal and highest source of being and movement,²² there also must be a universal and highest end or good. Moreover, unless we are to proceed to an impossible infinity of causes, the first cause must be unmovable. Its end, therefore, must be identical with it, for a thing is moved by that which it desires. Consequently, the first agent cause, which is the source of all being, is likewise the universal and highest good, the source of all goodness. Therefore, whatever exists proceeds from this universal source of being and at the same time from goodness itself. But whatever comes forth from the first and universal good must be nothing other than some particular good, as whatever proceeds from the first and universal cause of being is some particular

²⁰ Mindful of contemporary heresies, St. Thomas advances many and varied arguments proving that evil is not a positive, existing being. Cf. *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 48, a. 1; *C. G.*, III, cc. 7-9; *De Malo*, q. 1, a. 1; *In II Sen.*, d. 34, q. 1, a. 1; *De Sub. Sep.*, c. 15; *In De Div. Nom.*, c. IV, l. 14-15; *Comp. Theo.*, c. 117.

²¹ Cf. *De Malo*, q. 1, a. 1.

²² Cf. *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 2, a. 3.

being. Hence, each thing that exists is a particular good. We have seen, however, that evil is opposed to good, therefore, evil in itself cannot be something existing. St. Thomas states the argument in these words:

The good, properly speaking, is something insofar as it is desirable . . . the desirable has the nature of an end. The order of ends, however, is as the order of agents. For according as any agent is higher and more universal, in the same degree, the end for which it acts is a more universal good, for every agent acts on account of an end, and on account of some good. This is manifestly apparent in human affairs. For the director of a city intends some particular good, which is the good of the city. The king, however, who is higher than he, intends a universal good, namely, the peace of the whole kingdom. Since, therefore, in efficient causes there is no proceeding into infinity; but one must arrive at one first cause, which is the universal cause of all being, so also it is necessary that there be some universal good to which all goods are reduced. This is not able to be anything other than this itself which is the first and universal agent, because, since the appetible moves the appetite, but the first mover must be unmoved, it is necessary that the first universal appetible be the first and universal good, because everything is moved on account of its own appetite. As, therefore, whatever is in things must proceed from the first and universal cause of being, thus also, whatever is in things must come forth from the first and universal good. What, however, proceeds from the first and universal good is not able to exist except as some particular good, as what proceeds from the first and universal cause of being, is some particular being. Everything, therefore, which is something in things, must be some particular good; wherefore, according to that, a thing which exists is not able to be opposed to good. Hence, it remains that evil according as it is evil is not something in things, but is the privation of some particular good, inhering in some particular good.²³

²³ *De Malo*, q. 1, a. 1. " . . . bonum proprie est aliquid inquantum est appetibile, . . . appetibile habet rationem finis; ordo autem finium est et ordo agentium. Quanto enim aliquid agens est superius et universalius, tanto et finis, propter quem agit, est universalius bonum; nam omne agens agit propter finem et propter aliquid bonum; et hoc manifeste apparet in rebus humanis. Nam rector civitatis intendit bonum aliquid particulare, quod est civitatis bonum. Rex autem, qui est illo superior, intendit bonum

This is again apparent if we consider that whatever exists has a natural desire for those things becoming to it: "*Inclinatio sequitur formam.*" But, once more, whatever is desirable is good. Consequently, every existing thing is in agreement with some good. Evil as such, however, is opposed to all good, therefore it cannot be some positive, existing thing. In regard to this St. Thomas says:

Secondly, this same thing is apparent because whatever is in things has some inclination and a desire for something becoming to itself. What, however, has the nature of a desirable thing has the nature of good. Whatever, therefore, is in things has a suitability [*convenientiam*] with some good. Evil, however, according to its nature, is not conformable with good, but is opposed to it. Evil, therefore, is not something in things. But if evil were some thing, it would desire nothing, nor be desired by anything; and, consequently, it would not have any action nor any motion, because nothing acts or is moved unless on account of the desire of an end.²⁴

universale, scilicet totius regni pacem. Cum ergo in causis agentibus non sit procedere in infinitum, sed oportet devenire ad unum primum, quod est universalis causa essendi, oportet quod etiam sit aliquid universale bonum in quod omnia bona reducuntur; et hoc non potest esse aliud quam hoc ipsum quod est primum et universale agens; quia cum appetibile moveat appetitum, primum autem movens oportet esse non motum; necesse est primum et universale appetibile esse primum et universale bonum, quod omnia operatur propter appetitum sui ipsius. Sicut ergo quidquid est in rebus oportet quod proveniat a primo et universali causa essendi; ita quidquid est in rebus oportet quod proveniat a primo et universali bono. Quod autem provenit a primo et universali bono, non potest esse nisi bonum particulare tantum; sicut quod provenit a prima et universali causa essendi, est aliquid particulare ens. Omne ergo quod est aliquid in rebus, oportet quod sit aliquid particulare bonum; unde non potest, secundum id quod est, bono opponi. Unde relinquatur quod malum, secundum quod est malum, non est aliquid in rebus, sed est aliquid particularis boni privatio, alicui particulari bono inherens."

²⁴ *Ibid.* "Secundo hoc idem apparet; quia quidquid est in rebus, habet aliquam inclinationem, et appetitum alicuius sibi convenientis. Quod autem habet rationem appetibilis, habet rationem boni. Quidquid ergo est in rebus, habet convenientiam cum aliquo bono. Malum autem, inquantum huiusmodi, non convenit cum bono, sed opponitur ei. Malum ergo non est aliquid in rebus. Sed si malum esset aliqua res, nihil appeteret, nec ab

A final argument, and seemingly St. Thomas' favorite, considers existence itself. Goodness has been defined as that which is desired. Obviously, each thing desires and strives to maintain itself in existence. Hence, existence itself must be a good. But evil as such is universally opposed to good and connotes its absence. Therefore, evil as evil must flee even existence. By its nature evil *per se* cannot be a positive thing; it cannot belong to the first mode of being. The Angelic Doctor makes use of this argument in several instances.²⁵ In the *De Malo*, he gives it in this form:

Thirdly, the same thing is apparent from this, that existence itself especially has the nature of a desirable thing; wherefore, we see that each one naturally desires to preserve his own existence, and flees things destructive of his existence, and resists those things as much as he is able. Thus, therefore, existence itself, inasmuch as it is desirable, is a good. It must be, therefore, that evil, which is universally opposed to good, is opposed even to that which is existence. What, however, is opposed to that which is existence is not able to be anything.²⁶

Does this mean, then, that evil is a being of reason and nothing more? Such a conclusion leaves no justification for a metaphysical study of evil, because the object of metaphysics is real being with its properties and relationships. Furthermore, it diminishes the general problematic character of evil and confines it to the difficulties of mental hygienists. Lastly, this conclusion, as St. Thomas realistically observes, is contrary to the evidence of reason and the teaching of human experience.²⁷ Thus far, in

aliquo appetetur; et per consequens non haberet aliquam actionem nec aliquem motum; quia nihil agit vel movetur nisi propter appetitum finis."

²⁵ Cf. *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 48, a. 1; *C. G.*, III, c. 7; *In De Div. Nom.*, c. IV, lec. 15.

²⁶ *Loc. cit.*, q. 1, a. 1. "Tertio idem apparet ex hoc quod ipsum esse maxime habet rationem appetibilis; unde videmus quod unumquodque naturaliter appetit conservare suum esse, et refugit destructiva sui esse, et eis pro posse resistit. Sic ergo ipsum esse, in quantum est appetibile, est bonum. Oportet ergo quod malum, quod universaliter opponitur bono, opponatur etiam ei quod est esse. Quod autem est oppositum ei quod est esse, non potest esse aliquid."

²⁷ Cf. *In II Sen.*, d. 34, q. 1, a. 1.

studying the being of evil, we have been considering evil in the abstract, evil as evil. This cannot exist outside the mind because in itself evil is an absence, a kind of non-being. The evil which reason shows and experience teaches, however, is not evil abstracted and apart from all else except its definition, but it is evil as imperfection in some actual thing, the absence of something due in a real being. Cardinal Cajetan expresses it concisely when he explains evil in things as a "*rei remotio formalis*."²⁸ Evil is in reality and is experienced, not as an animal in a field or whiteness in a wall exist and are known, but as an absence of something that ought to be and of which we are made aware by the resulting discomfiture. Hence, while evil as such is an *ens rationis*, it has a foundation among real beings which gives it a place in the science of metaphysics and makes it a major problem among all men of all times.²⁹ Evil exists *essentially* in the mind, but *formally* in things as the thwarting of a perfection or form. Such, then, is the being of evil. It remains that our understanding of it should be deepened.

It has been shown that evil, of and by itself, does not have positive existence; nor, on the other hand, is it absolute non-being. St. Thomas observes that "evil is distant both from simple being and simple non-being, because it is neither like a habit nor like

²⁸ Thomas de Vio, Cardinal Cajetan, O.P., *Comm. in Summam Theologicam*, I, q. 48, a. 1. Cf. *Opera S. Thomae*, ed. Leonina, Vol. IV, p. 493. The words of Cajetan summarize the discussion clearly and emphatically: "... quia non verificatur quod est in rebus ut ens; sed est in rebus ut corruptio in actu exercito, id est ut rei remotio formalis. Ipsa namque absentia boni formaliter malum est; . . ."

"Dicuntur ergo mala in rebus esse, non positive, sed remotive; id est, non ponendo, sed removendo formaliter aliquid a rebus. Et sic mala formaliter inveniuntur in rebus ut mala; sunt enim rerum mala. In anima autem, per compositionem et quancumque aliam intellectus operationem, inveniuntur ut entia et bona."

²⁹ Thomas Pègues, O.P., *Commentaire Français Littéral de la Somme Théologique de Saint Thomas D'Aquin*, (Toulouse: E. Privat, 1923-30), Vol. 3, p. 128. "Peu de questions ont été aussi agitées, parmi les hommes, que cette question du mal. Elle a depuis toujours préoccupé les esprits; et c'est à son sujet, notamment au sujet de la cause du mal, que des erreurs sans nombre se sont fait jour à travers les siècles."

Concerning the relations between accidents and their subjects, the Angelic Doctor says:

A subject is disposed toward an accident in three ways. In one way as supplying to it a foundation, for an accident does not subsist by itself, but is supported by a subject. In another manner, as potency to act, for a subject is subjoined to an accident as a certain active potency, wherefore an accident is said to be a form. In the third mode, as cause to effect, for the principles of the subject are the principles *per se* of the accident.³⁵

In virtue of the first relation, i.e., the subject supporting the accident, these secondary forms, which of themselves are incomplete in essence and existence, are completed, as it were, or actualized by the substance in which they inhere. Hence, they are real, positive beings in the order of actuality. Evil, on the other hand, as we have seen, cannot be a positive being, either *per se* or *per accidens*, for it denotes the absence of a particular form of being. Again, according to the second relation between a subject and its accidents, an accident is said to be a form. This indicates that for its subject an accident is a source of additional actuality and specification. Contrasting this with evil, St. Thomas remarks:

This, therefore, is common to accidents and privations, that being is asserted of both by reason of a subject. But in this they differ because the subject, according to accidents, has existence of a certain kind [*esse aliquale*], but, according to privations, it does not have a certain kind of existence, but is wanting in existence.³⁶

It is clear, then, that, whereas an accident posits additional being for its subject, evil, on the contrary, signifies a removal of being.

³⁵ *De Virt. in Comm.*, q. 1, a. 3. "... subjectum tripliciter comparatur ad accidens. Uno modo sicut praebens ei sustentamentum; nam accidens *per se* non subsistit, fulcitur vero *per* subjectum. Alio modo sicut potentia ad actum; nam subjectum accidenti subicitur, sicut quaedam potentia activi; unde et accidens forma dicitur. Tertio modo sicut causa ad effectum; nam principia subjecti sunt principia *per se* accidentis."

³⁶ *In XII Meta.*, lec. 1. "Hoc igitur commune est inter accidentia et privationes, quia de utriusque dicitur ens ratione subjecti. Sed in hoc differunt, quia subjectum secundum accidentia habet esse aliquale, secundum vero privationes non habet esse aliquale, sed est deficiens ab esse."

Finally, it was said that subjects are related to their accidents as cause to effect. The fundamental reason for this is the principle that "that which is in the greatest degree and most truly asserted in any genus whatsoever is the cause of those things which are posterior in that genus." Consequently, that which has being primarily, namely, substance, must provide being for that which has it only secondarily and incompletely of itself, i.e., accidents. Therefore, a substance, or subject, is said to be the cause of its accidents and the principle from which they flow directly.³⁷ Evil, however, as it will appear later, is neither caused nor intended except accidentally. Consequently, it neither proceeds from, nor is caused by its subject directly, as are accidents. From this discussion it is evident that none of the three relations between a subject and its accidents can be asserted of evil and its subject. Evil exists in good as in a subject, not in the positive mode of accidents, but in the negative mode of privations.

A superficial consideration of the existence of evil in good seemingly reveals a contradiction, for how can evil, which by definition is opposed to good, be in good as in a subject? Once more it is necessary to distinguish between the abstract idea of evil, and evil as it is actually experienced. The evil which is *universally* opposed to goodness is evil in itself. If this existed in good, indeed, it would be a contradiction. However, we know that evil *per se* does not exist. The evil found in reality is particularized. It is the privation of some particular form and, therefore, is opposed only to some particular good. Goodness, on the other hand, is transcendental and pertains to each thing in its individuality, which in any way can or does exist. Consequently, it is possible for evil to destroy or remove some particular good in the subject and yet not be opposed to the subject itself. For example, amnesia takes away the good which is memory, but it does not destroy the man who suffers from it. St. Thomas says:

Evil is not in the good which is opposed to it, as in a subject; but in some other good, for the subject of blindness is not sight, but animal. Nevertheless, it seems, as Augustine

³⁷ Cf. *De Ente et Ess.*, c. 6; *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 77, a. 6, ad 2.

says, that here the rule of dialectics which says that *contraries cannot exist together* fails. This instance, however, must be understood according to the general acceptance of good and evil, not according to what is taken in the particular as this good and this evil. White and black, sweet and bitter, and such like contraries are not understood except in the particular, since they are in certain determined genera. But good encompasses all genera, wherefore one good can exist together with the privation of another good.³⁸

From this it is clear why both St. Thomas and Aristotle censured the earlier philosophers who asserted that good and evil were supreme genera and also why it is only in a certain sense that they may be called genera at all. The transcendence of goodness and the utter dependence of evil upon the good make it impossible for them to be designated as such without qualification. Furthermore, this universality of goodness and particularity of evil reverberates among the other transcendentals and reveals in a new light the intimate relations between them; for the privation which is opposed to some being is in being; the multitude which removes unity is founded in some one thing; the falsehood belying a particular truth is in truth; and, if beauty be a transcendental, ugliness is not found apart from it.³⁹

Precisely in what manner evil can destroy some particular good in a subject and yet not be opposed to the subject itself becomes apparent if we examine more closely the real beings in which the evils of experience are found. A finite being posited in reality is fundamentally a substance which exists in itself and not in another as its subject. However, because it is limited, this being

³⁸ *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 48, a. 3, ad 3. "... malum non est sicut in subiecto in bono quod ei opponitur, sed in quodam alio bono; subiectum enim caecitatis non est visus, sed animal—Videtur tamen, ut Augustinus dicit, hic fallere dialecticorum regula, quae dicit *contraria simul esse non posse*. Hoc tamen intelligendum est secundum communem acceptionem boni et mali: non autem secundum quod specialiter accipitur hoc bonum et hoc malum. Album autem et nigrum, dulce et amarum, et huiusmodi contraria, non accipiuntur nisi specialiter: quia sunt in quibusdam generibus determinatis. Sed bonum circuit omnia genera: unde unum bonum potest simul esse cum privatione alterius boni." Cf. *C. G.*, III, c. 11; *De Malo*, q. 1, a. 2, ad 5; *Comp. Theo.*, c. 118; *In II Sen.*, d. 34, q. 1, a. 4, ad 4.

³⁹ Cf. *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 11, a. 2, ad 1 & q. 17, a. 4, ad 2.

does not possess all the perfection possible to it. Hence, it has capacities for acquiring additional perfections. These capacities or potentialities are realized in the advent of certain forms destined by their very nature to inhere in a subject and, in this manner, to contribute to the perfection of substances. Therefore, we observe in real, finite things a threefold aspect of being, namely, this substance or subject, its potencies or powers to act, and accidental forms inhering in and perfecting it, i.e., the actions of the being.⁴⁰ Consequent upon this, there are in every real, finite being three modes of goodness, i.e., the goodness of the subject itself, the goodness of its powers to act or its aptitudes for further perfection, and the goodness of its accidental forms. In the discussion of the being of evil, it was indicated that the specific good to which evil in real things is primarily opposed is a form natural and due to the being. Obviously, this good cannot be the good which is the subject of evil because, in accordance with the principle of non-contradiction, opposites expel each other. The goodness of such a form, however, is but one of the three modes of goodness found in the things which are subjects of evil. Therefore, although evil in real things is said to be opposed to goodness, it is a specific good, the particular mode of goodness which is its opposite, and there yet remains in the being the other modes of goodness, especially the good which is the subject of evil and, potentially, of the absent form. It follows that the contradiction implied in the notion of evil existing in good as a subject is not real, but merely verbal and, furthermore, that evil, even though it is opposed to goodness, can never entirely destroy the good. This latter conclusion is evident if we consider that the effects of evil upon the being which is its subject are various according to the modes of goodness found in the being. Thus, St. Thomas remarks:

⁴⁰ This brief reference to St. Thomas' doctrine of substance and accidents and their respective modes of existence touches upon an issue much controverted among modern philosophers. In the first chapter we have indicated the organic relations of this doctrine with the Angelic Doctor's main thesis concerning potency and act. We need not give the matter a more detailed consideration here.

Evil is not able to consume the good completely. For evidence of this, one must consider that there is a threefold good. One kind is that which is wholly taken away by evil, and this is the good opposed to evil, as light is wholly taken away by darkness. But there is a certain kind of good which is neither totally removed nor diminished by evil, namely, the good which is the subject of evil, for not any of the substance of the air is diminished by darkness. Another kind of good is that which is diminished by evil, but not completely taken away; and this good is the aptitude of the subject for an act.⁴¹

The specific perfection or form to which a particular evil is opposed is completely removed, for it is the nature of evil to be "the absence of a form naturally due a being." On the other hand, evil neither diminishes nor destroys its subject which is the substance itself. It cannot diminish the good which is its subject because on the level of substance as such there is neither increase nor decrease. Evil cannot destroy this good because evil does not attain to its subject in any manner except through the natural dispositions of the subject. The opposition of evil to these dispositions is in the form of contrary dispositions which either do or do not affect the subject directly. Where the contrary dispositions have a direct bearing on the subject, they cannot be increased indefinitely because of the finite nature of the subject itself. Thus, the subject remains as long as the contrary dispositions remain. Those which do not affect the subject directly, i.e., obstacles or hindrances which impede the actualization of these natural powers, may, perhaps, be multiplied infinitely, but, since their relation to the dispositions of the subject is indirect and accidental, they destroy neither these dispositions, nor their sub-

⁴¹ *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 48, a. 4. "... malum non potest totaliter consumere bonum. Ad cuius evidentiam, considerandum est quod est triplex bonum. Quoddam, quod per malum totaliter tollitur: et hoc est bonum oppositum malo; sicut lumen totaliter per tenebras tollitur, et visus per caecitatem. Quoddam vero bonum est, quod nec totaliter tollitur per malum, nec diminuitur: scilicet bonum quod est subiectum mali; non enim per tenebras aliquid de substantia aeris diminuitur. Quoddam vero bonum est, quod diminuitur quidem per malum, sed non totaliter tollitur: et hoc bonum est habitus subiecti ad actum." Cf. *In II Sen.*, d. 35, q. 1, a. 5.

ject.⁴² That evil does not destroy the good which is the subject is obvious in the moral order, for sin does not annihilate the being of the sinner. However, even the event of substantial change in the physical order is no exception, although this process involves the disappearance or removal of a substantial form. By depriving the subject of its accidental perfections and, thus, augmenting contrary dispositions, evil may, in a sense, prepare the way for the disappearance of the substantial form of the subject. But the actual corruption of the form which takes place in substantial change is primarily and essentially due to the potentiality of prime matter for all corporeal forms. This, however, is not a defect in its nature; on the contrary, it may be called its first perfection because it is in virtue of this "appetite for actuality" that prime matter as such is said to be real. Thus, even in the physical order it cannot be said that evil destroys its subject.

In regard to the third mode of goodness, i.e., the aptitudes or dispositions of the subject for further perfection, it should be observed that these powers mediate, as it were, between the being and its additional perfections. Consequently, they have a twofold aspect, one inasmuch as they are rooted in the nature of the subject, and the other inasmuch as they are ordered to actualization by secondary forms.⁴³ In their first aspect evil can never wholly destroy these potencies because they belong to the nature of the subject itself. They will remain as long as the subject endures, and, as we have seen, evil does not destroy its subject. However, when these potencies are considered in their second aspect, i.e., as related to act and perfection by additional forms, this mode of goodness can be diminished by evil. This diminution in each instance is not by subtraction as of quantity from quantity, but, as it was said above, by the addition or intensification of contrary dispositions which impede or weaken the potentiality of the subject for the act. In this manner sin diminishes the aptitude of the soul for grace, yet it never wholly destroys the

⁴² Cf. Pègues, *op. cit.*, Vol. 3, p. 147.

⁴³ *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 48, a. 4, ad 2. "... habitus praedicta est media inter subiectum et actum. Unde ex ea parte qua attingit actum, diminuitur per malum: sed ex ea parte qua tenet se cum subiecto, remanet."

capacity of the soul to receive grace. If the contrary dispositions can be multiplied indefinitely, as they can in the moral order (for we can go on thinking, willing, and sinning indefinitely during life), the opposite good, the aptitude, can be diminished indefinitely. However, in the physical order this increase of contrary dispositions is limited because, by their materiality, the subjects cannot proceed indefinitely. Hence the diminution of the good in this respect potentially of wood for the form of fire. However, the wood can eventually be saturated and the form of fire then cannot be impeded to a greater degree.⁴⁴

This discussion indicates one way in which it is possible to speak of greater or lesser evils even though evil, considered in itself, does not admit of increase or decrease. As a privation, with its peculiar negative mode of existence, evil as such does not possess positive characteristics subject to reduction and augmentation. Nevertheless, inasmuch as the contrary dispositions mentioned above may be multiplied or diminished, accordingly, the corresponding evil is said to be more or less, as St. Thomas remarks, "Privations are subject to increase not as having a kind of essence, as quality and form, . . . but through the increase of the cause of privation."⁴⁵ In addition, however, evil is also said to be more or less according as it is opposed to a greater or lesser good. Thus it is that, even from the viewpoint of philosophy, sin, which in a certain sense is opposed to the Highest Good, is actually and literally the greatest evil on earth. Precisely at this point the tremendous importance of a sound and true axiology is strikingly apparent, for, although human living is primarily and essentially the pursuit of goodness, it frequently depends upon

⁴⁴ Cf. *C. G.*, III, c. 12; *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 48, a. 4; I-II, q. 85, a. 2; *In II Sen.*, d. 34, q. 1, a. 5.

⁴⁵ *C. G.*, III, c. 9. "Dicitur autem aliud altero magis et minus malum, per recessum a bono. . . . Privationes autem intenduntur non quasi aliquid essentiam habentes, sicut qualitates et formae, . . . sed per augmentum. Cf. *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. II, a. 4, ad 1. " . . . licet privatio secundum se non recipiat magis et minus, tamen secundum quod eius oppositum recipit magis et minus, etiam ipsa privativa dicitur secundum magis et minus."

accurately "choosing the lesser of two evils." Finally, evil is considered to be more or less according to its distance or deviation from the good. Hence, an act is said to be a greater or lesser evil according as it departs more or less from the rule of right reason. It is clear, then, that evil admits of increase or decrease, not in itself, but only when considered in relation to goodness. Thus, we see the utter dependence of evil upon the good. Evil can neither be defined nor measured except in terms of goodness, nor can it exist apart from the good which is its subject.

From this, and from what has been said previously concerning the being of evil considered in itself, it follows that a supreme principle of evil, existing and acting as the source of all evil, after the manner of the first principle and cause of all goodness, is contradictory and impossible. The absolute dependence of evil upon the good, as it was shown above, entirely precludes the presence of evil in reality without some admixture of goodness. But a highest evil, to fulfill its role as an ultimate cause and supreme principle opposed to the highest good, must necessarily be essentially and totally evil. Therefore, there can be no such evil power or dark divinity completely devoid of goodness. Again, it is evident that such a being could never exist because, as it has been remarked, existence itself is a good; hence, something purely evil can have no share in it. The impossibility of a supreme principle of evil becomes even more apparent in a study of the causes of evil for, as we shall see later, evil depends upon the causality of goodness, thus, it is not uncaused as an absolutely first principle must be. Furthermore, since "everything acts according as it is actual," evil, of and by itself, is not able to be a cause nor a first principle.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ *C. G.*, III, c. 15. "Summum enim malum oportet esse absque consortio omnis boni: sicut et summum bonum est quod est omnino separatum a malo. Non potest autem esse aliquid malum omnino separatum a bono: cum ostensum sit quod malum fundatur in bono. Ergo nihil est summe malum."

"Item. Illud quod est primum principium, non est ab aliquo causatum. Omne autem malum causatur a bono. . . . Non est igitur malum primum principium."

"Amplius. Malum non agit nisi in virtute boni. . . . Primum autem principium agit virtute propria. Malum igitur non potest esse primum principium."

The notion of a supreme principle of evil, the source of all evil, as opposed to the first principle of goodness, seems to be a persistent error among men. St. Thomas traces the inception of this doctrine, which he stigmatizes as "*penitus irrationale*," ultimately to Empedocles (500-430? B.C.), who posited two primary efficient causes or forces in the universe, "friendship" and "strife." The Angelic Doctor gives the following brief account of the development of this dualistic theory:

By this is excluded the error of asserting contrary first principles. This error first began with Empedocles, for he posited two first agent principles, *friendship* and *strife*, of which he said friendship was the cause of generation, but *strife*, the cause of corruption. From this it seems, as Aristotle says, in the first book of the *Metaphysics*, that he first asserted good and evil as two contrary principles.

Pythagoras posited two primaries, good and evil, not in the manner of agent principles, but in the mode of formal principles. He asserted that these two were genera under which all other things were comprised, as it is made evident by the Philosopher in the first book of the *Metaphysics*.

Moreover, certain men of a perverse sense presumed to join to Christian doctrine these errors of the older philosophers, even though they were sufficiently refuted by later philosophers. The first of these was Marcion, from whom the Marcionites have been named, who under the name of a Christian founded a heresy believing in two contrary first principles. The Cerdonians followed his teaching, and afterwards the Marchianists, and lastly the Manichaeans who especially have spread this error.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, II, c. 41. "Per hoc autem excluditur error ponentium prima principia contraria. Qui error primo incoepit ab Empedocle. Posuit enim duo prima principia agentia, *amicitiam* et *litem*, quorum *amicitiam* dixit esse causam generationis, *litem* vero corruptionis: ex quo videtur, ut Aristoteles dicit, in *I Metaphys.*, hic duo, bonum et malum, primus principia contraria possisse.

"Posuit autem et Pythagoras duo prima, bonum et malum: sed non per modum principiorum agentium, sed per modum formalium principiorum. Ponebat enim haec duo esse genera sub quibus omnia alia comprehenduntur: ut patet per Philosophum, in *I Metaphysicae*.

"Hos autem antiquissimorum philosophorum errores, qui etiam per posteriores philosophos sunt sufficienter exclusi, quidam perversi sensus homines doctrinae Christianae adiungere praesumpserunt. Quorum primus

Long before the time of Empedocles, however, the concept of two opposing principles of good and evil appeared in another stream of thought in another part of the world. In the religions of the near-East, this dualism had a prominent place. As early as the twenty-second dynasty (945-712 B.C.), in their religious mythology, the Egyptians had personified evil as the god, Typhon or Set. Similarly, the Persian religion very early contained some notion of a cosmic struggle between good and evil principles. Around 660 B.C., the Persian religious reformer, Zoroaster, introduced into the Parsee beliefs the two divinities, Ahura-mazda (Ormuzd or Ormazd) and Anra-mainyu (Ahriman). The former is the principle and efficient cause of goodness, the latter is evil and the source of all evil. The two are engaged in a mighty conflict from which Ormazd will eventually emerge victorious. Zoroastrianism was influential among the Persians until the Arabic conquests in the middle of the seventh century, A.D. At that time the *Koran* replaced the *Avesta* and Mohammedanism prevailed in Persia. However, many adherents of the Mazdian religion emigrated to other countries of the East and remnants of the religion of Zoroaster are found today among their descendants in India and Iran.⁴⁸

In 144 A.D., Marcion, an apostate bishop, founded the heresy which bears his name. Among his tenets was a vague dualistic doctrine which grew more pronounced as his later followers became familiar with the Gnostic trend. Of the Marcionites it is said, "They anticipated the more consistent dualism of Manichaeism and were finally absorbed by it."⁴⁹ Manichaeism gave new vigor to the belief in two opposing, supreme principles of good and evil. This heresy, one of the most virulent of early Christian

fuit Marchius, a quo Marchiani sunt dicti, qui sub nomine Christiano haeresim condidit, opinatus duo sibi adversa principia; quem secuti sunt Cerdoniani; et postmodum Marchianistae; et ultimo Manichaei, qui hunc errorem maxime diffuderunt."

Cf. *De Pot.*, q. 3, a. 6.

⁴⁸ A. F. J. Remy & L. C. Casartelli, "Avesta," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907), Vol. II, pp. 151-156.

⁴⁹ J. P. Arendez, "Marcionites," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. IX, p. 645.

times, was first propagated in 242 A.D., by a Persian who called himself "Mani" (the Illustrious One). While purporting to be a divinely inspired form of Christianity, Manichaeism was actually a medley of "Zoroastrian Dualism, Babylonian folklore, Buddhist ethics, and some small and superficial addition of Christian elements."⁵⁰ Since this was seemingly the parent error of many subsequent heresies, notably the Albigenses of the Middle Ages, it held a special interest for the Angelic Doctor. He summarizes the fallacies of its theological dualism in the following words:

The mistake of the Manichaeans, who erred seriously on all the preceding points, surpassed all the aforesaid errors. First, they reduced the origin of things not to one, but to two principles of creation, of which one they said was the author of good things, the other the author of evils. Secondly, they erred about the condition of these. For they asserted that both of the principles were corporeal, saying that the author of the good was a certain infinite, corporeal light possessing the power of understanding, but the author of evils they said was a certain infinite corporeal darkness. Consequently, they erred a third time in regard to the governance of things, constituting all things, not under one governing principle, but under contraries.⁵¹

⁵⁰ J. P. Arendzen, "Manichaeism," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. IX, p. 591.

⁵¹ *De Sub. Sep.*, c. 15. "Omnes autem praedictos errores, Manichaeorum error transcendit, qui in omnibus praedictis articulis graviter erraverunt. Primo namque rerum originem non in unum, sed in duo creationis principia reduxerunt: quorum unum dicebant esse auctorem bonorum, aliam vero auctorem malorum."

"Secundo erraverunt circa conditionem naturae ipsorum. Posuerunt enim utrumque principium corporale: auctorem quidem bonorum dicentes esse quandam lucem corpoream infinitam vim intelligendi habentem; auctorem vero malorum dixerunt esse quasdam corporales tenebras infinitas."

"Tertio vero erraverunt per consequens in rerum gubernatione, constituentes omnia non sub uno principatu, sed sub contrariis."
St. Thomas promptly refutes these errors. First, he shows that evil, inasmuch as it is not a being in act, cannot be the *per se* author of things. Secondly, he indicates that the intellect is neither a body, nor the act of a body, hence there could not be "a certain infinite, corporeal light with the power of understanding." Thirdly, he says that all governing is concerned with ends. Since good has the nature of an end, all governing

The controversial writings of the Church Fathers and the edicts of the Roman Emperors indicate that this heresy continued during the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries. Though it was still found in the East among the Eastern Turks and the inhabitants of China, Tibet, and India as late as 1000 A.D., Manichaeism, as such, apparently disappeared in the West about the middle of the sixth century. However, its dualistic tenets were perpetuated in the Priscillian and Paulician heresies of the fifth and seventh centuries from which stemmed the Bogomili and Albigensian errors of the Middle Ages and later times.⁵² As late as 1829, traces of Paulicianism were found in Russia, so it seems that the notion of a supreme principle of evil as well as one of good has persisted in some parts of the world even into the modern era. Aside from a definite tenet of an organized religious group, this idea is frequently espoused by contemporary thinkers, writers, and other individuals, as a solution to the mystery of evil. Thus Pégues remarks on this point:

This doctrine, with something of a difference that they embody the principle of evil in the person of Satan, the first of rebellious angels, is the teaching of several occult sects of our day. Satan is exalted by them even above the true God. This doctrine has its literature. Leconte de Lisle, de Heredia, Carducci have been particularly distinguished by the audacity of their blasphemies at the same time as by the reality of their talents. Some of their poems are only a cry of hate, of fury, of rage against God. One might say that they have been inspired by Satan himself.⁵³

partakes of the nature of goodness. Therefore, an evil principle sharing in the direction of the universe is impossible.

⁵² Fessler, "Manès, Manichéisme Manichéens," *Dictionnaire Encyclopédique de la Théologie Catholique*, Edited by Weizer and Welte, Transpédique de la Théologie Catholique, Edited by Weizer and Welte, Transpédique de la Théologie Catholique, Edited by Weizer and Welte, Vol. XIV, lated by I. Goschler. (Paris: Gaume Frères et J. Duprey, 1862), Vol. XIV, pp. 174-175. "Malgré toute cette cohorte d'adversaires savants, malgré la sévérité des lois impériales, malgré la folie de leur système, la secte des Manichéens s'est perpétuée pendant plus de mille ans, d'abord sous leur nom, plus tard sous le nom des Priscillianistes, des Pauliciens, des Bogomiles, des Albigeois, et des Vaudois."

⁵³ Pégues, *op. cit.*, Vol. 3, pp. 172-173. "Cette doctrine, à la différence près qu'on incarne le principe du mal dans la personne de Satan, le premier

Again in a recent issue of a newspaper an inquirer admits, "We see evil everywhere; this has led me to believe that there is a power of evil, but not a devil incarnate." Seven centuries ago St. Thomas explained why persons accept and uphold this belief in a supreme principle of evil. His explanation is as cogent in regard to these modern Manichaeans, as it has been for their predecessors in history. He says:

Those, however, who posited two first principles, one good and the other evil, fell into this error from the same root from which other strange notions of the ancients have arisen, namely, because they did not consider the universal cause of all being, but only particular causes of particular effects. For on account of this, if they found something to be harmful to some other thing by the power of its own nature, they thought the nature of that thing to be evil; for example, as if someone should say that the nature of fire was evil because it has burned the home of some poor man. The judgment of the goodness of some thing, however, is not obtained from its order to some particular thing, but according to itself, and according to its order to the whole universe, in which everything holds most orderly its own place, . . .

In like manner also, because they found two contrary particular causes of two contrary particular effects, they did not know how to reduce contrary particular causes to a universal common cause. And, therefore, they judged the contrariety in causes to extend even to first principles. But since all contraries agree in one common thing, it is necessary that one common cause be found for them above their own contrary causes, just as . . . above all things which in any manner exist is found one first principle of being . . .⁵⁴

des anges révoltés, est la doctrine de plusieurs sectes occultes de nos jours. Satan y est exalté audessus même du vrai Dieu. Cette doctrine a sa littérature. Leconte de Lisle, de Heredia, Carducci se sont particulièrement faits remarquer par l'audace de leur blasphèmes, en même temps que par la réalité de leur talent. Telles de leurs poésies ne sont qu'un cri de haine, de fureur, de rage contre Dieu. On les dirait inspirées par Satan lui-même."

⁵⁴ *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 49, a. 3. "Qui autem posuerunt duo prima principia, unum bonum et alterum malum, ex eadem radice in hunc errorem inciderunt, ex qua et aliae extraneae positiones antiquorum ortum habuerunt: quia scilicet non consideraverunt causam universalem totius entis, sed par-

Not only does St. Thomas' analysis of the nature of evil reveal the grossness of the Manichaean error, but, as Fr. Pègues suggests, it also exposes the chief fallacy of the Calvinist and Jansenist positions. According to these heretics, human nature has been intrinsically corrupted by original sin and, therefore, *naturally speaking*, man can perform only evil and sinful actions. Consequently, it is necessary that the merits of Christ "cloak" the evil actions of man and make them acceptable to a rigorously just and severe God. However, we have seen that evil never totally removes all goodness inasmuch as it can neither diminish, nor destroy its subject, nor take away completely the active powers of the subject. From this it follows that original sin did not render its subject, i.e., human nature, intrinsically corrupt, nor could it entirely remove the possibility of naturally good human actions. The Calvinist and Jansenist doctrine is an extreme position which not only theologically, but even metaphysically, is untenable. In addition to these religious implications, we might add that the principle that evil never wholly corrupts the good needs to be understood especially today. The prevalence in the world of all types of evil has set abroad a spirit of discouragement and pessimism which tempts some men to lose faith in the fundamental goodness of human nature. Men need to realize the true nature of evil and its relation to the good.

tiulares tantum causas particularium effectuum. Propter hoc enim, si aliquid invenerunt esse nocivum alicui rei per virtutem suae naturae, aestimaverunt naturam illius rei esse malam: puta si quis dicat naturam ignis esse malam, quia combussit domum alicuius pauperis.—Iudicium autem de bonitate alicuius rei non est accipiendum secundum ordinem ad totum universum, in quo quaelibet res suum locum ordinatissime tenet. . . .

"Similiter etiam, quia invenerunt duorum particularium effectuum contrariorum duas causas particulares contrarias, nesciverunt reducere causas particulares contrarias in causam universalem communem. Et ideo usque ad prima principia contrarietatem in causis esse iudicaverunt.—Sed cum omnia contraria conveniant in uno communi, necesse est in eis, supra causas contrarias proprias, inveniri unam causam communem: sicut . . . supra omnia quae quocumque modo sunt, invenitur unum primum principium essendi. . . ."

Ci. De Pot., q. 3, a. 6; *De Sub. Sep.*, c. 15.

4. EVIL AND TWO PROBLEMS

From this metaphysical investigation into the nature of evil, two apparent difficulties remain, one epistemological in character, the other, ontological. Evil, since it exists in a being as the absence of some due good, presents an epistemological problem because, in explaining the knowledge act, St. Thomas says:

The act of understanding is specified by its own object, inasmuch as the intelligible form is the principle of the intellectual operation, for every operation is specified by the intellect which is the principle of operation, as heating by heat. Wherefore the intellectual operation is specified by that form which makes the intellect to be in act, and this is the species of the principal object of the intellect; . . .⁵⁵

Now if the human intellect requires as its principle of operation the abstracted form of the thing understood, it seems that we should consider precisely in what manner evil, which connotes an absence of form, can be understood. It was said above that evil is known as it exists, i.e., through the good, and also that the mind in its judgments affirms being of it so that evil, as such, is an *ens rationis*. Our concern at this point, however, is the exact *in mente* process whereby evil, which is formless, is the cognized and understood. It might be suggested that the imagination furnishes a form for evil *per se*, much as it would for the consideration of a centaur or a jewel-bearing tree. But St. Thomas explains:

. . . something is said to be a non-being in two ways. In one way because non-existence falls under the definition of the thing, as blindness is called a non-being; and of such a non-being not any form is able to be conceived, neither in the intellect, nor in the imagination; and evil is a non-being of this kind. In another way, because it is not found in the

⁵⁵ *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 14, a. 5, ad 3. "Intantum enim ipsum intelligere specificatur per obiectum suum, in quantum forma intelligibilis est principium intellectualis operationis: nam omnis operatio specificatur per formam quae est principium operationis, sicut calefactio per calorem. Unde per illam formam intelligibilem specificatur intellectualis operatio, quae facit intellectum in actu. Et haec est species principalis intellecti: . . ."

nature of things, although privation of being itself may not be included in the definition of the thing; and, thus, nothing prevents one from imagining these non-beings and conceiving forms of them.⁵⁶

Therefore, evil as such, of and by itself, is not able to be conceived by the intellect. It is not by a proper, positive form of its own that evil is apprehended. On the contrary, the human intellect understands evil through its own potentiality and privation whereby it knows the privation and potentiality existing in things. By reflecting upon its own acts, the mind becomes aware that when it is considering one idea, it cannot at the same time be informed with any other intelligible species, even though they have been present to it in the past. The intellect sees that the presence of one intelligible form prevents the presence at the same time of other possible forms. Hence, the mind apprehends that it has a capacity for receiving something it does not have, and this is the definition of potentiality. Furthermore, it realizes that it is prevented from entertaining these possible ideas by the form immediately present to it, and this is a kind of privation. Concerning this point, St. Thomas says:

For, since our intellect knows individual things by their proper individual and diverse species, it knows that which is in act by an intelligible species through which the intellect is made to be in act. Wherefore it can know potentiality inasmuch as it is sometimes in potency to such a species. Thus, just as it knows act by act, so also it knows potentiality by means of potentiality. And because potentiality is of the nature of privation, for privation is a negation, the subject of which is a being in potency; it follows that it is suitable to our intellect in some manner to know privation inasmuch as it is natural for it to be in potency; although

⁵⁶ *De Ver.*, q. 3, a. 4, ad 6. ". . . aliquid dicitur non ens dupliciter. Uno modo, quia non esse cadit in definitione ejus, sicut caecitas dicitur non ens; et talis non ens non potest concipi aliqua forma neque in intellectu neque in imaginatione; et hujusmodi non ens est malum. Alio modo, quia non invenitur in rerum natura, quamvis ipsa privatio entitatis non claudatur in ejus definitione; et sic nihil prohibet imaginari non entia, et eorum formas concipere."

it can also be said that from the very knowledge of act there follows the knowledge of potency and privation.⁵⁷

For additional clarification, we add the commentary of Franciscus de Sylvestris upon this particular passage. He says:

It is fitting (if the intellect ought to know privation by privation existing in itself) both that sometime it be in potency to the species of act, and that while it knows that potentially, it should have in itself the opposite habit. For I imagine that when the intellect sometime has been in potency to the species of white and later in act, and afterwards by the recognition of white it realizes by reflection that it has the species of white and is white intelligibly, so it is turned to knowing itself to have been sometime non-white, whence it knows itself to have been deprived of the species and form of white. Or by this that it had not been able before a species of this kind to know white: and from this also, it knows that in a being of nature, that is non-white which lacks the form of whiteness: and similarly I speak of blindness and other privations. The mind, therefore, of St. Thomas and of Aristotle is that our intellect by the species of the habit existing in it, knowing privation of form and potentiality to the species, knows also the privation and potentiality suitable to a thing existing outside the intellect, from the proportional similitude of the intellect to the thing.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ *C. G.*, I, c. 71. "Nam cum intellectus noster singulas res per singulas species proprias cognoscat et diversas, id quod est in actu cognoscit per speciem intelligibilem, per quam fit intellectus in actu. Unde et potentiam cognoscere potest, in quantum in potentia ad talem speciem quandoque se habet: ut sicut actum cognoscit per actum, ita etiam potentiam per potentiam cognoscat. Et quia potentia est de ratione privationis, nam privatio est negatio, cuius subiectum est ens in potentia; sequitur quod intellectui nostro competat aliquo modo cognoscere privationem, in quantum est natus esse in potentia.—Licet etiam dici possit quod ex ipsa cognitione actus sequitur cognitio potentiae et privationis."

⁵⁸ Franciscus de Sylvestris, *Comm. in I Contra Gentiles*, c. 71. *Cf. Opera S. Thomae*, ed. Leonina, Vol. XIII, p. 208. "Oportet enim, si intellectus per privationem in ipso existentem debet cognoscere privationem, et quod aliquando sit in potentia ad speciem actus; et quod, dum illum potentialiter cognoscit, habeat in se habitum oppositum. Imaginor enim quod intellectus aliquando fuit in potentia ad speciem albi, et postmodum in actu. Postquam per albi cognitionem reflexe cognovit se habere speciem albi et esse album intelligibiliter, convertitur etiam ad cognoscendum se quando-

Thus, the human intellect, knowing potentiality and privation within itself, is able to apprehend it in extra-mental reality under the form of imperfect good.

This explanation suffices for the intellect which is the subject of privation and potentiality, however, there yet remains the intellect which is pure act. In other words, how is it possible that God understands evils? Obviously, there is no idea of evil in God, for the word, "idea," denotes either a form or a likeness. But a form in the Divine mind is an exemplar and the principle of real things bearing that form. Inasmuch as God is perfect goodness, there can be no principle of evil in Him. On the other hand, if idea is taken to mean likeness, again there can be no concept of evil as such in God because likeness implies some manner of participation, but "a thing is said to be evil from this that it recedes from a participation of the divine excellence."⁵⁹ In considering this question it is well to remember these words of St. Thomas:

Knowledge is according to the mode of the knower, for that which is known is in the knower according to the mode of the knower. Therefore, since the mode of the divine essence is higher than the mode in which creatures exist, the divine knowledge does not have the mode of created knowledge, namely, so as to be universal, or particular, or habitual, or potential, or to be existing according to any such mode.⁶⁰

que fuisse non album, dum cognoscit se privatum fuisse specie et forma albi, ac per hoc non potuisse ante huiusmodi speciem cognoscere album. Et ex hoc etiam cognoscit quod in esse naturae id est non album quod forma albedinis caret. Et similiter dico de caecitate et aliis privationibus.

"Mens ergo Sancti Thomae et Aristotelis est quod intellectus noster, per speciem habitus in se existentem cognoscens privationem formae quae in ipso aliquando fuit et potentialitatem ad speciem, cognoscit etiam privationem et potentialitatem rei existentem extra intellectum convenientem, ex similitudine proportionali intellectus ad rem."

⁵⁹ *Cf. De Ver.*, q. 3, a. 4.

⁶⁰ *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 14, a. 1, ad 3. "... scientia est secundum modum cognoscentis: scitum enim est in sciente secundum modum scientis. Et ideo, cum modus divinae essentiae sit altior quam modus quo creaturae sunt, scientia divina non habet modum creatae scientiae, ut scilicet sit universalis vel particularis, vel in habitu vel in potentia, vel secundum aliquem talem modum disposita."

God Who is pure actuality does not understand the nature of evil in a human way, i.e., by privation or potentiality existing in His intellect. Yet, without a doubt, He Who knows all things, possible or actual, past, present, or future, knows also the evil that is in things. The intellectual act of God consists in the contemplation of His own essence in which are found the likenesses of all real things. By knowing these things perfectly, God knows all that can happen to them, thus, He knows the evils that can befall them. For example, by knowing men as moral agents, God knows that they can sin as well as do good. Again, by knowing the good which is the order of the universe, God knows also the relative evils which, in a sense, contribute to that order. As St. Thomas says:

It is necessary that whoever knows something perfectly must know all that can befall it. But there are certain goods to which it can happen that they are corrupted by evils. Wherefore God would not know good things perfectly, unless He also knew evils. However, each thing is knowable according as it is. Wherefore, since this is the existence of evil, that it is a privation of good, through this that God knows good things, He also knows evils, as through the light, darkness is understood.⁶¹

Nor is this indirect knowledge of evil obtained through goodness an imperfect mode of knowing evil, and, hence, one unbecoming to the Supreme Being. On the contrary, it is one more indication of the perfection of God's knowledge, for if the human intellect could know good perfectly, it would not first need to know its own potentiality in order to understand evil. Furthermore, since evil cannot exist by itself, but requires the good for its subject, neither can it be known in itself apart from some notion of goodness.⁶²

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, I, q. 14, a. 10. "... quicumque perfecte cognoscit aliquid, oportet quod cognoscat omnia quae possunt illi accidere. Sunt autem quaedam bona, quibus accidere potest ut per mala corrumpantur. Unde Deus non perfecte cognosceret bona, nisi etiam cognosceret mala. Sic autem est cognoscibile unumquodque, secundum quod est. Unde, cum hoc sit esse mali, quod est privatio boni, per hoc ipsum quod Deus cognoscit bona, cognoscit etiam mala; sicut per lucem cognoscuntur tenebrae."

⁶² Cf. p. 31, n. 1.

The second difficulty in regard to the nature of evil, as we have said, is ontological in character. If, as St. Thomas remarks, "Evil is distant both from being absolutely and from non-being absolutely," it would seem that the nature of evil embodies a violation of one of the first principles of metaphysics, i.e., the principle of excluded middle, which was discussed in the first chapter. The answer to this difficulty shows conclusively that, far from minimizing the reality of evil, as metaphysicians are sometimes accused of doing, St. Thomas has revealed its true mode of existence in real things. Evil is distant from being absolutely because it connotes an absence of being. It does not posit in existence perfection or being, as substance and accident do. On the contrary, evil signifies the removal of some actuality. On the other hand, evil is not absolute non-being because this is pure nothing and evil makes its presence in the world felt too strongly to be dismissed as mere nothing. Even though it is an absence, evil is not non-being absolutely because it is a particular kind of absence, i.e., a privation. As we have seen, privation requires a determinate subject; consequently, evil has special ties with reality and receives a relative mode of existence by virtue of its subject in which it exists formally as the absence of a particular perfection. St. Thomas says:

... Dionysius accepted non-existence as that which in no way is, and, indeed, evil is more distant from this than even from existence, because in existence evil is as in a subject, although evil itself in itself is non-existent. But it is absent more from non-existence because simple non-existence is not able to be the subject of privation. Also, privation itself is not absolute non-existence, but is non-existence in this, for privation is negation in a subject, as is said in IV, *Meta.*, text 4, for blindness is nothing other than negation of sight in that which is fitted by nature to see.⁶³

⁶³ *In II Sen.*, d. 34, q. 1, a. 1, ad 2. "... Dionysius accipit non existens illud quod nullo modo est; et ab hoc quidem magis distat malum quam etiam ab existente; quia in existente malum est tanquam in subjecto, etiam ab existente; quia in existente magis distat malum quam quavis ipsum malum in se non sit existens; sed a non existente magis absistit, quia simpliciter non existens non potest privationis subjectum esse; nec etiam ipsa privatio est absolute non existens, sed est non existens in hoc, quia privatio est negatio in subjecto, ut in IV *Metaph.*, text 4, dicitur; nec, quia privatio est negatio visionis in eo quod natum est videre."

Again he explains,

... privations . . . are said in a certain way to be beings, as non-white and non-straight. For we say that non-white is, not because non-white has existence, but because some subject is deprived of whiteness.⁶⁴

Thus, evil does not violate the principle of excluded middle because, in a sense, as it is found in reality, it is more on the side of being, for it exists relatively and formally in actual things.

SUMMARY

As we continue our study of the nature of evil in greater detail, it will become more and more evident that the whole discussion hinges on a correct understanding of the definition and reality of evil. In this second chapter, we began with a treatment of the three kinds of non-being, i.e., matter, negation, and privation, as a preparation for the formal definition of evil. Evil was, then, defined as the privation of good. As a privation, evil specifies in what particular kind of subject it may be found and, in general, the subject must be a being in potentiality. This, however, partakes of the nature of goodness, hence, evil exists in good as in a subject. It is this special relation to a definite subject which gives evil its reality. Although it is not a positive being, in itself, evil is found in things formally as the absence of a due good. It is more than negation and more than a being of reason.

It follows that, since it has a negative mode of existence, evil is not in good as an accident is in its subject. Furthermore, because of the transcendental nature of goodness, there is no contradiction in the presence of evil in good. Evil is not opposed to the whole good, but only to some particular form. That form it destroys, but the good which is its subject, evil neither diminishes nor destroys. Evil may diminish the operations of the natural powers of its subject, but it cannot destroy them completely because they are rooted in the essence of the being. These natural

⁶⁴ *In XII Meta.*, lec. 1. "... privationes . . . dicuntur quodammodo entia, sicut non album et non rectum. Dicimus enim quod non album est; non quia non album esse habeat, sed quia subjectum aliquod est albedine privatum."

powers are diminished by the multiplication of contrary dispositions. According as these dispositions are increased or decreased, evil is said to be more or less. It is also said to be more or less according as it is distant from the good and according to the nobility of the good to which it is opposed. Hence, we concluded that evil can neither be known, nor defined, nor measured, nor can it exist except through the good. Our findings concerning the nature of evil were applied to the problems of Manichaeism, Jansenism, and pessimism. Finally, it was necessary to show how evil which denotes the absence of form can be understood by the human and Divine intellects, and to indicate that evil does not violate the principle of excluded middle even though it is distant from absolute being and from absolute non-being, because "evil is not some existing thing which by its own essence is evil, nor, again, is evil a thing totally non-existent; but evil is a thing which is partly good, and by that part it exists, and it is called evil because it falls short of [or lacks] some being."⁶⁵

⁶⁵ *In De Div. Nom.*, c. IV, lec. 14. "Malum autem non est res quaedam existens, quae scilicet per suam essentiam sit mala, neque iterum malum est res totaliter non existens; sed malum est res quae partim est bona, et ex illa parte existit, et dicitur mala, quia deficit ab aliquo esse."

CHAPTER III

THE KINDS OF EVIL

I. ACCORDING TO ST. THOMAS

COMMENTING upon the discussion of evil in the *De Divinis Nominibus* of Pseudo-Dionysius, St. Thomas notes approvingly, "And the order of questions is clear. For first it should be asked what is evil and, afterwards, whence evil has arisen, as Augustine says."¹ He himself follows this course of development in the *De Malo*, where first he inquires concerning the nature and existence of evil in itself and in the good, and then treats of the cause of evil. However, for our discussion it seems more convenient to consider next the classification of evil before proceeding to an investigation of its causes. Although a thing is truly known when its essential nature is comprehended, a yet more perfect knowledge is that which includes not only the definition of an object, but also some idea of its extension, i.e., some notion of the kinds or classes of the thing. Evil, we know, is the privation of a due good. It remains for us to consider the kinds of evil as they are treated in the writings of the Angelic Doctor. Furthermore, the ensuing knowledge of the variety of phenomena which share in the designation, "evil," will be helpful in the subsequent discussion of the causes of evil.

According to the chronological order of his writings, the *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard* ranks among the earliest of St. Thomas' compositions. Thus, the division of evil as found in that work is the first of such classifications made by him. At the same time it is the most extensive. With his characteristic honesty and forthrightness, St. Thomas acknowledges that this "perutile divisionem" was suggested by Avicenna in the latter's *Metaphysics*.² Evil is first divided into two major classes:

¹ *Ibid.*, lec. 13. "Et apparet ordo questionum. Prius enim quaerendum est quid est malum, et postea unde malum ortum sit, ut Augustinus dicit."

² Cf. *In II Sen.*, d. 35, q. 1, a. 2.

absolute evil (*malum per se*) and relative evil (*malum per accidens*).³ The former is evil as such, evil in the abstract, or considered in itself. The latter class refers to those things found in reality which, though essentially good, are called evil on account of some definite connection they have with a privation present either in themselves or in another. This, the Saint remarks, is evil taken concretely. Absolute evil is subject to further division according as it is a privation opposed to the being of a thing, or one contrary to a thing's operation. An example of the first would be an illness or the loss of a hand. This is the privation of a primary perfection and such a privation is considered evil regardless of the being of which it is asserted. An instance of the other division of absolute evil would be the loss of hearing. This is the privation of a secondary perfection and, as St. Thomas observes, such a privation is not evil for every being, but only for those to which the operation is due. Deafness is not evil for a stone, but it is evil when its subject is a man.

Turning now to the consideration of relative evil, we find that a thing, good in itself, accidentally becomes evil, or is called evil, because either it is the subject of a privation, or it causes a privation in another thing. Concerning the classification thus far, St. Thomas says:

... Avicenna, in his *Metaphysics*, posits a certain, very useful division of evil which may be gathered from his words. For he says that something is called evil in two ways, either absolutely [*per se*] or relatively [*per accidens*]. The privation itself of a perfection by which something is evil is called absolute evil, which also is said by some to be evil taken abstractly. This, however, is twofold, because that privation either is the privation of a perfection which belongs necessarily to a thing from the first, and that privation in all things is evil, as the privation of a foot and a hand, and such things is evil, as the privation of some second perfection, as the like; or it is the privation of some second perfection, as the privation of geometry, and things of this kind. And such a privation is not always evil to everything, but to that only

³ Besides the terms, *malum per se* and *malum per accidens*, St. Thomas also uses the terms, *malum simpliciter* and *malum alicuius*, to designate absolute and relative evil respectively. Cf. *De Malo*, q. 1, a. 1, ad 1; *C. G.*, III, c. 6.

which is given to having this action, or ought to have it. Evil *per accidens*, moreover, is twofold, either that which is the subject of such privation, or that which causes such privation in another, and each of these is evil taken concretely.⁴

The further analysis of relative evil reveals that those things which become evil by being the subject of a privation are four in number, namely, actions, habits, receptive potencies (*passio*), and the being itself (*substantia*). An action is called evil when it is the subject of the privation of its due end or circumstances, and in voluntary beings this kind of evil is called fault (*culpa*). Thus, speech as such is a good act, but when its purpose is to deceive, this act is evil. Moreover, because habits are similar to the acts through which they are formed, habits arising from evil acts are likewise evil. A receptive potency is qualified as evil when it is the subject of a privation which corrupts some good of the being. This evil is called a defect of nature or a punishment (*poena*), according as it is present in irrational or in intelligent beings respectively. Finally, since action, habit, and potency are accidental to a being, and could be the subject neither of form, nor of privation were it not for the substance in which they inhere and upon which they depend for their being, the privations present in these accidents are also reduced to the substance as their subject. In this manner, a thing itself is said to be evil, as a boy is said to be "bad" because he performs the bad action of stealing. In the following words St. Thomas explains these first subdivisions of relative evil:

⁴ *In II Sen.*, d. 34, q. 1, a. 2. "... Avicenna, in sua *Metaphysica*, ponit perutilem divisionem quamdam mali, quae ex verbis ejus colligi potest: dicit enim quod malum dicitur aliquid dupliciter: vel per se vel per accidens. Per se malum dicitur ipsa privatio perfectionis, qua aliquid malum est: quod etiam a quibusdam malum abstracte sumptum dicitur. Hoc autem est duplex: quia illa privatio vel est privatio perfectionis quae est necessaria inesse primo rei, et ista privatio in omnibus est malum, ut privatio pedis et manus, et hujusmodi; vel est privatio alicujus perfectionis secundae, sicut privatio geometriae, et hujusmodi, et talis privatio non semper culibet est malum, sed ei tantum qui ad eam habendam operam dedit, vel eam habere debet. Malum autem per accidens est duplex: vel id quod est subjectum talis privationis, vel id quod talem privationem in altero causat: et utrumque istorum est malum concretive sumptum."

That, however, which is the subject of privation may be taken in four ways, because it is either an action, or a habit, or a receptive potency [*passio*], or a substance. An action, if it should have the privation of a due end and of due circumstance, will have the nature of an evil of fault [*culpa*]. And because from like acts like habits are produced, from that cause it happens that the habits themselves which remain from such actions are evils, as the habits of vices. A receptive potency [*passio*], however, has a privation by which something in the sufferer is corrupted, and such *passio* is called evil of punishment [*poena*], or defect of nature in those things in which there is not able to be fault or punishment. And because no accident could be the subject of anything which is called privative or positive except on account of the substance which is subjoined [*subjicitur*] to it, therefore, it is fitting that the subject of this privation which is absolute evil, be further understood to be a substance, according to which a man is said to be evil and a soul is evil.⁵

On the other hand, those things which are called evil because they cause privation in other things are divided into two subclasses. The first has reference to matter as the cause of privation in another by the indisposition or intractability of the matter in receiving the action of an agent. For example, let us suppose that a statue is imperfect because the wood-carver chose a wood too hard for the execution of his design. The wood, analogous to matter, by its hardness is indisposed to receiving the form of the statue as perfectly as the artist had planned, hence, the wood is the cause of the privation of perfect form in the statue. The

⁵ *Ibid.* "Illud autem quod est subjectum privationis potest accipi quadrupliciter: quia vel est actio, vel habitus, vel passio, vel substantia. Actio quidem, si privationem debiti finis et debitaе circumstantiae habeat, rationem mali culpaе habebit: et quia ex similibus actibus similes habitus generantur, inde contingit quod habitus ipsi qui ex talibus actionibus relinquuntur, mali sunt, sicut habitus vitiorum. Passio autem privationem habet per quam aliquid in patiente corrumpitur, et talis passio malum poenae dicitur, vel defectus naturae, in illis in quibus non potest esse culpa et poena: et quia nullum accidens potest esse subjectum alicujus quod privative vel positive dicatur, nisi gratia substantiae, quae ei subjicitur: ideo oportet quod ulterius intelligatur subjectum hujus privationis quae per se malum est, substantia esse, secundum quod dicitur homo malus et anima mala."

second subdivision refers to the agent as a cause of privation in another. Again, there are two conditions possible for members of this class. The agent, or efficient cause, may be in actual contact with the being at the time it is injuring the latter. Thus, the disease germ attacking a bodily organ is immediately present to that organ. From this type of agent proceeds the evil which is known as the pain of sense in sentient beings subject to fault and punishment. Secondly, a privation may be caused by something, not immediately united to the being suffering the deprivation but which, nevertheless, causes the evil by preventing a due good from reaching the being. For example, without positive indoctrination, an authority may cause irreligion in people by the negative action of eliminating all forms of religious education, or, again, one person starves another, not by physical violence applied to the latter, but merely by withholding food. St. Thomas calls the evil proceeding from this type of agent the pain of the damned. He says:

If, however, a thing should be called evil *per accidens* because it causes such a privation, this is able to be in two ways, for the cause of the privation of a due perfection either is on the part of matter which is indisposed to receiving perfectly the power [*virtutem*] of the agent, as a defect is in monstrosities and in other things which happen from a defect in matter, or it is on the part of the agent, and this occurs in a twofold manner. Either the agent is united to the receiver in opposition to a due perfection, as fire burning and a sword cutting, and from this follows the evil which is called the pain of the sense in sentient things in which fault and punishment can be, because such an agent which removes a due perfection is perceived in that to which it is united; or it is an agent not so united, but impeding the influx of the perfecting cause, as clouds are called evil inasmuch as they obstruct the light of the sun lest it should reach us. And because such a cause is not perceived from the subtraction itself of the perfection, since it does not remove the perfection by acting in that which suffers the privation, but more by hindering an agent, unless by chance it is perceived accidentally in another way, as when clouds are seen, therefore, the evil which follows from this is not called pain of the senses, but pain of the

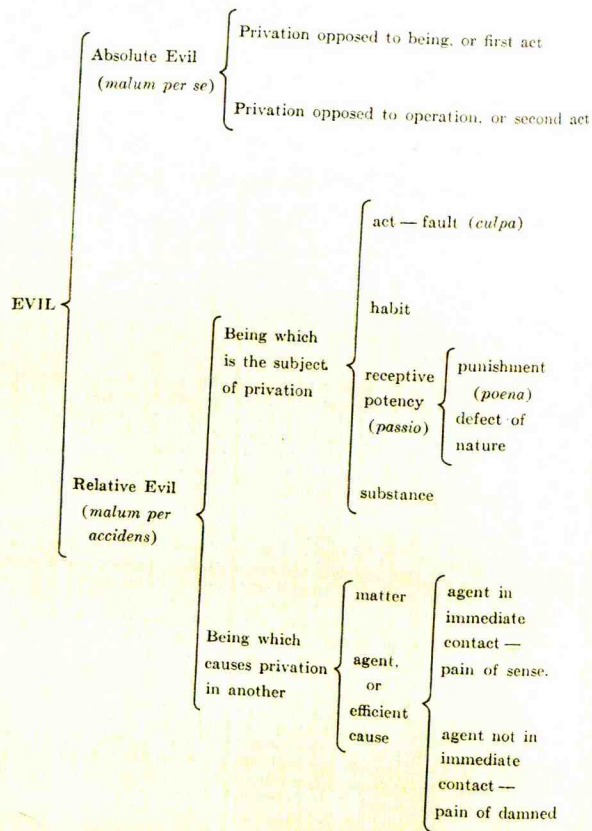
damned, however, in those things only which are susceptible of punishment.⁶

The discussion thus far may be clarified and the extent and completeness of this classification may be seen in the schema on page 72.

From this division there follows a threefold gradation of evil and thus a certain order in which evil may be considered. First there is evil as such; secondly, there is the evil which is so-called only relatively in virtue of its condition as a being which is the subject of some *per se* evil; lastly, certain things are called evil, not because they have evil inhering in them, but because they are the cause of privation in other beings. "Wherefore," as St. Thomas says, "the first is called evil absolutely, and the second as ordered to the first, and the third as ordered to the second."⁷ Serving rather as a conclusion and summary of his classification of evil, this principle of the threefold gradation is stated by St. Thomas in these words:

Therefore, evil being discussed in this manner, the order is such that that which is *per se* evil is spoken of first, and all others by relation to it; and the evil *per accidens* which is the subject of evil and which is called evil from this that it has in itself a privation which is evil *per se* comprises the second grade; and in the third grade is that which is called evil *per accidens* as a cause inducing evil; for this does not neces-

⁶ *Ibid.* "Si autem dicatur malum per accidens, quia causat talem privationem, hoc potest esse dupliciter: quia causa privationis debita perfectionis vel est ex parte materiae, quae est indisposita ad perfecte recipiendam virtutem agentis, sicut est defectus in monstris, et in aliis quae ex defectu materiae contingunt; aut est ex parte agentis, et hoc contingit dupliciter, quia vel agens est conjunctum agenti, in contrarium perfectionis debita, sicut ignis adurens et gladius secans; et ex hoc sequitur malum, quod dicitur poena sensus in sentientibus, in quibus culpa et poena esse possunt, quia tale agens quod privat perfectionem debitam, eo quod conjunctum est, sentitur; aut est agens non conjunctum, impediens influentiam causae perfectantis, sicut dicuntur nubes malae, in quantum impediunt lumen solis, ne ad nos perveniat, et quia talis causa non sentitur ex ipsa perfectionis subtractione, cum non tollat perfectionem agendo in id quod privetur, sed magis impediendo agentem, sed forte sentitur alio modo per accidens, sicut quia nubes videntur: ideo malum quod ex hoc sequitur, non dicitur poena sensus, sed poena damni, in illis tamen quae poenae susceptiva sunt."



sarily have in itself a privation, but makes some other thing to have a privation.⁷

Having stated in his earlier work this comprehensive and penetrating classification of evil, St. Thomas does not refer to it in its broad outlines again, nor does he carry it throughout his works in this detailed form. Unlike many intellectuals, the Angelic Doctor was never the servant of his knowledge. At all times he was the complete master of his learning and could press into service whatever point or principle was needed for his purpose, yet always remaining consistent with the total truth of his doctrine. Thus, while retaining the principles and significances embodied in this detailed classification, St. Thomas, in his other considerations of evil, employs divisions which accord with the context of the particular discussion. Consequently, evil is more commonly found in his writings classified into three general divisions, namely, evil of nature (*malum naturae*), of punishment (*poena*), and of fault (*culpa*). This classification is attained by considering evil in its opposition to goodness. By goodness is understood some perfection, but this perfection, we know, may be either of two kinds. It may be some form of the being itself, such as sound eyes, or it may be an action or operation of a being, e.g., seeing. Opposed to the former mode of perfection is the privation known as evil in an agent (*in ipso agente*), while evil in an action (*in ipso actu deficiente*) is the name given to defect in the latter type of perfection. By evil in an agent is meant the privation in a being of a form or of any part required for the integrity of the being and the perfection of its nature as such. Such an evil is blindness, or some mutilation of the body, or any other corruptive evil. On the other hand, evil in an action is the

⁷ *Ibid.* "In malis ergo hoc modo dictis est talis ordo, quod id quod est per se malum, primo dicitur, et omnia alia per relationem ad id; et secundum gradum tenet malum per accidens, quod est subjectum mali quod dicitur malum ex hoc quod privationem quae per se malum est, in se habet; et in tertio gradu est id quod dicitur malum per accidens sicut causa inducens malum; hoc enim non habet in se de necessitate privationem, sed facit aliquid esse privationem habens. Unde primum dicitur absolute malum, et secundum in ordine ad primum, et tertium in ordine ad secundum."

privation of order or due proportion in an action or operation, e.g., limping, stealing, etc. Thus, St. Thomas writes:

Since evil is opposed to good, it is necessary that evil be divided according to the division of good. The good, however, signifies a certain perfection. But perfection is twofold, namely, first perfection, which is form or habit, and second perfection, which is operation. To the first perfection, the exercise of which is operation, is able to be reduced each thing which we use in acting. Wherefore, and conversely, evil is found to be twofold. One evil, indeed, is in the agent itself, according to which either form, or habit, or whatever is necessary for action is lacking, as blindness or crookedness of a limb is a certain kind of evil. But another kind of evil is in a deficient act itself, as if we should say limping is some evil.⁸

These two types of evil are found both in irrational and in intellectual natures. Referring to the former as natural agents, we know from experience, as well as from metaphysical principles, that these agents usually act in a uniform manner and according to their respective natures. If there is some deviation or imperfection in their proper operations, ultimately it can be traced to a defect in the agent itself. Either it contains in itself a privation which impedes its action or it is too limited in its powers to resist a stronger agent or to overcome the obstacle offered by some intransigent or defective matter. As St. Thomas explains:

Evil has a deficient cause in voluntary beings otherwise than in natural things. For the natural agent produces an effect of such a kind as it is itself, unless it is impeded by some exterior thing; and this itself is a certain defect in it.

⁸ *De Malo*, q. 1, a. 4. "Cum enim malum opponatur bono, necesse est quod secundum divisionem boni dividatur malum. Bonum autem quamdam perfectionem designat. Perfectio autem est duplex: scilicet prima, quae est forma vel habitus; et secunda, quae est operatio. Ad perfectionem autem primam, cujus usus est operatio, potest reduci omne illud quo utimur operando. Unde et e converso duplex malum invenitur. Unum quidem in ipso agente, secundum quod privatur vel forma vel habitu, vel quocumque quod necessarium sit ad operandum: sicut caecitas vel curvitas tibiae quoddam malum est. Aliud vero malum est in ipso actu deficiente, sicut si dicamus claudicationem esse aliquod malum." Cf. *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 48, a. 5.

Wherefore, evil never follows in the effect unless some other evil pre-exists in the agent or in the matter. . . ."

Therefore, in irrational creatures the evil in an action is reduced ultimately to evil in an agent, and this corruption of forms and impeding of natural agents is called *evil of nature*.⁹ As found in intellectual beings, however, these two types of evil take on special aspects because the rational creature is endowed with intellect, free will, and mastery over his actions. Because with their intellects they can comprehend the nature of goodness and with their wills they can desire it, the good has a unique relation to intellectual beings. Consequently, that which is opposed to goodness likewise has a special relation to such beings. Evil in an agent, the privation opposed to the first perfection or the goodness of the being of a thing, in rational creatures is called *evil of punishment*, because it is contrary to the will and, in this manner, is painful. This evil includes not only the privation of corporeal goods, but also that of grace and glory. On the other hand, since the rational creature has control of his acts, a defect in his proper action is imputed to him as his own fault. Hence, evil in the action of an intellectual being is called *evil of fault*. On this point the Angelic Doctor writes:

In comparison with other creatures the rational or intellectual nature is related to good and evil in a certain special mode, because any other creature is naturally ordered to the good in particular, the intellectual nature alone apprehends by the intellect the general nature itself of the good, and by the desire of the will is moved to the good in general. There-

⁹ *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 49, a. 1, ad 3. ". . . malum habet causam deficientem aliter in rebus voluntariis, et naturalibus. Agens enim naturale producit effectum suum talem quale ipsum est, nisi impediatur ab aliquo extrinseco: et hoc ipsum est quidam defectus eius. Unde numquam sequitur malum in effectu, nisi praexistat aliquod aliud malum in agente vel materia. . . ." Cf. *ibid.*, a. 2. ". . . malum quod in defectu actionis consistit, semper causatur ex defectu agentis." Cf. *C. G.*, III, c. 10.

¹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, I-II, q. 42, a. 2. "Sicut autem contristativum malum est quod contrariatur voluntati; ita corruptivum malum est quod contrariatur naturae. Et hoc est malum naturae."

In *II Sen.*, d. 35, q. 1, a. 1. "Si enim privetur aliqua forma vel perfectio alicujus rei naturalis, dicitur esse malum naturae: . . ."

fore, the evil of the rational creature is divided by a particular division into fault [*culpa*] and punishment [*poena*]. This division of evil is not made except according to what is found in rational nature, as is evident from the authority, already introduced, of Augustine, from which also is able to be gathered the reason for this, namely, because it is of the nature of fault that it is according to the will, but it is of the nature of punishment that it is contrary to the will. Will, however, is found in the intellectual nature alone.¹¹

St. Thomas further explains the significance of fault and punishment, when he says:

Just as it happens that these two [kinds of evil] are found in other things, so also it is in the intellectual nature which acts by the will; in which it is manifest that an inordinate action of the will has the nature of fault, for from this anyone is blamed and is rendered culpable, that he voluntarily performs an inordinate action. Moreover, evil is found in the intellectual creature according to a privation of form or of habit, or of any other thing which can be necessary for acting well, whether it pertains to the soul, or to the body, or to exterior things; and, according to the teaching of the Catholic faith, such evil must be called punishment.¹²

He concludes, "Thus every evil of the rational creature is comprised either under fault or under punishment."¹² It is accord-

¹¹ *De Malo*, q. 1, a. 4. "... natura rationalis vel intellectualis quodam speciali modo se habet ad bonum et malum prae aliis creaturis; quia quaelibet alia creatura naturaliter ordinatur in aliquod particulare bonum; intellectualis autem natura sola apprehendit ipsam rationem boni communem per intellectum, et in bonum commune movetur per appetitum voluntatis; et ideo malum rationalis creaturae speciali quadam divisione dividitur per culpam et poenam. Haec enim divisio non est mali nisi secundum quod in rationali natura invenitur, ut patet ex auctoritate Augustini inducta; ex qua etiam huiusmodi ratio accipi potest, quia scilicet de ratione culpae est quod sit secundum voluntatem, de ratione autem poenae est quod sit contra voluntatem. Voluntas autem in sola natura intellectuali invenitur." Cf. *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 48, a. 5.

¹² *De Malo*, q. 1, a. 4. "Sicut autem in aliis contingit haec duo reperiri, ita et in natura intellectuali quae per voluntatem operatur: in qua manifestum est quod inordinata actio voluntatis habet rationem culpae; ex hoc enim aliquis vituperatur et culpabilis redditur, quod inordinatam actionem voluntarie operatur. Est autem et in creatura intellectuali invenire malum

ing to this development, then, that the Thomistic classification of evil into evil of nature, evil of fault, and evil of punishment is established. It is necessary now to return to each of these classes for a more detailed examination.

2. EVIL OF NATURE

Evil of nature, as we have said, is the name given to the corruption of forms, the consequent destruction of individual beings, and the impeding of natural operations which is the lot of the irrational creatures of the universe. This *malum naturae* is a consequence of the finiteness and limitation of corporeal beings. St. Thomas' classic illustration of this kind of evil is the slaying of the ass for the benefit of the lion. However, the Angelic Doctor maintains that this evil of nature is not an evil in the full sense of the word. Evil is the privation of a due good. But incorruptibility is not natural to the irrational creature, hence its corruption does not deprive it of a due good. As St. Thomas says:

Because evil is the privation of good and not a pure negation, . . . ; not every defect of good is evil, but the defect of a good which is natural and ought to be had. For the defect of sight is not evil in a stone, but in an animal, because it is contrary to the nature of a stone that it should have sight. In like manner also, it is contrary to the nature of a creature that it be preserved in existence through itself, since the same thing gives existence and conserves it. Wherefore this defect is not an evil for a creature.¹³

secundum privationem formae aut habitus, aut cuiuscumque alterius quod posset esse necessarium ad bene operandum, sive pertineat ad animam sive ad corpus sive ad res exteriores; et tale malum, secundum fidei catholicae sententiam, necesse est quod poena dicatur. . . . sic omne malum rationalis creaturae vel sub culpa vel sub poena continetur."

¹³ *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 48, a. 5, ad 1. "... quia malum privatio est boni, et non negatio pura, . . . ; non omnis defectus boni est malum, sed defectus boni quod natum est et debet haberi. Defectus enim visionis non est malum in lapide, sed in animali: quia contra rationem lapidis est, quod visum habeat. Similiter etiam contra rationem creaturae est, quod in esse conservetur a seipsa: quia idem dat esse et conservat. Unde iste defectus non est malum creaturae." Cf. I-II, q. 85, a. 6.

On the contrary, evil of nature has an aspect of goodness because through it the natural agents attain their primary end, i.e., to contribute to the perfection and order of the universe. Since every intelligent being acts with a purpose, God had a definite intention in His work of creation and this was His own extrinsic glory in the communication of His perfection to other beings. Hence, the perfection of the universe, i.e., the achievement of its end, lies in its imitation of the goodness of God.¹⁴ The divine goodness, however, is one, simple, and infinite. On account of its limited nature, it is impossible that any one creatural thing or species could perfectly or even adequately mirror this unique perfection. Yet a variety of creatures by exhibiting diverse grades of goodness from the height of Angelic incorruptibility to the lowliness of prime matter, to a certain extent and in a more suitable manner, succeeds in reflecting the goodness of the Creator. As St. Thomas expresses it:

For He [God] brought things into existence for the purpose of communicating His goodness to creatures, and to be represented by them. And because He could not be represented sufficiently by one creature, He brought forth many and diverse creatures, that what is lacking to one for the representation of the Divine goodness might be supplied by another, for the goodness which in God is simple and uniform, in creatures is manifold and divided. Wherefore the whole universe participates the Divine goodness and represents it more perfectly than any single creature.¹⁵

¹⁴ *C. G.*, III, c. 19. "Res omnes creatae sunt quaedam imagines primi agentis, scilicet Dei: *agens enim agit sibi simile*. Perfectio autem imaginis est ut repraesentet suum exemplar per similitudinem ad ipsum: ad hoc enim imago constituitur. Sunt igitur res omnes propter divinam similitudinem consequendam sicut propter ultimum finem."

¹⁵ *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 47, a. 1. "Produxit enim res in esse propter suam bonitatem communicandam creaturis, et per eas repraesentandam. Et quia per unam creaturam sufficienter repraesentari non potest, produxit multas creaturas et diversas, ut quod deest uni ad repraesentandum divinam bonitatem, suppleatur ex alia: nam bonitas quae in Deo est simpliciter et uniformiter, in creaturis est multipliciter et divisim. Unde perfectius participat divinam bonitatem, et repraesentat eam, totum universum, quam alia quaecumque creatura." Cf. I, q. 44, a. 4.

However, variety and diversity in creatures are predicated upon their inequality. Obviously, this requires that not all beings will have the same perfections, but that some creatures will be imperfect in comparison with others. Furthermore, the end of the universe is not attained merely by a multitude of variegated creatures. In order that the variety of beings result not in confusion but in the perfection of the whole and an imitation of the goodness of God, it is necessary that the manifold creatural species and their members be ordered and hierarchical. Order, however, signifies priority and posteriority and a subordination of the proximate to the ultimate according to some definite principle. The evil of nature, by which some things lack the perfections of others and the lower is used by the higher, as the weaker animal provides food for the stronger, contributes to the order of the universe, to the perfection of the whole, and ultimately results in good.

There are some for whom these remarks about the order of the universe have no cogency because these thinkers deny the presence of order in our cosmos. We have indicated previously how the presence of order in nature is not only justified but is required by the principles of a true metaphysics of reality.¹⁶ Without going into the question further, we affirm that not only the principles of metaphysics but also the evidence of science and the data of experience, all point to both intrinsic and extrinsic order in our universe, according to which each creature has its own particular end and, beyond that, is ordered to the good of the whole of creation. We decline to go into this point more deeply, not because of any desire to make arbitrary and unfounded assertions, but because the order of nature is a question of such importance and one with roots which strike so deeply into metaphysics and the positive sciences that it is best treated in a separate work on that specific subject. For such material the reader is referred to *The Order of Nature* by Joseph M. Marling and *God and Intelligence* by Msgr. Fulton J. Sheen.¹⁷

¹⁶ Cf. Chap. I, pp. 13 f.

¹⁷ For a complete treatment, cf. Joseph M. Marling, C.P.P.S., *The Order of Nature*, Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America, 1934. For a fine treatment from the viewpoint of metaphysics, cf. Fulton J.

It seems that the alternative to this Thomistic explanation of the evil of nature is the pessimism of those modern philosophers who refuse to see order in the universe and who deny that it has end or purpose. Thus B. A. G. Fuller has written:

The world from this point of view [i.e., the point of view of his arbitrary definition of metaphysical evil] is evil for no other reason than that it is a world; the individual imperfect because he is himself and not another, one fact among many and not the only fact. Perfection can be attained only by transcending all finite and particular experience, both the manifold of sense and the manifold of discursive thought, and in one's self wholly becoming the one whole ineffable Reality. So-called finite goods and perfections are illusions, preferable only to finite evils because by pursuit of them one sooner escapes from them. The mere existence of the universe, then, is sufficient to damn it. The world, inasmuch as it exists, is already evil, and of this metaphysical evil physical and moral evil are natural symptoms.¹⁸

These remarks do not refer to the sufferings of brute animals because, unlike St. Thomas' evil of nature, Fuller's metaphysical evil does not include them. Instead, all suffering of men and of animals are comprised in his definition of physical evil. Of animal suffering he says:

Many apologists for the divine goodness have an easy way of ignoring or dismissing as irrelevant to the question such physical evil as does not immediately concern humanity. Of the general incompatibility of the types produced by nature, of the stultification of one thing by another, of the battlefields on which man does not fight and suffer, and of tooth and claw that are red, but not with his blood, they take little practical account, though it must be insisted that such phenomena, quite as much as the fact of human suffering, form part of the problem of physical evil. . . .

. . . the fact of physical evil in its larger aspect still remains unexplained. A perfect man might fall, and we,

Sheen, *God and Intelligence*, (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1935), Part II, Chap. VII, pp. 242-270.

¹⁸ B. A. G. Fuller, *The Problem of Evil in Plotinus*, (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1912), pp. 2-3.

through our consanguinity with our first parent, might perhaps be involved in his sin with some show of justice. But no theological ingenuity, it would seem, could decently attribute the sufferings of unrelated, unfree, irrational and sinless animals to the same cause. Yet animal as well as human suffering is something which a theodicy must face. A God that does not need to be freed of responsibility for the one is scarcely worth freeing from blame for the other.¹⁹

St. Thomas, on the other hand, with his complete view of reality and his understanding of the totality of things says:

But He [God] provided thus that, if evil should occur from the defect of some nature, it would be ordered to good, as we see that the corruption of one is the generation of another. And that manner of forethought reached even all the way to the brute animals, which are moved rather by the impulse of nature than by a choice of will. And therefore the evil which befalls them is recompensed by the good of nature, not by the good of reward, as the death of the fly is the food of the spider.²⁰

Another example of contemporary pessimism is the philosopher, Wendell B. Smith, who writes:

It is, indeed, the ultimate tragedy of the universe that regardless of what its moral forces may desire, all actualization must be finite and exclude possibly an infinite number of other finite possibilities. Nor is there, I think, ground for belief in any eventual complete triumph of good over evil. Indeed cosmic evil seems as basic an element in reality as good, and the complete banishing of it seems inconceivable.²¹

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 132-134.

²⁰ *In I Sen.*, d. 39, q. 2, a. 2. "Sed ita providit ut si malum contingeret ex defectu alicujus naturae, ordinaretur in bonum; sicut videmus quod corruptio unius est generatio alterius; et iste modus providentiae extendit se etiam usque ad bruta animalia, quae potius aguntur instinctu naturae se etiam electione voluntatis. Et ideo malum quod accidit in eis, recompensatur per bonum naturae, non per bonum praemii, sicut quod mors muscae est victus aranae."

²¹ Wendell B. Smith, "Ethics and the Aesthetic," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, VI, (September, 1945), p. 97.

These men, Fuller, Smith, and others like them need the *Weltanschauung* of St. Thomas if they are to avoid the impasse of pessimism. These men of the twentieth century need the understanding of the true nature of the universe which St. Thomas offers when he says:

Wherefore, . . . it must be considered that the whole universe is constituted by all creatures, as a whole of its parts. Now if we wish to assign an end to some whole and its parts, we shall find first, indeed, that the individual parts exist for their respective acts, as the eye for seeing. But, secondly, we shall discover that the less noble exists for the more noble, as the senses for the intellect, and the lungs for the heart. Thirdly, we shall find that all the parts exist for the perfection of the whole, as matter for form; for parts are as the matter of the whole. Furthermore, the whole man exists for some extrinsic end, that is, that he may delight in God. Thus, therefore, in the parts of the universe, each creature exists for his own proper act and perfection. Secondly, however, the less noble creatures exist for the more noble, as the creatures which are inferior to man exist for man. Moreover, the individual creatures exist for the perfection of the whole universe. Furthermore, the entire universe, with its individual parts, is ordered to God as to its end, inasmuch as by a kind of imitation the Divine goodness is represented in them for the glory of God;²²

²² *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 65, a. 2. "Unde . . . considerandum est quod ex omnibus creaturis constituitur totum universum sicut totum ex partibus. Si autem alienius totius et partium eius velimus finem assignare, inveniemus primo quidem, quod singulae partes sunt propter suos actus; sicut oculus ad videndum. Secundo vero, quod pars ignobilior est propter nobiliorem; sicut sensus propter intellectum, et pulmo propter cor. Tertio vero, omnes partes sunt propter perfectionem totius, sicut et materia propter formam; partes enim sunt quasi materia totius. Uterius autem, totus homo est propter aliquem finem extrinsecum, puta ut fruatur Deo.—Sic igitur et in partibus universi, unaquaqueque creatura est propter suum proprium actum et perfectionem. Secundo autem, creaturae ignobiliores sunt propter nobiliores; sicut creaturae quae sunt infra hominem, sunt propter hominem. Uterius autem, singulae creaturae sunt propter perfectionem totius universi. Uterius autem, totum universum, cum singulis suis partibus, ordinatur in Deum sicut in finem, in quantum in eis per quandam imitationem divina bonitas repraesentatur ad gloriam Dei:"

It should be noted, however, that, although this doctrine of the evil of nature is optimistic, it is not the illusive optimism of Leibnitz.²³ For although St. Thomas says, "The perfection of the universe requires that there should be some which can fail in goodness and which sometimes do fail," he does not make evil of nature an *essential* part of the universe. Its nature as a kind of non-being renders it impossible for evil to be a component part of anything or a direct cause. But any factor which directly perfects another thing must be one of these realities. It follows, then, that the contribution which the evil of nature makes to the perfection of the universe is accidental and by way of a connection with some good which does contribute directly to the perfection of the cosmos. St. Thomas explains:

Evil does not contribute directly to the perfection of the universe; for that contributes directly to the perfection of any whole which is a constituent part or a direct cause of some perfection in it. But evil is not a part of the universe because it does not have the nature of substance, nor of accident, but only of privation, as Dionysius says. But it contributes accidentally to the perfection of the universe inasmuch as it is joined to something which is of the perfection of the universe.²⁴

²³ Cf. G. W. Leibnitz, *Opera Philosophica*; edited by J. E. Erdmann, (Berlin: G. Eichler, 1840), "De Rerum Originatione Radicali," pp. 147-150; "Théodicée," no. 226, p. 573; "Principes de la Nature et de la Grâce, Fondés en Raison," no. 18, p. 718. Maritain says St. Thomas and Leibnitz are diametrically opposed. He characterizes the German philosopher's optimistic doctrines as "a rationalistic deterioration of Christian truths." Cf. Jacques Maritain, *Saint Thomas and the Problem of Evil*, translated by Mrs. Gordon Anderson, (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1942), p. 8.

²⁴ In *I Sen.*, d. 46, q. 1, a. 3. ". . . malum per se ad universi perfectionem non confert: illud enim per se confert ad perfectionem alicujus totius quod est pars constituens ipsum, vel causa per se alicujus perfectionis in ipso. Sed malum non est pars universi, quia neque habet naturam substantiae neque accidentis, sed privationis tantum, ut Dionysius dicit; nec iterum per se aliquid bonum causat. Sed per accidens confert ad universi

The good to which evil is joined and which contributes essentially to the perfection of the universe may precede evil or follow from it. Thus, man as a free, moral agent fulfills one of the grades of goodness in the order of the universe. But joined to this good is the evil which results when man uses his freedom wrongly. The fact that there exists an intellectual-corporeal being which can choose to perform good or evil acts is a positive contribution to the perfection of the universe. The evil which comes from this type of being is accidental and consequent upon the existence of this particular form of goodness. On the other hand, there is a kind of good which is realized in the universe through a comparison with an evil prior to it in nature, as when generosity or kindness is shown in an extraordinary degree at times of disaster or distress. St. Thomas calls this "the beauty resulting in good from a comparison with evil." It is the good itself which contributes positively and directly to the perfection of the universe. The contribution, so to speak, of evil in this instance is its role as the occasion for the display of goodness. Obviously, this latter contribution is indirect and is effective in adding to the perfection of the universe only by virtue of its relation to the good which is consequent upon it. Thus, it is that evil, joined to some good, contributes accidentally to the perfection of creation.²⁵

perfectionem, in quantum conjungitur alicui quod est de perfectione universi."

Cf. *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 19, a. 9, ad 2. "... malum non operatur ad perfectionem et decorem universi nisi per accidens, . . ."

I, q. 48, a. 1, ad 5. "... partes universi habent ordinem ad invicem, secundum quod una agit in alteram, et est finis alterius et exemplar. Hæc autem, . . . non possunt convenire malo, nisi ratione boni adiuncti. Unde malum neque ad perfectionem universi pertinet, neque sub ordine universi concluditur, nisi per accidens, id est, ratione boni adiuncti."

²⁵ Cf. *In I Sen.*, d. 46, q. 1, a. 3. "Hoc autem potest esse vel per antecedens malum, vel consequens. Antecedens, sicut natura quæ quandoque deficit, et quandoque non, ut liberum arbitrium hominis; et sine tali natura, ex cuius defectu incidit malum, non esset universum perfectum in omnibus gradibus bonitatis. Consequens autem est illud bonum quod occasionatur ex malo, quod est decor resultans in bonum ex comparatione mali, vel aliqua perfectio, ad quam materialiter malum se habet, sicut persecutio ad patientiam, vel aliis infinitis modis: quia causæ per accidens infinitæ sunt, secundum Philosophum in *II Physic.*, text. 1."

Furthermore, unlike Leibnitz, the Angelic Doctor does not think this is "the most perfect, actual world which is possible."²⁶ On the contrary, St. Thomas not only admits that God could improve the present universe, if He so willed, but also says that other universes better than the actual one could be created by Him.²⁷ Moreover, St. Thomas maintains that a universe containing inequalities yet without the presence of evil of nature is possible. He writes:

The cause of inequality could be on the part of God, not, indeed, that He would punish some, and reward others; but that He would exalt some more and others less, in order that the beauty of order might shine the more in men. Also, inequality could be caused on the part of nature . . . without any defect of nature.²⁸

Such would have been the condition of men in Paradise and, indeed, the possibility of this kind of order is made actual among the blessed in Heaven.

Finally, St. Thomas makes a correct distinction which provides one of the bases for refuting the extreme remarks made by the German optimist four hundred years later. The Angelic Doctor writes:

²⁶ Cf. Leibnitz, *op. cit.*, "Principes de la Nature et de la Grace. Fondés en Raison," no. 10, p. 716. "Il s'ensuit de la perfection suprême de Dieu, qu'en produisant l'Univers il a choisi le meilleur plan possible, où il y ait la plus grande variété, avec la plus grand ordre: le terrain, le lieu, le tems les mieux ménagés: le plus d'effet produit par les voies les plus simples; le plus de puissance, le plus de connaissance, le plus de bonheur et de bonté dans les créatures, que l'Univers en pouvoit admettre. Car tous les possibles prétendant à l'existence dans l'entendement de Dieu, à proportion de leurs perfections, le résultat de toutes ces prétentions doit être le Monde actuel le plus parfait qui soit possible. Et sans cela il ne seroit pas possible de rendre raison, pourquoi les choses sont allées plutôt ainsi qu'autrement."

²⁷ Cf. *In I Sen.*, d. 44, q. 1, a. 2.

²⁸ *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 96, a. 3, ad 3. "... causa disparitatis poterat esse et ex parte Dei, non quidem ut puniret quosdam et quosdam præmiaret: sed ut quosdam plus, quosdam minus sublimaret, ut pulchritudo ordinis magis in hominibus relucret. Et etiam ex parte nature poterat disparitas causari . . . absque aliquo defectu nature."

It belongs to the best agent to produce his effect so that it is best as a whole; not, however, that he makes each part of the whole the best simply, but the best in proportion to the whole, for the good of an animal would be taken away is every part of it had the dignity of the eye. In this way, therefore, God established the universe best as a whole according to the mode of a creature;²⁹

In his doctrine of the evil of nature, as in all his philosophical teachings, St. Thomas is preeminently the realist. Taking things as they exist, with respect for their objective reality, the Angelic Doctor has sought the ultimate explanation for their being as they are.

3. THE EVIL OF FAULT

Evil of fault (*culpa*) is evil of action which has taken on a special significance because the vitiated act is that of a moral agent who enjoys the control of his actions and responsibility for them. St. Thomas formally defines evil of fault as "the privation of mode, species, and order in the act itself of the will."³⁰ It is essential to this type of evil that the action be voluntary and free, and, therefore, one of the characteristics of fault is its agreement or conformity with the will.

Fundamentally, the Angelic Doctor distinguishes defect, evil, sin, and fault.³¹ The first, i.e., defect, properly speaking, signifies

²⁹ *Ibid.*, I, q. 47, a. 2, ad 1. " . . . optimi agentis est producere totum effectum suum optimum: non tamen quod quamlibet partem totius faciat optimam simpliciter, sed optimam secundum proportionem ad totum: tolleretur enim bonitas animalis, si quaelibet pars eius oculi haberet dignitatem. Sic igitur et Deus totum universum constituit optimum, secundum modum creaturae:" Cf. I, q. 48, a. 2, ad 3; *De Pot.*, q. 3, a. 6, ad 26.

³⁰ *De Malo*, q. 1, a. 4, ad 7. "Malum autem culpae formaliter est privatio modi, speciei et ordinis in ipso actu voluntatis."

Cf. *Sum. Theo.*, I-II, q. 85, a. 4. "Est etiam quoddam bonum quod est ipse actus ordinatus, quod etiam habet suum modum, speciem et ordinem: et huius privatio est essentialiter ipsum peccatum."

Comp. Theo., c. 121. " . . . defectus actionis voluntariae constituit rationem peccati et culpae,"

³¹ Cf. *Sum. Theo.*, I-II, q. 21, a. 1; a. 2 & ad 2; *De Malo*, q. 2, a. 2; q. 3, a. 1; *Comp. Theo.*, c. 120; *In De Div. Nom.*, c. IV, lec. 22; *In II Sen.*, d. 30, q. 1, a. 2; d. 35, q. 1, a. 1.

a simple negation.³² *Evil*, however, as we have seen, adds to negation the note of a requisite subject, and refers to the absence of a good which is due a particular, specified subject. Limit this concept still more by adding the note of action as the subject of the privation and the definition of *sin* is obtained, for sin is a less general term which refers only to privation in an action which fails to achieve its due end on account of the absence of some form, order, or measure in the action. Since this term includes any inordinate action, it may be applied to works of nature and of art, as well as to those of a moral agent as such.³³ The things of nature have a rule and measure for their actions in the natural inclinations following upon their respective forms, and an act not in accordance with these instincts is said to be a sin. Thus, the birth of a deformed animal is called a sin of nature because the act departed from its rule which was the natural inclination of the animal to reproduce its like as perfectly as possible. Similarly, in the production of artificial things the rule and measure of the actions involved is the intention of the maker or artist, hence, the production of an ugly statue is a sin against art on the part of the sculptor intending a masterpiece. Although sin generally connotes in an action both departure from its rule and measure and deviation from its proper end, St. Thomas recognizes in the *De Malo* that "it is more of the nature of sin to pass over the rule of the action than even to fall short of the end of the act." He concludes, "This, therefore, is absolutely of the nature of sin, whether in nature or in art or in morals, that it be opposed to the rule of the action."³⁴

In sins of nature, however, there is no blame involved because irrational beings are determined in their actions. Likewise, there

³² Cf. *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 48, a. 5, ad 1; *De Malo*, q. 1, a. 4, ad 10; *In II Sen.*, d. 30, a. 2.

³³ Cf. n. 31 & *Sum. Theo.*, I, 63, a. 1; *De Malo*, q. 2, a. 1; *Comp. Theo.*, c. 119.

³⁴ *De Malo*, q. 2, a. 1. " . . . magis est de ratione peccati praeterire regulam actionis quam etiam deficere ab actionis fine. Hoc est ergo per se ratione peccati, sive in natura sive in arte sive in moribus, quod opponitur regulae actionis."

is no moral guilt in the production of a poor painting for, although it may reveal the painter as a bad artist, it does not make him a bad man unless, of course, his intentions were evil. But a sin in the moral order brings with it the stigma of guilt because the proper act of a moral agent is free. The rule and measure of human acts is the order of reason to the general end of human life; this includes both reason and the Divine law as the rule for human acts. When the intelligent being in his proper actions deliberately departs from this order, he does so with full responsibility for the inordinateness of his act. Therefore, since sin in the moral order has this particular aspect of blame or guilt, it receives a special name, i.e., *fault*. Although St. Thomas is mindful of these fundamental distinctions of evil, sin, and fault, and he mentions them in several of his writings, as we have observed,³⁵ nevertheless, the Angelic Doctor uses fault (*culpa*) and sin (*peccatum*) synonymously in discussions of human acts or voluntary actions, for he notes that "in such like actions, evil, sin, and guilt are one and the same thing."³⁶ Furthermore, he observes, "It is permissible according to the common manner of speaking among theologians that sin and fault be taken for the same."³⁷

The definition of fault in itself gives little difficulty; it is an all too familiar, too common experience. But the nature of fault becomes more complex when it is studied from the viewpoint of theology, ethics, or metaphysics. St. Thomas says, "The theologian considers sin chiefly as an offense against God; and the

³⁵ Cf. p. 86, n. 31.

³⁶ *Sum. Theo.*, I-II, q. 21, a. 2. "Unde relinquitur quod bonum vel malum in solis actibus voluntariis constituit rationem laudis vel culpae; in quibus idem est malum, peccatum et culpa."

Cf. *Comp. Theo.*, c. 120. "Si igitur in actionibus non voluntariis ordinatis ad finem defectus accidat, peccatum tantum dicitur; si autem in voluntariis, dicitur non solum peccatum, sed culpa: eo quod agens voluntarium, cum sit dominus suae actionis, vituperio dignus est et poena."

³⁷ *De Malo*, q. 2, a. 2. "... licet secundum communem usum loquendi apud theologos pro eodem sumantur peccatum et culpa."

moral philosopher, as something contrary to reason."³⁸ The metaphysician, however, as Jacques Maritain has so well said, is interested in studying "what, in the order of metaphysical connections, is it that causes free actions to be bad." The French philosopher adds:

This is a particularly difficult problem. I believe St. Thomas is the only thinker who has considered it in all its difficulty, and I think the solution he proposes is one of the most original of his philosophical discoveries.³⁹

This further consideration of the evil of fault is an investigation into the nature of fault by means of a study of its causes and, as such, it will be treated in the following chapter. There remains to be examined, however, the other type of evil found in intellectual beings.

4. THE EVIL OF PUNISHMENT

Evil of punishment (*poena*) is the privation in the intellectual creature "of form or habit or any other thing which could be necessary for acting well, whether it pertains to the soul, or the body, or to exterior things."⁴⁰ Like the evil of nature, punishment is concerned with the absence of some good directly related to the integrity and welfare of the being itself. However, because the being in this instance has an intellect which can recognize the deprivation and a will which can be pained at the loss, and freedom enabling him to perform acts which make him deserving of it, the privation has greater significance than the evil of nature in natural agents, and it receives the special name of punishment.

The propriety of this special name is evident when we consider three factors which pertain to the nature of punishment. First, all punishment is somehow related to fault, for man would neither

³⁸ *Sum. Theo.*, I-II, q. 71, a. 6, ad 5. "... a theologis consideratur peccatum praecipue secundum quod est offensa contra Deum; a philosopho autem morali, secundum quod contrariatur rationi."

³⁹ Maritain, *Saint Thomas and the Problem of Evil*. Translated by Mrs. Gordon Anderson. Pp. 22-23.

⁴⁰ Cf. *De Malo*, q. 1, a. 4; *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 48, a. 5; a. 6.

be deserving of pain, nor capable of its infliction if he were not guilty of some sin, either personally or in his nature.⁴¹ It follows from this that the sufferings of animals cannot be called punishments, since the irrational creature is unfree and, therefore, cannot sin. This is the thought of St. Thomas when he remarks, "Yet some say that even in brutes, the lack of reason takes on the nature of penalty, but it seems better to say that there is no punishment except where there also is sin."⁴² In regard to the evils that befall animals, St. Thomas agrees with the common sense view already held by Aristotle. He says:

Properly speaking, we cannot wish good to an irrational creature, because it does not belong to it properly to possess good, but only to the rational creature, which through its free will is master of the use of the good which it has. Therefore, the Philosopher says, in the second book of the *Physics*, that we do not say something good or evil befalls things of this kind, except metaphorically.⁴³

Secondly, punishment is always contrary to the will of the person being punished. Each one strives to preserve the integrity of his being and desires his own proper good, so that it is painful to him and he is naturally unwilling to be deprived of his goods. Thirdly, punishment is always something inhering in the one afflicted as an effect from some exterior source. Strictly speaking, one cannot punish himself, for the act would not be contrary to his will and, therefore, not in accord with the true meaning of punishment. Consequently, this kind of evil is a kind of *passio* inasmuch as it is received into and suffered by a person from some agent exterior to him. These three characteristics of punishment are explained by St. Thomas when he writes:

⁴¹ Cf. *Sum. Theo.*, I-II, q. 87, a. 7.

⁴² Cf. *In II Sen.*, d. 35, q. 1, a. 1, ad 1.

⁴³ *Sum. Theo.*, II-II, q. 25, a. 3. "Non autem proprie possum [sic] bonum velle creaturae irrationali: quia non est eius proprie habere bonum, sed solum creaturae rationalis, quae est domina utendi bono quod habet per liberum arbitrium. Et ideo Philosophus dicit, in *II Physic.*, quod huiusmodi rebus non dicimus aliquid bene vel male contingere nisi secundum similitudinem."

For there are three things concerning the nature of punishment. One of which is that it has a relation to fault; for someone is properly said to be punished when he suffers evil for something which he has committed. Moreover, the tradition of faith holds this, that the rational creature could incur nothing harmful, neither in regard to the soul nor in regard to the body, nor in regard to any exterior things, unless sin had preceded either in the person or at least in his nature. Thus, it follows that every such privation of a good which anyone can use for acting well is called punishment in men, and, by a like reason, in Angels; The second thing which pertains to the nature of punishment is that it opposes the will. For the will of each one has an inclination to its proper good, wherefore to be deprived of the proper good is repugnant to the will A third thing seems to be of the nature of punishment, that it consists in a certain suffering [*passione*]. For those things which happen contrary to the will are not from the intrinsic principle which is the will, but from an extrinsic principle of which the suffering is said to be an effect.⁴⁴

The most essential aspect of punishment is its opposition to the will of the sufferer. However, as St. Thomas indicates, punishment can be opposed to the will in different ways. That privation is most properly called punishment which is immediately and sensibly opposed to the actual, conscious inclination of the will. An instance of this is bodily pain. But there is also the privation which is opposed to the habitual inclination of man's will,

⁴⁴ *De Malo*, q. 1, a. 4. "Sunt enim tria de ratione poenae. Quorum unum est quod habeat respectum ad culpam; dicitur enim proprie aliquis puniri quando patitur malum pro aliquo quod commisit. Habet autem hoc traditio fidei, quod nullum nocumentum creatura rationalis potuisset intrudere neque quantum ad animam neque quantum ad corpus neque currere neque quantum ad aliqua exteriora, nisi peccato praecedente vel in persona vel quantum ad aliqua exteriora, nisi peccato praecedente vel in persona vel saltem in natura; et sic sequitur quod omnis talis boni privatio, quo uti quis potest ad bene operandum in hominibus, poena dicitur, et pari ratione in angelis; Secundum vero quod pertinet ad rationem poenae, est quod voluntati repugnet. Voluntas enim uniuscujusque inclinationem habet in proprium bonum; unde privari proprio bono, voluntati repugnat. . . . Tertium vero esse videtur de ratione poenae ut in quadam passione consistat. Ea enim quae contra voluntatem eveniunt, non sunt a principio intrinseco quod est voluntas, sed a principio extrinseco, cuius effectus passio dicitur."

although it is not opposed to his will in act because the sufferer is unaware of his privation. Thus, if the destruction of his house is unknown to a man on a journey, the misfortune is not actually painful to him, but it would be if he knew what had taken place. Finally, a privation may be opposed to the natural rectitude of the will, although it is contrary to neither the actual nor the habitual inclination of the will. For example, the unrepentent sinner may neither actually nor habitually desire sanctifying grace, yet the privation of this spiritual good is opposed to the natural disposition of his will, since the good as such is the proper object of the rational appetite. To these last two modes of privation the term, punishment, may also be applied.⁴⁵

From these different degrees of opposition to the will and from the fact that there is a hierarchical variety of goods the privation of which is painful to man, it follows that "the grades of punishment can be measured in two ways: in one way according to the quantity of the good which is removed by the punishment, in another way, according to what is more or less contrary to the will."⁴⁶ The gradation of punishments according to the latter method yields a relative classification which ultimately must be founded upon the former method if it is to present the true status of penal privations. Although it is true, as St. Thomas observes, that the privation of a greater good is more contrary to the will than the loss of a lesser one, the Angelic Doctor also realistically admits that some men esteem the lesser goods of a sensible and corporeal nature above all others and take little note of spiritual and intellectual values. For such persons bodily pain and the loss of temporal goods seem to be the greatest punishments. Therefore, this relative method of classification can result in an inversion of the true order of punishments, unless there is some absolute basis of classification independent of the opinion of men. Such a basis is employed in the first method of measuring punish-

⁴⁵ Cf. *Comp. Theo.*, c. 122; *De Malo*, q. 1, a. 4.

⁴⁶ *Comp. Theo.*, c. 122. "... gradus poenarum dupliciter mensurari possunt: uno modo secundum quantitatem boni quod per poenam privatur; alio modo secundum quod magis vel minus est contrarium voluntati; . . ."

Cf. *C. G.*, III, c. 141.

ments which provides an order of punishments according to the order and excellence of the respective goods to which they are opposed. Thus, the greatest punishment is the loss of eternal happiness, since this is absolutely man's highest good. Next, in descending order, comes the loss of virtue, and then the loss of the good disposition of reason and the powers subject to it. After these deprivations of goods of the soul, the punishment next in order is loss of the health and well-being of the body, and, finally, the removal of those goods which are exterior to man.⁴⁷

Punishment, especially under the form of physical pain and mental anxiety, is the evil best known in our contemporary, secularized civilization. Fault or sin cannot be properly understood without an appreciation of God and man's relations to Him. These concepts, however, in many portions of our society, are no longer familiar. But everyone has experienced some kind of pain; everyone is aware of the presence of physical suffering in the world. Indeed, one more inversion in a society characterized by many illegitimate inversions of the right order of things is the ultimate reduction by some persons of all evil to the evil of punishment. The truth of the matter, however, is that even the nature of punishment is not fully understood by many people because, as St. Thomas insists, punishment is related to fault and cannot be fully comprehended apart from it. From this relationship to fault it follows that punishment, while in one sense an evil, in another and in an absolute sense is a good. St. Thomas writes:

From Him, indeed, can come to us the evil of punishment, which is not evil absolutely, but relatively; absolutely it is a good. For since good implies order to an end, but evil denotes the privation of this order, that is evil absolutely which excludes order to the ultimate end; this is evil of fault. Evil of punishment is, indeed, evil, inasmuch as it removes some particular good, but it is good absolutely, inasmuch as it depends upon the order to the ultimate end.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Cf. *C. G.*, III, c. 141.

⁴⁸ *Sum. Theo.*, II-II, q. 19, a. 1. "Ab ipso quidem potest nobis inminere malum poenae, quod non est simpliciter malum, sed secundum quid, bonum autem simpliciter. Cum enim bonum dicatur in ordine ad finem, malum autem importat huius ordinis privationem; illud est malum simpliciter quod excludit ordinem a fine ultimo, quod est malum culpae. Malum

Punishment is ordained to the last end, and, absolutely speaking, is a good because it partakes of the nature of justice and order. In the act of sin, man yields to his own will in a measure beyond the limits of reason and the Divine law. Punishment restores the order of justice by opposing the will and withdrawing from it more satisfaction or pleasure than the will received from the sin. Punishment is further related to fault in the role of a medicinal agent. It may be preventive, in that fear of punishment often deters from sin; or corrective, in that persons may be withdrawn from sin by the pain of punishment. Finally, St. Thomas says that punishment may serve other good purposes not so closely related to sin, such as providing the occasion for the exercise or promotion of virtue and the manifestation of Divine glory.⁴⁹

Punishment and fault present an interesting contrast which St. Thomas does not fail to note in the *De Malo*. He says:

Therefore, punishment and fault differ in three ways. First, fault is the evil of action, but punishment is the evil of agent. But these two evils are ordered in different ways in natural things and in voluntary ones. In natural things from the evil of agent follows the evil of action, as from a crooked leg limping follows. But in voluntary beings, on the contrary, from the evil of action which is fault, there follows the evil of agent, which is punishment, Divine Providence having rectified fault through punishment. In a second way punishment differs from fault through this that one is according to the will and the other contrary to it. . . . Thirdly, they differ through this that fault is in acting, but punishment is in suffering, as is shown by Augustine in the first book of *De Libero Arbitrio* (in the beginning) where he calls fault the evil which we do, but punishment, the evil which we suffer.⁵⁰

autem poenae est quidem malum, in quantum privat aliquod particulare bonum: est tamen bonum simpliciter, in quantum dependet ab ordine finis ultimi."

⁴⁹ Cf. *In Joan.*, c. IX, loc. 1; *Comp. Theo.*, c. 121; *De Malo*, q. 1, a. 4, ad 9; a. 5, ad 7 & ad 12; *In Hebr.*, c. XI, loc. 6; *Sum. Theo.*, I-II, q. 87, a. 6 & ad 3; II-II, q. 108, a. 4.

⁵⁰ *Loc. cit.*, q. 1, a. 4. "Sic ergo tripliciter poena et culpa differunt. Primo quidem, quia culpa est malum ipsius actionis, poena autem est

In the *De Malo*, in the *Summa Theologica*, and in his *Commentaries on the Sentences*, St. Thomas devotes a whole article to a fourth significant difference between punishment and fault. Fault has the questionable honor of being a greater evil than punishment. This is true even though the latter includes the privation of man's highest spiritual good. Because fault proceeds from his bad will, a man is said to be evil on account of the fault which he commits, but he is not called evil because of some punishment he is suffering. St. Thomas quotes the Pseudo-Dionysius as saying, "To be punished is not an evil; but it is an evil to be made worthy of punishment." Since the evil of fault gives its subject more of the character of evil than does punishment, it follows that fault itself is more evil than punishment. Furthermore, that which is more distant from God Who is essentially Goodness Itself is more evil than that which is closer to Him. But, as we shall consider in greater detail later, God can be the author of punishment, since it is opposed only to the good of the rational creature and can be used to restore the order of justice disturbed by fault. Fault, on the other hand, is opposed to God in the sense that it is opposed to the fulfillment of the Divine will and the love of the Divine goodness on the part of the creature. Therefore, punishment is more closely related to God and has less of the nature of evil than has fault. This conclusion is evident again when we consider that a wise person will permit a lesser evil in order to avoid or prevent a greater one. But God Who is all-wise utilizes punishment as a sanction and as a deterrent from fault. Consequently, the latter evil must be worse than the former. Finally, it should be noted that fault is in action, whereas punishment is in enduring or suffering (the Scholastic "passion"). But action or operation indicates the fullness of character, while

malum agentis. Sed haec duo mala aliter ordinantur in naturalibus et voluntariis; nam in naturalibus ex malo agentis sequitur malum actionis, sicut ex tibia curva sequitur claudicatio; in voluntariis autem e converso, ex malo actionis, quod est culpa, sequitur malum agentis, quod est poena, divina providentia culpam per poenam ordinante. Secundo modo differet poena a culpa per hoc quod est secundum voluntatem et contra voluntatem esse. . . . Tertio vero per hoc quod culpa est in agendo, poena vero in patiendo, ut patet per Augustinum, in *I De lib. arb.*, in princ., ubi culpam nominat malum quod agimus, poenam vero malum quod patimur."

passion connotes a thing being moved to a quality or condition. Therefore, fault which is an evil action has more of the nature of evil than has punishment which signifies an evil being endured.⁵¹

Much more could be written concerning each of St. Thomas' major classifications of evil, and they offer fields for future investigation and application to modern problems. However, the above discussions are sufficient for our immediate purpose. The Angelic Doctor's division of evil is realistic, well-defined, and meaningful. It is to be regretted that among modern philosophers, Scholastic and non-Scholastic alike, this classification has been overshadowed by later, more arbitrary classifications tinged with nominalism.

5. ACCORDING TO MODERN PHILOSOPHERS

One modern attitude concerning the classification of evil is expressed by B. A. G. Fuller when he says:

Philosophers have found it sufficient to take the fact that there is Evil at its face value, and that value in all its looseness of extension. They have not worried over our varying uses of the word, and the apparent lack of external connection between the facts to which it is applied. . . . In short, the problem of Evil has little or no interest in the classification of phenomena and the analysis of their common value.⁵²

Tsanoff perforce must share in this type of loose thinking, since evil for him is so relative, even in its foundation, that seemingly it would defy classification. On Tsanoff's premises it would seem that either all evil is in one big category of relative evil, or each experience of evil is a class unto itself.

On the other hand, there are philosophers today who choose to assign names of their own invention to the various types of evil with which they treat. Thus, we read of "cosmic evil," "natural evil," "the discrepancy between reward and merit," etc. How-

⁵¹ Cf. *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 48, a. 6; II-II, q. 76, a. 4; *De Malo*, q. 1, a. 5; *In II Sen.*, d. 37, q. 3, a. 2.

⁵² Fuller, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

ever, among those modern thinkers who are interested in a classification of evil the best known division is that which is attributed to Leibnitz. This classification divides evil into metaphysical, physical, and moral evil. The German philosopher wrote:

Evil can be taken metaphysically, physically, or morally. Metaphysical evil consists in simple imperfection, physical evil in suffering, and moral evil in sin.⁵³

Some modern philosophers, such as Fuller, have borrowed Leibnitz's terms and affixed their own nuances.⁵⁴ Others have simply taken the German optimist's classification for their own.

At first glance it may appear that Leibnitz and St. Thomas merely use different words for the same meanings. However, a comparison of the two classifications reveals significant divergences. The moral evil of Leibnitz is the same as the Thomistic fault. But the Leibnitzian physical evil is more extensive than St. Thomas' punishment because the German philosopher included all suffering, both of animals and of men, in his category, while St. Thomas, with good reason, used punishment only with reference to human beings and comprised in it spiritual privations as well as bodily sufferings. Finally, the Angelic Doctor's evil of nature includes the evils that befall animals, as well as the general finitude consequent upon the order of the universe. Leibnitz's metaphysical evil, on the other hand, denotes, apart from animal suffering, the natural consequences of this cosmic finitude-

⁵³ Leibnitz, *op. cit.*, "Théodicée," no. 21, p. 510. "On peut prendre le mal métaphysiquement, physiquement et moralement. Le mal métaphysique consiste dans la simple imperfection, le mal physique dans la souffrance, et le mal moral dans le péché."

Cf. *ibid.*, no. 241, p. 577. ". . . le mal physique, c'est-à-dire les souffrances, les misères, nous embarrasseront moins, étant des suites du mal moral . . . La question du mal physique, c'est-à-dire, de l'origine des souffrances, a des difficultés communes avec celle de l'origine du mal métaphysique, dont les monstres et les autres irrégularités apparentes de l'Univers fournissent des exemples."

It is interesting to note that St. Thomas precedes Leibnitz in the use of the term, "moral evil [*malum morale*]"; cf. *De Malo*, q. 1, a. 3.

⁵⁴ Cf. Fuller, *op. cit.*, pp. 2 ff.

ness, but especially the irregularities which occur in irrational creation. It would seem that, while the classification of the German philosopher offers the advantage of a trim terminology, the Thomistic division is richer in the truth of reality and deserves the same revival that Thomistic thought in general is enjoying.

SUMMARY

In contrast to the loose thinking of some modern philosophers and the subjective treatment of reality by others, St. Thomas offers a carefully reasoned, objective classification of evil. With this we have been concerned in the third chapter. First, there was the extensive and penetrating division which the Angelic Doctor borrowed from Avicenna. From this was drawn a gradation for the treatment of evil which began with evil *per se*, then evil *per accidens* as the subject of privation, and finally, evil *per accidens* as the cause of evil in another being. Next, we considered St. Thomas' "working" classification of evil and found that, dividing evil according to the good to which it was opposed, the Angelic Doctor spoke of *evil of agent* and *evil of action*. These two forms of privation were later called *evil of nature*, when their meanings were applied to irrational creatures. But because man is endowed with an intellect and a free will, a defect in his proper action is called *fault*, while a privation in the human agent is called *punishment* because it is contrary to the will and is ultimately the penal consequence of some fault.

We examined each of these major divisions of evil more closely and found that evil of nature is an apparent evil, since it contributes to the good order of the universe, not essentially, but accidentally. In considering St. Thomas' explanation of the evil of nature, we saw the product of his philosophical equilibrium refute both the cosmic pessimism of such men as Fuller and Smith and the unmitigated optimism of Leibnitz. The discussion of the evil of fault brought to light St. Thomas' distinction of defect, evil, sin, and fault. Evil of punishment, examined next, was seen to be a relative evil, consequent upon fault, and a good, absolutely speaking, because it is the work of justice and order. The consideration of punishment concluded with a contrast between

it and fault, and the discovery that fault is the greater evil. Finally, it was necessary to mention briefly some modern views on the classification of evil, particularly that of Leibnitz, which has been adopted to a great extent by modern philosophers. His metaphysical, physical, and moral evil was compared with St. Thomas' evil of nature, of punishment, and of fault. The former classification is herein considered inadequate and a hope for the revival of the Thomistic divisions was expressed.

CHAPTER IV

THE CAUSES OF EVIL

I. A PRELIMINARY OBSERVATION

Aristotle observes that "men do not think they know a thing till they have grasped the 'why' of it."¹ So true is this general observation when used with reference to the study of evil that Fr. Pégues, with justice, refers to the cause of evil as the question which has most tormented the minds of men in the course of the centuries.² This question is more than a problem; it is a mystery. Metaphysics can explain the nature of evil and investigate its relations in the world of finite experience. This in itself is a worth-while accomplishment, but it is not the last word concerning evil. The ultimate and most necessary question regarding this subject is why—free will, sin, and suffering being what they are—the infinitely good God chose to give the universe the form He did. Here the problem of evil becomes a mystery because its answer lies deep in the mind of the Creator. At this point metaphysics must stand mute and let theology, Divine Revelation, and supernatural faith bring man to higher knowledge.

From these latter sources man learns with certitude that he was created by a personal God and endowed with a supernatural destiny, that he bears within himself the wounds of an original transgression which make him prey to sin and suffering, and that the supernatural repercussions of this primal misfortune were remedied by the self-sacrifice of the Son of God. He learns that the sufferings of the innocent may redound to increase their eternal reward, to expiate their own past sins and the sins of others.

¹ Aristotle, *Physics*, II, c. 3, (194b, 18-20); translated by R. P. Hardie and R. K. Gaye. *The Works of Aristotle*; ed. W. D. Ross, (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1908-31), Vol. II.

² Pégues, *op. cit.*, Vol. 3, p. 158. "C'est l'objet de la question suivante (*Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 491, question capitale s'il en fût, et qui a le plus tourmenté les esprits au cours des siècles."

and "to fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ," that without fail Divine justice is rendered to unrepentant sinners, and that, beyond any doubt, God is all-wise, all-good, and all-powerful. Above all, this higher knowledge teaches man of the Love which created, sustains, and draws to Itself all things, and convinces him that he is living, not in a purely material world, but in a purposeful, *moral* universe, where sin and sanctity, not pain and prosperity, are the vital issues. All these truths, supernatural in their origin, culminate to give the believer a satisfactory explanation of the mystery of evil.

Because St. Thomas wrote a summary of theology and précis of theological disputations, his theory of evil, taken in its absolute entirety, includes this fuller understanding of the cause of evil; for the "sacred science" can continue where metaphysics falters. The proper instrument of metaphysics, as we indicated in the beginning of this work, is human reason. Unaided by Revelation, this instrument cannot attain to a full understanding of all the truths necessary for the explanation of the presence of evil in the world. One who attempts a complete theory of evil founded solely on the deliverances of unaided human reason thereby puts himself in the position of Eliphaz the Themanite, Baldad, and Sophar. These three friends of Job tried to rationalize the mystery of evil and the Lord said to the first of them:

My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends, because you have not spoken the thing that it right before me, as my servant Job hath.

... go to my servant Job, and offer for yourselves a holocaust and my servant Job shall pray for you: his face will I accept, that folly be not imputed to you: for you have not spoken right things before me, as my servant Job hath.³

Thus, the complete answers to certain problems are beyond the natural ken of metaphysics, since it is and always remains a human science. Nor is this limitation derogatory to the "first philosophy" for St. Thomas himself says a thing is not considered defective if it goes not beyond its natural powers, provided only that it acts up to the full measure of its nature.⁴ In-

³ Job, 42: 7-8.

⁴ Cf. *C. G.*, III, c. 10.

deed, a modern Thomist, Fr. Gerald Vann, O.P., maintains that the whole achievement of philosophy (and this especially applies to metaphysics) "is to lead us to the point at which we are bound to look beyond its horizons."⁵

However, before reaching that point in the philosophical investigation of evil, there is much information which metaphysics can bring to light. In this metaphysical study we have already considered the nature of evil, examined its characteristics, and classified its varieties. By bringing certain fundamental metaphysical principles to bear upon this information, we can further discover whether evil is caused; if so, what mode of causality is involved; whether evil itself can be a cause; and, also, whether some of the things advanced as causes of evil, e.g., chance, God, etc., are true sources of this phenomenon. Finally, as we have already indicated, metaphysics can bring one to the point of acknowledging that the primary cause of evil is a mystery. This, too, is a contribution, because to know that a thing is a mystery is to know something specific about it. The task of this fourth chapter is to present, according to the thought of St. Thomas, all that metaphysics can reveal concerning the causes and causality of evil.

2. CAUSE *Per Se*

A cause may be described as a factor which, in a particular way, partially accounts for the presence or existence of a thing. We say "in a particular way" to distinguish cause from principle or condition, and "partially" because there are four causes, and each of them makes its specific contribution to the being of the effect.⁶ Considering evil in general, we see that it must somehow have a cause. This is evident from its nature as the privation of good. As we have seen, privation connotes the absence of a connatural and due perfection. Now, no being lacks what belongs to it naturally unless some cause interferes with its proper order

⁵ Gerald Vann, O.P., *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, (New York: Benziger Brothers, Inc., 1947), p. 146.

⁶ Cf. Chapter I, pp. 14 ff., for our treatment of the nature of causality and the four causes.

and disposition.⁷ Again, we know that evil, as a privation, exists in its negative manner in good as its subject. The fact that something inheres in a subject indicates that it does not enjoy an independent existence, but must have as the source of its being, either the principles of the subject or some external cause. It follows from this that evil must have a cause of some kind. Furthermore, the good which is the subject of evil is a being in potency to the missing perfection. Consequently, since both the privation and the absent form are possibilities for the subject, there must be some reason for the realization, so to speak, of the privation rather than of the form. In other words, the advent of evil in some manner is caused.⁸

On the other hand, when we consider the peculiar, negative type of existence which belongs to evil as such, and also that, according to St. Thomas, "this name Cause signifies a certain influx to the being of the thing caused,"⁹ it seems that evil as such cannot have a cause in the usual manner of causality. As a privation, it appears that evil in itself is incapable of receiving the influx of actuality ordinarily associated with a cause. Furthermore, every effect in some way resembles its cause. The effect of a univocal cause bears a similitude to its agent inasmuch as its form is of the same species as the form of the cause. With

⁷ *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 49, a. 1. "... necesse est dicere quod omne malum aliquo modo causam habeat. Malum enim est defectus boni quod natum est et debet haberi. Quod autem aliquid deficit a sua naturali et debita dispositione, non potest provenire nisi ex aliqua causa trahente rem extra suam dispositionem: . . ."

⁸ Cf. *C. G.*, III, c. 13. "Quicquid enim est in aliquo ut in subiecto, oportet quod habeat aliquam causam: causatur enim vel ex subiecti principis, vel ex aliqua extrinseca causa. Malum autem est in bono sicut in subiecto, . . . Oportet igitur quod malum habeat causam."

"Item. Quod est in potentia ad utrumque oppositorum, non constituitur in actu alicuius eorum nisi per aliquam causam: nulla enim potentia facit se esse in actu. Malum autem est privatio eius quod quis natus est et debet habere: ex hoc enim unumquodque dicitur malum esse. Est igitur malum in subiecto quod est in potentia ad ipsum et ad suum oppositum. Oportet igitur quod malum habeat aliquam causam."

⁹ *In V Meta.*, lec. 1. "... hoc vero nomen Causa, importat influxum quemdam ad esse causati."

equivocal causes and their respective effects the resemblance is only by a "trace" of the cause insofar as the effect shows forth the causality of the agent, but not its form.¹⁰ In either case, however, there is some reflection of the cause in its proper effect. Now every cause is good, for it acts inasmuch as it is itself in act; but to have actuality is to have, in some manner, being and goodness. Therefore, if evil were to have a direct cause, in order to resemble its cause, as is characteristic of a proper effect, evil would necessarily have some similitude to goodness, and this is contrary to its nature as a privation and evil. Moreover, each thing acts according to its nature. Consequently, as a cause, every agent will have, in regard to its proper effect, a certain order measured and determined by the nature of the cause itself. It is characteristic of evil, however, to deviate from and to go beyond determined order. Therefore, no cause can be directly responsible for evil, nor can evil be a proper effect of any agent or cause. St. Thomas expresses these arguments in the following words:

Every direct effect [*effectus per se*] has in some manner a similitude to its cause, either according to the same nature, as with univocal agents, or according to a deficient nature, as with equivocal agents. Every efficient cause acts according as it is in act, which pertains to the nature of the good. Wherefore evil, according to this, is not assimilated to the agent cause in regard to that by which it acts. It remains, therefore, that evil does not have a cause *per se*. . . . the same is evident from this that every cause *per se* has a certain determined order to its proper effect. What, however, is done according to order is not evil, but evil occurs in neglecting the order. Wherefore evil as such does not have a direct cause [*causam per se*]. . . .¹¹

However, the Angelic Doctor insists that "it is fitting, nevertheless, that evil in some manner should have a cause."¹¹

¹⁰ Cf. *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 45, a. 7.

¹¹ *De Malo*, q. 1, a. 3. ". . . omnis effectus per se habet aliquam similitudinem suae causae, vel secundum eandem rationem, sicut in agentibus univocis, vel secundum deficientem rationem, sicut in agentibus equivocis; omnis enim causa agens agit secundum quod actu est, quod pertinet

3. CAUSE *Per Accidens*

Evil is not caused directly, as is the good. On the contrary, evil is the indirect or accidental effect of a cause which acts primarily for some positive, good result. Thus, evil is said to have a cause *per accidens*. In his commentary on the second book of Aristotle's *Physics*, St. Thomas remarks:

But one must consider that an accidental cause is spoken of in two ways; in one way on the part of a cause, in another on the part of an effect. It is spoken of on the part of a cause when that which is called the cause *per accidens* is connected to the cause *per se*; as, for instance, if white or musical ability should be called the cause of a house because it is accidentally conjoined to the architect. However, cause *per accidens* is spoken of on the part of the effect when it is understood as something which is connected to the effect accidentally, as if we should say that the architect is the cause of a disagreement because the disagreement happens on account of the house he made.¹²

Evil may be considered according to either of these two aspects of accidental causality, for evil both causes and is caused accidentally. Postponing the consideration of evil as a cause *per accidens*, we are immediately interested in evil as the accidental effect of such a cause. Perhaps the clearest way of studying this

ad rationem boni. Unde malum, secundum quod huiusmodi, non assimilatur causae agenti secundum id quod est agens. Relinquitur ergo quod malum non habeat causam per se. . . . idem apparet ex hoc quod omnis causa per se, habet certum et determinatum ordinem ad suum effectum; quod autem fit secundum ordinem non est malum, sed malum accidit in praetermittendo ordinem. Unde malum, secundum quod huiusmodi, non habet causam per se, oportet tamen quod malum aliquo modo causam habeat."

¹² *In II Phys.*, lec. 8. "Sed considerandum est quod causa per accidens dicitur dupliciter: uno modo ex parte causae, alio modo ex parte effectus. Ex parte quidem causae, quando illud quod dicitur causa per accidens, conjungitur causae per se sicut si album; vel musicum dicatur causa domus, quia accidentaliter conjungitur aedificatori. Ex parte autem effectus, quando accipitur aliquod quod accidentaliter conjungitur effectui: ut si dicamus, quod aedificator est causa discordiae, quia ex domo facta accidit discordia." Cf. *De Malo*, q. 1, a. 3, ad 14.

is to consider evil as such in its relations to each of the four causes.

In regard to the intrinsic causes, it is obvious that evil, considered in itself, has no formal cause, since a privation is essentially the absence of some form. Again, form connotes a certain actuality or perfection, and this is contrary to the nature of evil as such. This does not mean, however, that evil has no formal nature of any kind, for if this were the case, evil could neither be known nor defined. Formally, as it has been said many times, evil is the absence of a due good. As a privation, however, evil is a kind of non-being. Consequently, it can have no intrinsic, positive factor such as a form constituting it in positive existence. Therefore, it is again evident that evil as such does not have a formal cause. [On the other hand, because evil maintains its presence by virtue of the good which is its subject, the good is said to be the material cause of evil, always, however, in an accidental manner. Since every being seeks its own perfection, the activity of the good which is the subject of evil is directed primarily toward the maintenance and increase of that good. It is extraneous to the subject that it is host to some privation which it carries along in its activity.¹³ Were this not true, and, instead, if evil were somehow the recipient of a direct influx from the principles of its subject, then the privation would be natural to the good, and, therefore, no longer an evil, for evil is the absence of something natural and due. Consequently, it is evident that good, as the material cause of evil, is, in this instance, a material cause *per accidens*.]

It is interesting to note that one of the historical errors in regard to the problem of evil is the explanation of the presence of evil in the world as due primarily to matter or to some type of limiting principle which serves as a material cause. By setting the world of singulars in opposition, as it were, to the world of Ideas, Plato led in the formation of this theory. He accounted

¹³ Cf. *In II Sen.*, d. 34, q. 1, a. 4, ad 5. "... malum non habet subiectum sicut per se accidens, sed sicut privatio perfectionis; et ideo non oportet quod per se ex principiis sui subiecti causetur, sed sufficit quod tantum in subiecto aptitudinem et debitum requirat."

for the imperfection of the sensible world, as compared to the ideal world, by asserting the presence in the former of a limiting principle, called variously, space (*χώρα*), mass (*ἐκμαζείον*), receptacle (*παράδεξις*), the unlimited (*ἄπειρον*) and, perhaps, the Dyad, or "the great and small."¹⁴ Relative to this theory of Plato, however, it should be noted that the founder of the Academy does not call this principle "matter." His pupil, Aristotle, was the first to use the word, *hyle*, in that sense. Furthermore, it cannot be said that Plato understood the principle of imperfection to be a material substratum of existence. It is certain, however, that he did assert the existence of a limiting principle, the source of all evil and imperfection. At the beginning of the Christian era, Plato's comparatively mild condemnation of material existence was accentuated to an extreme in the syncretism of the Alexandrian Philo and, later (c. 253 A.D.) in the neo-Platonism of Plotinus. In these philosophical systems the repudiation of matter led to a denial of the creation of the world by the immediate action of God, and to the assertion of certain intermediary agents (emanations with Plotinus) between God and the material universe. Furthermore, in regard to man, the human soul, according to these philosophers, is imprisoned in the body as in a dungeon and by this contact with matter the soul is degraded and drawn toward moral evil.

Plotinus writes:

Given that the Good is not the only existent thing, it is inevitable that by the outgoing from It, the continuous down going from It, there should be produced a last; this will be evil. This last, the thing that has no residue of Good in it, is matter. (*Enneads*, I, viii, 7.)

Thus what enters into matter ceases to belong to itself, comes to belong to matter, just as in the nourishment of living beings what is taken in does not remain as it came, but is turned into blood and becomes in fact any of the humors of the recipient. If, then, the body is the cause of evil, there is no escape; the cause of evil is matter. (*Ibid.*, I, viii, 8.)

This is the fall of the soul, this entry into matter, thence its weakness; not all the faculties of its being retain free

¹⁴ Cf. Plato, *Politicus*, 273, ff.; *Timaeus*, 48c-51, 52d-53b; *Philebus*, 30c.

play, for matter hinders their manifestation; it encroaches upon the soul's territory and, as it were, crushes the soul back and turns to evil what it has stolen until that finds strength to rise again.

Thus the cause of the weakness of the soul and of all its evil is matter. What soul could contain evil unless by contact with the lower kind? . . . the soul takes up false notions through having gone outside of its own truth by ceasing to be purely itself. (*Ibid.*, I, viii, 14-15.)¹⁵

St. Thomas was cognizant of these historical errors in regard to matter for he writes:

It should be known that among many of the ancients it was commonly said that matter is absolutely evil, and this was said because they did not distinguish between privation and matter. Privation, however, is non-being and evil. Wherefore, since Plato held matter to be non-being, he also said matter was absolutely evil. But Aristotle, in the first book of the *Physics*, says that matter is not non-being, nor evil, except accidentally, that is, by reason of a privation which happens to it. And this is also what Dionysius says here that matter is not evil just because it is matter.¹⁶

If carried to its ultimate conclusion, the theory which looks upon matter as the primary cause of all evil confronts its proponents with an insoluble problem. Eventually it compels them either to adopt an even more absurd doctrine, such as that of the evil god of the Manichaeans, or to assent, from logical necessity, to propositions contrary to their fundamental philosophical position. If matter is sufficiently active to be accounted the direct and primary cause of evil in things, according to their under-

¹⁵ From *The Essence of Plotinus* by Grace H. Turnbull. (Copyright 1934 by Grace H. Turnbull. Used by permission of Oxford University Press, Inc., New York), pp. 56-58.

¹⁶ In *De Div. Nom.*, c. IV, lec. 21. ". . . sciendum est quod apud multos antiquorum vulgariter dicebatur quod materia est secundum se mala, et hoc ideo, quia non distinguebant inter privationem et materiam. Privatio autem est non ens et malum. Unde, sicut Plato dicebat materiam esse non ens, ita dicebat materiam esse secundum se malam. Sed Aristoteles in *I Physic.*, dicit quod materia non est non ens, nec malum, nisi per accidens, id est ratione privationis quae ei accidit; et hoc est etiam quod hic Dionysius dicit quod materia non est mala, secundum quod est materia. . . ."

standing of evil, then matter must have some reality of its own. However, if, as these philosophers hold, all beings ultimately have as their source one principle which is necessarily all-good, then this first principle, at the same time, must be the ultimate cause of matter and, therefore, of evil. This inconsistency is brought out very clearly by B. A. G. Fuller in his *The Problem of Evil in Plotinus*. On the other hand, if in order to avoid this first contradiction it is arbitrarily denied that matter comes from the first principle, then the aforesaid doctrine that all reality comes ultimately from that one source is contradicted, and the problem of the origin of matter still remains. Finally, if both of these difficulties are evaded by asserting the non-entity of matter, how can matter have any effect at all, evil or otherwise? The path opened by this explanation of the cause of evil is, indeed, a thorny one.

Nevertheless, it seems that this historical error, concealed under new terms and culminating in a new, even more illogical and unrealistic alternative, has its adherents among some contemporary thinkers. These men, perplexed by the presence of evil in the world, have asserted as part of reality a certain stubborn, uncompromising element which resists the impression of good, causes disorder in the universe, and escapes the power of God. For a similar notion, Plotinus used the term, "matter," these men speak of "a drag in the universe," "a recalcitrant cosmic residue," "the dysteleological surd," or some such thing. Unlike their Jewish and Egyptian predecessors who preferred inconsistency to a denial of the omnipotence of God, these modern philosophers conclude from the presence of this evil element in the world that the Deity is too impotent to do anything about it. In other words, they choose as their alternative a god that is finite. Thus, E. H. Reeman writes, "God is actually now doing the best He can and can't do better . . . in all the struggle His interests are as much at stake as humanity's."¹⁷ And John H. Holmes

¹⁷ E. H. Reeman, *Do We Need a New Idea of God?*, p. 26, quoted in Rudolph G. Bantas, *Contemporary Philosophy and Thomistic Principles*, (New York: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1932), p. 357.

We might add that Bantas acknowledges that "the problem of evil is principally responsible for the theories of a finite and evolving God," p. 385. Brightman lists the following contemporary writers among those inter-

remarks, "So far as we can judge from the divine handiwork, God is not infinite, certainly not omnipotent."¹⁸ With this alternative these men and the thinkers they represent make for themselves many more difficulties than Plotinus ever faced. The supposed finitude of God raises tremendous problems concerning the origin and purpose of the world, human morality, and the dignity and end of man. In less philosophical language, these men have cut off the body to save the limb. A more rational explanation is one based on the true concepts of matter as a potential good, and of evil as a privation, a kind of absence, which has no direct material cause. This explanation admits of a conclusion such as the following by St. Thomas:

It is otherwise concerning one who has charge of some particular thing, than concerning a universal provider, because the provider of a particular thing, as far as he is able, excludes defect from that which is under his care; but the universal provider permits some defect in some particular good, lest the good of the whole be impeded. Wherefore the corruptions and defects in natural things are said to be contrary to a particular nature, but are, nevertheless, in accordance with the design of the universal nature insofar as the defect of one happens to the good of another, or even of the whole universe; for "the corruption of one is the generation of another" whereby a species is preserved. Since God is the universal provider of all being, it pertains to His Providence to permit certain defects to be in some particular things, lest the perfect good of the universe be obstructed, for if all evils were prevented, much good would be lacking to the universe.¹⁹

ested in the idea of a finite god: W. K. Wright, John Bennett, Robert L. Calhoun, W. T. Marvin, Henry Nelson Wieman, Vergilius Ferm, Georgia Harkness, Peter A. Bertocci, and others. Cf. E. S. Brightman, *A Philosophy of Religion*, (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1940), p. 300.

¹⁸ John Haynes Holmes, "A Struggling God," *My Idea of God*, edited by J. F. Newton, (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1926), p. 116.

¹⁹ *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 22, a. 2, ad 2. ". . . aliter de eo est qui habet curam alicuius particularis, et de providore universalis. Quia provisor particularis excludit defectum ab eo quod eius curae subditur, quantum potest: sed provisor universalis permittit aliquem defectum in aliquo particulari accidere,

Continuing now our consideration of the relations between evil and the four causes, we next examine the influence of the external causes. The final cause is that on account of which something is done. Evil, however, is never intended purely for its own sake. Therefore, it has no final cause *per se*, but only *per accidens*. This is evident if we recall that "the good is what all things desire." Consequently, if something directly desired evil as such, it would indicate the presence of some good in the nature of evil—obviously, a contradiction. Moreover, the object of the rational appetite is the good, either apparent or real. It follows that the direct desire for evil solely for itself is impossible, since such a desire would be contrary to the natural operation of the will. The connection between evil as such and a final cause is acci-

ne impediatur bonum totius. Unde corruptiones et defectus in rebus naturalibus, dicuntur esse contra naturam particularem; sed tamen sunt de intentione naturae universalis, in quantum defectus unius cedit in bonum alterius, vel etiam totius universi; nam corruptio unius est generatio alterius, per quam species conservatur. Cum igitur Deus sit universalis provisor totius entis, ad ipsius providentiam pertinet ut permittat quosdam defectus esse in aliquibus particularibus rebus, ne impediatur bonum universi perfectum. Si enim omnia mala impediuntur, multa bona deessent universo: . . ."

Apropos of this is the following enlightening remark made by Richard Downey in his book entitled *Divine Providence*, (Copyright, 1928, by The Macmillan Company & used with their permission), pp. 20-22:

"It is surely a significant fact that matter has been the despair, and sometimes the undoing, of every religion except Catholicism. Either it has been glorified and worshipped by the worldly-minded, or it has been degraded and despised by idealists. In pagan systems of philosophy and theology, generally, matter was regarded as a flaw in the handiwork of the gods, the source and the origin of all evil; and consequently from the outset Christianity was open to the charge of materialism.

"But the fact is that she, and she alone throughout all the ages, has understood the great synthesis of spirit and matter. She sees that matter is not a flaw in God's handiwork, but a triumph of his power; that spirit can and does glorify matter; and she points triumphantly to the doctrine of the resurrection of the body as the crowning instance of spiritualized matter. And therefore, in the Christian economy, it is not necessary to relegate matter and material things to the care of some demi-god. It comes within the scope of the immediate providence of the infinitely perfect Creator."

dental. This means that evil as an effect always occurs outside the intention of the agent. Franciscus de Sylvestris points out that this can happen in two ways.²⁰ In the first instance, the evil effect is completely unexpected and unforeseen by the agent. For example, if a man bats a ball and breaks a window, the destruction of the window is an evil effect unforeseen and entirely *beyond* his intention which was the pleasure of a good hit. This type of evil occurrence is closely related to the problem of the efficient cause of evil and its character will become more apparent in that consideration. The second way in which evil occurs outside the intention of the agent requires that the evil effect, in this case, foreseen and known, be concomitant to some good result which is directly and primarily desired. The evil here is said to be *beside* the intention of the agent. Furthermore, in this second instance, the desire for the resultant good must be greater than the desire for the good which is lost, and greater than the fear of the consequent evil. Thus, in an emergency a man may deliberately break a window in order that he may enter his locked house. The evil of destroying the window is foreseen, but the good of preserving the house or its contents is more desired than the conservation of the pane of glass. Concerning this, St. Thomas says:

Since the nature of the good is the nature of the appetible, . . . , and since evil is opposed to good, it is impossible that any evil as such be desired by an appetite, either natural, or animal, or intellectual, which is the will. Nevertheless, some evil may be desired accidentally insofar as it is consequent upon some good, and this appears in each appetite. . . . The evil, however, which is joined to some good is the privation of another good. Never, therefore, would evil be desired, not even accidentally, unless the good to which it is joined were more desired than the good which is taken away by the evil.²¹

²⁰ Cf. Franciscus de Sylvestris, *Comm. in II Contra Gentiles*, c. 41. *Opera S. Thomae*, ed. Leonina, Vol. XIII, p. 364.

²¹ *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 19, a. 9. " . . . cum ratio boni sit ratio appetibilis, . . . malum autem opponatur bono; impossibile est quod aliquod malum, inquantum huiusmodi, appetatur, neque appetitu naturali, neque animali, neque intellectuali, qui est voluntas. Sed aliquod malum appetitur per

This type of accidental choice of evil is often observed in the actions of man, since he is endowed with a hierarchy of appetites, each order of which has its own proper good, among which he must choose correctly. Thus, the good of the soul often requires the privation of some good of the body, the good of the whole man must prevail over the good of some part or faculty, etc. Here once again the theory of evil reveals intimate ties with a philosophy of good and the necessity of the foundation of a theory of evil upon a sound theory of value and objective good, for to all practical purposes this accidental choice of evil reduces itself to a choice between two goods.

The following words of St. Thomas summarize in part what has been said thus far in regard to the causes of evil:

Good is the cause of evil in the mode of a material cause, . . . for it has been shown that good is the subject of evil. Evil, however, does not have a formal cause, but rather it is the privation of form. Likewise, neither does it have a final cause, but rather it is the privation of order to a due end, for not only the end has the nature of good, but also the useful which is ordered to the end. But evil has a cause in the manner of an agent, not, however, *per se*, but *per accidens*.²²

Concerning this last accidental cause of evil, its accidental efficient cause, St. Thomas in another place writes:

But since the inordination of sin and of every other evil is not a simple negation, but is the privation of that which is natural and which something ought to have, it is necessary

accidens, inquantum consequitur ad aliquod bonum. Et hoc apparet in quolibet appetitu. . . .

"Malum autem quod coniungitur alicui bono, est privatio alterius boni. Numquam igitur appeteretur malum, nec per accidens, nisi bonum cui coniungitur malum, magis appeteretur quam bonum quod privatur per malum."

²² *Ibid.*, I, q. 49, a. 1. "Et quidem quod bonum sit causa mali per modum cause materialis, iam ex praemissis patet: ostensum est enim quod bonum est subiectum mali. Causam autem formalem malum non habet: sed est magis privatio formae. Et similiter nec causam finalem: sed magis est privatio ordinis ad finem debitum; non solum enim finis habet rationem boni, sed etiam utile, quod ordinatur ad finem. Causam autem per modum agentis habet malum: non autem per se, sed per accidens."

that such inordinateness should have an accidental efficient cause, for what naturally is and ought to be in a thing, is never lacking except on account of some impeding cause. Accordingly, it is customary to say that evil, which consists in a certain privation, has a deficient cause, or an efficient cause *per accidens*.²³

An agent acts according to the degree of being and good it possesses, and its purpose is to produce a perfect result so far as it is able. In keeping with this, the ensuing action or effect should be whole and sound. Therefore, when a defective action or effect occurs, it is beside the intention of the agent and some explanation for the discrepancy should be sought.

In regard to an evil or defective action the imperfection results from a deficiency in the good of the agent itself, or in its instrument. For example, the weakness of a child may cause a stumbling gait. Now, the child moves, not as being weak, but as having the power to walk. It is accidental that he has not sufficient strength to walk perfectly. Hence, it is by accident that action on the part of the agent—in this case, the child—produced a defective result. In like manner, a defective instrument, such as an injured leg, produces accidentally a deficient or evil result, i.e., limping. St. Thomas says:

It goes back to the same, however, if the defect of action and of effect should result from the defect of an instrument, or of any other thing which is required for the action of the agent, as when the moving power produces limping on account of the crookedness of a leg, for the agent acts both by its power and its instrument.²⁴

²³ *Ibid.*, I-II, q. 75, a. 1. "Sed cum inordinatio peccati, et quodlibet malum, non sit simplex negatio, sed privatio eius quod natum est et debet habere; necesse est quod talis inordinatio habeat causam agentem per accidens: quod enim natum est inesse et debet, numquam abesse nisi propter causam aliquam impediendam. Et secundum hoc consuevit dici quod malum, quod in quadam privatione consistit, habet causam deficientem, vel agentem per accidens."

²⁴ *C. G.*, III, c. 10. "In idem autem redit si defectus actionis et effectus proveniat ex defectu instrumenti, vel cuiuscumque alterius quod requiritur ad actionem agentis, sicut cum virtus motiva producit claudicationem propter tibiae curvitatem: utroque enim agens agit, et virtute et instrumento."

Since the defective action is caused by the agent acting in spite of, but, nevertheless with, a deficiency in itself or in its instrument, it is clear why evil is said to have a deficient cause. Here we see in its full light a principle which we met in considering the evil of nature, namely, that the evil in an action is reducible to the evil in an agent, as its source.

In the case of an imperfect effect or thing, however, the accidental or deficient cause may be the weakness of the agent, but, in another way, the evil may be caused accidentally by a defect in the object which receives the action of the agent. The agent may be perfect according to its nature, yet because the object is indisposed to receive the action, evil may result. It is not the fault of the match that wet paper refuses to be kindled. The agent is acting to the full extent of its power. That the action is hindered by the indisposition of the object is accidental and not included in the intention of the agent. The deficiency, in this instance, is said to be in the matter of the effect. A third manner in which evil in an effect or thing may have an accidental efficient cause is not by way of the deficiency of its matter or of its agent, but on account of the agent's perfection and power. In material things the presence of one substantial form entails the privation of others. Thus, free hydrogen and free oxygen cannot retain their respective forms when they take on the form of water. In this sense it is said to be an evil if, by an agent sufficiently active to cause the transition, a thing is made to take on a new form, thereby losing the one it had. The primary intention of the agent, however, is its own perfection, and it is accidental to it that its action involves the destruction of the less powerful form of the thing affected. It is a so-called evil for the lamb that its form is changed into the flesh and form of the wolf. Yet the wolf is seeking primarily the perfection of its own form, without regard to the effect upon the lamb. The evil which befalls the lamb is an unintentional concomitant to the perfection of the stronger animal. In this third instance of evil in a thing, a fatal deficiency is present, namely the inability of the first form to resist the action of the agent. However, the cause of this evil is attributed not so much to this deficiency as to the cause *per accidens* which

is the agent acting according to its natural powers. St. Thomas explains:

It should be known that evil in an action is caused otherwise than in an effect. Indeed, evil is caused in an action on account of a defect of something in the principles of action, either of the principal or of the instrumental agent: But evil in some thing, not, however, in the proper effect of an agent, is caused sometimes from the power of the agent; sometimes, however, from a defect of the agent, or of the matter. It is caused from the power or perfection of the agent when the privation of another form follows necessarily upon the form intended by the agent; as upon the form of fire there follows the privation of the form of air or water. . . . But this is accidental, because the fire does not intend to remove the form of water, but to introduce its own form, but by doing this it accidentally causes that [i.e., the privation of the form of water]. But if there is a defect in a proper effect, this is either on account of a defect of action, which goes back to the defect of some principle, as it has been said, or from an indisposition of the matter, But this itself that it is deficient is accidental to the good, to which it is essentially suitable to act. Wherefore it is true that evil in no way has a cause except accidentally.²⁵

However, just as negation presupposes affirmation, and the relative requires the absolute, so also that which is accidental is not sufficiently accounted for without reference to the *per se* reality

²⁵ *Sum. Theo.*, q. 49, a. 1. ". . . sciendum est quod aliter causatur malum in actione, et aliter in effectu. In actione quidem causatur malum propter defectum alicuius principiorum actionis, vel principalis agentis, vel instrumentalis: . . . —Malum autem in re aliqua, non tamen in proprio effectu agentis, causatur quandoque ex virtute agentis; quandoque autem ex defectu ipsius, vel materiae. Ex virtute quidem vel perfectione agentis, quando ad formam intentam ab agente sequitur privatio formae alterius formae privatio; sicut ad formam ignis sequitur privatio formae aeris vel aquae. . . . Sed hoc est per accidens: quia ignis non intendit privare formam aquae, sed inducere formam propriam; sed hoc faciendo, causat et propter defectum actionis, qui redundat in defectum alicuius principii, ut dictum est; vel ex indispositione materiae, Sed et hoc ipsum quod est esse deficientis, accidit bono, cui per se competit agere. Unde verum est quod malum secundum nullum modum habet causam nisi per accidens." Cf. *C. G.*, III, c. 10; *In II Sen.*, d. 34, q. 1, a. 3.

with which it is connected. It is necessary, then, to trace the accidental cause of evil to some direct cause. A direct or *per se* cause, as we have indicated, denotes a principle giving an influx of being to the thing caused. Therefore, only that which has being can be such a cause. But every being as such is good; consequently, the accidental causes of evil are reduced to forms of goodness as their primary causes. Thus, evil looks to the goodness of the thing or the operation which is its subject for its material support, so to speak. Its finality lies in its accidental connection to the first and primary intention of the agent, and this direct intention is always a good, either apparent or real. Lastly, the efficient cause of evil goes back to something which is acting according to the power of its being and goodness, but which accidentally yields an evil result because of some deficiency in either the agent, the instrument, or the thing affected. It is clear, therefore, that the good itself is the primary cause of evil, not directly, but indirectly and in an accidental manner. Much has already been said concerning the utter dependence of evil upon the good. We have seen that evil could neither exist, nor be known, nor be measured without the good. We add now that evil needs the good as its primary cause from which it (the evil) follows as an accidental effect.²⁶

4. MORAL EVIL—A SPECIAL PROBLEM

This general theory of the metaphysical connections involved in the occurrence of evil is, for the most part, easily verified in its application to the evils of nature and of punishment. For example, the form of a seed gives way to the form of a plant; the plant form is assimilated by that of an animal and so on. Again, a bird may be unable to fly swiftly and perfectly either because it is weak from sickness or age, or because its instrument, a wing, is damaged. Another illustration from nature is the indisposition of such materials as wood, glass, or rubber to receive and conduct the action of the natural agent, electricity, thereby hindering the natural action of this agent through no fault of the agent. These

²⁶ Cf. *De Malo*, q. 1, a. 3; *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 49, a. 1; *C. G.*, III, c. 10; *In II Sen.*, d. 34, q. 1, a. 3.

instances illustrate the general theory applied to the evil of nature. Similar examples could be drawn from the evil of punishment. It is evident in these instances that these evils have as their respective subjects some being or act which is good in its nature and that they are accidental and beside the intention of the particular agents concerned. There appears a possible difficulty in reconciling the accidentality of the final cause of *malum naturae* and *poena* with the action of a universal agent, but this question will be considered in the following section when we treat of God in relation to the efficient cause of evil. However, more urgent problems arise when this general theory concerning the cause of evil is applied to the evil of fault or to the moral order. In regard to the formal cause it seems that *culpa* must somehow have a form because sins are classified into different species and forms are the principles which give species. Furthermore, it appears that fault has a final cause inasmuch as it is the result of a free choice on the part of a voluntary agent. Finally, it seems difficult to reconcile the essential freedom and voluntariness of an evil human act with the deficiency in one of the principles of action which, according to the general theory, is always present in the case of and accounts for evil in an action.

These problems arise in connection with the evil of fault because, as St. Thomas says repeatedly in his treatise on vice and sin, sin is not a pure privation. An evil human act presents two aspects, one positive—the action itself which tends to some positive, but undue, good; the other privative—the inordinateness and lack of rectitude in the act. In consequence of this Cajetan warns:

Therefore, beware in the treatment of vices and sins, lest you err in the beginning, thinking vice and sin to have the nature of evil only by reason of a privation. For it is necessary to say that sin is an act evil in two ways, namely by contrariety, and privatively. Intemperance is an act evil by contrariety forasmuch as it is an act having an object contrary to the formal object of temperance; but it is an act privatively forasmuch as it is an act deprived of the rectitude which it ought to have.

However, there is between these two modes of evil so great a difference that the first, . . . , is a certain positive thing, . . . , the second is a privation, is nothing.²⁷

Consequently, in regard to the problem concerning *culpa* and a formal, specifying cause, we may say that it is from the positive aspect of fault that an evil human act receives its species. It is not the privation as such which has a positive formality, but the end or object of the act which in itself has reality and goodness. St. Thomas says:

Since there are two things in sin, namely, the act itself and its inordinateness, according as it is withdrawn from the order of reason and of the Divine law, the species of a sin is considered not on the part of the inordinateness, which is beside the intention of the one sinning, . . . , but rather on the part of the act itself according as it is determined to the object to which the intention of the one sinning is directed.²⁸

In another place he says more specifically, "It should be known that just as natural things obtain species from form, things of the moral order obtain it from the end, which is the object of the will upon which all morality depends."²⁹ It follows from this that the good and evil of the moral order can be considered as

²⁷ Cajetan, *Comm. in Summam Theologicam*, I-II, q. 71, a. 6. Cf. *Opera S. Thomae*, ed. Leonina, Vol. VII, p. 10. ". . . ideo cave, in tractatu de vitiis et peccatis, ne cres in principio, putans vitium et peccatum habere tantum rationem mali ratione privationis. Oportet namque dicere quod peccatum est actus malus dupliciter, scilicet contrarie, et privative: intemperantia enim est actus malus contrarie, pro quanto est actus habens contrarium obiectum formale obiecto temperantiae; est vero actus malus privative, pro quanto est actus privatus rectitudine quam deberet habere.

"Est autem inter has duas mali rationes tanta differentia, quod prima, . . . est res quaedam positiva, . . . ; secunda est privatio, est nihil. . . ."

²⁸ *Sum. Theo.*, I-II, q. 72, a. 8. ". . . cum in peccato sint duo, scilicet ipse actus, et inordinatio eius, prout receditur ab ordine rationis et legis divinae; species peccati attenditur non ex parte inordinationis, quae est divinae; species peccati attenditur non ex parte ipsius actus, secundum prae intentionem peccantis, . . . ; sed magis ex parte ipsius actus, secundum quod terminatur ad obiectum, in quod fertur intentio peccantis."

²⁹ *Comp. Theo.*, c. 116. "Sciendum est igitur, quod sicut naturalia consequuntur speciem a forma, ita moralia a fine, qui est voluntatis obiectum, a quo omnia moralia dependent."

contraries, properly speaking, for contraries are opposites which agree in genus and in the possession of being. Moral good and moral evil both have the being of a human act, the good essentially and the evil by virtue of its connection with the good of the undue end. Furthermore, they agree in the genus of quality. Thus, because they are contraries in the moral order and because of the aspect of being which moral evil has by virtue of the being of the end, good and evil are said to be specific differences in the moral order. St. Thomas explains this in the following words:

Good and evil are not constitutive differences except in moral matters, which receive species from the end, which is the object of the will upon which all morality depends. And because good has the nature of an end, therefore, good and evil are specific differences in morals—good absolutely, but evil inasmuch as it is the absence of a due end. The absence of a due end, however, does not constitute a species in the moral order except according as it is joined to the undue end; just as in natural things the privation of a substantial form is not found unless joined to another form. Therefore, the evil which is a constitutive difference in moral matters is a certain good joined to the privation of another good, as the end of the intemperate man is not to be deprived of the good of reason, but it is the pleasure of the senses without the order of reason. Wherefore evil as evil is not a constitutive difference but by virtue of the adjoined good.³⁰

Obviously, it is the twofold aspect of the evil of fault that makes possible the necessary distinction in this discussion.

³⁰ *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 48, a. 1, ad 2. “. . . bonum et malum non sunt differentiae constitutivae nisi in moralibus, quae recipiunt speciem ex fine, qui est obiectum voluntatis, a qua moralia dependent. Et quia bonum habet rationem finis, ideo bonum et malum sunt differentiae specificae in moralibus; bonum per se, sed malum in quantum est remotio debiti finis. Nec tamen remotio debiti finis constituit speciem in moralibus, nisi secundum quod adiungitur fini indebito: sicut neque in naturalibus invenitur privatio formae substantialis, nisi adiuncta alteri formae. Sic igitur malum quod est differentia constitutiva in moralibus, est quoddam bonum adiunctum privationi alterius boni: sicut finis intemperati est, non quidem carere bono rationis, sed delectabile sensus absque ordine rationis. Unde malum, in quantum malum, non est differentia constitutiva; sed ratione boni adiuncti.” Cf. *Comp. Theo.*, c. 116.

Similarly, in the problem concerning *culpa* and the final cause, we may again point to the positive aspect of the evil act, to the undue end which has its proper goodness. The direct choice of the agent falls upon this end, not upon the privation which is joined to it. The sinner intends a relative good which brings with it an absolute evil, i.e., the privation of the due end and the order to reason and the Divine law. The evil is not the object of his direct desire, but is an accidental concomitant which the sinner tolerates for the sake of the inordinate good which he seeks.

This, however, brings us to the third problem in regard to the evil of fault. The proper object of the will is the good as such. Now the absolute good for man is that which is in accordance with reason; therefore, the proper action of the will is to choose that which accords with reason, that which is good absolutely and not *secundum quid*. When, however, the will chooses an apparent or relative good at the expense of the order to reason, as is the case in evil of fault, this is a defective action on the part of the will. According to St. Thomas' general theory of the causes of evil, evil in an action is always the result of some deficiency either in the principal or in the instrumental agent. But the instruments of the will are the intellect which presents some object to the will as good and the powers of the body which execute the will's commands. A defect in the former instrument is weakness or ignorance and both of these excuse or diminish sin. On the other hand, a defect in one of the latter instruments does not influence the morality of an act, since its action presupposes the determination of the will to some object, good or bad. Consequently, it follows, as St. Thomas says, "that moral fault is found first and principally in the sole act of the will, and an act is properly called moral from this that it is voluntary. Therefore, the root and origin of moral sin must be sought in the act of the will."³¹

³¹ *C. G.*, III, c. 10. "Relinquitur igitur quod morale vitium in solo actu voluntatis primo et principaliter invenitur: et rationabiliter etiam ex hoc actus moralis dicatur, quia voluntarius est. In actu igitur voluntatis quaerenda est radix et origo peccati moralis."

With the deficiency located by elimination in the principal agent of moral actions, namely, the will, the core of the problem still remains. For, if the deficiency is natural to the will, then it is always present and the will must sin everytime it acts. According to this, acts of virtue, of which we have had experience, would be impossible. On the other hand, if the defect is occasional and fortuitous, then there will be no guilt, because sudden and unforeseen events are involuntary and beyond the control of reason. Finally, if the defect in the will be voluntary and a moral fault itself, then the root deficiency of this evil must be sought and so on indefinitely. Therefore, it is necessary to find a defect in the will which is voluntary and at the same time is not in itself blameworthy.³²

The Angelic Doctor solves the question by showing that the deficiency is the deliberate refusal of the will to consider its rule and measure which is the order of reason and the Divine law. This in itself is not a fault, for the will is free to attend or not to attend to the dictate of reason in the role of conscience, so long as it (the will) does not act. This neglect of reason is a mere negation. But if the will proceeds to act while entertaining this voluntary negation, then it becomes the fatal deficiency which results in an evil human act. Concerning this St. Thomas writes:

In all things which are such that one ought to be the rule and measure of the other, the good in that which is ruled and measured is from this that it be directed and conformed to the rule and measure; but its evil is from this that it is not directed nor measured. If, therefore, there should be some artisan who must cut some line rightly according to some rule, if he does not cut straight—which is to cut badly—this evil cutting will be caused from this defect, namely, that the artisan was without rule and measure. In like manner, delectation and every other thing in human affairs ought to be measured and ruled according to the rule of reason and the Divine law. Wherefore, that the rule of reason and of the Divine law is not used is presupposed in the will before the inordinate choice. However, in this matter, that the fore-said rule is not used, it is not necessary to seek some cause, since for this the very liberty of the will, by which it is able

³² Cf. *ibid.*

to act or not to act is sufficient. And this, that the will in act does not attend to such a rule, considered in itself, is not evil, nor fault, nor punishment, because the mind is not bound, nor is it able to attend always to a rule of this kind, in act. But from this it receives the first nature of fault, that without the actual consideration of the rule, the will proceeds to a choice of this kind; just as the artisan does not sin in this that he does not always hold the measure, but from this that not holding the measure he proceeds to the cutting. Similarly, the fault of the will is not in this that in act it does not attend to the rule of reason or of the Divine law, but from this that, not having this rule or measure, it proceeds to the choosing. Whence it is that Augustine says . . . that the will is the cause of sin inasmuch as it is deficient, but that defect is compared to silence and darkness, because that defect is solely a negation.³³

The following remark in which he contrasts the will of the Creator and the human will sheds further light upon the Angelic Doctor's meaning:

³³ *De Malo*, q. 1, a. 3. "In omnibus enim quorum unum debet esse regula et mensura alterius, bonum in regulato et mensurato est ex hoc quod regulatur et conformatur regule et mensurae; malum vero ex hoc quod est non regulari vel mensurari. Si ergo sit aliquis artifex qui debeat aliquid lignum recte incidere secundum aliquam regulam, si non directe incidat, quod est male incidere, haec mala incisio causabitur ex hoc defectu quod artifex erat sine regula et mensura. Similiter delectatio et quodlibet aliud in rebus humanis est mensurandum et regulandum secundum regulam rationis et legis divinae; unde non uti regula rationis et legis divinae praeratiōis et legis divinae; unde non uti regula electionem. Hujusmodi autem intelligitur in voluntate ante inordinatam electionem. Hujusmodi autem quod est non uti regula praedicta, non oportet aliquam causam quaerere; quod est non uti regula praedicta, non oportet aliquam causam quaerere; quia ad hoc sufficit ipsa libertas voluntatis, per quam potest agere vel non agere; et hoc ipsum quod est non attendere actu ad talem regulam in se consideratam, non est malum nec culpa nec poena; quia anima non tenetur consideratam, non est malum nec culpa nec poena; quia anima non tenetur attendere ad hujusmodi regulam semper in actu; sed ex hoc nec potest attendere ad hujusmodi regulam, quod sine actuali consideratione regulae accipit primo rationem culpa, quod sine actuali consideratione regulae procedit ad hujusmodi electionem; sicut artifex non peccat in eo quod non semper tenet mensuram; sed ex hoc quod non tenens mensuram procedit ad incidendum; et similiter culpa voluntatis non est in hoc quod actu non attendit ad regulam rationis vel legis divinae; sed ex hoc quod non habens regulam vel mensuram hujusmodi, procedit ad eligendum; et inde est quod Augustinus dicit, . . . quod voluntas est causa peccati inquantum est deficiens; sed illum defectum comparat silentio vel tenebris, quia scilicet defectus ille est negatio sola." Cf. *San. Theo.*, I, q. 49, a. 1, ad 3; I-II, q. 75, a. 1; C. G., III, c. 10.

The good of that which is created in some way is able to fail with that defect from which voluntary evil proceeds, since from this that it is created, it follows that it is subject to another, as to a rule and measure. If, however, someone should be his own rule and measure, he would not be able to proceed to the work without the rule. On account of this, God Who is his own rule is not able to sin, just as an artisan would not be able to sin in the cutting of a line if his own hand were the rule of the cutting.³⁴

It is for this penetrating metaphysical analysis of the difficulties concerning the efficient cause of moral evil and their solution that Maritain praised St. Thomas so enthusiastically, as we noted in the last chapter. In the same vein, Fr. Pégues writes, "There has been nothing more enlightening nor more profound written on the true origin and the initial cause of moral evil or of sin, in that which is of us."³⁵ With this metaphysical problem solved, the way is opened to certain questions involving the psychological, ethical, and theological aspects of moral evil. However, these problems, interesting and important as they are, are beyond the scope of this work. Some of these aspects of moral evil, moreover, are beyond the reach of metaphysics, and, thus, we are close to one of those points where philosophy must look to a higher science, namely, to theology.

5. OTHER EFFICIENT CAUSES OF EVIL

According to St. Thomas, the efficient cause of evil is some good which accidentally yields an evil result in virtue of a defect in

³⁴ *De Malo*, q. 1, a. 3, ad 9. "... bonum ex hoc quod est creatum, aliquo modo potest deficere illo defectu ex quo malum voluntarium procedit; quia ex hoc ipso quod est creatum, sequitur quod ipsum sit subiectum alteri, sicut regulae et mensurae. Si autem ipsum esset sua regula et mensura, non posset sine regula ad opus procedere. Propter hoc Deus, qui est sua regula, peccare non potest; sicut nec artifex peccare posset in incisione ligni si sua manus regula esset incisionis." Cf. *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 63, a. 1.

³⁵ Pégues, *op. cit.*, Vol. 3, p. 167. "Il n'a rien été écrit de plus lumineux ni de plus profond sur l'origine vraie et la cause initiale du mal moral ou du péché, en ce qui est de nous."

For an excellent exposition of this particular topic in St. Thomas' theory of evil, cf. Maritain, *Saint Thomas and the Problem of Evil*, pp. 20-37.

the agent, instrument, or the thing affected, or on account of the power of the agent. Thus, he says that evil has a "deficient cause." Falling far short of this profound insight are certain other doctrines which, because of their partial truth and popular appeal, demand that we examine them briefly in the light of Thomistic thought. First, there is the ever recurring notion of an evil principle or god which is the efficient cause of all evil. Just as good is caused by Good; so also evil is caused by Evil. Having already considered this doctrine at length in the second chapter, we need not repeat the discussion here. We have seen it to be a false theory and metaphysically impossible.

A second theory is that which attributes the source of evil to wretched social conditions and especially to poverty. Joad cites G. B. Shaw as a proponent of this view.³⁶ More interesting, however, is Denis de Rougemont's observation and criticism:

We have believed that *evil was relative to the social order*, that it proceeded from a bad distribution of wealth, from a faulty education, from inadequate laws or from repressions and injustices that could be eliminated by clever laws. All these beliefs, in large part superstitious, have had largely the effect of blinding us as to the essential reality of evil rooted in our freedom, in our primary data, in the nature and the very definition of man insofar as he is human.³⁷

In addition to agreeing with de Rougemont that this view is utterly destructive of human freedom and shows a lack of appreciation for man as a rational, self-determining being, we object that it is an entirely inadequate explanation. Environment is an important influence in the moral life of man, and a poor social situation may occasion tendencies toward evil; this is the partial truth of this view. Nevertheless, this theory completely overlooks the fact that suffering and crime are found also on the highest stratum of society and among the wealthy as well as with the poor. In fact, we have it on the highest authority that the rich have a difficult time saving their souls.

³⁶ Cf. C. E. M. Joad, *God and Evil*, (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1943), pp. 14 f.

³⁷ Denis de Rougemont, *The Devil's Share*, translated by Haakon Chevalier, (New York: Pantheon Books, Inc., 1944), p. 90.

A similar theory is one that blames all moral evil upon psychological or physiological maladjustments. The followers of Freudian psychology are the outstanding contemporary advocates of the psychic theory, while de Rougemont depicts the spirit of certain materialistic physiologists when he says:

Those of my contemporaries who look upon man as a complex of endocrine glands, enzymes, and vitamins find it more and more difficult to conceive that moral judgment still has a meaning, and that the person exists as a whole, at once autonomous and responsible. Evil or 'sin' in their view has ceased to be anything but the effects of a temporary or chronic disturbance in the flow of internal secretions.³⁸

More narrow than the preceding theory, since these doctrines are restricted primarily to the source of moral evil, these notions likewise involve a torturing of facts and a denial of the freedom and of the humanity of man. Far from solving the problem of the cause of evil, they actually explain moral evil away and give no account of the other types of evil. Furthermore, the psychological and physiological influences which, according to some, cause the disturbances called "sins," and the wretched social conditions which, in the view of others, are the sources of all evil must themselves be evil or defective, so their evil character remains to be explained and so on indefinitely. Much more logical is St. Thomas' remark that "in the causes of evil we do not proceed to infinity, but reduce all evils to some good cause, from which evil follows accidentally."³⁹

A third theory suggests chance as an efficient cause of evil. If this is accepted as the total answer to the problem of the cause of evil, and if chance is understood as some mysterious force operating in the universe, this solution is false and in reality offers no explanation of the cause of evil because it merely pushes the mystery back one step and lodges it in the nature of chance itself. However, if chance is correctly understood, then, in a

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 153-154.

³⁹ *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 49, a. 3, ad 6. "... in causis mali non est procedere in infinitum: sed est reducere omnia mala in aliquam causam bonam, ex qua sequitur malum per accidens."

sense, some evils can be attributed to it as their accidental cause. Obviously, this is in accordance with human experience, and the daily traffic casualties furnish abundant examples. St. Thomas recognizes this experiential fact when he writes, "Fortune and fate are reckoned among the causes, since many things are said to be done or even to exist on account of fortune and chance."⁴⁰ Chance is the accidental intersection of two or more independent causal series. In the case of an evil chance occurrence, this mutual interference has produced frustration in the causes and deviation from their respective ends. Thus, if a man driving to his office strikes a child walking to school, the mishap occurs by chance and is the result of both agents pursuing their respective courses until the moment of their encounter. From this unintentional clashing of independent causal series, it is evident that evil may accidentally result. Therefore, in such an instance, chance may be called an accidental cause of evil.

However, chance as such cannot be the only causal factor in the production of an evil result. The good which is the primary cause of evil, either by its power or by some deficiency, and from which evil follows accidentally must also be present and be considered. Nor is it inconceivable to take into account more than one accidental cause for the same evil effect, because "the cause *per accidens* is infinite and indetermined in this that an infinity of things is able to happen to one thing."⁴¹ A second qualification of chance as a cause of evil is that only from the viewpoint of particular causes can anything be said to happen by chance.

⁴⁰ *In II Phys.*, lec. 7. "Dicitur ergo primo, quod etiam fortuna et casus computantur inter causas, cum multa dicantur fieri vel esse etiam propter fortunam et casum."

St. Thomas, with Aristotle, distinguishes between fortune or luck (*fortuna*) and chance (*casus*), the latter being the fortuitous occurrences which befall natural things, while the former implies chance as found in intellectual beings. Cf. *In II Phys.*, lec. 7-loc. 10, inc. In our discussion we use the term chance for fortuitous events in both the natural and the human orders, "quia omne quod est a fortuna, est a casu, sed non convertitur." *In II Phys.*, lec. 10.

⁴¹ *In II Phys.*, lec. 8. "... causa autem per accidens est infinita et indeterminata, eo quod infinita uni possunt accidere."

Since chance effects are the result of several conflicting causes, these effects are not true beings, nor do they have unity of themselves and a proper cause. Maritain calls them contingent facts as distinguished from contingent beings.⁴² However, an intellect is able to see how the independent series of events led up to the fortuitous occurrence, therefore, a mind considering the operation of chance gives to chance results a certain unity. Now if there is a superior intellect which knows all things perfectly, as to their respective origins, beings, and ends, which foresees all that will befall each thing, and which gives existence and order to all things according to its own design, then for this intellect or being there can be no such thing as a chance occurrence, either in its operations or in its relations to other things. Such a being is God and, as far as He is concerned, nothing happens by chance. Thus, the Angelic Doctor writes:

Therefore it must be said that those things which happen here by accident, whether in natural things or in the affairs of men, are reduced to some pre-ordaining cause, which is Divine Providence; because nothing prevents that which is accidental being taken as one by some intellect; otherwise, the intellect would not be able to form this proposition, *The person digging a grave found a treasure*. And just as the intellect can apprehend this, so also it is able to effect it; . . . Therefore, nothing prevents those things which happen here by accident, as fortuitous or by chance, being reduced to some ordering cause which acts by the intellect, especially the Divine intellect.⁴³

⁴² Cf. Maritain, *A Preface to Metaphysics*, p. 144. An excellent, short exposition of St. Thomas' teaching concerning chance is given on pp. 141-151.

⁴³ *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 116, a. 1. "Et ideo dicendum est quod ea quae hic per accidens aguntur, sive in rebus naturalibus sive in rebus humanis, reducuntur in aliquam causam praedeterminantem, quae est providentia divina. Quia nihil prohibet id quod est per accidens, accipi ut unum ab aliquo intellectu: alioquin intellectus formare non posset hanc propositionem, *Fodiens sepulchrum invenit thesaurum*. Et sicut hoc potest intellectus apprehendere, ita potest efficere: . . . Et sic nihil prohibet ea quae hic per accidens aguntur, ut fortuita vel casualia, reduci in aliquam causam ordinantem, quae per intellectum agit; et praecipue intellectum divinum."

This does not, however, entirely exclude chance from the world.⁴⁴ There is chance in the order of particular causes and finite beings, because their knowledge and powers are limited and can be impeded. Thus, St. Thomas concludes:

Something is said to be fortuitous in things in the order of particular causes, outside the order of which they occur. But inasmuch as it pertains to Divine Providence, *nothing in the world occurs by chance*, as Augustine says. . . .⁴⁵

Does it follow from this, then, that God may be considered an efficient cause of evil? Such a conclusion has snared many people into blasphemy and atheism. This is the last theory concerning the efficient cause of evil which we shall examine. From the foregoing metaphysical treatment of the nature and causes of evil, certain conclusions should be evident. Everything which comes from God as its direct cause is positive and being and good. Evil as such, however, is negative and a kind of non-being. Therefore, it is meaningless to look to God as the cause of evil in the same way as He is the Creator of being and good. Again, evil in itself cannot be desired, consequently, God does not directly will evils. Furthermore, evil in an action is reducible to a defect in the agent. But there can be no defect in the infinitely perfect God, so there can be no imperfection in His own proper activity. St. Thomas writes:

According to Augustine, God is so good that He would never permit there to be any evil, unless He were so powerful that from every evil He is able to draw good. Wherefore it is neither on account of the impotency, nor on account of the ignorance of God that evils appear in the world. But it is from the order of His wisdom and the magnitude of His goodness. . . .⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Cf. *C. G.*, III, c. 74.

⁴⁵ *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 103, a. 7, ad 2. ". . . aliqua dicuntur esse casualia in rebus, per ordinem ad causas particulares, extra quarum ordinem fiunt. Sed quantum ad divinam providentiam pertinet, nihil fit casu in mundo, ut Augustinus dicit . . ."

Cf. I, q. 22, a. 2, ad 1; q. 116, a. 1, ad 2.

⁴⁶ *De Pot.*, q. 3, a. 6, ad 4. ". . . secundum Augustinum, Deus est adeo bonus quod nunquam aliquid malum esse permetteret, nisi esset adeo

Indirectly, however, and in a sense, God may be called the author of the evil of nature, since this evil is consequent upon His design of the universe whereby its order and continuance requires that some things be corrupted and other generated, and this is according to "the order of His wisdom." Similarly, on the moral level the Divine love of justice and the right order of things requires that the abuse of free will be punished, so that again, indirectly, God is the author of the evil of punishment. In the same restricted manner, God is said to will these two evils, inasmuch as He wills the goods to which they are connected, namely, the order of the universe and justice. However, it is the positive good of the order of the universe and of the order of justice which is His direct intention. Natural evil and punishment are accidental concomitants to the first and immediate object of His will.⁴⁷ Therefore, they are neither desired in themselves, nor do they have a finality of their own, properly speaking. If He so willed, God could eliminate these concomitant evils, but He need not do so, for He is powerful enough to bring good out of them. How these evils with His permission eventuate in God's universe is explained by the Angelic Doctor in these words:

It can be observed that, Divine Providence remaining, evils can happen in the world on account of the defect of secondary causes. For we see in ordered causes that evil happens in an effect from a defect in the secondary cause, which defect, nevertheless, in no way is caused by the first cause; just as the evil of limping is caused by the crookedness of the leg, but not by the motive power of the soul. Wherefore, whatever is of motion in the limp is referred to the motive power as its cause; but what is there from crookedness is not caused by the motive power, but by the crookedness of the leg. And, therefore, whatever evil happens in things, in regard to this that it has either species or some nature it is reduced to God as its cause, for evil is not

potens, quod de quolibet malo posset elicere bonum. Unde nec propter impotentiam nec propter ignorantiam Dei est quod mala in mundo proveniunt; sed est ex ordine sapientiae suae et magnitudine bonitatis. . . ."

⁴⁷ *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 19, a. 9.

able to exist except in the good. . . . But in regard to that which it has of defect, it is reduced to the defectible inferior cause. Thus, although God is the universal cause of all things, nevertheless, He is not the cause of evils inasmuch as they are evils; but whatever of good is joined to them is caused by God.⁴⁸

In regard to fault, however, God in no way can be called a cause of this evil, nor can He be said to will it, since the evil of fault is contrary to the Divine goodness. The being of the evil human act is from the Source of All Being, it is true, but the mortal deficiency which makes the act vicious is due to the free will of man. It should be noted, however, that the opposition of the sinner to the Divine will does not defeat nor impede Its purpose for, as St. Thomas says, "The Divine intention is not frustrated, neither in those who sin, nor in those who are saved; for God foresees the end of both, and from both He procures glory, saving these on account of His goodness, and punishing those because of His justice."⁴⁹

It follows from this discussion, therefore, that indirectly God may be said to be the cause of the evil of nature and of the evil of punishment because He wills and sustains the goods to which

⁴⁸ *Comp. Theo.*, c. 142. ". . . perspicui potest quod divina providentia manente, mala in mundo accidere possunt propter defectum causarum secundarum. Videmus enim in causis ordinatis accidere malum in effectu ex defectu causae secundae, qui tamen defectus a causa prima nullo modo causatur; sicut malum claudicationis causatur a curvitate cruris, non autem a virtute animae motiva; unde quidquid est in claudicatione de motu refertur in virtutem motivam sicut in causam; quod autem est ibi de obliquitate, non causatur a virtute motiva, sed a curvitate. Et ideo quidquid malum in rebus accidit, quantum ad hoc quod esse vel speciem vel naturam aliquam habet, reducitur in Deum sicut in causam; non enim potest esse malum nisi in bono. . . . Quantum vero ad id quod habet de defectu, reducitur in causam inferiorem defectibilem. Et sic licet Deus sit universalis omnium causa, non tamen est causa malorum in quantum sunt mala; sed quidquid boni eis adjungitur, causatur a Deo."

⁴⁹ *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 63, a. 7, ad 2. ". . . divina intentio non frustratur nec in his qui peccant, nec in his qui salvantur: utroque enim eventum Deus praecognoscit, et ex utroque habet gloriam, dum hos ex sua bonitate salvat, illos ex sua iustitia punit."

they are joined. But God cannot, in any manner, be called the cause of sin as to its evil.⁵⁰

6. EVIL AS A CAUSE

Our final consideration in this chapter is in regard to evil itself as a cause. It is a familiar Thomistic principle that each thing acts inasmuch as it has being and its mode of operation is conformed to its mode of being. Evil in itself, as we have said repeatedly, is a kind of non-being and has a negative mode of existence. Therefore, it is not to be expected that evil as such should have a causality of its own. Thus, the Angelic Doctor writes:

Every cause is either matter, or form, or agent, or end. Evil, however, can be neither matter, nor form, . . . for . . . being in act as well as being in potency is good. Likewise, it cannot be an agent, since each thing acts according as it is in act and has a form. Nor also can evil be an end, since it is beside the intention . . . Therefore, evil is not able to be a cause of anything.⁵¹

However, "each thing which is joined to a cause *per se*, that is not of its nature, is called a cause *per accidens*."⁵² Now evil is never experienced except as joined to some good and good is always a cause *per se*. Therefore, evil can be an accidental cause effective in virtue of the power of the good which is its subject. In this manner a defect in an agent is said to *cause* an imperfect action. In this way, by virtue of its conjoined good, evil can be an accidental cause in each of the four kinds of causes. St. Thomas writes:

⁵⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, I, q. 49, a. 2.

⁵¹ *C. G.*, III, c. 10. "Omnis causa vel est materia, vel forma, vel agens, vel finis. Malum autem non potest esse neque materia neque forma: . . . enim . . . tam ens actu, quam ens in potentia, est bonum. Similiter non potest esse agens: cum unumquodque agat secundum quod est actu et formam habet. Neque etiam potest esse finis: cum sit praeter intentionem. . . . Malum igitur non potest esse alicuius causa."

⁵² *In II Phys.*, lec. 6. "Nam causa per accidens dicitur omne illud, quod coniungitur causae per se, quod non est de ratione ejus: . . ."

By running through all the species of causes, we find that evil is an accidental cause: in the species of efficient cause, because a defect in an effect and in an action results from the deficient power of the agent cause; in the species of material cause, because from the indisposition of the matter is caused a defect in the effect; in the species of formal cause, because to one form is always joined the privation of another form; in the species of final cause, because evil is joined to an undue end, inasmuch as the due end is impeded by it.⁵³

In addition, however, there are two common modes of speaking in which it seems that evil of itself effects something. The first is found with the metaphysician when he says that evil *corrupts* good. The Angelic Doctor explains:

Something is said to act in three ways; in one way, formally, and in this mode of speaking whiteness is said to make white. In this manner evil, even with the nature of a privation, is said to corrupt the good, because it is itself the corruption or privation of the good. In another way something is said to act effectively, as a painter is said to make a wall white. In the third way, a thing acts in the manner of a final cause, as the end is said to effect by moving the agent. In these two ways, however, evil does not effect anything of itself, that is, according as it is a certain privation, but according to the good which is joined to it; . . .⁵⁴

⁵³ *C. G.*, III, c. 14. "Secundum omnes species causarum discurrendo, invenitur malum esse per accidens causa. In specie quidem causae efficientis, quia propter causae agentis deficientem virtutem sequitur defectus in effectu et actione. In specie vero causae materialis, quia ex materiae indispositione causatur in effectu defectus. In specie vero causae formalis, quia uni formae semper adiungitur alterius formae privatio. In specie vero causae finalis, quia indebito fini adiungitur malum, in quantum per ipsum finis debitus impeditur."

⁵⁴ *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 48, a. 1, ad 4. ". . . aliquid agere dicitur tripliciter. Uno modo, formaliter, eo modo loquendi quo dicitur albedo facere album. Et sic malum, etiam ratione ipsius privationis, dicitur corrumpere bonum: quia est ipsa corruptio vel privatio boni. Alio modo dicitur aliquid agere effective: sicut pictor dicitur facere album parietem. Tertio modo, per modum causae finalis: sicut finis dicitur efficere, movendo efficientem. His autem duobus modis malum non agit aliquid per se, id est secundum quod est privatio quaedam, sed secundum quod ei bonum adiungitur: . . ."

The second way in which evil is spoken of as acting is in the common parlance which considers that which causes evil to be itself wholly evil. Thus, a disease germ is called evil because it causes sickness. Here we have the problem of relative good and evil. Concerning this, St. Thomas remarks:

Certain persons, however, who estimate things not from the nature of these things, but from their own proper advantage, think that everything harmful to themselves is simply evil, not considering that that which is harmful to one, is helpful to another, and that even to themselves the same thing may be evil in some respects, but good in others.⁵⁵

Therefore, these things which effect evil are not evil in their nature, for if they were they would be non-beings without the power to effect anything. In their nature, since they are beings, they are good, absolutely speaking. Relatively they are evil because they are harmful to some other thing.

From this discussion we see that evil of itself cannot be a cause *per se*, either efficient, or final, or formal, or material. Accidentally, however, it may enter any one of these species of causes and, by virtue of the good to which it is joined, be indirectly effective. Here, again, St. Thomas refutes those who maintain that evil is a positive part of reality, an active cause in its own right, attacking the good and threatening its very existence. These erring thinkers were represented by the historian and literary critic, Bernard De Voto, when he wrote:

For a long time to believe that evil is an active principle in the world and the affairs of men has been a heresy; I think the twentieth century has by now made us see that it is not. . . .

Forty-seven years of the twentieth century have, I believe, cracked the illusion of which we are likely to die. My faith is that we now understand evil as implicit in the world—and so we will bring courage and fortitude and strength, not

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, I, q. 65, a. 1, ad 2. "Quidam autem, aestimantes res non ex earum natura, sed ex suo proprio commodo, quaecumque sibi nociva sunt, simpliciter mala arbitrantur; non considerantes quod id quod est uni nocivum quantum ad aliquid, vel alteri vel eidem quantum ad aliquid est profectum."

panic to the struggle against it. That we will see the struggle as one not to eradicate evil but to subdue and contain it. I think we will do better. Courage and reality seem to me better weapons against evil than illusion and despair.⁵⁶

This question, as we have said, has been treated at length in the second chapter. There, in the consideration of the nature of evil it was necessary to advance St. Thomas' arguments against the reality of evil as a positive being.⁵⁷ In this present section we have approached the question from the aspect of causality and a similar conclusion has been reached, namely, that just as evil as such is not a positive being, but exists in virtue of the good, so also evil in itself is not a direct, active cause, and, if it does affect something indirectly, it is only by virtue of the good to which it is joined.

SUMMARY

With the material in this chapter metaphysics has reached the limit of its penetration into the problem of evil. Further knowledge of the mystery lies beyond in the domain of theology. We have seen that evil must in some manner have a cause, for evil is unnatural and alien to its particular subject. However, the non-entity of evil as such casts no reflection of a being in act which could be its cause. Therefore, evil must not have a direct cause, since direct effects bear some similitude to their agents.

It was shown that evil has an indirect or accidental cause in each species of cause except the formal cause, for evil as such is the absence of form. The indirect material cause of evil is the good which is the subject of the privation. This Thomistic position was seen to be in contrast to certain historical and contemporary errors concerning matter as a cause of evil. The indirect final cause of evil is the good of the end to which the evil choice is joined, for evil in itself cannot be directly the object of desire. In regard to the efficient cause of evil, we saw evil in an action traced to a defect in either the instrumental or the principal

⁵⁶ Bernard De Voto, "The Easy Chair," *Harper's Magazine*, Vol. CXCIV (December, 1947), p. 518.

⁵⁷ Cf. Chapter II, pp. 37 ff.

agent, while evil in a thing is due either to the power of the agent to introduce a substantial change in the object, or to the indisposition of the matter of the thing to receive the action of the agent. Both evil in an action and evil in a thing involve a vitiating deficiency, therefore, the indirect efficient cause of evil is often called, and evil is said to have a "deficient cause." A further examination of these indirect causes of evil made it clear that they are reducible to some forms of goodness, so that evil is said to be caused by the good, but in an indirect manner.

Moral evil presented special problems in connection with the formal, final, and efficient causes. Apparent inconsistencies regarding the formality and finality of evil human acts were resolved by distinguishing between the positive action toward the good of a specific end and the privation of due order which makes a moral act evil. A third problem involving the efficient cause and the freedom of morally evil acts was answered by St. Thomas' explanation that the deficiency in the will which precedes the evil act is voluntary, but not in itself culpable.

Next other theories in regard to the efficient cause of evil were examined. Some of these were social and psychological factors considered as real, direct causes of evil, chance, and the relation of the presence of evil in the world to the Creator. The first factors were rejected as causes of evil, since this position is not true to experience, short-sighted, and destructive of human freedom. Chance was rejected as an ultimate explanation for the cause of evil, since it is merely the collision of two or more causal series, and it does not operate outside the order of contingent beings. There are no chance occurrences for God and His Providence. In considering the relation between the presence of evil and the existence of a Supreme and Omnipotent Being, we saw that indirectly God may be said to cause the evil of nature and of punishment, the former for the sake of the natural order in the universe, and the latter for the restoration and preservation of justice. These two types of evils come about through the failures of secondary causes which are permitted by God. However, God in no way is the cause of the evil of fault. Finally, in regard to all evils, God would never permit them

unless He were powerful enough to make them eventuate in good.

The last section in this chapter contained a discussion of the causality of evil as such. Since it is a kind of non-being, evil in itself cannot be a cause *per se*. But accidentally, in virtue of the good to which it is joined, evil can be a cause, and this in every species of cause. Thus, nothing which directly brings about a harmful condition is evil in itself. Absolutely such a thing, e.g., a disease germ, is good but it is evil relatively in regard to the object to which it brings harm. This distinction is important for the preservation of clarity in certain issues involved in the problem of evil.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, HISTORICAL INFLUENCES, AND CONCLUSIONS

I. THE THEORY OF EVIL IN THOMISTIC
PHILOSOPHY—SUMMARIZED

At the risk of engendering in the minds of the readers, such weariness as St. Thomas remarked upon in his Prologue to the *Summa Theologica*, we present here a brief résumé of the foregoing chapters in order that the Thomistic theory of evil may be seen at a glance, wholly and in all its realism and logical consistency. Since this is a metaphysical study, we began with an exposition of fundamental metaphysical principles. From this we learned that being is that which exists or can exist, that a being can be a cause only to the extent that it is itself in act, and that the good is characterized by the absoluteness of perfection and the relation of desirability, and is convertible with being. Since evil is that which is opposed to goodness, it would seem that evil is also opposed to being and, is, therefore, some kind of non-being. This was developed in the second chapter and the essence of evil was found to be a privation, i.e., the absence of a naturally due good. The fact that every particular evil connotes a definite absence which indicates and specifies its proper subject makes of evil more than a mere nothing. Evil is a non-being in the sense that in itself it is an absence. But evil is real and really experienced in the sense that it is present formally in beings which are imperfect and has determined relations to these beings. It follows that evil as such is never found apart from its subject. It could never be a positive thing, an active principle existing in its own right. The subject of evil is always something good, therefore, evil is said to exist in good as its subject and it can exist in no other way. Thus, evil is absolutely and utterly dependent upon the good.

In the third chapter we considered the kinds of evil according to St. Thomas. After taking note of a detailed classification

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which he borrows from Avicenna, we found that the Angelic Doctor also has what we call a "working classification." In this he divides evil according to the perfection to which it is opposed. Accordingly, since perfection is twofold, namely, of being and of operation, St. Thomas speaks in general of evil of being and evil of action. The occurrence of these two types of evil in irrational creation is called simply evil of nature (*malum naturae*). In voluntary beings, however, evil of being and evil of action are distinguished into evil of punishment (*malum poenae*) and evil of fault (*malum culpa*) respectively, on account of the relations they have to the intellect and will. Each of these three important classes of evil was examined in detail, before we continued to the fourth chapter which took up the problem of the cause of evil.

The cause of evil is the most mysterious of all the questions that arise concerning this subject. Metaphysics by itself cannot give the complete answer, but it does tell us that evil is caused not directly, but indirectly by some good. This occurs in every species of cause except the formal cause, for evil is the absence of form. Furthermore, as a kind of non-being, evil itself cannot be a direct cause. But indirectly in every species of cause evil may have some effect in virtue of the good to which it is joined and the more powerful is this good, the more devastating will be the indirect effect of its inherent evil.

Included in St. Thomas' theory of evil are these consequences. Evil cannot be considered as something as real as good, Schiller, Royce, Alexander and others notwithstanding.¹ Evil of nature, by contributing to the order of the universe, serves a good purpose. But it is not for this reason an essential part of reality. As a kind of non-being it follows that its contribution is accidental, and if God had so willed, He could have arranged things differently. A further consequence of the nature of evil is that there is no question of God directly creating or making or doing evil, because only being and reality come from Him. The evils

¹ Cf. Chesley T. Howell, *A Critique of Good and Evil in Contemporary Thought*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, The School of Divinity, University of Chicago, 1937, pp. 16, 57, 66.

He permits are from the failure of secondary causes. They are foreseen and known by Him and they do not frustrate His Divine Plan. On the contrary, by His infinite power and goodness, these evils are made subject to His Divine Providence and are eventually turned to the good. Finally, the elaboration of these developments and of the words of St. Thomas on this subject provided frequent opportunities for indicating the position of the Angelic Doctor in relation to certain historical and contemporary errors concerning the problem of evil and for showing the contemporaneity of the Thomistic doctrine by contrasting its sound propositions with the less satisfactory and erroneous opinions of some modern philosophers.

2. HISTORICAL INFLUENCES UPON THIS THEORY

Although we have shown St. Thomas' theory of evil as a development of his fundamental metaphysical position, historically this theory is not a purely *a priori* product. St. Thomas was not the proverbial "philosopher in an ivory tower." He was too keen a student of reality and too ardent a lover of truth for such an existence. Consequently, his theory of evil shows certain religious, intellectual, and social influences.

One of these, we may conclude from the internal evidence of his writings, is the Albigensian heresy. It is true that the Angelic Doctor does not mention Albi, nor the Albigenses, nor the Albigensian heresy by this name. However, we have already noted the special interest he seems to have in the Manichaeans.² Undoubtedly St. Thomas shared the common belief of medieval thinkers who considered the Albigenses to be direct descendants of the early Manichaeans and, for the most part, called them by the latter name. Concerning this belief, an authority on the subject of Manichaeism writes:

Manichaeism was not so much a 'heresy' as a rival faith opposing Christianity, often under the guise of the doctrine of Jesus. . . . Whether the heretics in Gaul were actually members of the sect has been maintained and denied, the

² Cf. Chapter II, p. 54.

only thing certain being that the churchmen who opposed them believed that they were Manichaeans and called them by this name.³

Similarly Schmidt speaks of "the authors of the Middle Ages who give to the Cathari the name of Manichaeans." He goes on to say, "The orthodox Church of that period confused them [the Albigenses] with that sect, only because they believed in two gods; it had the habit of tracing all dualist heresies back to the most famous of them all, to that of Mani."⁴ We know for certain that St. Thomas was of this opinion. Not only is there the legend about the Angelic Doctor's preoccupation with the problem of the "Manichaeans," while he was dining with King Louis IX,⁵ but also his own words give us his view of the matter. In the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, II, c. 83, when he is discussing the false belief that souls were created with or before the visible world and later were joined to bodies, St. Thomas adds, "Indeed, this opinion remains *even to this day* among heretics, of whom *the Manichaeans* agree with Plato in asserting them [human souls] to be eternal and to pass from body to body."⁶ (Italics

³ A. W. Williams Jackson, "Source of the Albigensian Heresy," *An Outline of Christianity*, (New York: Bethlehem Publishers, Inc.; Dodd Mead and Company, Distributors, 1926), Vol. II, p. 271.

⁴ C. Schmidt, *Histoire et doctrine de la secte des Cathares ou Albigeois*, (Paris: J. Cherbuliez, 1849), Vol. II, p. 256. ". . . auteurs du moyen âge qui donnent aux Cathares le nom de Manichéens. L'Eglise orthodoxe de cette période ne les a confondus avec cette secte, que parce qu'ils ont cru à deux dieux; on avait l'habitude de ramener toutes les hérésies dualistes à la plus célèbre de toutes, à celle de Manès; . . ."

⁵ Guilielmo de Thoco, *Vita S. Thomae Aquinatis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*; edited by J. Bollandus, G. Henschenius, and D. Papebrochius. Martii Tomus Primus, p. 671, C and D. ". . . Obtinente autem mandato Regis et Prioris Parisiensis, ut Magistrum humilem inclinaret, sublimem contemplatione, ad expressum mandatum Regis et Prioris, dimisso suo studio eum illa imaginatione, quam manens in cella conceperat, accessit ad Regem: juxta quem existens in mensa, subito veritate fidei inspirata, mensam percussit et dixit: Modo conclusum est contra haeresim Manichaei. . . ."

⁶ *Loc. cit.* "Quae quidem opinio usque hodie apud haereticos manet: quorum Manichaei eas etiam aeternas asserunt, cum Platone, et de corpore ad corpus transire."

ours). Consequently in his writings St. Thomas does not distinguish between the early Manichaeans and the Albigenses of his own time. In his terminology both groups are "Manichaeans." Sometimes one can be certain he has in mind particularly the early heretics as, for instance, when he writes, "As Augustine says, if anyone subscribe to this opinion, he does not agree with those Manichaean heretics who say that the devil's nature is evil in itself."⁷ Obviously, St. Augustine is speaking of the followers of Mani and not of the thirteenth century Albigenses. Again, St. Thomas discusses certain beliefs which we know were peculiar to the Manichaeans and not to the medieval heretics, e.g., abstinence from wine, the concept of the good god as a body of infinite light, and of the human soul as made from the same light substance of which the good principle was composed. However, in many other instances, the Angelic Doctor is concerned with theological, moral, and cosmological errors which were chief tenets of the Albigenses.

Of all the religious aberrations of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the Albigenses, or Cathari, or Manichaeans, as they were variously known, were outstanding.⁸ Strictly speaking Albigensianism was more than a heresy; it was "an extra-Christian religion."⁹ Schmidt says:

Although having preserved one or another of the fundamental marks of the revelation of Jesus Christ, Catharism cannot be called a *Christian* heresy. It is a philosophical and religious doctrine outside of Christianity, but which, having had its origin in the milieu of the Church, had sought

⁷ *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 63, a. 5.

⁸ Cf. Hoffman Nickerson, *The Inquisition*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1923), p. 269. It should be noted that according to Weber's article, "Albigenses," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* the Albigenses should not be identified with the Cathari. He says the former group is only a branch of the latter. Schmidt, however, in his authoritative work, uses the two names interchangeably to refer to the heretical theological dualists of southern France, more definitely known as "Albigenses."

⁹ Cf. N. A. Weber, "Albigenses," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. I, p. 269; also A. V. Williams Jackson, *Researches in Manichaeism*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932), p. 19.

to take for itself the sacred code of the Christians, appropriating those things which suited it, interpreting and arranging them to its own use.¹⁰

The exact origin of the Albigensian religion is one of the debated and unsettled questions of history. Schmidt points out that the sworn secrecy of the sect and the fervor of the Inquisition in destroying the writings of heretics makes it necessary for scholars to glean their knowledge of the Albigenses, for the most part, from the works of their opponents. This Protestant historian and theologian acknowledges that these sources are reliable, but by way of a complete account they leave much to be desired.¹¹ Historical evidence in regard to the early times of the Albigensian heresy is particularly vague. Among modern historians there is much conjecture as to whether these medieval theological dualists were direct descendants of the third century Manichaeans, or were an independent sect, having some resemblances to the earlier heretics, but with more divergences.¹² Numerous authorities could be cited in support of either view. At present the safest statement seems to be an inconclusive one such as the following:

Persian dualism is joined to Albigensianism through the following sects: Gnosticism, Manichaeism, Priscillianism, Paulicianism (in Armenia, around 668), Bogomilism (with the Bulgars, at the beginning of the tenth century). But one cannot decide with certitude if between these heresies there exists a connection properly speaking, or only a logical bond.¹³

¹⁰ Schmidt, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 5. "Le catharisme ne peut pas être appelé une hérésie chrétienne, ayant conservé encore l'un ou l'autre des caractères fondamentaux de la révélation de Jésus-Christ; il est une doctrine philosophique et religieuse en dehors du christianisme, mais qui, ayant eu son origine au milieu de l'Église, a cherché à s'appliquer le code sacré des chrétiens, à en prendre ce qui lui convenait, à l'interpréter et à l'arranger à son service."

¹¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 1.

¹² Cf. *ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 256-261, for an excellent account of the similarities and dissimilarities in the respective doctrines of the Manichaeans and the Albigenses.

¹³ F. Vernet, "Albigéois," *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, Edited by A. Vacant, E. Mangenot, and E. Amann, (Paris: Letouzey et Ané,

This much, however, is certain. The Albigensian heresy first appeared in France around Toulouse at the beginning of the eleventh century. There is evidence for the presence of its adherents at Orleans in 1022, at Cambrai and Liege in 1025, and at Châlons in 1045. By 1050, the heresy had advanced north into the Germanies as far as the city of Goslar. The sect took root especially in southern France and, in 1163, was given its name, after the city of Albi, by the Council of Tours.¹⁴ It continued to flourish, at first unmolested, and then in spite of the peaceful, but vigorous efforts of the Church to reclaim the heretics from their erring ways. Finally, in 1208, Pope Innocent III mustered a Crusade against the Albigenses. This war, which continued intermittently until the final campaign by Louis VIII, in 1226, and the organization of the Inquisition in 1233 eventually succeeded in eradicating most of the sect except small branches and remnants which survived in isolated parts of eastern Europe.

That such a heresy, with its many repulsive features, should rise and flourish in what was considered the most civilized and cultured part of France is rather extraordinary. Weber explains this occurrence when he says:

The rise and spread of the new doctrine in southern France was favoured by various circumstances, among which may be mentioned: the fascination exercised by the readily grasped dualistic principle; the remnant of Jewish and Mohammedan doctrinal elements; the wealth, leisure, and imaginative minds of the inhabitants of Languedoc; their contempt for the Catholic clergy caused by the ignorance and the worldly, too frequently scandalous, lives of the latter; the protection of the overwhelming majority of the

1927), Vol. I, col. 677. "Du dualisme persan on aboutit à l'albigéisme à travers les sectes suivantes: gnosticisme, manichéisme, priscillianisme, paulicianisme (en Arménie, vers 668), bogomilisme (chez les Bulgares, au commencement du X^e siècle). Mais on ne saurait décider avec certitude si entre ces hérésies il existe une filiation proprement dite ou seulement un lien logique."

¹⁴ Cf. Nickerson, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

nobility, and the intimate local blending of national aspirations and religious sentiments.¹⁵

As we have noted, the Albigensian heresy was a false religion. Among its adherents there was a definite organization into hierarchy, laity, and catechumens, diocesan divisions and sub-divisions, and it had specific rites and ceremonies.¹⁶ Its fundamental tenet, an answer to the problem of evil, was an extreme dualism which asserted the existence of two supreme beings, one the lord and creator of all good things including an invisible world and the New Testament; the other, the author of all evil things, especially visible creation and the Old Testament, except the prophetic books. The good principle was identified with the God of the orthodox Christians, while in opposition to Him, according to these heretics, is the evil principle, or the Devil. In some instances, as in Thrace and in Italy, this dualism took a mitigated form in which the evil principle was said to have been created by God and then to have turned from Him by an act of free will. However, the most widespread form of theological dualism was like that of southern France in which the dualism was absolute and there were posited two equal, eternal, and independent first causes of all things. From this there followed the Albigensian repudiation of all things material and terrestrial, even life itself, since all material things were believed to be under the dominion of the demon. This led these heretics to deny also the real body of Christ and the reality of His Passion, and to consider marriage and procreation as the greatest sin, because it perpetuated earthly existences. Schmidt summarizes the Albigensian attitude when he says:

The tendency of all the practical and moral part of the Cathari system naturally ought to have been to detach man by all possible means from the material world and to break all ties which bound him to the earth, all the chains which kept him captive under the empire of the demon. Matter being the work of the evil principle, all contact with it ought to be avoided as impure; such is the supreme law of the

¹⁵ Weber, *op. cit.*, p. 267.

¹⁶ Cf. Schmidt, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 142 ff.

Cathari ethics, such is the source from whence sprang all its defences and its precepts of conduct for life;¹⁷

From their fundamental position the Albigenses evolved a doctrine replete with gross theological errors and fanatical moral practices. On different occasions and in different writings St. Thomas mentions and refutes various Albigensian beliefs and practices, thus giving proof of his familiarity with the teachings of these heretics. However, in connection with his theory of evil, the influence of the heresy is detected chiefly in the seeming urgency with which the Angelic Doctor argues for the impossibility of the existence of a being evil in itself and the source of all evil. We have previously noted the many times he considers this question.¹⁸ Furthermore, in several of the discussions concerning it he multiplies argument after argument to disprove the existence of such an evil being, or of two contrary first principles, one good, the other evil.¹⁹ It is not surprising that St. Thomas should show this particular interest since his position with the Albigenses bears some analogy to that of St. Augustine, whose works he studied, with the Manichaeans. In addition, the Angelic Doctor belonged to a religious order which had for one of its primary objectives the combatting of heresy, particularly the Albigensian variety.

A second influence which should be taken into account in the consideration of St. Thomas' theory of evil is the religious and intellectual atmosphere of his age with its particular emphasis upon theology. It is an historical fact that in the thirteenth century "sacred science," as St. Thomas called theology, was

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 79. "La tendance de toute la partie pratique et morale du système cathare a dû être naturellement de détacher l'homme par tous les moyens possibles du monde matériel et de rompre tous les liens qui l'attachent à la terre, toutes les chaînes qui le retiennent captif sous l'empire du démon. La matière étant l'oeuvre du mauvais principe, tout contact volontaire avec elle doit être évité comme impur; telle est la loi suprême de la morale cathare, telle est la source d'où elle fait découler toutes ses défenses et tous ses préceptes de conduite pour la vie;"

¹⁸ Cf. p. 37, n. 20.

¹⁹ Cf. *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 49, a. 3; *De Malo*, q. 1, a. 1; *C. G.*, III, c. 7 & c. 15; *Comp. Theo.*, c. 115 & c. 117.

the acknowledged "queen of the sciences." In that period the study of theology was the supreme culmination of the university program and the integrating factor in the medieval curriculum. The thirteenth century thinkers, such as St. Albert the Great, Alexander of Hales, St. Thomas, St. Bonaventure, Duns Scotus, etc., were primarily theologians. However, because they were interested in a rational foundation, insofar as it is possible, for the truths of faith, they were also philosophers in the true sense of the word.

Among contemporary philosophers there are many misconceptions of the relationship between theology and philosophy and, therefore, they condemn philosophy formulated in the Middle Ages as being unduly influenced by theology. A digression into the complete history of this question would be inconvenient for our purpose. We should only like to point out that St. Thomas is generally credited with the definitive clarification of the issues between philosophy and theology and for this reason he is recognized as the first modern philosopher. As Father Zybura says:

St. Thomas achieved this eminence as the first modern philosopher primarily by being the first to trace the exact line of demarcation between the domains of faith and reason: by drawing a clear-cut distinction between theology and philosophy he gave a philosophically grounded and definitive solution of the knotty problem with which Patristic and Scholastic thought had wrestled for centuries.²⁰

As the Angelic Doctor so clearly taught, theology and philosophy have their own proper fields and methods and there is no possibility of conflict between the true deliverances of these two sciences because the ultimate source of their truth is the same, namely God. Not only are these two sciences not antagonistic, they even hold in mutual agreement some principles which can be attained by natural reason and have been revealed by God. Theology and philosophy work to a mutual advantage. Theology makes use of philosophy "to prepare the way for faith by a rational demonstration of the so-called preambles of faith; to

²⁰ J. S. Zybura, in the Introduction to *Contemporary Philosophy and Thomistic Principles* by Rudolph G. Bandas, p. 9.

serve as a means for the systematization of theology; to give a reasonable explanation, as far as may be, of the doctrines of faith, and to defend them against unreasonable attacks."²¹ Philosophy, on the other hand, is provided by theology with a *scientia rectoris*, "for whatever is found in other sciences contrary to the truth of this science is wholly condemned as false."²² Furthermore, theology lays bare for rational investigation wider and deeper views of reality. Gilson illustrates this when he writes:

Philosophers have not inferred the supreme existentiality of God from any previous knowledge of the existential nature of things; on the contrary, the self-revelation of the existentiality of God has helped philosophers toward the realization of the existential nature of things. In other words, philosophers were not able to reach, beyond essences, the existential energies which are their very causes, until the Jewish-Christian Revelation had taught them that "to be" was the proper name of the Supreme Being.²³

The teachings of theology are particularly needful for the problem of evil because they provide the crux of the problem and make possible a satisfactory solution. Hence, the presence of evil in the world would not be so perplexing and fearsome, if it were not known with certainty that the universe is the creation of an Infinitely Good, Infinitely Powerful Being. On the other hand, just because theology assures us that the good God is omnipotent and that His creation is *valde bonum*, we are confident that evil ultimately can be managed and explained. Furthermore, between the inception and the resolution of this problem theology provides the doctrines of original sin, the Redemption of man, grace, and the Mystical Body of Christ which are necessary for a successful treatment of the matter. These services of theology to the solution of the problem of evil, the need for them, and the limitations of philosophy in this discussion

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

²² *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 1, a. 6, ad 2.

²³ E. Gilson, *God and Philosophy*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941), p. 65.

have already been referred to at the beginning of the preceding chapter.

The influence of theology upon St. Thomas' metaphysical treatment of the problem of evil is twofold. First, theology acts as a guide. It asserts certain positions which must be held as true and, accordingly, it confronts the metaphysics of evil with problems which might not otherwise arise and which require a deeper penetration into the natures involved. For example, with theology it is an indubitable truth that man has a free will, is responsible for his voluntary actions, and will be held to strict accountability for them. Therefore, in explaining the metaphysical relations involved in the commission of moral evil, it was necessary, as we have seen, that St. Thomas find the true explanation which would neither compromise his own principle concerning a "deficient cause" of evil in an action nor destroy the responsibility of man for his human acts. Similarly, theology asserts the ultimate triumph of the good over evil, therefore, philosophy cannot validly arrive at a conclusion which is pessimistic in all respects. As Gilson says:

A good God, Who makes all things out of nothing, not only gratuitously bringing them into existence, but also establishing their order, allows of no intermediate and hence inferior cause between Himself and His work. As sole Author He takes full responsibility; and He is very well able to do so, for His work is good. What now remains for the philosopher is to show that it is so.²⁴

From this flows the spirit of optimism which prevails throughout St. Thomas' discussions concerning evil and which must be reiterated as a final conclusion. This spirit of hopefulness and assurance is the second effect of the influence of theology upon the metaphysics of St. Thomas and his theory of evil. Thus the Angelic Doctor writes, "Every being which is not God is a creature of God. But every creature of God is good, as it is said (I Tim. iv: 4) and God is the greatest good. Therefore, every

²⁴ E. Gilson, *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy*, translated by A. H. C. Downes, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), p. 110.

being is good." ²⁵ Again, although he is realistic enough to recognize the preponderance of evil, especially moral evil, among men, the Angelic Doctor insists that the good outweighs the evil in the universe. He writes:

Therefore, when it is said that evil is as in the greater number, it is simply false, for generated and corruptible things, in which alone evil of nature occurs are a small part of the whole universe. And again, in each species the defect of nature happens in the smaller number. However, only among men does evil seem to be as in the greater number, because the good of man according to the senses is not the good of man as man, that is, the good according to reason. But more follow the senses rather than the reason.²⁶

In regard to the fall of the angels, St. Thomas maintains that more stood firm than sinned,²⁷ while in regard to the Deicide of Calvary he indicates that it was really a triumph and a victory when he says that had the demons fully and certainly known that Christ was the Son of God and the effects of His Passion, "they would never have obtained the crucifixion of the Lord of Glory."²⁸

The suffering of the innocent is always a stumbling block to many persons who consider this problem. Theology helps St. Thomas to explain with optimistic truth, "Punishment is not due to the virtuous man simply. Nevertheless, punishment is due to him as satisfactory, because this pertains to his virtue itself that

²⁵ *Sum. Theo.*, I, q. 5, a. 3, *Sed contra*. "Omne ens, quod non est Deus, est Dei creatura. Sed omnis creatura Dei est bona, ut dicitur I ad Tim., IV cap.: Deus vero est maxime bonus. Ergo omne ens est bonum."

²⁶ *Ibid.*, I, q. 49, a. 3, ad 5. "Quod autem dicitur, quod malum est ut in pluribus, simpliciter falsum est. Nam generabilia et corruptibilia, in quibus solum contingit esse malum naturae, sunt modica pars totius universi. Et iterum in unaquaque specie defectus naturae accidit ut in paucioribus. In solis autem hominibus malum videtur esse ut in pluribus: quia bonum hominis secundum sensum non est bonum hominis in quantum homo, id est secundum rationem; plures autem sequuntur sensum quam rationem." Cf. *De Pot.*, q. 3, a. 6, ad 5; *In I Sen.*, d. 39, q. 2, a. 2, ad 4.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, I, q. 63, a. 9.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, I, q. 64, a. 1, ad 4.

he satisfy for these things in which he offended either God or man." ²⁹ Again he writes:

For it is fitting that, first, having been conformed to His sufferings, we should attain to the immortality and impassibility of glory, which was begun in Christ and was by Him acquired for us. Wherefore it is necessary that for a time suffering should remain in our bodies that we may merit the impassibility of glory in conformity with Christ.³⁰

St. Thomas has here sounded the deepest notes of the Christian optimism which flows from a truly Christian philosophy, a philosophy enlightened by theology. Concerning this spirit, Father Vann, O.P., has written:

... the very heart of Christian optimism. It blinds its eyes to no single crime or wickedness; there is no cry from humanity or from the lesser creatures to which it is deaf; it knows the problem of evil in all its terrible fulness; and yet none the less it affirms at the end with Julian of Norwich, All shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well. In other words, it has faith in what to the eyes of eternity is already and always an accomplished vision: the fulfillment of sorrow in joy.³¹

A final indication of the confidence which is the effect of a theological background is the following remark which is a partial explanation of the occurrence of evil under the order of Divine Providence. The Angelic Doctor says:

And God knows beforehand those defects touching the will beyond the intention of Providence and He orders them to

²⁹ *Ibid.*, I-II, q. 87, a. 6, ad 2. "... virtuoso non debetur poena simpliciter, potest tamen sibi deberi poena ut satisfactoria: quia hoc ipsum ad virtutem pertinet, ut satisfaciatur pro his in quibus offendit vel Deum vel hominem."

³⁰ *Ibid.*, I-II, q. 85, a. 5, ad 2. "Oportet enim quod ad immortalitatem et impassibilitatem gloriae, quae in Christo inchoata est, et per Christum nobis acquisita, perveniamus conformati prius passionibus eius. Unde oportet quod ad tempus passibilitas in nostris corporibus remaneat, ad impassibilitatem gloriae promerendam conformiter Christo."

³¹ Vann, O.P., "The Sorrow of God," Aquinas Paper No. 7 (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Bookshop, 1946), p. 12.

the good not only of nature, but also of like orders such as to the good of justice, which is manifested when fault is by means of punishment ordered to the good of the will of other persons, who by their wickedness either are withdrawn from sin, or gain in merits and glory; and [God does this] in many other ways which human reason is not adequate to explain.³²

The last two influences which we shall consider in connection with St. Thomas' theory of evil are the Pseudo-Dionysius and St. Augustine. One cannot read the passages which treat of this theory without noticing the place of authority which is given to the words of these two men. Of the two, the Pseudo-Dionysius is of lesser importance; however, we shall consider his influence first.

In the Acts of the Apostles we read, "So Paul went out from among them [the men of Athens]. But certain men adhering to him, did believe; among whom was also Dionysius, the Areopagite, and the woman named Damaris, and others with them."³³ Several centuries later, probably around the end of the fifth century, a Christian neo-Platonist composed four theological works under the titles, *Celestial Hierarchy*, *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, *Concerning the Divine Names* and *Mystical Theology*. The author apparently was so desirous that his ideas be accepted that, in order to insure a more favorable reception for them, he identified himself with Dionysius, the convert of St. Paul. Thus, the true identity of the author of the *Areopagitica*, as this group of writings is called, has been lost to history. For over a thousand years these works were considered to be the product of a prelate and a saint and were esteemed accordingly. Stiglmayr tells us:

³² *In I Sen.*, d. 39, q. 2, a. 2. "Et istos defectus voluntatem contingentes praeter intentionem providentiae praescivit Deus et ordinavit eos in bonum non tantum naturae, sed etiam similis generis sicut in bonum justitiae, quod ostenditur cum culpa per poenam ordinatur in bonum voluntatis aliorum, qui per eorum nequitiam, vel corriguntur de peccatis, vel in meritis et gloria cresunt; et in multa alia quae humana ratio non sufficit explicare."

³³ Acts, 17: 33-34.

Deep obscurity still hovers about the person of the Pseudo-Areopagite. External evidence as to the time and place of his birth, his education, and later occupation is entirely wanting. Our only source of information regarding this problematic personage is the writings themselves. The clues furnished by the first appearance and by the character of the writings enable us to conclude that the author belongs at the very earliest to the latter half of the fifth century and that, in all probability, he was a native of Syria.³⁴

After examining critical studies of the works of the Pseudo-Dionysius, Durantel concludes, "It establishes with almost certitude that the *Areopagitica* are not of the Areopagite, but it permits only very vague approximations regarding their true author and the probabilities of the date of their composition. It is necessary without doubt to resign oneself to not knowing it always."³⁵

The authenticity of this "founding in the history of philosophy," as Durantel aptly describes the *Areopagitica*, was never really questioned until the fifteenth century. Attention was first called to the problem by two Greeks who were travelling in the West, George de Trebizonde and Theodore Gaza. But especially the writings of Larentius Valla (1407-1457) raised interest in the matter and spurred investigations by Erasmus, Scaliger, Luther, and others.

Therefore, as Durantel says, "it is not astonishing that St. Thomas, with all the Middle Ages, had believed firmly that Dionysius, the Areopagite, converted by St. Paul after the famous discourse which the Acts of the Apostles reports, then successively bishop of Athens and of Paris, was the author of the works accepted for eight centuries under his name."³⁶ Along with St.

³⁴ Joseph Stiglmayr, "Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. V, p. 13.

³⁵ J. Durantel, *Saint Thomas et le Pseudo-Denis*, (Paris: Felix Alcan, 1919), p. 26. "Elle établit avec une presque certitude que les *Areopagitica* ne sont pas de l'Aréopagite, mais ne permet que de très vagues à-peu-près sur leur véritable auteur et des probabilités sur la date de leur composition. Il faut sans doute se résigner à l'ignorer toujours."

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 27. "Il n'est donc pas étonnant que S. Thomas, avec tout le Moyen-Age, ait cru fermement que Denis l'Aréopagite converti par S. Paul

Augustine, the other Church Fathers, and Peter the Lombard, the Pseudo-Dionysius was one of the masters of medieval thought. The degree of his eminence as an authority on theological and philosophical questions may be judged by the numerous translations, commentaries, and paraphrases of the *Arcopagitica* written at that time and by the many "lives," eulogies, and "martyrdoms" of the supposed author. The Pseudo-Dionysius is credited with providing the foundation for medieval mystical doctrines, creating the science of angelology, fixing the notion of God as He was conceived in the Middle Ages, and disclosing to the men of those times the relations between the Creator and His creatures as they are known in theology and philosophy. He gave to the Middle Ages the orthodox answers to theological questions disputed between heretics and Churchmen, set forth the doctrine of the hierarchy of beings, and indicated the pattern for the thirteenth century theological "Summas," by his treatment first of God, then the procession of creatures from Him, and their final return to Him. It is even said that all the art and architecture of the Middle Ages took its inspiration from the Dionysian doctrines that the material world is the representation of the ideal world and that, by means of the sensible, man's spirit is raised to the spiritual.³⁷

There is no doubt that St. Thomas felt this influence which permeated the thought of the Middle Ages and that he was thoroughly familiar with the writings of the Pseudo-Arcopagite. He came into contact with them directly and indirectly. Indirectly he met these doctrines in the intellectual traditions of the time, in the works of Peter the Lombard, who had studied the *Arcopagitica* in itself and in the interpretations of St. John Damascene. He met them in the lectures of Albert the Great and in the existing commentaries, two of which he specifically mentions, namely, those of Maximus and of Hugh of St. Victor. Moreover, the Angelic Doctor assimilated the thought of the

à la suite de fameux discours que rapportent les Actes des Apôtres, puis successivement évêque d'Athènes et de Paris, était l'auteur des œuvres reçues depuis huit siècles sous son nom."

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 235, 242 f.

Pseudo-Dionysius directly from the Greek texts of his work and from their Latin translations, from the medieval theological and patristic anthologies, and by his own work of commentary.³⁸ Such was the influence of the Pseudo-Dionysius upon St. Thomas' thought that, according to Durantel, there is scarcely a point of his own doctrine which St. Thomas does not corroborate with the authority of the earlier theologian and he is the only author to whose teaching on a particular subject the Angelic Doctor makes a public profession of adherence.³⁹ St. Thomas, however, does not make slavish use of the words of the Pseudo-Arcopagite. On the contrary, he frequently adapts them to his own nuances and employs them as he sees fit to support, explain, illustrate, or summarize his own doctrine, or to resolve a difficulty. Indeed, the thought of the Pseudo-Arcopagite gains in its use by St. Thomas for much of its native obscurity is made clear and its inherent implications are developed. Thus Durantel writes:

But yet, in saying that St. Thomas borrowed from Dionysius, we do not mean that he incorporated in his work the doctrines of Dionysius just as they were, even those to which he returns most often. Already, in the *Commentary on the Divine Names*, we have noted a general tendency of St. Thomas to adapt the thought of the author to the ideas of his times and naturally to his own thoughts. . . . The doctrines of Dionysius, in entering in his framework, had to adapt themselves there, sometimes even to deform themselves a little. This was inevitable. Nevertheless, we do not intend to retract anything of that which we have said of the important influence of his thought upon that of St. Thomas.⁴⁰

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 236 ff.

³⁹ *De Sub. Sep.*, c. 16. "Ad quod ostendendum utemur praecipue Dionysii documentis, qui super alios ea quae ad spirituales substantias pertinent, excellentius tradidit." Cf. Durantel, *op. cit.*, p. 237.

⁴⁰ Durantel, *op. cit.*, pp. 256 f. "Mais encore, en disant que S. Thomas emprunte à Denis, nous n'entendons pas qu'il incorpore telles quelles dans son oeuvre les doctrines de Denis, même celles sur lesquelles il revient le plus souvent. Déjà, dans le *Commentaire des Noms Divins*, nous avons noté une tendance générale de S. Thomas à adapter la pensée de l'auteur aux idées de son temps et aux siennes propres naturellement. . . . Les doctrines de Denis, en entrant dans ses cadres, ont dû s'y adapter, parfois

The Angelic Doctor wrote a commentary on the Dionysian treatise, *Concerning the Divine Names*. Chapter Four of this treatise contains a discussion of the nature, cause, and *raison d'être* of evil. According to many modern authorities—Engelhardt, H. Koch, J. Stiglmayr, and others—this particular section of the *De Divinis Nominibus* treating of evil is not the original work of the Pseudo-Dionysius, but was borrowed by him from the *De Malorum Subsistentia* by Proclus.⁴¹ Durantel also seems to incline toward this view although he suggests that, until the exact date of the composition of the treatise, *Concerning the Divine Names*, is known, it is impossible to determine absolutely, beyond all possibility of doubt whether Proclus or the Pseudo-Dionysius was the plagiarist. Also, this author suggests the possibility that a third person, too zealous for the glory of the Pseudo-Areopagite, may have interpolated the passage from Proclus.⁴² The resemblances between these two authors in their writings concerning evil was noticed long before the modern era. Maximus was the first, according to Durantel, to mention that "several pagan authors, Proclus in particular, had borrowed from Dionysius, copying him even sometimes word for word."⁴³ St. Thomas, however, never mentions the similarities between the doctrines of evil of Proclus and the Pseudo-Dionysius.⁴⁴ In his own discussions of evil, he frequently quotes from the writings of the latter on the subject. This is especially true of his questions concerning evil in his *Commentary on the Sentences*, although he also refers to the supposed Dionysius when he discusses the subject in the *Summa Theologica*, and somewhat less frequently in the *De Malo* and the *Summa Contra Gentiles*. In some instances, the Angelic Doctor uses the Pseudo-Areopagite as his "Sed contra" authority. In other cases, the words of Dionysius

même se déformer un peu. C'était inévitable. Nous n'entendons cependant rien reprendre de ce que nous avons dit de l'influence capitale de sa pensée sur celle de S. Thomas."

⁴¹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 227, n. 3.

⁴² Cf. *ibid.*, p. 254, n. 7.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 227, n. 3.

⁴⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 229.

are used to summarize the conclusion of an article or a response to an objection. Still other times St. Thomas quotes a sentence from the discussion of evil in the *De Divinis Nominibus* as a principle to be used in his own argument. The remarks of the Pseudo-Dionysius seem to come to the mind of the Angelic Doctor especially when he is discussing the mode of being of evil, the dependence of evil upon the good for its indirect action, and the position of evil in the world in regard to the work of Divine Providence.

The conclusion of Durantel that the doctrines of the Pseudo-Areopagite are not merely paraphrased by St. Thomas, but are assimilated to his own thought and thereby are deepened and enriched is quite evident in the Angelic Doctor's theory of evil. St. Thomas' treatment of the subject is more extensive than that found in the *De Divinis Nominibus* since the former includes a skillful and penetrating analysis of the kinds of evil and a consideration of the nature and causes of each type. Furthermore, the statements of the Pseudo-Dionysius are sometimes rather vague or in need of qualification for the sake of clarity and of orthodoxy. On account of this St. Thomas is often able to use them as objections to his own teachings. When, however, he answers these objections or uses the words of the Pseudo-Areopagite to summarize his own conclusions, the statements from the *De Divinis Nominibus* are clarified and the full import of their meaning can be grasped. In describing the influence of the writings of the Pseudo-Dionysius on St. Thomas' theory of evil, it can be said that the Angelic Doctor did not so much learn a theory concerning evil from the Pseudo-Areopagite, as he found in him an authority to substantiate the conclusions drawn from his own reflections and from his considerations of St. Augustine's theory of evil and, furthermore, he found in him an author whose words often gave apt expression to his (St. Thomas') thoughts.

There is little doubt that the strongest external influence upon the formulation of the theory of evil in the metaphysics of St. Thomas came from St. Augustine's writings upon the subject. Concerning the relations between the respective philosophies of these two Doctors of the Church, Boyer speaks of "the substantial accord and profound convergence of two minds, one of which

discovers, outlines, sets going, and the other completes and unifies the same metaphysics."⁴⁵ Whether or not this description can be truthfully applied in general to the philosophies of Augustine and Aquinas is a debated question. However, the above quotation is certainly applicable to the theories of evil found in the writings of these two scholars. Of Augustine, Gilson says without qualification, "... his metaphysic of evil passed wholly and almost as it stood into Thomism and Scotism."⁴⁶ Concerning St. Augustine's efforts to solve the problem of evil, Stolle writes, "... his labors find their just reward in the writings of the Scholastics, notably those of Saint Thomas in which Augustine's solution in its main outlines is destined to live."⁴⁷

The many scholarly treatises which have been written about him and the wide circulation of his own works which are easily accessible in many translations as well as in the original Latin have made St. Augustine a familiar figure to Protestant and Catholic thinkers alike. Therefore, there is little need to pause here for a review of the man and his work. Furthermore, the prominence of the Bishop of Hippo as a theologian, a philosopher, a religious convert, and a saint would make such a discussion in the space at our disposal seem to be a superficial and inane attempt, to say the least. Consequently, we shall consider immediately some major aspects of his theory of evil and its rapport with that of St. Thomas.

The young Augustine was forced by the scourge of his own thoughts to seek a solution to the problem of evil. Falling first into the errors of the Manichaeans, he was rescued by the grace of God through his love for truth. Still the son of St. Monica, asked himself, "Where, therefore, is evil, and whence comes it, and by what does it creep in hither? What is its root, and what

⁴⁵ Charles Boyer, S.J., "Saint Thomas et Saint Augustin," *Essais Sur la Doctrine de Saint Augustin*, (Paris: Gabriel Beauchesne et ses fils, 1932), p. 147.

⁴⁶ Gilson, *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy*, p. 115.

⁴⁷ Elmer Stolle, *Saint Augustine and the Problem of Evil*, unpublished M.A. dissertation, The Catholic University of America, 1933, p. 3.

its seed?"⁴⁸ With the help of Christian Revelation, the Platonic concept of matter, and a remark of St. Ambrose concerning evil as the *indigentia boni*, Augustine's brilliant mind finally succeeded in discovering the metaphysical nature of evil, its causes, and a classification of its manifestations. Thus, the Doctor of Grace defines evil as a privation of good,⁴⁹ divides it into sin (*peccatum*) and the punishment of sin (*poena peccati*),⁵⁰ and assigns the free will of man as the cause of the former and the will of God as the cause, in a sense, of the latter.⁵¹ Evil is dependent upon the good⁵² and God permits evils because He is powerful enough to draw good from them and to turn them to the benefit of His chosen ones.⁵³ Concerning this last point, Philips maintains:

⁴⁸ St. Augustine, *Confessiones*, VII, c. 5, in *Patrologia Latina*, edited by J. P. Migne. Tome 32, col. 736. "Ubi ergo malum, et unde, et qua huc irrepit? Quae radix ejus, et quod semen ejus?"

⁴⁹ *Enchiridion de Fide, Spe, et Charitate*, xi (PL 40, 236). "Quid est autem aliud quod malum dicitur, nisi privatio boni? *Confessiones*, III, 7 (PL 32, 688). "... non noveram malum non esse nisi privationem boni, usque ad quod omnino non est."

⁵⁰ *De Genesi ad Litteram, Imperfectus Liber*, iii (PL 34, 221). "... sed omne quod dicitur malum, aut peccatum esse, aut poenam peccati."

⁵¹ *Confessiones*, VII, 3 (PL 32, 735). "Et intendebam ut eernerem quod audiebam, liberum voluntatis arbitrium causam esse ut male faceremus, et rectum iudicium tuum ut pateremur; ... Itaque cum aliquid vellem aut nollem, non alium quam me velle ac nolle certissimus eram, et ibi esse causam peccati mei jam jamque animadvertēbam. Quod autem invitum facerem, pati me potius quam facere videbam; et id non culpam, sed poenam esse iudicabam, qua me non injuste plecti, te justum cogitans, cito fatebar."

⁵² *Enchiridion*, xiv (PL 40, 238). "Ex bonis igitur mala orta sunt, et nisi in aliquibus bonis non sunt; nec erat alias unde orietur ulla mali natura."

⁵³ *De Civitate Dei*, XIV, 27 (PL 41, 435). "Proinde peccatores, et angeli, et homines nihil agunt, quo impediuntur *Magna opera Domini*, exquisita in omnes voluntates ejus (*Psal.* CX, 2). Quoniam qui providentur atque omnipotenter sua cuique distribuit, non solum bonis, verum etiam malis bene uti novit." *Enchiridion*, xi (PL 40, 236). "Neque enim Deus omnipotens, ... cum summe bonus sit, ullo modo sineret mali ali-

In that consists the true originality of Augustine. Very often he insists on that consideration which is entirely proper to him. He sees not only the manifestation of the justice of God in the reprobates and the manifestation of His mercy in the elect (that, the other Fathers and the Scholastic Doctors had done also); but, going farther, he showed that all is created, all is ordered, all is permitted, even the damnation of sinners, for the greatest good of the saints.⁵⁴

These main principles of St. Augustine's theory of evil give some notion of the faithfulness with which the Angelic Doctor adhered to the teachings of his African predecessor with regard to the metaphysics of evil. In his customary manner, however, St. Thomas was not content merely to repeat these truths discovered at an earlier time. He enlarged upon them, deepened their applications, and made genuine and original contributions to the subject matter. To indicate just a few of the Angelic Doctor's contributions to the foundation he borrowed from St. Augustine's theory of evil, we might mention his work of synthesis. Whereas Augustine's remarks concerning evil are scattered throughout his writings, St. Thomas, on the contrary, usually presents the kernel or main principles of his doctrine of evil in one particular section of the *Summa Theologica* or the *Summa Contra Gentiles* or the *Commentary on the Sentences* or the *Compendium Theologiae* and then lets it ramify throughout the rest of the work wherever it is necessary. As if that were not sufficient organization, he also has a whole treatise devoted specifically to the subject of evil, namely, the *Quaestiones Disputatae de Malo*, to which we already referred so many times. Again,

quid esse in operibus suis, nisi usque adeo esset omnipotens et bonus, ut bene faceret et de malo."

⁵⁴ Gérard Philips, *La Raison d'Être du Mal*, (Louvain: E. Desbarax, 1927), p. 227. "En cela consiste la vraie originalité d'Augustin. Très souvent, il insiste sur cette considération qui lui est tout à fait propre. Il ne voit pas seulement la manifestation de la justice de Dieu dans les réprouvés et celle de sa miséricorde dans les élus (cela, les autres Pères et les docteurs scolastiques le font aussi); mais allant plus loin, il démontre que tout est créé, tout est ordonné, tout est permis, jusqu'à la damnation des pécheurs, pour de plus grand bien des saints."

St. Augustine was concerned primarily with evil in relation to man and only secondarily did he consider natural evil. St. Thomas, as we have seen, also carefully investigated the evil in nature and set forth its significance for theology and philosophy. Stolle writes:

The Angelic Doctor, however, perceived a vital point that had escaped Augustine, viz., that metaphysical imperfection, though not an evil in itself (as Augustine also had contended) nevertheless must be given its place in the discussion of the problem, for it alone can furnish a basis for a completely adequate explanation of the origin of evil. Augustine had evaded the difficulty by his theory of creation *ex nihilo* Saint Thomas, on the other hand, faced the issue and in order to give a satisfactory explanation found it necessary to append one word to the Augustinian definition, thus making it read: "malum est privatio boni debiti."⁵⁵

In addition to extending the theory of evil to include its manifestations in all the orders of creation, St. Thomas clarified the notion of punishment and drew more accurate conclusions concerning some of its aspects, e.g., the well-known difference of opinion between St. Augustine and St. Thomas in regard to the eternal state of infants who die without Baptism. Furthermore, whereas the Doctor of Grace paused after asserting that the source of evil in a will is some deficient cause, the Angelic Doctor went on to explain the nature of the deficiency and the metaphysical relations involved. Finally, St. Thomas brought to the study of evil all the advantages of the philosophical discipline of the thirteenth century. This enabled him to elucidate more clearly the nature of evil in relation to being, the cause of evil in relation to every species of cause, and other metaphysical aspects of the problem. From this discussion, the truth of Father Boyer's words, at least in their application to the respective theories of evil of these two saints, is evident. Where Augustine discovered, Aquinas explored; where the Doctor of Grace outlined, the Angelic Doctor unified, developed, and completed.

⁵⁵ Stolle, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

3. CONCLUSIONS

In bringing this study to a close, we have remarked briefly upon the major factors which influenced St. Thomas in the formation of his theory of evil.⁵⁶ It now remains for us to indicate a few of the most important conclusions which can be drawn from the contents of the preceding pages. Foremost among these is the realization that, although the Angelic Doctor drew the final stroke of his pen more than six hundred years ago, his philosophy in general, but his discussions of evil and its various aspects in particular are singularly apropos and urgently needed today. We found that in his theory of evil he has treated the very problems which are raised by modern philosophers, and his explanations are more satisfying to the man of good will, sounder, and more deeply penetrating than those we have seen offered by contemporary non-Scholastic philosophers.

A second conclusion is that the treatment of evil in Thomistic metaphysics provides a philosophical basis for the optimistic realism which is required by Christian theology and which is characteristic of true Christianity. Christianity is well aware of the presence of evil in the world. Indeed, the shadow of that malevolent presence was deepened when the Light came into the world.

If I had not come, and spoken to them, they would not have sinned; but now they have no excuse for their sin.

⁵⁶ Our treatment of this aspect of the subject has been necessarily abbreviated. However, the importance of this topic is such that perhaps the work of a whole dissertation could profitably be devoted to it. As Durantel, says, "Car, si jamais l'étude des sources où un auteur a puisé a contribué à le faire comprendre, c'est assurément le cas de S. Thomas dont l'immense érudition possédait toutes les connaissances de son époque, et ce n'est certes rien lui ôter que de reconnaître le parti qu'il en a tiré car c'est là proprement son originalité d'avoir fait oeuvre personnelle, et d'importance, avec des éléments très divers. Mais, précisément ne l'étudier qu'en lui-même, c'est étudier le cours d'eau sans remonter à la source." *Op. cit.*, p. 257.

If I had not done among them the works that no other man hath done, they would not have sinned; but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father.⁵⁷

Nevertheless, at the same time Christian theology is just as firmly insistent upon the power of God to bring good out of evil and upon the eventual complete triumph of the good for all eternity. The effect of these two views is the optimistic realism of the true Christian which Thomistic metaphysics supports by showing the nonentity of evil in itself and its total dependence upon the good.

Thirdly, St. Thomas, by restoring the concepts of hierarchy and of absolute values, which concepts have been lost in the maze of modern relativity, indicates the correct solution of a problem which seems to be particularly perplexing to some modern philosophers, namely, the conflict of desires within the human person. The Angelic Doctor states as a principle "that everything which is naturally subject to some other thing has its own good in this that it is brought under this other thing, just as the good of the sensitive appetite in man is that it is ruled by reason."⁵⁸ It follows that not all goods are of equal importance, that the good of the lower faculties lies in their reconciliation with the aspirations of the higher, and that it is not evil to deny some goods for the sake of higher ones. From this the modern philosopher can learn the distinction between true and apparent goods, and can see that many experiences which he calls evil are only apparently so.

Finally, in the light of the Thomistic theory of evil, we may, to a certain extent, determine the nature of those deficiencies which prevent many contemporary non-Scholastic philosophers from attaining a satisfactory answer to the problem of evil, either in the theoretical or in the practical orders. In the theoretical order, these philosophers lack the enlightenment of theology which, as we have seen so often, is a practical necessity for the successful philosophical treatment of this problem. Furthermore,

⁵⁷ John, 15: 22-24.

⁵⁸ *In De Div. Nom.*, c. IV, lec. 19. "... quod omne illud quod est naturaliter subiectum alicui, bonum suum habet in hoc quod ei subdatur, sicut bonum appetitus sensibilium in homine est quod regulatur ratione."

it seems that these men lack the respect for reality which must be one of the characteristic virtues of every true philosopher. Their own subjectivism opens the way to confusion in their theories and reverberates in the practical order by causing frustration and pessimism in those who are struggling against evil.

In regard to the problem of evil in the practical order, St. Thomas, following the Doctor of Grace, has shown that all the evil which befalls man is somehow related to sin. It would seem then that for practical purposes the root of evil among men is to be sought on the moral level. Furthermore, if evil, as St. Thomas says, is a kind of non-being, the most effective counteraction should be the increase of positive reality or of the good. Therefore, on the basis of this information provided by Christian philosophy, it would seem that what is required for the practical struggle against evil is the implementing of the moral order by the inculcation of virtue, for "virtue is that which makes its possessor good." The failure to realize this fundamental feature of the problem has led many persons to attempt the practical solution of the problem of evil purely on the physical or the social levels. Such projects are helpful and may alleviate oppressive conditions, but they do not reach the root difficulty. Slum clearance, nutrition programs, public health benefits, quantitative education, etc., as such, of and by themselves, cannot meet a problem which is fundamentally moral and which, therefore, to the extent that it can be answered, must be answered on the moral level by the exercise of virtue, especially of that virtue which "envieth not, dealeth not perversely; is not puffed up; is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth."

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