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Christian-Islamic Preambles of Faith

**An Exercise in Philosophy of Religion or Kalâm for Our Day
Modeled after Thomas Aquinas,
Summa Contra Gentiles, Books I-III**

by
Joseph Kenny

The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy

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Preface

Joseph Kenny

Christians have written expositions of their faith, from the apologetic works of the early Fathers to the great *summas* of medieval times, to modern treatises. Likewise Muslims have written many short and long expositions of their faith, from at least the 9th century until our own day; these are called by the Arabic word *kalâm*, meaning "discourse".

Christians and Muslims believe many things in common. They also hold that these beliefs have a rational foundation, since the preambles of faith can be proven by reason, and any teaching of faith which cannot be proven can at least be shown not to be self-contradictory or impossible. The arguments used in the Christian *summas* and the Muslim books of *kalâm* are highly philosophical, but guided by what each tradition holds as revelation. They are at the same time books of apologetic theology and philosophy of religion.

Christian and Muslim apologetic books normally begin with a section on the preambles of faith and then go on to show the unique validity of their own religion. There is literature enough on how each religion is distinct. This book is different. It attempts to let Christian and Muslim thought advance together as far as they can go.

This book is inspired particularly by St. Thomas Aquinas' *Summa contra gentiles*, Books I-III. In spite of the title, it is not an attack on anyone or any religion. While the fourth volume — not included here — is a defence of the distinctive content of the Catholic faith, these first three of the four volumes of the work build carefully the shared vision held by Christians and Muslims alike. They bring supportive insight from Christian reflection which has been foundational for the development of Western culture. In the present developments of interchange between East and West these insights attained by reason in a context of deep faith can constitute a veritable treasure chest for Islamic thinkers as they build toward the future.

Why write another work then? First of all, it is necessary to update Thomas Aquinas, since many of his arguments and illustrations are based on the defective physical sciences of his day. Secondly, it is necessary to present his thought more simply for readers who would find it laborious to go through his complicated dialectic without familiarity with the careful structures of scholastic reasoning. Nevertheless, the reader will find this book fundamentally a reworking of the *Summa contra gentiles* and a summary of its main arguments. Thirdly, in this day of searching for shared vision as a basis for dialogue as cooperation rather than conflict between civilizations this work provides one of the most rich and ordered sources.

References after subtitles are to the books and chapters of *Contra gentiles*. Thomas' custom was to conclude each section with a Biblical quotation that supported his argument. I do the same, adding quotations from the Qur'ân.

Foreword

George F. McLean

This volume is a summary of the *Summa Contra Gentiles* Books I-III (See Thomas Aquinas, *On the Truth of the Catholic Faith*, translators: Book I Anton, C. Pegis; Book II James Anderson; Book III Vernon J. Bourke [Garden City, NJ: Hanover House, 1956].

The reader should rightly ask how, at this turn of millennia, fairly and effectively to approach an early work of Thomas Aquinas (1225-1275) written over 700 years ago, for obviously we no longer live in his times. But it may be more helpful to make note of the fact that we no longer live in the modern rationalist era, either. We begin then by asking what this means, that is, what changes are taking place now, and how these enable us to draw new and relevant insights from this venerable text.

The New Context

The following set of new sensibilities, like a new tooth, is emerging gradually but inexorably in the contemporary consciousness. It reorients and reshapes our human aspirations and our possibilities for cooperation between cultures.

1. *Matter and Spirit: From Quantity to Quality.* Economic and physical provisions for the people of this world are a basic need and of high value. It is possible, however, to focus upon them with such single mindedness that, not only are other dimensions of human life ignored, but the economy itself suffers. If the quality of life is not promoted — if social cohesion is diminished and the environment damaged — then whatever be the short range profits, a country is weakened and great and lasting damage in as yet unimaginable ways is ensured. Hence there is an emerging sense that both spirit and matter are strongly integrated. Physical and economic progress must be for goals which integrate the quality of personal life in community. Peoples tend to respond to leadership calls which reflect that integration and suspect, rightly unilateral calls, whether only to material progress or only to spiritual campaigns as being partisan, unbalanced and doomed to failure.

2. *Freedom: From External Choices to Responsible Human Commitment to Life with Others.* The recent tendency of assertions of freedom to devolve into selfishness, as reflected by corruption in economic and political life, are being challenged by a stronger sense of moral commitment to living well with others in building together a world with greater equity and progress.

3. *Values and Cultures: From Arbitrary Impositions to Creative Human Responses to Present Challenges.* The same awareness of interior human subjectivity which undergirds the sense of freedom and responsibility enables dramatic new appreciation of values and cultures. Values receive new attention; cultural traditions are no longer seen as arbitrary choices made in the past and simply handed down as obligatory in the present. Rather, they represent the cumulative creative freedom of the community in its effort to live together with decency. Now such traditions challenge us to transform them into platforms on which life today can be lived with equal or greater dignity.

4. *Religion: From Tolerance to Integration.* Religion is the ultimate human commitment, the key to transcending self horizontally to community and vertically to spiritual values. The separation of religion from the public life has sapped enthusiasm at the local and national level

from drawing on the spiritual heritage of the country and enabling it to continue to play its role in national life as a source of values, morality and public commitment. People now seek appropriate ways to refound the values and insights of the various cultural heritages in their religious roots and to appreciate the positive relations between the religions.

5. *Complementarity: From Private Values to Civil Society.* The term values can ring of private personal concern; instead, today there is a broad search for new ways to promote the whole range of intermediate structures: family, neighborhood, school, church, trade, etc. In this, the concern is for the ability of persons and groups to play a more active and responsible role in the community and in the nation as alternatives to intervention by larger, more remote and impersonal groups.

6. *Rights and Responsibilities: From Individual Interest to the Common Good.* Individualism is being tempered by much stronger senses of relatedness to others, of community, of cooperation and of civic duty. The emphasis in public debate is shifting beyond the abstract assertion and legalistic defense of universal rights. These must be guaranteed and defended, but they are not sufficient; left by themselves they can be anarchistic and destructive. Instead, the focus becomes the implementation of rights as part of a concrete effort to build the nation. Beyond the minimal prohibition of violations of rights, there is a new appreciation of a diversity and pluralism which draws each group more fully into the effort to face common problems and build their nation.

7. *Patriotism: From Ideology to Ideals.* The sense of community extends as well to nation. Patriotism is coming to be seen not as jingoism for manipulating people into exploitive adventures for special interests, but as the mode in which all — both individually and in various groups — relate to the common good of the nation as a whole.

8. *World: From Competition to Cooperation.* This must extend to the fulfillment of a role in global affairs which reflects not merely self-interest, but the ideals and traditions of humanity. The international posture of a people is now challenged to be not merely a matter of self-interest or of strength for self-assertion. There is ever greater recognition of being part of a worldwide community. The peoples of the world are not merely competitors in a race between the strong and the weak or the wealthy and the needy; they are brothers and sisters whose welfare is the concern of all. Hence, the international agenda is not only one of trading opportunities or even human rights, but of building a community of nations inspired by justice, concern, and love.

In sum, the new sensibility is practical and enabling for life. Its thrust is characteristically outward to concern for others at home and abroad, and upward to enrich the quality of life. Its effect is to inspire the hope, courage and magnanimity of spirit needed in a time of great change.

The New Hermeneutics

What unifies all of these and constitutes the pervasive present concern is a shift from the private possession of external things or objects to the development of inner human consciousness and creativity or, as is sometimes said, a shift in consciousness and concern from "having" to "being".

The implications of this for opening new possibilities for cooperation between the Islamic and Christian tradition needed for our time is exceedingly great. Rather than these being thought of — and indeed thinking of themselves — as simply economic or political blocks after the manner of S. Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations*, it is now possible to grasp these forces more deeply in terms of the inner spirit which inspires them and which can, and indeed must, be shared. For

whereas money cannot be transferred without being lost to its owner, knowledge and commitment are reinforced in being shared.

As was seen above, attention and motivation is moving from matter to spirit and from things to values. Correlatively, it now becomes possible for cultures and civilizations to envisage not merely dialogue as if between contrasting positions, but complementarity and cooperation on shared problems, and to move fundamentally on the great mysteries of the meaning of life.

This has important implications for hermeneutics or the interpretation of texts from earlier times. It is now appreciated how reality moves forward with the progress of human consciousness. Thus, if the human role has always been described as that of a Vice Regent of God, the emphasis now shifts, from returning to the past, to drawing therefrom principles for cooperating dynamically in the ongoing work of creation.

A teenager goes through a period in which the internal process of the establishment of personal self-identity often generates some tension with others in the family; but in time this enables the person to relate to parents and siblings with much greater openness and responsibility. Analogously, the progress of the human consciousness, borne forward by a cultural tradition, can make it possible for new and richer meaning of classic texts to unfold. This, indeed, is the function of a Supreme Court in some political systems or of specialists in Fiqh or in Torah, namely, to interpret the laws. They must be faithful to the law, but to the law as a living reality across time. Their work is not to replicate by-gone times and circumstances, but to unfold the richer meaning of the texts as this becomes available with the development of a people's self-awareness and for that reason becomes newly important for their humane well-being.

The New Significance of the Summa Contra Gentiles

This is particularly significant with regard to the *Summa contra Gentiles* and to the present summary. The title reflects the earlier context of the Middle Ages when there was indeed a clash of civilizations. The front line then was in Andalusia; the Christian troops in the culture war were the Dominicans, officially and rightly named the Order of Preachers. Being at the center of the reception of Aristotle into Christianity — extensively via Islamic sources — Thomas Aquinas undertook to write this work for the use of his Dominican confreres in Spain.

Though the times were long before the present ecumenism, he did not, however, write a polemical text; that would have begun from the differences. Rather, he carefully sorted out the materials and wrote the first three of the four books on the points shared — if not always interpreted in the same way — by Islam and Christianity. What was distinctive of Christianity was reserved for the last or fourth book. Hence the title of the English translation, *On the Truth of the Catholic Faith*, communicates better the positive purpose and tone of the work. Though not without brief passages which reflect the misinformation and polemic prejudices of the time in which it was situated, its structure is highly adapted to the work of comparative philosophy and ecumenical comparison. It focuses on the common issues and especially on shared vision. It proceeds not upon a prior and specifically Christian faith commitment, but on the basis of universally available human reason initiated by the Greeks and of the highest interest both to Islamic and to Christian thinkers at that time.

In taking up this medieval text today we do not abandon the newly emerging ecumenical sense that we must — and now can — work on the relations between our cultures in richer and more effective ways. Nor did Thomas and the Islamic figures in taking up Greek philosophy, especially that of Aristotle, abandon their Islamic or Christian religious cultures — Thomas, as he was to

prove, certainly was no Latin Averroist. Instead, both Islamic and Christian thinkers took up the work of Aristotle in order to develop the competencies of reason and its service to the life of faith. For both the context is religious and they are able to draw richly upon their scriptures to express this munificently. Professor Kenny has done us all a great service in bringing forward the parallel texts in the Qur'ân in order to make this shared context be visible and evident.

Thus, we find Thomas at the beginning of the work discussing the relation of faith and reason in the conviction that as both come from the same source they cannot be contradictory. His search then is for their complementarity.

Book I, *God* (see Appendix I for Thomas's introduction to this Book), after the discussion of faith and reason turns first to the existence of God and begins by reasoning on the nature of motion. He proceeds from the obvious fact of motion to its need for a cause able to explain this phenomenon and which therefore must not itself be in motion i.e., an unmoved mover.

In a retrospective reading of this text in the light of the ancient and medieval cosmology which considered matter to be eternal and envisaged planetary beings which were material but unchanging, it could be said that the effective conclusion of Aristotle's *Physics* brings the reasoner to a reality not subject to motion or change, that is, to an unmoved mover(s), but that this could still be a finite, contingent and even multiple being(s). In Thomas then overstepping the bounds of this reasoning then when he says: "This we call God" (I 13, 3)? Some would say — Professor Kenny among them — that the reasoning depends on the reigning Ptolemaic cosmology, and lost its force with that cosmology. But this would appear overly to restrict Aquinas's reasoning. Thomas notes that if the conclusion of the *Physics* is to reality that is not moving, there remains the question, taken up at this point in the *Metaphysics* XII, of whether this being is necessary of itself or of another. In his third proof Thomas treats the issue at great length, differentiating Aristotle's argumentation in the *Physics* and in the *Metaphysics* in order to come to the same conclusion reached by Xenophanes and Parmenides before Aristotle, namely, that no being is possible unless there be being which is necessary of itself rather than by reference to another, repeating again "This we call God" (I 13, 28-35).

One might ask then whether the long discussion about the physical order of changing being is superfluous. Quite the contrary! That might be the case were God to be able not to exist as well as to exist, and the search were simply to decide between the two. But, of course, such a "god" would be no God at all. Rather, Thomas is concerned at the beginning of this work, as also of his *Summa Theologica*, to answer Aristotle's first scientific question, namely, whether the subject of the science exists. He wants to do this in an *a posteriori* fashion that relates all things to God first by way of their efficient cause. Further this reasoning is being carried out by the human person who is a physical being working not only by intellect, but also from the sense contact with the physical universe. It is important then, both from the point of view of the object and of the thinker, that God be seen as cause of the entire physical universe.

It is characteristic of both the Islamic and the Christian traditions that they are not only other worldly, but this worldly as well. Indeed as religious their concern is to relate or "bind back" (*re-ligio*) all things to God. Their concern is that all reality, including our own physical body and that of our world, be seen in their ultimate, that is, divine origin, as sharing in that divine perfection, and as directed to that divine end. This is the basis of the ability of reason to assist faith in articulating the way to live for its investigation of the existence and characteristics of the divine is always in terms of its being the source, exemplar and goal of all beings.

In part II, *Creation* (see Appendix III for Thomas introduction to this Book), the orientation is inverted and the procedure is not from the effect to the cause, but from the cause thus attained to its effect. Here again it is characteristic of Thomas that he should argue at the greatest length and detail to conclude to the autonomy of creation. It had been thought in Christian and Islamic circles that, in order to preserve the infinity and power of God, creatures — humans in particular — needed to possess some divine seeds in order that they be able to generate new life or that they needed some special illumination of the mind by God in addition to their nature in order that they be able to know.

Indeed, many of the medieval Aristotelians in both the Islamic and Christian traditions argued along with Aristotle that because the form was so much the act of matter, the properly immaterial nature of the act of intellection required a principle (an agent intellect) which existed quite independently of the human person. This, however, jeopardized human responsibility and al-Ghazâlî concluded that the philosophers could not provide for the rich sense of human freedom and responsibility found in the sacred traditions. For this reason he left philosophy as he describes in his *Deliverance from Error and Mystical Union with the Almighty* (*Munquidh min al-D~lal*) and wrote his famous *Incoherence of the Philosophers* (*Tah~fut al-Fal~sifa*).

Over a century later Thomas, working with the sense of existence developed in the early Christian context, was able to resolve this issue by elaborating an understanding of the one human soul with properly intellectual capability but being also the form of the body. This philosophical development of the understanding of the unity of body and spirit in the proper identity of the human person founded the sense both of the spiritual dignity of the human body and of the worldly engagement of the human spirit; both these dimensions of the one human nature are fully and properly human. This is key not only to protecting human dignity in the face of present day multiple technological and ideological threats, but also to engaging human persons creatively in their physical and social environments.

Thomas begins Book III, *God* (see Appendix III for his introduction to this Book), by an affirmation of teleology. Nothing has been more central to the reductionist mechanistic character of the modern understanding of human life than the rejection of teleology or purpose; nothing is more important at this juncture in the new development of human consciousness than its rediscovery. This appears in the new appreciation of the role of subjectivity even in the physical and social sciences. It is especially so in terms of values where human purpose emerges as central to the development of cultures and hence to their cooperation in broader, even global, contexts.

But in this issue of the goal of life lies the most fundamental issue regarding the relation of faith and reason. Just as the efficient cause of all was the first issue in the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, so the final cause is the culmination and crown of this work. Aristotle in his ethics was able by philosophy to identify the goal of human life as contemplation, i.e., the exercise of the highest human power, the intellect, regarding the highest reality, the divine. All life is directed thereto and all has meaning as it relates to that project.

Faith, however, as belief is required because we know from the Judeo-Christian and Islamic scriptures that our goal transcends this world and what can be accomplished by the work of simply human powers culminating in contemplation. That goal is life with God in which he is seen not mediately, as described in Book I through his creatures ("as in a glass darkly" writes St. Paul), but by vision face to face. This further inspires and enlivens all human acts and implies a higher, "supernatural" or graced order.

The heart of the issue of the relation of faith and reason is then that of the relation between contemplation and vision: do they constitute two goals or one? If one then either faith or reason is reduced to the other. But if two, then does one compete with the other in such wise that the person must flee the world in order to avoid being distracted by it and that reason is inimicable to the life of faith? Or are they related in such wise that service in the world is an authentic way to God. If so then the work of reason can be a significant, indeed essential dimension of human service in the realization of God's designs in creating rational beings and appointing them to the special position of his Vice Regents on earth? The impact of religion is at stake here: is it an opium of the people in life which is to be understood as class warfare, as said Marx; or is it a motivation to the service to others in the world, even to the loss of one's life. Indeed, the Gospel says that one who claims to love God, but hates his neighbor, is in fact a murderer (I John 2-3).

This is the challenge which Thomas takes up in this third Book crafting an elegant philosophic-theological solution in such wise that vision of God is a higher, but not contradictory fulfillment of the natural human goal of contemplation, thereby integrating the philosophy of Aristotle with the Christian Platonism of Augustine. This synthesis is analyzed in detail by Gerald Stanley in Appendix IV below.

In this light the overall sense of this work emerges afresh in terms of our new sensibility to human subjectivity and the new challenges this entails to develop cooperation rather than conflict between cultures and civilizations. The exercise by each people of their freedom as they seek their goal — natural/supranatural — must be diverse according to the physical and social circumstances in which they live. In interaction with nature and other peoples they shape their proper sense of values and develop their own distinctive set of virtues. Together these constitutes cultures which are good ways to cultivate the human spirit. Passed on through time, these generate in turn traditions, each of which is, in fact, the basic and proper pathway of a people to its ultimate goal of contemplation and vision.

Here the image of Isaias (27:13) comes to mind, namely, that of all nations proceeding each along its own path to the Holy Mountain. Today, rather than it being thought that there could be but one path to God, the truth of the Prophet emerges, namely, that there are many paths, but one way, or of the Vatican II document, *Nostra Aetate*, 2, which urges Christians to "acknowledge, preserve, and promote the spiritual and moral goods found among these (other religions) as well as the values in their society and culture." To this it adds specially its esteem for Moslems to whom it appeals to "make common cause of safeguarding and fostering social justice, moral values, peace and freedom" (n. 3). This opens dialogue and even cooperation, rather than conflict, as the mode of relations between religions, cultures and civilizations.

We turn then to the first three books of this early *Summa* of Thomas now not as "contra" or against or even as a dialogue between contrasting Christian and Moslem cultures, but rather as a summing up of shared intellectual resources in the hope that together we can cooperate in helping humankind face the difficult issues of the new millennium.

Introduction

Joseph Kenny

A Work of Wisdom (I:1-3)

Philosophy of religion is philosophical wisdom in its highest sense. There are many specialized wisdom, but the highest is that which considers the first causes of the universe and divine truth as far as we can know it. The task of the wise person is to explore and affirm divine truth and at the same time refute opposing errors. Among all human pursuits, this task is the most perfect, most noble, most useful and most full of joy.

It is the most perfect because, in so far as one gives oneself to the pursuit of wisdom, so far does one even now have some share in true beatitude. "Blessed is the one who meditates on wisdom" (Sirach 14:20); "Whoever is given wisdom is given a great blessing" (Qur'ân 2:269).

It is more noble because through this pursuit one especially approaches to a likeness to God, who "made all things in wisdom" (Ps 104:24); "Blessed be God the best Creator" (Qur'ân 23:14). Since likeness is the cause of love, the pursuit of wisdom surely joins one to God in friendship. That is why it is said of wisdom that "she is an inexhaustible treasure to men, and those who acquire it win God's friendship" (Wisdom 7:14); "God was pleased with them, and they were pleased with God, that is, they who respect God" (Qur'ân 98:8).

It is more useful because through wisdom we arrive at the kingdom of immortality. "Honor wisdom, so that you may reign forever" (Wisdom 6:21); "This is the straight path of your Lord; we favored with signs the people who recall them; they have an abode of peace with their Lord . . ." (Qur'ân 6:166-7).

It is more full of joy because "nothing is bitter in her company; when life is shared with her there is no pain, nothing but pleasure and joy" (Wisdom 8:16); "There they hear no offence, but only 'peace'; there they receive blessing morning and evening" (Qur'ân 19:62).

Revelation Includes Truth about God That Reason Can Reach (I:4)

There are some intelligible truths about God that are open to human reason; there are others that absolutely surpass its power. This book concentrates on the former. We could ask, if some truths about God can be known by reason, whether it was useless for them also to be revealed. But if people were left to discover these truths by themselves, without revelation, there would be three undesirable consequences:

The first is that few men would possess the knowledge of God, because most people suffer from any of three impediments: First, many people do not have the ability or frame of mind to apply themselves to serious study; however much they tried, they would be unable to reach the highest level of human knowledge which consists in knowing God. Secondly, others are deterred from pursuing this truth by the necessities imposed upon them by their daily lives. For some men must devote themselves to taking care of temporal matters. Such men would not be able to give so much time to the leisure of contemplative inquiry as to reach the highest peak at which human investigation can arrive, namely, the knowledge of God. Finally, there are some who are deterred by laziness. That is because metaphysics, which deals with divine things, is the last part of philosophy to be learned, and it presupposes much other knowledge that can be had only with a

great deal of labour. Those who wish to undergo such labour are few, even though God has inserted into the minds of men a natural appetite for knowledge.

The second consequence is that those who would succeed in discovering this knowledge about God would barely reach it after a great deal of time. That is because divine truth is very deep and it presupposes a long training in other subjects. Secondly, young people are distracted by other interests and ambitions and seldom have the emotional tranquillity necessary for the study of such lofty truth. So, if reason were the only way to know God, the human race would remain in the darkest shadows of ignorance. For then the knowledge of God, which makes men perfect and good, would come to be possessed only by a few, and these few would require a long time in order to reach it.

The third undesirable consequence is due to the fact that human reason is prone to error. This is because of the weakness of our intellect in judgment and the admixture of imagination, which obscures the force of reason, and weakness of will which prevents us from following the truth. We can observe among philosophers that each one teaches his own brand of doctrine. So, to exclude error from our ideas of God, it was necessary that pure and certain truth concerning divine things should be presented to us by way of revelation.

Therefore it is written: "All your children will be taught by Yahweh" (Isaiah 54:13); "Since you believe, think of God, since he has taught you what you did not know" (Qur'ân 2:239).

Revelation also Includes Truth That Reason Cannot Demonstrate (I:5-6)

As will be shown later, divine providence ordained humans towards a higher good than human weakness can experience in this present life. It is necessary for the human mind to be taught something about this goal, so that it will desire it and zealously strive for it.

Likewise, even the most imperfect knowledge about the most noble realities brings the greatest perfection to the soul. Therefore, although human reason cannot grasp fully the truths that are above it, yet, if it somehow holds these truths at least by faith, it acquires great perfection for itself.

Therefore it is written: "What you have been taught already exceeds the scope of the human mind" (Sirach 3:23); "We do not know; only You are knowledgeable about the mysteries" (Qur'ân 5:109).

The acceptance of revelation, however, should not be a blind leap in the dark. Divine Wisdom reveals its own presence, as well as the truth of its teaching and inspiration, by fitting arguments. It also confirms its teaching by visible manifestations of divine power that surpass the ability of all nature. The greatest miracle is to find people, even in the midst of persecution, assenting to truths that surpass all human understanding and which draw people away from the pleasures of the flesh and the things of the world.

"God himself confirmed their witness with signs and marvels and miracles of all kinds, and by distributing the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the various ways he wills" (Hebrews 2:4); "We have sent down manifest signs, but God guides those he wishes" (Qur'ân 22:16).

Revelation And Reason Are Not Opposed (I:7-8)

There are certain basic truths that human reason is naturally endowed to know. Although revelation surpasses the capacity of human reason, nevertheless it cannot be opposed to these truths. For the basic truths that human reason knows are so clear that it is impossible for us to think

of such truths as false. Nor is it permissible to believe as false that which we hold by faith, since this is confirmed by divine authority.

Furthermore, God has implanted in us knowledge of the principles that are known to us naturally, for God is the author of our nature. Therefore whatever is opposed to them cannot come from God, and what comes from God by way of revelation cannot be contrary to our natural knowledge.

Thus we conclude that whatever arguments are brought forward against the doctrines of faith are conclusions incorrectly derived from the first and self-evident principles imbedded in nature. Such conclusions do not have the force of demonstration; they are arguments that are either probable or sophistical. And so, they can be refuted.

Procedure (I:9)

This book will not discuss teachings that are based solely on revelation. Rather, it will investigate the truth which faith (both Christian and Muslim) professes and reason also can investigate. This we shall do by bringing forward both demonstrative and probable arguments, some of which are drawn from the books of Greek and Arab philosophers, that truth may be strengthened and error overcome.

The subject of this book is God, as he can be investigated by human reason. Toward this goal, the first consideration is what belongs to God in himself. The second consideration is the emanation of creatures from God. The third is the ordering of creatures to God as their end.

Among the inquiries concerning God in himself, the first is his existence. For, if we do not demonstrate that God exists, all consideration of divine things is necessarily futile.

Part I

The Existence and Nature of God

The Opinion That God's Existence Is Self-Evident (I:10)

Some persons consider superfluous and impossible any attempt to demonstrate that God exists because, they say, his existence is self-evident, in such a way that the contrary cannot be entertained in the mind, as may be seen from the following arguments:

(1 - St. Anselm's argument): Those propositions are said to be self-evident that are known immediately upon the knowledge of their terms. Thus, as soon as you know the nature of a **whole** and the nature of a **part**, you know immediately that every whole is greater than its part. The proposition **God exists** is of this sort. For by the name God we understand something than which nothing greater can be thought. This notion is formed in the intellect by one who hears and understands the name **God**. As a result, God must exist already at least in the intellect. But he cannot exist solely in the intellect, since that which exists both in the intellect and in reality is greater than that which exists in the intellect alone. Now, as the very definition of the name points out, nothing can be greater than God. Consequently, the proposition that God exists is self-evident, as being evident from the very meaning of the name God.

(2) Since God's being is his essence, the question **What is he?** and the question **Is he?** have the same answer. Thus, in the proposition **God exists**, the predicate is either identical with the subject or at least included in the definition of the subject. Hence, that God exists is self-evident.

(3) What is naturally known is known through itself, for we do not come to such propositions through an effort of inquiry. But the proposition that God exists is naturally known since, as will be shown later, the desire of man naturally tends towards God as towards the ultimate end. The proposition that God exists is, therefore, self-evident.

(4) That through which everything else is known ought itself to be self-evident. Now, just as the light of the sun is the principle of all visible perception, so the divine light is the principle of all intelligible knowledge, since the divine light is that in which intelligible illumination is found first and in its highest degree. That God exists, therefore, must be self-evident.

By these and similar arguments some think that the proposition **God exists** is so self-evident that its contrary cannot be entertained by the mind.

A Refutation of the Above Opinion (I:11)

The above opinion arises partly from the fact that people, right from childhood, hear about God and are taught to call on his name. As a result, the mind holds on to the existence of God very firmly, as something known naturally and self-evidently.

This opinion also partly arises from a failure to distinguish between what is self-evident in an absolute sense and what is self-evident in relation to us. God's existence is most evident in itself, since he is his own being. But we do not see this being; so God's existence is not self-evident to us.

Contrary to the first argument, it does not follow immediately that, as soon as we know the meaning of the name **God**, that the existence of God is known. First of all, not even all those who admit that God exists accept that God is that than which nothing greater can be thought. After all, many ancients said that this world itself was God. What is more, granted that everyone should

understand by the name **God** something than which nothing greater can be thought, it will still not be necessary that there exist in reality such a thing. From the fact that we have such an idea, it only follows that it exists in the intellect. The proposition that in reality there is something than which nothing greater can be thought must be proved.

As for the second argument, just as it is self-evident to us that a whole is greater than a part, so to those seeing the divine essence in itself it is supremely self-evident that God exists because his essence is his being. But, because we are not able to see his essence, we arrive at a knowledge of his being, not through God himself, but through his effects.

The answer to the third argument is likewise clear. For man naturally knows God in the same way as he naturally desires God. Now, man naturally desires God in so far as he naturally desires happiness, which is a certain likeness of the divine goodness. On this basis, it is not necessary that God considered in himself be naturally known to man, but only a likeness of God. It remains, therefore, that man is to reach the knowledge of God through reasoning from the likenesses of God found in his effects.

As for the last argument, God is indeed that by which all things are known, not in the sense that they are not known unless he is known (as obtains among self-evident principles), but because all our knowledge is caused in us through his influence.

The Opinion That God's Existence Can Be Known by Faith Alone (I:12)

A contrary opinion to the above also makes any proof for the existence of God useless. It is that we cannot arrive at the existence of God through reason; it is received by way of faith and revelation alone. This is the common among some lines of modern philosophers of religion, who take it as a dogma that the existence of God cannot be proved by reason.

This opinion originated from the weakness of some of the arguments advanced to prove that God exists. It also originates from a general scepticism about the power of the human intellect to know anything. Positivist philosophers deny that we can know the essence of anything or the causal connection between one thing and another. Their denial of our ability to prove the existence of God is just one application of their position that we cannot prove that anything exists and cannot prove anything about any reality.

Some of these philosophers argue that, since all our knowledge takes its origin from the senses, and God transcends all sense and sensible things, his existence must be indemonstrable.

Others, following the teaching of philosophers and theologians that we cannot know what God is and that we cannot define him, conclude that we cannot prove his existence. That is because every demonstration is based on the definition of a thing.

This opinion goes against all common sense and science and the art of logic, which teaches us to arrive at causes from their effects. If there is no knowable substance higher than sensible substance, there will be no science higher than physics [Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, IV, 3]. But from ancient times philosophers have tried to prove that immaterial substances exist and that God is the cause of all existence. Likewise we read: "The invisible things of God are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made" (Romans 1:20). "Blessed be He who set lights in the sky and set their a lamp and an illuminating moon. He is the one who made night and day succeed one another, for whoever wishes to reflect or be thankful" (Qur'ân 25:21-22).

We assume that we can know what created things are and their causal connections. Yet we do not argue from a knowledge of what God is to the fact of his existence. Rather, we argue from his effects to the fact of his existence. His effects give us an imperfect knowledge of what he is, since

divine names are derived either by negating creaturely imperfections of him or by relating God in some way to his effects.

Although God transcends all sensible things and sense knowledge, his effects, on which the demonstration proving his existence is based, are nevertheless sensible things. Knowledge of these sensible things leads us to knowledge of God who transcends sense.

Insufficient Arguments for the Existence of God (I:13)

Anselm's Argument

The position of St. Anselm that God's existence is self-evident is sometimes presented as "the ontological proof": It would be impossible to have an idea of an infinite, perfect being if there were no such being really existing. The argument was taken up by Descartes, Leibnitz and Hegel. Its refutation by Thomas Aquinas, given above, is sufficient. Today no school of philosophical thought upholds the ontological argument.

The Ash'arite Argument

Another argument, presented by many Ash'arite Muslim theologians, is based on the premise that the world must have had a beginning in time. It could not begin to exist by itself, but must have been produced by an eternal all-powerful being, which we call God. They attempt to prove the premise that the world had a beginning in time from the fact that a world that existed from eternity would imply an infinite series of nights and days and of generation of men and animals. Such an infinite series, they say, is impossible. Therefore the world began in time.

The weakness of this argument is the premise that an infinite temporal succession is impossible. Such a series is not infinite in act, but only in potency. Here and now only a finite number of things exist. We cannot prove by reason that the world either had a beginning or did not have a beginning, but its creation in time can only be known from revelation. There is more discussion of this point in Section II, on creation.

Arguments in Proof of the Existence of God (I:13)

Arguments from Motion and Efficient Causality

The argument of Aristotle from motion is listed by Thomas Aquinas as the "first and most manifest" of his "five ways" [*Summa theologiae*, I, q.2, a.3]. It goes as follows: Everything that is moved is moved by another. That some things are in motion — for example, the sun — is evident from the senses. Therefore, it is moved by something else that moves it. This mover is itself either moved or not moved. If it is not, we have reached our conclusion — namely, that we must posit some unmoved mover. This we call God. If it is moved, it is moved by another mover. We must, consequently, either proceed to infinity, or we must arrive at some unmoved mover. Now, it is impossible to proceed to infinity. Hence, we must posit some prime unmoved mover.

Aristotle argues for the proposition that everything that is moved is moved by another by pointing out that self-motion, applicable to animals, is possible only by one part moving another, and ultimately by the soul. He explains that violent motion, obviously, must come from an outside agent. Natural motion, however, such as the gravitational falling of bodies when an impediment is

removed, proceeds from the substantial form of the body, which is an active principle of motion. It does not depend on any mover here and now, but only indirectly, in that the active form was given to it by whatever generated or gave it being. As a general principle, to be moved is to go from potency to act; yet nothing can be at the same time in act and in potency with respect to the same thing; therefore to be moved must mean to be moved by another.

Aristotle also argues that there can be no procession to infinity among movers and things moved. Such a series must be of bodies in contact with one another, so that they move and are moved simultaneously as a single series. But if there is no first mover, all the other intermediary movers or instruments will not be activated, and there will be no motion.

The context of this argument becomes apparent from Aristotle's cosmological treatise, *On the heavens*, where he makes it clear that all life on earth depends on the sun. Its changing positions bring the wind, rain and heat that bring about all motion on the earth. Since he believed in an eternal universe, he held that the sun is incorruptible; it heats, but is not hot or on fire. Likewise he maintained that the sun's motion around the earth (according to the Ptolemaic theory) was not a natural motion, like gravity, but required constantly renewed energy to keep it going. Aristotle had no idea of impetus (or inertia), whereby an agent can communicate to a projectile a transient accidental form-resembling the permanent form of gravity — that keeps it in motion until this form is corrupted by resistance (Thomas did know of impetus — *Commentary on the Physics*, Book 7, lesson 3 — but failed to apply it to the cosmos). Aristotle realized that no power could keep fuelling the sun, moon and the planets on their daily course around the earth for eternity unless it had infinite energy. Infinite energy cannot be contained in any body. Therefore the movers of these heavenly bodies must be spirits. These spirits carry out this task in service of the earth below out of love of the supreme principle of the universe, God himself.

Aristotle's universe consisted of a chain of movers depending here and now on a spiritual source. But once we introduce the notion of impetus — to say that the heavenly bodies are no different from man — launched satellites kept in motion by the two vectors of gravity and an impetus perpendicular to gravity, which need no refuelling but require only their initial propulsion — then there is no need to postulate spiritual forces to push the moon and other heavenly bodies. Once they were initially set in motion, they go on by themselves, just like natural motion, which Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas said requires no efficient cause here and now.

By the principle "Whatever is moved is moved by another" Aristotle and Thomas never meant that "Whatever is in motion is moved by another," but "Whatever is set in motion is set in motion by another." Modern physics shows that the heavenly bodies were set in motion in the distant past and need no additional energy to keep on going. Thus the argument from motion, as Aristotle's constructed it, carries no weight. And once we try to construct a chain of movers going into the past we arrive at nothing certain.

Thomas' "second way" [S.T., I, q.2, a.3] is that a chain of efficient causes cannot go back infinitely, but must reach a first efficient cause, which is God. This argument is simply a rephrasing of the argument from motion in more general metaphysical terms, and it has the same weakness as that argument: In the "sensible things" that we experience all the chains of efficient causality resolve in accidental dependence on causes in the past. A child depends on its parent for its becoming, but not for its present existence.

Many modern Thomists try to disengage Thomas' argument from motion from its cosmological context and reinterpret it in a broader metaphysical sense of "divine pre-motion". But this is to distort the actual thought of Thomas. It is true he had a place for "divine pre-motion",

but his argument for a prime mover is fundamentally a physical theory based on his philosophy of nature.

[On the other hand, while this proof begins from the physical (moving or changing) universe it concludes to the need for a cause which must be simply other (SCG, 12-13). Kenny's insistence on restricting this within the cosmos as context is certainly contrary to the intent of Thomas, whose entire concern in this chapter is the existence not of the cosmos, but of God.

A few paragraphs later Thomas, in this third proof (n. 15-35) repeats the argumentation from motion to an unmoved reality. At this point he insists that all issues about intermediate bodies or planets are simply irrelevant because in the context of his concerns the real issue is whether the non changing reality is self-explanatory or not. If yes then it is God; if no then a self-explanatory cause is necessary. Here he cites Aristotle's *Metaphysics* explicitly three times (n, 28, 33 and 34), but says nothing about *On the Heavens*. Changing Thomas's explicit context assures invalidate the conclusion, but that is due to having turned away from the argumentation.

It is the central intent of Thomas in this work is to identify the ways by which reason can come to see all things as related to God — the "religatio" or "binding back" of all to God which is an etymology of the terms religion. Cosmologists rightly suppose motion and moving things; some relate them to the supposition of a "Big Bang". But whatever be their suppositions, Thomas's questions remain: by what, how, and for what? Applied systemically these inexorably take one beyond the physics and cosmology to self-sufficient or absolute being in which all else participates. G.F.M.]

The Argument from Contingency

Thomas' "third way" is taken from what is possible or necessary: We find some things that are possible to exist or not exist, since they are generated and corrupted. It is impossible for such things to exist forever, since what can cease to exist will one day not exist. But if everything has no necessity of existing, then at one time nothing must have existed. In such a case nothing could have come into existence, because everything must start from something. But, since things do exist, they must depend on something necessary. Some things, like incorruptible spirits, have a relative necessity for continuing to exist, but even these must depend on something absolutely necessary in itself, which we call God.

This proof assumes the important Thomistic principle of the real distinction between essence and existence in everything but God, a principle which goes back to Ibn-Sînâ and Boethius and even more remotely, but less clearly, to Aristotle. The essences of the things we know are in potency to the act of existence, which may or may not be present. All such things are contingent beings, dependent here, now and always on the direct action of One whose essence is identical with its existence to sustain it in being. Contingent beings depend on natural causes for their coming into being, but natural causes are restricted to the individual essences of their effects. For instance, a cat gives birth to this kitten, but in replicating itself the cat does not confer or sustain the existence of the kitten. Existence is a universal effect and must be referred to a universal cause, which is God.

In this sense, not only the substances of things but all natural causality and motion, as a sort of being, is immediately dependent on God, and we can say that he gives the power to act, preserves it, applies it to act and enters into the action itself. But he does not supplant nature on its specific level of causality; rather it is his instrument.

The root of the distinction between a contingent and absolutely necessary being is the fact that contingent beings have some measure of potentiality, whereas God, the absolutely necessary being, is completely in act. It follows too, as the argument from motion tried to show, that God is completely unchangeable and unmovable, since any change or motion implies a transit from potentiality to actuality.

The argument from contingency supposes the fact and knowability of causality on both the sensible or physical level and on a metaphysical level. This, of course, is contrary to Hume's reduction of all causality to the merely temporal order of succession. [But that supposition restricts knowledge to sensible phenomena, in which terms the question of the existence of God cannot even come up, much less be resolved. Aristotle and Thomas do not simply suppose that we can know only in sense terms, or that we can know the non physical; rather they carry out the hard reasoning to show the impossibility of physical or changing realities without a non changing cause. G.F.M.]

The Argument from Gradation of Perfection

Thomas' "fourth way" is taken from the gradation of being. Things have degrees of goodness, truth, nobility etc. But greater and lesser in any genus is always in reference to what is most in that genus. Therefore there should be something which is most perfectly good, true and noble, and consequently is most perfectly being, since being, truth and goodness are interchangeable. But what is greatest in any genus is the cause of what is less in that genus. So in the order of being in general, there must be a cause for the being, goodness and any perfection of all things. And that we call God.

Whereas the third way is based on the act of existence, this argument is based on the essential perfection scattered throughout the various species of being. All of these species have limited perfection, implying not only contingency of existence but also a dependency of sharing or participation in the perfect essence, which has all these perfection united together in the supreme degree (and consequently is not distinct from its existence). Thus God is the author or designer of each distinct species or nature, although individual natural causes multiply individuals within that species. [The argument here is not properly one of efficient causality. To that it adds a relation of formal causality, Platonic in character, whereby all creatures participate in, and hence manifest to their own degree, the divine perfection of unity and truth, goodness and beauty. It is notable that this list of perfections are fully open to both the physical and the non physical orders. He speaks here of levels of truth and even of the nobility of all creatures in terms which transcend even our present claims to human dignity. G.F.M.]

The Argument from Design

Thomas' "fifth way" is taken from design. St. John of Damascus proposed it [*De fide orthodoxa*, I, 3]; it was taken up by Ibn-Tufayl (*ayy ibn-Yaqân*, pp. 176-177) and by Ibn-Rushd (*Tahâfut at-Tahâfut*, II, p. 647, 658; *Manâhij al-adilla*, p. 110; cfr. pp. 65-70, 77, 109-131). The natural things of the world, though lacking knowledge, act for a purpose. That they do so regularly and in the same way shows that they do not do so by chance but by intention. Since they do not have intelligence themselves, they must be directed by an outside Intelligence that orders all things to their proper goals, and that we call God.

This argument is based on two distinct areas of design. Which is the more marvelous is hard to say. The first is the internal order of any natural unit: Whether we examine a human body, an

insect or a chemical, we find a complicated order of parts, elements and sub-atomic particles that baffles the mind, all working together to make the natural unit function well. The more one studies biology and chemistry, the more one is struck by the design found in nature.

The second area of design is the co-ordination of distinct natural units to form an eco-system that sustains life on this planet. It is the nature of a banana plant to produce bananas, but that they should be food for men is an extrinsic purpose. Emphasis on ecology in recent years has only highlighted the complex interdependency of all the varied living and non-living components of this world. Thomas argues that contrary and discordant things cannot, always or for the most part, be parts of one order except under someone's government, which enables all and each to tend to a definite end. But that is what we find in this world. So there must be a God by whose providence the world is governed.

This argument has been contested on two fronts. The first objection is that it presupposes teleology as developed by Aristotle, which is the use of final cause in scientific explanation. Much modern thought, inspired by Darwin, had denied final causality, purpose or function in nature, and attempted to explain everything by chance or the survival of the fittest, both in the evolution of natural species and in the order of the cosmos. Yet the order of the universe is too obvious and too inherent to be denied. The role of science is to lend precision to sense data, not to deny it.

Another objection comes from the fact of evil in the world. On the level of the natural unit there is deformity, sickness and death. On the cosmic level there are earthquakes, plagues and other natural disasters that make human existence, at least, seem to be at the mercy of chance. Yet all these evils only go to prove that we expect health and order as a norm. The question of evil will be discussed in greater detail later, in connection with divine providence.

Negative Attributes (I:15)

Once we know that God exists, we would like to know what he is. Here the way of negation is paramount. For the divine substance is greater than everything we know. We cannot approach knowing him as he really is. Positive statements [such as those we have seen regarding his existence and truth, goodness and beauty tell us much about the source of our being. This, in turn, tells us especially what it really means for us, as participants who image this Being, to live ourselves and with others in this world. But to his proper transcendence and inner life they are not proportionate. Hence they tell us very little about what or whom he properly is for that would be to live life divine itself or to be God. G.F.M.] The more then we establish what he is not and how he is different from all else, the better we know him. This negative process of refining more and more what God is not contrasts with the progress of our knowledge of earthly things where we first determine their genus and then move to more and more specific and detailed positive knowledge.

The first and basic negative attribute of God is that he is **unchangeable**, as Scripture confirms: "I, Yahweh, do not change" (Malachi 3:6); "With him there is no such thing as alteration, no shadow caused by change" (James 1:17); "Everyone on earth fades away; only the face of your Lord endures, the Glorious and Honorable" (Qur'ân 55:26-27).

God is also **eternal** (I:15). This follows from the fact that he is unchangeable, neither coming into being or altering or ceasing to exist. Since there is no change or motion in him, there can be no time, which is the measure of motion, and there can be no before or after. So he possesses his whole existence or life all at once, without any succession. Thus we read: "You, Yahweh, sit

enthroned from eternity; your throne endures from age to age. . . . You remain the same, and your years will never end" (Psalm 102). "Everything is perishing except his face" (Qur'ân 28:88).

Likewise, God has **no passive potency** (I:16), which is the capability of becoming in any way otherwise than he always is. That is because he is the first and necessary being, fully in act and unchangeable.

He is also **immaterial** (I:17), because matter is a passive potency enabling something to become otherwise than it is. Therefore he cannot be the matter or substance of other things, as all varieties of pantheism maintain. Today we find Hinduism (including Hari Krishna), the Grail Movement, the writer Kazanzakhas, and so many other movements claiming that divinity is a force pervading the universe. It is particularly concentrated wherever there is consciousness, especially in minds purified of sensual disturbances who gaze inwards on themselves and see the divine power that resides there, which is the person's real identity. Any person's true goal, they say, is to return and merge with the divine source from which it was taken, like a spark from a fire. But we say that God created the universe as an efficient cause, and nothing went out of him to become part of creation.

God also has **no composition of parts** (I:18). That is because parts are in potency to their act of union in a whole, and again the whole is potentially dissolvable into its parts. Any such composition or dissolution supposes an outside agent, but there is no prior agent acting on God. So God is **simple**, having his total perfection in his indivisible being, and not dispersed in parts which are imperfect with respect to a whole.

There is **nothing violent or unnatural** in God (I:19), because any such thing would be extrinsic to God, whereas he is simple, without any composition, necessarily existent of himself and independent of any outside agent.

Similarly, God is **not a body** (I:20), since any body is composed of parts and is subject to division, whereas God is simple and pure act without any passive potency.

Likewise every body is finite and mobile, which God is not.

Furthermore, corporeity is the lowest common denominator of physical beings, while life and intelligence are special higher perfection; God, who is the highest being, should not be reduced to the lowest level of being.

Therefore we read: "God is spirit, and those who worship must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24); "To the eternal King, the undying, invisible and only God be honor and glory for ever and ever" (1 Timothy 1:17). "That is God, my Lord in whom I trust and on whom I rely, Creator of the heavens and the earth, who made couples from among yourselves and couples among your flocks, multiplying you thereby. There is nothing that resembles him" (Qur'ân 42:10-11).

God is **not distinct from his own essence**, or divinity (I:21). This contrasts with earthly things, where, for example, we are not identical with our humanity, but each one of us adds to our humanity our own individuality, which is based on quantifiably distinct matter. This cannot apply to God because he is immaterial; besides, any distinction between his nature and his individuality would be a kind of composition of act and potency.

God's **essence and existence are identical** (I:22); otherwise he would not exist necessarily; besides he would be composed of something potential and actual, and would depend on an outside cause to actualize the composition. God would then have being by participation in this outside agent. But he is the first cause. Therefore his essence must be his own existence. So we read: "I am he who is. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I am has sent me to you'" (Exodus 3:13-14). "God — there is no divinity other than He — the living, the subsistent, is not subject to slumber or sleep; his is everything in heaven and on earth" (Qur'ân 2:255).

God has **nothing accidental** to his essence (I:23). Since he is his very existence which is perfect act he cannot participate in something additional, like an accident. Accidents would also imply potency to receiving them, composition, changeability and dependency on an outside cause. Divine perfection would likewise demand that he have every perfection in the most perfect way, which is by way of identity.

This position is in accord with the medieval Muslim philosophers and the Mu'tazilite school of theology, but not with the Ash'arite theologians who held that there is a real distinction among the positive attributes of God (such as his knowledge, power and will) and between these attributes and God's essence, even though they say that these attributes are inseparable from God.

God cannot be designated by any **specific difference** (I:24): for example, if we were to understand *supreme* Being in the same way as we define man as a *rational* animal. Otherwise his essence would be incomplete and in potency with respect to the difference which determines his essence and makes it actual and real.

In the same way God cannot be put in any **genus** (I:25), such would be the case were we to understand being as something univocally common to all things, including God. No genus, such as animal, exists by itself, but requires a specific difference making it this or that kind of animal; but God cannot be designated by a specific difference. Moreover, "being" cannot be a genus, since being cannot be differentiated into any species except by being [Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, III, 8]. Nor can God be put in the genus of "substance" or "essence", since there is no aspect of his essence which is not identical with his existence; so there is nothing univocally in common between his essence and that of anything else.

Therefore God cannot be defined, since any proper definition is by way of genus and specific difference. And, since a definition is the principle of demonstrating any property of a subject, there can be no proper demonstration of any of God's attributes. Rather, the only kind of demonstration that can be made regarding God is from his effects.

God is **not the existence of all things** (I:26). Many of the pantheistic movements discussed above under the heading of "God is immaterial" are really dualistic, saying that divinity is the pure energy of the universe, but that matter is a diluting and weakening factor, so that all human endeavor should be to purify oneself from things material so as to develop a higher concentration of divine energy.

If God were the being or energy of the universe, everything would be one with no distinction, since differences come from distinct particular natures. These moreover cannot be being itself; rather, they derive being from their form and from outside agents. God also would either have to be the subject of the generation and corruption that we see in the universe, or generation and corruption in the world would be impossible, since God is fully in act. Whereas we read: "You are Yahweh Most High, over all the earth Most Great; you are high above all the gods" (Ps 97:9). "God is Most High, the true King, besides whom there is no deity, the Lord of the throne of honor" (Qur'ân 23:111).

The error of pantheism sometimes comes from a misunderstanding of such passages as "In him we live and move and exist" (Acts 17:28) or "so that God may be all in all" (1 Cor 15:28), which are to be understood as indicating that God is the cause of all things, to whom everything is present. Another factor contributing to pantheism is confusion in attempting to understand the fundamental principles of the universe:

Some confuse divine being, which is perfect act, with logical being, a most general concept that is common to everything; the latter is the basic and most imperfect of all our concepts and must be determined by a genus and specific difference to correspond to something really existing.

Others follow a physical approach, searching for the simplest underlying principle of all things, which they take as some underlying single type of energy, differentiated only by the measure of matter affecting it. In so doing, they neither give credit to the role of specific forms in determining what any nature is, nor do they see the difference between the self-subsistent energy of the divine being and the energy that atomic physicists see as a potentiality of some particles subjected to fission or fusion.

God is not the **form of a body** (I:27), like the soul of the world. That is because God is being itself, which does not admit of anything extrinsic. Likewise the form of a body is only a principle of being and part of a composite whole.

Similarly, God is not **number**, as the Grail Movement maintains, saying that the divine substance of all things is number deriving from unity and trinity where divinity is concentrated and has its source. This theory repeats the error of the Pythagoreans and of Plato, who confused the unity that is the characteristic of the indivisibility of a substance with quantity, which is a positive bodily attribute. So we read: "Can you claim to fathom the depth of God, can you reach the limit of Shaddai? It is higher than the heavens: what can you do? It is deeper than Sheol: what can you know?" (Job 11:7-8). "To him belong all who are in heaven and earth, and they bow down to him. He initiates life and restores it, and it is easy for him; he is the supreme exemplar in heaven and earth, the powerful and wise" (Qur'ân 30:26-27).

Positive Attributes in General (I:28-36)

God is **perfect** (I:28). In the gradations of physical things, the higher possess the perfection of the lower; thus living things are bodies but have something additional. So God, who is his very being, has every perfection that can be said of being, and lacks no goodness that can be found partially in other things. On the other hand, he does not have their defects, which are really the lack of some being.

Likewise, because God is the fullness of act and the cause of all other things, he must have all the perfection of these things, since an effect can fall short of a cause but cannot surpass it in perfection; rather the perfection it has is by participation in the perfection of the cause.

So we read: "Moses said, 'Please show me your glory.' Yahweh said, 'I shall make all my goodness pass before you, and before you I shall pronounce the name Yahweh'" (Exodus 33:18), indicating that He-who-is [Yahweh] has all goodness. "It is we who make things live and make things die, and we are the inheritors" (Qur'ân 15:23); "To God belongs the inheritance of the heavens and the earth" (Qur'ân 3:180), indicating that all the perfection that creatures have belong to God.

In creatures there is a **resemblance of God** (I:29), since any effect participates in the perfection of its cause. The resemblance differs, however, according to the cause: Natural effects have the same nature as their cause, as offspring and parents. But a work of art does not resemble the nature of the artist but only his idea. Thus creatures differ from God in nature, yet they have an imperfect resemblance to him. So we sometimes hear this resemblance affirmed: "Let us make man in our own image, in the likeness of ourselves" (Genesis 1:28), and sometimes we hear it denied: "To whom can you compare God? What image can you contrive of him?" (Isaiah 40:18). "There is nothing like him" (Qur'ân 42:11).

It is more correct to say that creatures resemble God than to say that God resembles creatures, because God is the perfect exemplar whose perfection are reflected in a very imperfect way in creatures.

How do we **name** God (I:30)? In our language about God we use terms taken from our experience of creatures. Since God has in a superior way every perfection that creatures have, any name that designates a perfection without implying any defect can properly be used of God, such as goodness, wisdom, being, etc. But names that express a perfection in a limited way, such as the names of any species of things or of their proper activities, cannot apply to God, unless metaphorically in poetic language. Thus God cannot be called a stone or a man and he cannot be said to walk. Nevertheless, the Psalms especially use much metaphors in describing God, calling him a "Rock", a "Fortress", etc. These terms are called anthropomorphisms, describing God in human terms, and are to be understood as pictorial symbols of immaterial perfection.

Yet even names that imply no imperfection limp in describing God. That is because in our way of thinking which starts from sensible things where we distinguish between a concrete thing, which is composed of matter and form (e.g., man), and the form it possesses (e.g., humanity), which is simple but not subsistent. Either way we have something imperfect. Thus "goodness" is abstract and not subsistent, and the "good" is concrete and composite. So these names can be denied of God if we focus on the way they express meaning, but they can be affirmed of him if we focus on the reality they refer to. To correct the limitations of our concrete and abstract nouns or adjectives, we sometimes add a qualification which is either negative (e.g. *infinite*) or relative (e.g., *first* cause, *supreme* good). For we cannot grasp what God is but what he is not and how other things are related to him.

God has **many names** (I:31), because as a cause he does not have any effect that resembles him in nature and can be predicated univocally of him, but only analogously and in infinitely different ways, like so many dispersed reflections. The names that apply properly to God do so not merely because he is a cause — since he is the cause of everything — but because we somewhat imitate and participate in that perfection, e.g. wisdom, which we do in many different ways. If we were able to understand his essence as he is, one name would be enough, as is promised to be the case for us one day: "When that day come, Yahweh will be the one and only and his name the one name" (Zechariah 14:9), if we refer this passage not merely to the Messianic age but also to the end of time. "Call on either Allâh or ar-Ramân. Whatever name you call him by, he has the most beautiful names" (Qur'ân 17:110).

None of God's names, however, applies **univocally** to him and creatures (I:32), since creatures do not replicate his nature. Also, God is outside any genus of predication. Furthermore, he has all perfection in undivided unity and the supreme degree of intensity, while other things have them divided and in limited degrees of participation. But whatever applies to several things unequally, according to an order of priority and posteriority, is not univocal. For example, "being" applies first to substance and secondarily to accidents; so it is not univocal. The same holds for any attribute said of God and creatures.

On the other hand, these names are not said of God and creatures **equivocally** (I:33), because equivocal terms apply to totally unrelated things, for example the *bank* of a river or a *bank* where money is kept, but in the case of God and creatures there is some likeness, so that knowledge of creatures leads us to knowledge of God; otherwise we could not know that he exists or anything about him.

Rather these names apply to God and creatures **analogously** (I:34). In any analogy a name applies to one thing first of all and to other things secondarily. A common example is "health" in an animal and in medicine, where we say that an animal is the proper subject of health, whereas medicine is only a cause. But this creates a problem, because we do not say that God is being and goodness because he is the cause of being and goodness in creatures, since this would imply that

real goodness and being is principally in creatures and God must be defined in relationship to them. Rather it is the other way around. So we must distinguish: According to the order of our knowledge, being, goodness, etc., are first in creatures, but in reality they are first in God, because as a cause he possesses these qualities pre-eminently.

Likewise, the names of God are not **synonyms** (I:35). Although they all signify the same reality, they do so under different aspects according as God's perfection is reflected in different ways in creatures, and these correspond to distinct ideas in our knowledge. Any name first of all signifies an idea before it signifies reality. In the same way, our **statements** about God (I:36), such as "God is goodness" or "Goodness is in God", are true, because any distinction in our minds between subject and predicate refers only to our thought, but the unity of the two refers to God.

Attributes Pertaining to God's Nature (I:37-43)

God is **good** (I:37). That is because goodness consists in desirability, and that is found in perfection. So God, being perfect, is good. Goodness also consists in being or act, while evil is a lack of being or act; God, however, is being fully in act. God's goodness is also shown from the goodness that he diffuses to others. So we hear: "Israel, how good God is to those who are pure of heart" (Psalm 73:1). "God is the Provident [Razzâq], endowed with power, and solid" (Qur'ân 51:58).

He is **goodness itself** (I:38). Since he is his very existence, he is identified with any quality he has. So goodness cannot be anything additional to him; otherwise he would only have it by participation in something better. Thus only God is goodness itself: "No one is good but God alone" (Mark 10:18). "But the face of your Lord is everlasting, endowed with majesty and honor" (Qur'ân 55:27).

There can be **no evil** in God (I:39). Since God is unmixed being and goodness, he is unlike anything that has being and goodness in a limited and participatory way. His own being is also perfect and fully in act, which excludes evil. Evil is also violent and contrary to nature; as such, it implies a struggle between two forces. But there is no composition in God; so there can be no evil in him. Thus we read: "Far be evil from God, or injustice from Shaddai! (Job 34:10). "God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all" (1 John 1:5). "Whoever acts virtuously does so to himself; whoever acts wickedly is accountable for it. Your Lord is not unjust to his servants" (Qur'ân 41:46).

God is the **good of every good** (I:40). That is, his goodness includes the perfection of every other thing, since everything else is good only by participation in his goodness. He is also the good of every good in the sense that he is the final goal of all other things, which either serve him or also know and love him. So we read: "In her company all good things came to me" (Wisdom 7:11). "God is kind to his servants, providing for those he chooses" (Qur'ân 42:19).

God is the **supreme good** (I:41), as he is the universal good, compared with the particular goodness of every other thing. Likewise he is good by his essence and not by participation, as is everything else.

Likewise, not having any potentiality or evil in him, he is uniquely the perfect good.

So we read: "There is no Holy One like Yahweh" (1 Samuel 2:2). "Everything in the heavens and on earth praises God, the King, the Holy One, the Strong and the Wise" (Qur'ân 62:1).

God is **one** (I:42), since any multiplicity would mean that each would have something distinctive which the other lacks. But God lacks nothing, and he is absolutely perfect. Besides, any distinctive note would imply composition, which God does not have.

Likewise, God's rule of the world is not divided, but everything participates in his being as a single principle of the universe.

So we read: "Listen, Israel: Yahweh our God is the one, the only Yahweh" (Deuteronomy 6:4). "Do not take two deities. God is only one deity. So fear me" (Qur'ân 16:51). "Were there other divinities than God in heaven and earth, these would perish" (Qur'ân 21:22).

The oneness of God is compromised in African and some other traditional religions which, though acknowledging a supreme deity, do not accord him full control over subordinate spirits. The latter, like corrupt junior officers in a company, can frustrate the good intention of their head unless they receive their own appeasement from clients.

As for the intrinsic unity of God, we saw how this is compromised by Ash'arite theologians who make a real distinction among the attributes of God. The medieval Muslim philosophers and Mu'tazilite theologians, as well as Christian theologians, do not allow any such distinction. We can note that Christian theology explains the distinction of the persons of the Trinity in terms of subsistent relations within a single substance, but a discussion of the Trinity is outside the scope of this book.

God is **infinite** (I:43), not in the primitive quantitative sense of number which can always be added to, or of extension which can always be further divided, but in the sense of spiritual greatness. That is equivalent to God's active power, which corresponds to the goodness or perfection of his own nature, since for incorporeal things the greater is the better.

God's infinity stems from his existing in full actuality, not contracted by the potentiality of any subject, for just as prime matter is infinite in its potency, so pure act is infinite in perfection. Furthermore, were God to be finite, our intellect, which can extend its conception indefinitely, could conceive of something greater than God. So we read: "Great is Yahweh, praiseworthy his Eminence, for his greatness has no limit" (Psalm 145:3). "To God belongs the rule of the heavens and the earth and all that is in them. He is powerful over all things" (Qur'ân 5:120).

God's Knowledge (I:44-63)

God is **intelligent** (I:44). That is because intellectual knowledge is the presence of forms in the mind in an immaterial way; thus knowledge is universal and not particular. The more something is removed from matter, the more actually intelligible it is. God, who is completely immaterial and actually intelligible, must also be intelligent in act, since knowledge is union with what is intelligible in act.

Besides, God has all the perfection of his creatures, the best of which is intelligence.

Also, natural things do not operate by chance, but in a determined way and for a specific purpose; since they have no intelligence themselves, this purpose must come from the One who set up their nature and keeps them in being.

So we read: "Too overpowering for me is your knowledge, too towering, I cannot master it" (Psalm 139:6). "How rich and deep are the wisdom and the knowledge of God!" (Romans 11:33). "With him are the keys of the mysteries; only he knows them. He knows what is on the dry land and in the sea. Not a leaf falls but he knows it, nor a grain into the dark earth nor a fresh or dry branch but it is all in a clear book" (Qur'ân 6:59).

God's **knowing is his essence** (I:45), since his act of knowing is intrinsic to him, and anything in God is identical to his essence and existence. Also, his knowledge cannot be habitual without being always actual, because there is no potency in God. Nor can his knowing be anything extrinsic to him; otherwise his essence would need completion outside itself. Since, then, God's knowing is

his very being, it must be simple, eternal, invariable and always in act, as other divine attributes. Therefore God cannot add to his knowledge which is eternally infinite and all encompassing or can there be any change or composition in his simple and perfect act of knowing.

God **knows everything else through his essence** (I:46), which means that his knowledge does not derive from the way things are and his knowledge has no dependence on them; rather they are completely dependent on him. That is because his intellect is completely in act and identical with his own perfect being, with no potency to receive anything from outside.

So God **knows himself perfectly** (I:47). For knowledge to be perfect, the idea must perfectly correspond to the object and must perfectly exist in the knower. But God's essence, which is the idea or medium by which he knows, is identical to himself and to his intellect; so he must know himself perfectly.

Moreover, knowledge consists in the union of the intellect in act and the intelligible in act; but God's essence and intellect are perfectly in act and identical with one another.

Also, the perfection and happiness of any intellectual substance is to know what is perfectly intelligible, which is God's essence.

Therefore, as intellectual creatures achieve this goal to a limited degree, God must do so in a perfect way. So we read: "The Spirit explores the depths of everything, even the depths of God" (1 Corinthians 2:10). "Those who are in the heavens and on earth do not know the mystery — only God" (Qur'ân 27:65).

God's **self is the first and proper object of his knowledge** (I:48). That is because his essence is the medium of all his knowledge. Were other things included the focus of his knowledge would be divided and he would be in potency to extraneous intelligible things, which also are lower than himself.

Yet God does **know other things** (I:49). To know the cause is to know the effect; since God is the cause of those things and he knows himself perfectly, he must know them.

Also, since he is the exemplar which other things in some way resemble, the model of these things must exist in God, and this can be only in an intelligible way, since that is the nature of God.

So we hear: "Yahweh looked down from his holy height; from heaven to earth he gazed" (Psalm 102:20), as if to say that by knowing himself he knows other things. Likewise, "He is God, in the heavens and the earth; he knows what you do secretly and what you do openly, and he knows what you earn" (Qur'ân 6:3).

God has **proper knowledge of everything** (I:50), that is, his knowledge is not just universal, but he knows each thing as it is distinct from all else and from God. Since God is the cause of all being, there is nothing that is not caused either directly or indirectly by himself. Since he knows himself perfectly, he must know all else fully.

Also, the multiplicity of individual things in the world as individuals is not the work of nature, which is determined to one operation, even though it may be repeated. Rather, it takes an intellect which is the first cause to know everything as individual or [each thing in its uniqueness. This will be particularly important as regards the ability to recognize and take account of the unique and free creativity of persons and peoples, and hence to promote and relate their distinct cultural traditions in positive cooperation and dialogue. G.F.M.]

Besides, his knowledge is perfect and must extend to every aspect of what he knows. Likewise, if human beings can know individuals, much more can God.

So we read: "No created thing is hidden from him; everything is uncovered and stretched fully open to the eyes of the one to whom we must give account of ourselves (Hebrews 4:13). "God knows what is in the heavens and on earth. There are never three people conversing but he is the

fourth of them, or five but he is the sixth. Whether they are more or fewer, he is with them wherever they happen to be. Then, on the day of resurrection, he will tell them what they did. God is knowledgeable of everything" (Qur'ân 58:7).

In knowing many things, there is no multiplicity in God (I:51-54), because all these things are represented by his one simple and perfectly intelligible essence. His essence is both an efficient and an exemplary cause of everything. As exemplar, however, he does not have the same nature as creatures; otherwise he would be divided by every contrariety and distinction found in the world; rather, his nature contains virtually all lower perfection, somewhat as the number ten contains the perfection of lower numbers. So God knows how each creature both imitates and falls short of his own perfection. Thus Plato's theory of a separate world of exemplar forms is true to the extent that God knows that things can resemble him in many different ways, but, as a pattern for imitation, his essence is simply one and undivided.

God **knows everything at once** (I:55). Our own intellect cannot actually think of many things unless they are unified according to subject or relationship; so we cannot simultaneously think of completely disparate things. But God knows everything by one representation which is his essence and the constant object of his knowledge. Therefore he knows everything at once.

Besides, in God there is no potentiality to change, considering one thing after another.

So we read: "With him there is no such thing as alteration, no shadow caused by change" (James 1:17). "No one can have his life lengthened or shortened except as it is in his book; that is easy for God" (Qur'ân 35:11), implying that the "book" of his knowledge is complete and it is no effort for him to know and effect anything.

God's knowledge is **not habitual** (I:56), which is a half-way state between actual knowledge and ignorance. Otherwise he would not know everything all at once, and he would be in potency to actual knowledge and perfection. Likewise, his act of knowing would have to be distinct from his essence and he would not know by his essence. Since habitual knowledge is what we have when we are sleeping, we hear: "He never slumbers or sleeps, the guardian of Israel" (Psalm 121:4). "There is no divinity but God, the living and subsistent. He is not subject to slumber or sleep" (Qur'ân 2:255).

There is **no discursive reasoning** in God (I:57), which is arguing from premises to a conclusion. That is because God knows everything at once and not successively.

Moreover reasoning is going from potential knowledge of something to actual knowledge, and the premises are causes of the conclusion. But God has no potentiality and his knowledge is not caused or moved by anything. Rather, he knows everything naturally by his essence.

Moreover reasoning is a defective kind of knowledge proper to the human intellect which cannot see everything it knows at once.

Nonetheless, God understands human reasoning, but in him it is not step by step as with us. So we read: "Everything is uncovered and stretched fully open to his eyes" (Hebrews 4:13). "God knows what they hide and what they manifest; his is knowledgeable of the inside of hearts" (Qur'ân 11:5).

In God's knowledge there is **no composing and dividing** (I:58), as we do when we judge that "A is B" or "A is not B". Rather he knows what is and what is not by one look at his essence.

Furthermore, there is no composition in him, which would be the case were he to consider subject and predicate separately and make a judgement after prior knowledge of the subject's definition.

Nevertheless, God understands our own judgements since, though he is simply one, he is the exemplar of all multiple and composed things. So he knows multiple and composed things both in

the world of nature and in the world of human thought. Thus we read: "Yahweh knows the plans of men" (Psalm 94:11). "Your Lord knows what your hearts conceal and what they manifest" (Qur'ân 27:74).

There is **truth** in God (I:59-60), even though truth for us consists in judgement by composing and dividing and not in simple apprehension of what something is. For by his simple and perfect knowledge God knows what we judge, although he does so without composing and dividing. So the definition of truth as "the adequation of intellect and thing" [Ibn-Sînâ, *ash-Shifâ': al-ilâhiyyât*, I, 9] is true of God's knowledge, even though his manner of knowing is different.

Likewise, since "truth is the good of the intellect" [Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VI, ch. 2], and God has all goodness, he must also have truth. So the Paraclete is called "the Spirit of truth" (John 14:16). "Say, 'God is true'" (Qur'ân 3:95).

God, in fact, is **truth itself** (I:61), since truth is a perfection of the act of knowing, and God is knowledge itself, since everything in him is by way of identity and not participation in something else.

Likewise, besides the truth of the intellect there is the truth of a thing, which is "a property of the being of each thing as it is established" [Ibn-Sînâ, *ash-Shifâ': al-ilâhiyyât*, VIII, 6], in so far as it causes the mind to have a correct idea of it and it matches its exemplar in the divine mind. But God is his own essence, and thus he is truth both as truth of the intellect and truth of a thing. So we hear of the divine word: "I am the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6). "God is the truth [*al-aqq*]; he raises the dead and is powerful over everything" (Qur'ân 22:6).

And in God there can be **no falsehood**, since falsehood is opposed to truth.

Also, God knows everything by a simple view of his essence and not by making affirmative or negative propositions where error can occur.

Likewise, error is a failure of judgement, a lack of perfection and an evil, but God is perfect and without any evil.

Also, the human intellect errs when it is not in accord with reality, which is a cause and measure of human knowledge. But divine knowledge is the cause and measure of other things, so it cannot be wrong about them.

So we read: "God is no human being that he should lie" (Numbers 23:19). "A true promise of God! And who is more true than God in his word?" (Qur'ân 4:122).

Hence, God is **the first and supreme truth** (I:62). The true and being are interchangeable, since truth is affirming what is and denying what is not [cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, III, 1; IV, 7]. But God is the first and most perfect being; so his truth is first and highest.

Also, since God is essentially truth and the measure of all truth as the cause of all things, he is the highest and first truth.

Problematic Objects of God's Knowledge (I:64-71)

God knows **singulars** (I:65). The Muslims theologian al-Ghazâlî accuses the philosopher Ibn-Sînâ of holding the contrary [*Tahâfut al-falâsifa*, n. 15]. Neither Ibn-Sînâ nor al-Fârâbî before him, nor Ibn-Rushd after him, say this in any of their surviving writings. All of these held that, since knowledge is perfective, the only worthy object of God's knowledge is himself. In knowing himself he knows all that is contained in his causative power but, since these philosophers held that God's causality operates through a hierarchy of intermediaries, his knowledge of singulars is indirect.

In reply, we can agree that, while human knowledge is assimilative, that is, depending on the action of the object on our knowing powers, God's knowledge is causative, since, as creator, his knowledge is the measure of what he knows. But God's causality extends to every essential and accidental aspect of creation, including matter and individuality, which arises from matter marked by quantity. Because they failed to grasp that God's causality extends directly to the existence of each individual thing, the Muslim philosophers were ambiguous about God's knowledge of singulars.

Another consideration is that God's perfection requires that he be ignorant of nothing; therefore singulars cannot escape his knowledge.

Besides, the higher the power the stronger it should be; so God's intellect should know more than a human mind, just as the human mind knows more than the internal senses, and the latter more than the external senses. Nevertheless, because a sensible object cannot work directly on the human mind it cannot impress on it its individuality; so human knowledge is restricted to universals. But God's knowledge, being causative, knows individuals in their individuality.

So we read: "Do not say, 'I shall hide from the Lord'" (Sirach 16:17). "Nothing is hidden from God on earth or in heaven" (Qur'ân 14:38).

God knows **all that is potentially but not actually existing** (I:66). One could object that knowledge extends only to what is true, and that is equivalent to what exists.

By way of reply, we can observe that God's knowledge is related to things as things are related to our knowledge, so that as things can exist without our knowing them, so God can know what does not exist. This is because his knowledge is causative, like that of a craftsman, who knows what he wants to make before making it. And since God's creative power is infinite, no number of actual created things can equal all that God could create.

Furthermore, even our own intellect can continue to know what some things are even after they have ceased to exist, just as it can know some things before they happen, as in astronomical predictions.

Likewise, God's eternal knowledge is not successive, like the historical succession of things that come to be and pass away, but it can be compared to the centre of a circle which always has the same relationship to any point of the circumference. His knowledge grasps history as a whole, whereas anyone on the road of history can see well only what is close behind or shortly coming up. God's eternal knowledge includes both a vision of things in the time they do exist and a simple understanding of things in the time they exist only causally in his power. Whichever form of existence they have, it satisfies the conditions for knowledge. So he does not know singulars merely in their causes, as astronomers predict eclipses, but he knows singulars in themselves.

So we read: "All things were known to him before they were created, and are still, now that they are finished" (Sirach 23:20). "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you" (Jeremiah 1:4). "With God there is knowledge of the Hour. He makes rain fall, and knows what is in wombs. No one knows what he will earn tomorrow, and no one knows in what land he will die. God is the Knowing and Informed One" (Qur'ân 31:34).

God knows **future contingents** (I:67). One could object that if he foreknows things, it would seem that they are necessary and must happen, and are no longer contingent. Therefore, if they are really contingent and God cannot learn anything new because of his unchangeability, then he must have no knowledge of any singular contingent events.

In reply, we can point out that knowledge of future contingents is not uncertain because they are contingent; for instance, while we see someone running we are certain in judging that he is

running. But the divine intellect sees the whole range of time as present; so God has infallible knowledge of contingent events.

Also, apart from the fact that God knows contingent things in themselves, by his knowledge of contingent things in their causes, God knows all the chance occurrences that would impede the causes from taking effect.

Nevertheless, although God necessarily knows that contingent events will take place, they remain contingent, because a thing is contingent or necessary with respect to its proximate cause, not to its remote cause which is God.

So we read: "I told you about it long before; before it happened I revealed it to you" (Isaiah 48:4). "Every prophecy has its fixed time and you will know" (Qur'ân 6:67).

God knows **human thoughts and desires** (I:68). The problem here is that acts of the will are free and can be determined and known only by the one who wills, and so they seem to lie outside God's knowledge. Yet God knows everything that in any way exists by knowing his own essence, and that includes what is in the human mind and will.

Moreover, by keeping man and his soul in being, God enables the mind and will to operate. So, as the first cause of everything, he knows the thoughts and desires of man. Thus we read: "A searcher of mind and heart is God the Just" (Psalm 7:9). "He knows what they hide and what they manifest, since he knows the innermost heart" (Qur'ân 11:5).

God knows **infinite** things (I:69). An objection here is that "the infinite as such is unknowable" [Aristotle, *Physics*, IV, 4]. So it seems that God cannot have an actual knowledge of infinite singular things.

We can reply that, because God's efficient and his exemplar causality, which he knows fully, is infinite, therefore his knowledge extends to an infinitude of possibilities, even though what is actual is finite.

Moreover an infinitude of created things is still less than God; so, because he knows himself which is greater, he knows such an infinitude which is lesser.

Likewise, were God's knowledge restricted to a finite number, the human mind, whose knowledge is potentially infinite, could one day know that number and surpass it.

To know an actual numeric infinity is impossible for us because our knowledge is successive, counting one part after another; but God's knowledge is simultaneous and by a single concept which is his own essence. This knowledge is hinted at in the following passages: "None can describe his skill" (Psalm 147:5). "If you count the count the favors of God you cannot number them" (Qur'ân 16:18).

In knowing the infinite, our intellects are different from God's in four ways: First, our intellect is finite; God's is infinite. Secondly, we know different things by different ideas; so we cannot know infinite things, as God who knows by a single knowledge of his essence. Thirdly, human knowledge goes from one idea to another in succession, whereas God's knowledge is simultaneous. Fourthly, God, knowing causally, knows what is and what is not, whereas human knowledge begins from what is.

God's knowledge of infinite things is, like his knowledge of possible things, not a vision of them as all ever being actual at some time, but a simple understanding of them as possible.

God knows the **lowliest** things (I:70). On the contrary, since knowledge is valued according to its object, it would seem debasing for God to know vile things.

In reply, we can point out that the power of God's intellect is shown in how far it can go, extending even to the least things. Even these, to the extent that they are something in act, are likenesses of the First Act, and even the highest creatures are more distant from God than they are

from the lowest creatures. If lowliness were an impediment to divine knowledge it would follow that he knows no creature. The lowliness of the object does not debase the knower, since it is present to him according to the level of the knower, such as material things in an immaterial way. Lowly things can accidentally debase the knower if they distract him from attending to better things or if they arouse disordered affections. The highest human science, metaphysics, considers being from its first divine cause right down to potency which is the lowest in being. Thus a power is not judged small because it can reach lowly things but only if it is restricted to them. So we read: "Wisdom is quicker to move than any motion; she is so pure, she pervades and permeates all things" (Wisdom 7:24). "He is God, besides whom there is no other, knowing what is hidden and what is manifest, the Merciful and Compassionate . . . the King, the Most Holy . . ." (Qur'ân 59:22-23).

God knows **evil** things (I:71). An objection is that what is known is somehow in the knower, but evil cannot exist in God. So it would seem that God does not know evil, or even privation, for the same reason. Ibn-Rushd argues that God's intellect, which is solely in act, cannot know privation [*Commentary on Aristotle's De Anima*, III, 25].

In reply, we can say that contrary things are not contrary in the mind, but one is known from the other. Included in contrariety is negation, by which one thing is distinguished from another, all of which God knows. God also knows matter, which includes privation in its potency to what it is not. So, if he knows privation, he also knows evil. Knowledge of evil is not bad in itself, but only if it accidentally turns someone towards evil. So we read: "He knows how deceptive human beings are, and he sees their misdeeds too, and marks them well" (Job 11:11). "God knows the difference between what is harmful and what is helpful" (Qur'ân 2:220).

Privation is something we know by experiencing it in ourselves, but God, having no privation, knows it by knowing his own essence as the cause of other things together with their potentialities and privations. It is also not an imperfection for God to know evil only as a privation of good, because that is all it is, and therefore the only way it is knowable.

God's Will (I:72-88)

First, God must have a **will** (I:72). That is because the proper object of the will is what is understood as good, and God understands goodness. In fact, desire pervades the range of being. Intelligent, sensitive, vegetative and inanimate things all in their own way try to preserve their being and perform their natural activities. So in a supreme way God must will not only his own good, but also that of all other things which would never be created or receive goodness except by God's will. In reference to God's will we read: "Whatever he wills, Yahweh does" (Psalm 135:6). "God favors with his mercy those he wishes" (Qur'ân 2:105).

God's **will is his essence** (I:73). In God willing is a consequence of intelligence, and God's intelligence is the same as his essence.

Likewise, God is pure act, so that there can be no distinction between his essence and his actions and no intermediary power that is in potency to action or non-action.

God's will has **his essence as its principal object** (I:74). That is because the principal object of God's intelligence is his own essence, and it is known as the principal good.

Also, God's action cannot focus on or be referred to something outside himself; otherwise he would be in potency to and dependence on that thing, and God would not be the first being, good and goal of all.

Likewise, since every power is measured by its object, only God's essence is proportionate and adequate to his willing power. Since everything in God is one, his willing of his essence includes willing his knowledge, his will, his oneness and anything else that pertains to his essence.

In willing himself, God also **wills other things** (I:75). That is because to will an end is to will everything that is ordered to that end; so, since all other things are ordered to God as their end, in loving himself he loves all other things as well. They are lovable because their being is a participated likeness to his own being, and his own essence contains a proper representation of them.

Also it is a sign of God's power that his will extends far and wide, down to the least of his creatures.

So we read: "Yes, you love everything that exists, and nothing that you have made disgusts you, since, if you had hated something, you would not have made it" (Wisdom 11:24). "We built the heavens with our hands. We are the generous" (Qur'ân 51:47).

God loves himself and other things by **one act of the will** (I:76). Since he loves other things only as their being reflects his own goodness and is ordered to it, they all fall into the scope of his loving himself.

Also the perfection and strength of God's act of loving himself embraces all other things at the same time.

Besides, were God to love himself and others by separate acts, that would follow a discursive type of reasoning, which is impossible for him, and would imply being moved by the secondary object, which is also impossible for him.

Willing many objects is compatible with the simplicity of God's being (I:77). That is because the many things that God loves form only one object of his will, as they are included in his loving himself. Material things are represented there immaterially, and multiple things are represented together as one. Just as God can know many things in himself, so also in himself he can love many things.

God loves **every good thing individually** (I:78). It is not necessary, to preserve the indivisibility of God, to say that he loves other goods in some generality by willing to be the cause of all goods that come from him, without loving each one in particular. That is because created goods do not exist as a universal but as particular things, each of which God has put in a particular place in the arrangement of all things.

Besides, as God knows each individual thing, so also he loves it.

So we hear: "God saw all that he had made, and indeed it was very good" (Genesis 1:31). "Blessed be God, the best of creators" (Qur'ân 23:14).

God loves even **what does not yet exist** (I:79). The contrary may appear to be true, because loving is a relationship, and no one can love what does not exist. Also, God can be called Creator, Lord or Father only of what exists; so it seems his will is restricted to what exists. Furthermore, since his will is invariable, just as his being, if he loves only what exists he should love only what always exists. Even the reply that he loves them not in themselves but as they exist in his mind seems inadequate, for this would amount to God not loving them in themselves but only as they are in his mind.

In defence of our position, we point out that God knows what does not yet exist not merely as a possibility in his own mind, but as something that will have existence at a certain time. So God's will extends to the existence of the thing in itself, even though it is yet to be. Loving is an act remaining in the will and does not require its object actually to exist, as do the acts of making, creating and governing.

God **necessarily loves himself** (I:80). That is because God's own goodness is the principal and adequate object of his will, and God's will is necessarily always in act. Furthermore, his love for other things must always be in reference to himself as the purpose of their existence. These things have a natural desire for survival and find their fulfillment in acting according to the order he implanted in their natures or, in the case of man, in loving God; so also God's fulfillment is in loving himself.

God does **not necessarily love other things** (I:81-82). That is because he loves them only in reference to himself as their goal. But he exists independently and does not require them for his own existence, goodness and happiness.

Also, were he to love everything of necessity, he would also have to love every possible participation in his own goodness and thus would be obliged to create an infinity of creatures. So, even though God necessarily knows things other than himself, he does not necessarily love them, since knowing implies a disposition of the knower, but loving requires a disposition of the thing loved, that is, its existence at some time.

There is, however, an objection to God's not being determined to love his creatures. First, indetermination would seem to imply variability and potency; therefore he would seem to be determined by another to love them. In reply, we can distinguish between indetermination on the part of a subject, which means that it is in a state of imperfection, like someone in doubt between two positions, and indetermination of an object, such as the object of art; the artist is free to choose how he wants to render his work and this is an indication of the artist's perfection. So God's freedom in loving creatures implies no potentiality or changeability. His will is not determined by anything extrinsic, but by his intellect.

Yet God loves other things **by a hypothetical necessity** (I:83). That is because everything in God is eternal and his will is unchangeable. So if in fact he does will something, even though he does not will it from necessity, he necessarily wills it. Thus it is impossible for him not to will what he does will, even though his will is not determined by the object. Similarly, if he wills a certain thing, such as the life of a man, he must will what is indispensable for that life. So we read: "The Glory of Israel does not lie or go back on his word" (1 Samuel 15:29). "When their fixed term comes, they cannot put it off an hour nor advance it" (Qur'ân 16:61).

On the other hand, God **cannot will what is impossible** (I:84). By impossible, we mean what implies a contradiction, such as for a circle to be square or a man to be a dog. Any such thing implies the being and non-being of a thing at the same time, and as such is neither intelligible nor good.

God's will does **not make contingent things necessary** (I:85). If by hypothetical necessity God wills them to exist they cannot become absolutely necessary. All that we can say is that if God wills something to be, it will be.

God's will follows a **rational order** (I:86). First of all, his own goodness is the reason why he loves any other thing. Secondly, he arranges the good of individuals to serve the order of the whole universe. Thirdly, if he wills something to be, he wills what is necessary for that thing to be. Although the universe as a whole is not necessary for God's own goodness, within the universe some things are necessary for others, while some are just useful.

Although God's will follows a rational order, his willing has **no cause** (I:87). That is because the purpose or goodness that would cause him to will is himself and his own willing. Among creatures, when he wills one thing for the sake of another, he does so entirely as ordered towards his own goodness. We should note that God's willing does not proceed step by step, but takes place in a single eternal act which is his own essence.

This position is contrary to some Ash'arite thinkers who say that no reason at all can be assigned to God's choices. Yet we read: "You made all things in wisdom" (Ps 104:24). "He is the one who made the night for you to rest in and the daytime to give you light; there are signs here for a people who listen" (Qur'ân 10:67).

God has **free will** (I:88). That is because, with respect to creatures, he does not act of necessity, since they are all ordered to himself as their end and purpose. Only the end, which is himself, does he will necessarily. He is master of his acts with regards to means to this end.

The Place of Passions and Virtues in God (I:89-96)

God has **no emotions** (I:89). That is because he has no sensation, but only intellectual knowledge. Also, emotions imply bodily transformations, but God has no body. Likewise, God, being pure act, is completely unchangeable; so he cannot change mood.

Apart from these general reasons why God has no emotions, there are reasons why he does not have certain particular emotions. Among these is *sadness* or *pain*, which implies the presence of evil, which for God is impossible. Likewise, God cannot have *hope* or *desire*, because these imply that he does not yet have something. Similarly he cannot have *fear*, because that is reference to a threatening evil. Also *repentance* is excluded because it is a kind of sadness and also implies change of will. *Envy* is also a sadness at the good of another, but God cannot mistake the good of another as evil. *Anger* is an effect of sadness and it presupposes an injury, which God cannot suffer.

Yet God has in his will something corresponding to **joy and pleasure** (I:90). Joy is a reaction to a present good; so this and pleasure exist in God, but not as emotions which function on the sensitive and bodily level. Joy and pleasure are nearly the same thing, except that joy focuses on the object of the will, whereas pleasure is a concomitant of smooth action of the will.

God likewise has **love** (I:91), which is simply willing the good of what is loved. We have seen that God wills his own good and that of others; so he has love. Moreover God wills the good of each particular thing as it is in itself, even though the good of some things are for the service of others, while his own love for himself is the most perfect and firm love possible.

The question arises whether God's love can have degrees. If that means greater and lesser intensity of action, it is impossible for God. But God's love can have degrees by willing a greater or lesser good to different things.

With regard to joy and love we read: "There will be rejoicing in heaven over one sinner repenting" (Luke 15:7); "I have loved you with an everlasting love" (Jeremiah 31:3). "Your Lord is rich and full of mercy" (Qur'ân 6:132).

Whenever Scripture speaks of God's *anger* or *compassion* or *repentance*, these should be understood metaphorically. For the action of God's will produces effects similar to these human feelings. For instance, God punishes from justice as someone else might from anger; he takes away human suffering from cool mercy just as a human person might do so out of an intense feeling of compassion; and he turns favor into punishment or vice versa according to the immutable order of his providence, like someone who changes his mind. Also, such human emotions arise from joy and love which God does have; thus God is metaphorically said to be sad when things happen contrary to what he loves and approves of.

God **in some way has virtue** (I:92), since "virtue is what makes a person good and his action good" [Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, II, 6, 2], and God is perfectly good in himself and in his action. On the other hand, human virtue is a habit, which God cannot have because it is an accidental perfection added to one's essence and is intermediate between potency and full act.

God, therefore, has virtue not as a habit but essentially. Even so, he cannot have those human virtues which regulate the active life such political behaviour, or regulation of passions that concern bodily goods. Scripture, however, sometimes ascribes to God metaphorically passions that concern spiritual goods, such as fortitude, magnanimity, meekness etc. These are said of God in metaphorical terms because their effects are similar to what he does by his intellect and will. So we hear: "There is no Rock like our God" (1 Samuel 2:2). "So mighty is his power, so great his strength" (Isaiah 40:26). "God is forgiving and meek" (Qur'ân 2:225).

God has **moral virtues that regulate actions** (I:93), such as truthfulness, justice, liberality, magnificence, prudence and art. The objects of these virtues have nothing repugnant to divine perfection; so there is no reason not to ascribe these virtues to God. Thus *art* is the pattern in his mind by which he makes things, as we hear: "Wisdom, the designer of all things, has instructed me" (Wisdom 7:21). "We have created the heavens and the earth only with truth" (Qur'ân 15:85).

Prudence is his knowledge directing his will in his free choice, as we hear: "In him there is good counsel no less than discretion" (Job 12:13). "Then he mounted the throne, planning the order" (Qur'ân 10:3).

Justice is his giving whatever he has chosen to exist the things necessary for that existence, as we hear: "Yahweh the just loves just deeds" (Psalm 11:8). "God and the angels and those who possess knowledge attest that there is no divinity but him, standing up with justice" (Qur'ân 3:18).

Liberality is his giving without gaining anything in return, as we hear: "When you open your hand, O Goodness, they fill up" (Psalm 104:28). "Let people rejoice in the favor and mercy of God; that is better than what they amass" (Qur'ân 10:58).

Truthfulness is found in the correspondence of what he makes to his creative ideas, as we hear: "All your commandments are truth" (Psalm 119:151). "God is the witness of everything" (Qur'ân 4:33).

Yet some acts of the preceding virtues cannot apply to God, such as obedience, worship and other acts directed to a superior. Other acts imply imperfection, such as that part of prudence which is to take counsel, as we hear: "Whom has he consulted to enlighten him?" (Isaiah 40:14). "They said, 'Praise be to you! We have no knowledge except what you taught us. You are the Knowing and the Wise'" (Qur'ân 2:32). Likewise commutative justice is excluded, since God received nothing from anyone, as we hear: "Who has given anything to him, so that his presents come only as a debt returned? (Romans 11:35). "He distributes and measures material blessings to those he wishes" (Qur'ân 13:26). He has only distributive justice, as we hear: "To each he gave in proportion to his ability" (Matthew 25:15). "He gives responsibility to each person only according to his ability" (Qur'ân 7:42).

The virtues that apply to God have to be understood in their general nature, not as they are sometimes contracted to apply to specifically human affairs. In their generality they apply more widely than human virtues; for example divine justice regulates the universe, while human justice only certain human affairs. Thus God's virtues are exemplars for our own, but those human virtues which do not apply to God have their exemplarity only in the divine wisdom, which embraces the proper natures of all things.

God has **contemplative virtues** (I:94). *Wisdom* consists in "knowing the highest causes" [Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, I, 2, 7]; this belongs to God because he knows himself, the first cause of everything. So we read: "All wisdom comes from the Lord; she is with him forever" (Sirach 1:1). "He is the One who really created the heavens and the earth. The day he says 'be', it is. Right belongs to him. His is the kingship the day the trumpet is blown. He is knowledgeable of the mysterious and of the obvious. He is the Wise and the Informed" (Qur'ân 6:73).

Science is "knowledge of something through its proper cause" [Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, I, 2, 1]. But God knows the arrangement of all causes and effects without any discursive reasoning. So we read: "Yahweh is an all-knowing God" (1 Samuel 2:3). "God is most knowledgeable of all who are in the heavens and on earth" (Qur'ân 17:55).

Likewise, God has *understanding*, which is direct knowledge of things without a reasoning process. So we read: "I am perception; power is mine" (Proverbs 8:14). "The Merciful is perceptive of all things" (Qur'ân 97:19).

All these virtues of God are the perfect exemplars which our imperfect virtues reflect.

Because God is virtuous and he is the supreme good, he **cannot will evil** (I:95).

Moreover, willing evil can only come from an error in judgement, which is impossible for God.

Likewise, evil is a turning away from a good purpose, but God's will cannot turn away from himself, the goal and purpose of everything.

So we read: "A trustworthy God who does no wrong, he is the Honest, the Upright One!" (Deuteronomy 32:4). "God does no wrong at all to men, but men do wrong to themselves" (Qur'ân 10:44).

Also, because God cannot do evil, he **hates nothing** (I:96), since hate is wishing evil to something.

Also, God's will is related to other things as they are created likenesses of his own being and goodness, and that relationship can only be love.

Moreover, to hate something would mean that he does not wish the thing to exist; so the existence of a thing is an indication that he wills it.

So we hear: "Yes, you love everything that exists, and nothing that you have made disgusts you, since, if you had hated something, you would not have made it. And how could a thing subsist, had you not willed it? Or how be preserved, if not called forth by you?" (Wisdom 11:24-25). "No one despairs of the mercy of his Lord except those who go astray" (Qur'ân 15:56).

God's Life (I:97-102)

God is **living** (I:97), as is shown by the fact that he is knowing and willing. These are activities that come from within, corresponding in a most perfect way to the definition of a living thing, which is something that is self-moving. Of this perfection of God we read: "I live forever" (Deuteronomy 32:40). "The God besides whom there is no deity, the Living and the Subsistent" (Qur'ân 3:2).

God is **his own life** (I:98). That is because he does not participate in any form, but is his own being and intelligence which is life itself. So we hear: "I am the life" (John 14:6). "God is the Truth; he causes life and causes death" (Qur'ân 22:6).

God's life is **everlasting** (I:99). Since he is life itself, he can never lose his life. That would have to come either from an outside cause — whereas he is subject to none — or from a cessation of his activity of knowing and willing, which is also impossible because it is simultaneous and changeless, as is his very being. So we repeat the passages: "I live forever" (Deuteronomy 32:40). "There is no divinity but God, the living and subsistent. He is not subject to slumber or sleep. His is everything in the heavens and on earth" (Qur'ân 2:255).

Similarly, God is **happy** (I:100), since happiness is the possession by an intelligent being of its proper good. That is his own activity which is perfect on four counts: It is intrinsic to himself;

it is the act of the highest power, which is the intellect; it is in respect to the highest intelligible object, which is his own being; and his manner of activity is perfect, easy, stable and delightful.

Likewise his happiness can be seen in his "having all he wishes and his wishing nothing in an evil way" [St. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XIII, 5], since he does not need anything outside himself and does not will evil.

So we read: "God, the blessed and only Ruler of all" (1 Timothy 6:15). "Everyone on earth fades away; only the face of your Lord endures, the Glorious and Honorable" (Qur'ân 55:26-27).

God is **his own happiness** (I:101), since his activity of knowing is identical with his essence, and this is the principal object of his will and the purpose of all creation.

God's happiness is **supreme happiness** (I:102), since he is happiness itself and not by any participation.

Also, his act of knowing is incomparable, since he knows himself and everything else universally by one act which is identical with his being. This act is also eternally complete without any succession, distraction or interruption.

His happiness likewise is the summit of any human participation in happiness, whether in contemplative life — where he views himself and everything else perfectly and eternally — or in active life — where he rules not just one person or house or city or kingdom, but the whole universe.

Finally, false earthly happiness is only a shadow of his most perfect happiness, since he has undiluted *pleasure* in himself and every good thing; as for *wealth*, he has total self-sufficiency and providence for the whole world; as for *power*, he has infinite ability and strength; for *dignity*, he has the first place and rule of all; as for *fame*, he has the admiration and wonder of every intellect that knows him.

To Him, Therefore, Who Is Singularly Happy, Be Honor And Glory For Ever And Ever. Amen.

Part II God and Creation

Introduction (II:1)

To obtain a perfect knowledge of God, we have to know his operation. There are two types of operation in God: The first type consists in the acts of understanding, willing, joy and love. The second type consists in his acts of bringing things into being, preserving and governing them. The former operation is a perfection of the operator, while the latter is a perfection of the thing made. Now, since the agent is naturally prior to the thing made and is the cause of it, it follows that the first of these types of operation is the ground of the second, and naturally precedes it, as a cause precedes its effect.

Part I discussed the internal action of God. This second Part looks at the external works of God: So Psalm 143:5 reads: "I counted all your actions; on the works of your hands I meditated." Although the two parallel phrases have the same meaning, we can adapt the first, "I counted all your actions," to God's internal acts of understanding and will, and the second, "On the works of your hands I meditated," to the creating and governing of all external things. Likewise, with reference to the internal and external richness of God, we read: "He is self-sufficient (*ghaniyy*); to him belongs everything in heaven and on earth" (Qur'ân 10:68).

Meditation on the God's works is necessary for knowing God (II:2), first so as to admire and reflect upon the wisdom by which he brought things into being, as we read: "How manifold are your works, Yahweh! With Wisdom at your side you made them all" (Psalm 104:20). "We did not create the heavens and the earth and what is between them in play, but we created them in Truth" (Qur'ân 44:31-32); "That is the work of God who is expert in everything" (Qur'ân 27:88).

Secondly, consideration of God's works leads to admiration of his sublime power, and consequently inspires in our hearts reverence for God. For the power of the worker is understood to be greater than the things he made. It is said, particularly to philosophers: "If they have been impressed by their power and energy, let them deduce from these how much mightier is he that has formed them" (Wisdom 13:4). "Ever since the creation of the world, the invisible existence of God and his everlasting power have been clearly seen by the mind's understanding of created things" (Romans 1:20). "God is he who created the heavens and the earth and what is between them in six days, then he mounted upon his throne" (Qur'ân 32:4), a position of superiority to all that he has created.

Fear and reverence of God result from this admiration. Hence it is said: "Yahweh, there is no one like you, so great you are, so great your mighty name. Who would not revere you, King of nations?" (Jeremiah 10:6). And after a description of the marvels of creation, we hear: "Only the learned among his servants fear God" (Qur'ân 35:28).

Thirdly, this consideration of God's works leads the souls of men to the love of God's goodness. If the goodness, beauty and delightfulness of creatures are so alluring to the minds of men, God's own goodness, compared with the partial or particular goodness found in creatures, will draw the enkindled minds of men wholly to him. Hence it is said: "You made me happy, Yahweh, by your work; at the works of your hands I sing for joy" (Psalm 92:5). "Your Lord creates what he wishes, and chooses what is best for men; God is exalted and above what they associate with him" (Qur'ân 28:68).

Lastly, the consideration of God's works imbues men with a certain likeness to God's perfection. Since religious faith teaches one principally about God and makes one know creatures by the light of divine revelation, there arises in man a certain likeness to God's wisdom. So it is said: "All of us, with our unveiled faces like mirrors reflecting the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the image that we reflect in brighter and brighter glory" (1 Corinthians 3:18). "Vision has come to you from your Lord; whoever looks has made a gain; whoever closes his eyes is at a loss (Qur'ân 6:104).

It is therefore evident that the consideration of creatures has its part to play in building up religious faith. For this reason it is said: "I shall remind you of the works of the Lord, and tell of what I have seen. By the words of the Lord his works come into being" (Sirach 42:15). "The creation of the heavens and the earth, the differentiation of night and day, the ships the sailing on the sea with cargo for men's benefit, the rain God's sends from the sky to revive the earth after its death, his multiplication of every beast on the earth, his sending of winds and directing clouds between heaven and earth — these are signs for people who use their intelligence" (Qur'ân 2:164).

Knowing the nature of creatures also helps combat errors concerning God (II:3). For errors about creatures sometimes lead one astray from the truth of faith, when they are inconsistent with the knowledge of God. This happens in many ways:

First, through ignorance of the nature of creatures men sometimes set up as the first cause or God something that can only receive its being from another. Thinking that nothing exists beyond the realm of visible creatures, they identify God with one kind of body or the other. Of these it is said: "Fire or wind or the swift air, the sphere of the stars, impetuous water, heaven's lamps, are what they have held to be the gods who govern the world" (Wisdom 13:2). "When night came upon Abraham he saw a star and said, 'This is my Lord,' but when it disappeared he said, 'I do not like things that disappear.' And when he saw the moon rising, he said, 'This is my Lord,' but when it disappeared he said, 'Unless my Lord guides me, I will one of the people who go astray.' So when he saw the sun rising, he said, 'This is my Lord; this is greater.' But when it disappeared he said, 'O people, I disown what you associate with God.'" (Qur'ân 6:76-78).

Secondly, this happens because they attribute to certain creatures what belongs only to God. This also results from error concerning creatures. For what is incompatible with a thing's nature is not ascribed to it except through ignorance of its nature. Now, what belongs solely to God is incompatible with the nature of a created thing, just as that which is exclusively man's is incompatible with another thing's nature. Such an error arises from ignorance of the nature of creatures. Against this error it is said: "They have conferred the ineffable Name on sticks and stones" (Wisdom 14:21). This error is committed by those who attribute the creation of things, or knowledge of the future, or the working of miracles to causes other than God. "Is one who creates like one who cannot create? Will you not understand?" (Qur'ân 16:17).

Thirdly, this happens because through ignorance of the creature's nature something is subtracted from God's power in its workings upon creatures. This is evident in the case of those who assert that things proceed from God, not by the divine will, but by natural necessity, and again in those who withdraw either all or some things from divine providence, or who deny that it can work outside the ordinary course of things. All these notions are derogatory to God's power. Against such persons it is said: "They said, 'Go away! What can Shaddai do to us?'" (Job 22:17), and "You show your strength when people will not believe in your absolute power" (Wisdom 12:17). "On the day of resurrection God will show them what they were not expecting, show them the evil they are guilty of, and they will be trapped by what they used to mock" (Qur'ân 39:47).

Lastly, through ignorance of the nature of things man becomes ignorant of his own place in the order of the universe. He mistakenly believes that he is subject to other creatures to which he is, in fact, superior. Such is the case of believers in astrology, who think human events are subject to the stars; against these it is said: "Do not take alarm at the heavenly signs, alarmed though the nations may be at them" (Jeremiah 10:2). This is likewise true of those who think that human souls are mortal, or who, in the name of animal rights, condemn slaughtering animals for food or scientific experiment, or who promote abortion so as to leave room on earth for wild animals. Against this we read, "Kill and eat" (Acts 10:13). "You have a lesson in your flocks: They give you milk from their stomach as well as many other benefits. Some of them you eat, and on some you ride as on a ship" (Qur'ân 23:21-22).

It is therefore evident that it is wrong to assert that what anyone holds about creatures makes no difference to the truth of faith, so long as one thinks rightly about God. For error concerning creatures, by subjecting them to causes other than God, spills over into false opinion about God and takes men's minds away from Him, to whom faith seeks to lead them. For this reason Scripture threatens with punishment those who err about creatures, just as unbelievers: "Because they have no regard for the deeds of Yahweh, nor for the work of his hands, he will tear them down and never rebuild them (Psalm 28:5). "We did not create heaven and earth and what is between them without purpose; that is the opinion of those who disbelieve, and those who disbelieve are doomed to the Fire" (Qur'ân 38:27).

The philosopher and the theologian consider creatures in different ways (II:4). Philosophy considers creatures as they are in themselves, while theology or religious doctrine considers them only as they relate to God.

Again, anything concerning creatures that is considered in common by the philosopher and the theologian is considered under different principles. For the philosopher takes his argument from the proper causes of things, the theologian from the first cause. Therefore divine wisdom or theology ought to be called the highest wisdom, since it treats of the highest cause. However divine wisdom sometimes argues from principles of philosophy, just as First Philosophy or metaphysics uses the data of all the sciences for its own purposes.

Similarly, the two kinds of teaching do not follow the same order. For philosophy considers creatures in themselves and leads us from them to the knowledge of God, but theology starts with God and then considers creatures in their relation to God. The order of theology is more perfect, because it more resembles the knowledge possessed by God, who, in knowing himself, immediately knows other things.

God's Power (II:6-10)

God is the source of being for other things (II:6). That is because he is the fullness of being, pure act without any limiting potency, on whom every other being depends for its existence and its natural operations.

It is, moreover, a sign of perfection for whatever is in act to produce its like; thus God is able to produce other beings, whose existence bears some likeness to his own.

Also, the more perfectly something is actual the farther its power can reach; so God's infinite power can reach to unlimited varieties and numbers of created things.

Hence it is said: "His works are great, past all reckoning, marvels beyond all counting" (Job 5:9); "Each sign we showed them was greater than the previous one" (Qur'ân 43:48).

It is clear that **active power** is fittingly attributed to God (II:7). For he is the source of being to other things.

Again, the more something is in act — and God is pure act — the greater its active power.

Divine perfection, furthermore, includes the perfections of all things, among which is active power.

Moreover, the fact that God acts and moves other things indicates that he has the power to act.

Thus it is said: "An El too dreadful for the council of holy ones, too great and awesome for all around him: Yahweh God of armies, who is like you? Mighty Yah, your faithful surround you" (Psalm 89:8-9); "God is the creator of everything, and he is the unique and invincible (qahhâr)" (Qur'ân 13:16).

God's power is his very substance (II:8), since God is act itself, without any potentiality to an act that is other than himself, or any participation in something outside himself.

Furthermore, every perfection of God is contained in his very being, and nothing is accidental to him.

Finally, other agents depend on God as the first agent who acts through his very self.

God's power is his very action (II:9), since, if both his action and his power are the identical with his substance (cf. I:45), they must be identical with each other.

Also, if action is the complement of power, God's power can be completed or fulfilled only by his own essence.

So God's action is in no way accidental to him, but is identical with his power, which is identical with his essence.

God's power has to do with external things (II:10), because power is a principle, and principles are distinct from their effects. Therefore his power does not refer to internal actions such as understanding and willing, which are one and the same with God's very being.

God's Relation to Creatures (II:11-14)

Many things are said of God with relation to creatures (II:11). First, this is because God's power has to do with external effects.

Likewise the dependent relationship of other things to God involves corresponding language relating God to creatures.

Further, likeness of other things to himself implies reciprocal likeness to them.

Also God's knowledge of other things implies a kind of relationship. So also does his status as agent and mover of things in the world. And so does his position as the "first" being and "highest" good.

Yet relations predicated of God in reference to creatures have no real existence in him (II:12). For they cannot exist in him as accidents in a subject, since there is no accident in him. Neither can they be God's very substance, for then it would follow that God's substance would depend on something else extrinsic to it, so that he would not be a necessary being.

Moreover, as the first measure of all things, God is like the object of knowledge to knowledge, where a real relation is in the knower but not in the known.

Furthermore, God is related to potential beings in the same way as to actual ones, and in the first case this relationship cannot be real.

Besides, some of these relationships are not eternal, such as Lord or Creator; if they were real they would imply a change in God, which is impossible.

Neither can it be said that **those relations exist somewhere outside God** (II:13-14). For if they did, we should have to consider yet other relations of God to these realities, and so on endlessly. Therefore, these relations are attributed to him solely in accordance with our manner of understanding.

It also follows that such relations are not said of God in the same way as other things are predicated of him. For all other things, such as wisdom and will, express his essence, while the aforesaid relations do not, but express only our way of understanding.

However, our understanding is not fallacious. For from the very fact that our intellect understands that the relations of the divine effects are terminated in God himself, it predicates certain things of him relatively.

Moreover, these many relations, which do not signify God's essence, do not contradict God's simplicity. Rather, the more something is simple or undivided, the more perfect and powerful it is, so that more and more things are related to it, and this is most true of God.

Creation (II:15-21)

God is the cause of being for all things (II:15). That is because everything that belongs to something without being totally identical with it, is there by an outside cause, while only one thing can be totally identified with an attribute in its full intensity. Existence is common to everything; so everything which exists in any way at all must derive its existence from that whose existence has no cause.

This can be seen also by the fact that things of the same nature come into existence and go out of existence, while the nature remains the same. Therefore existence is dependent on an outside cause which is being in the highest degree, necessarily existing, fully in act and perfect.

Again, the order of causes necessarily corresponds to the order of effects, since effects are commensurate with their causes. Now, being is common to everything that is. Above all causes, then, there must be a cause whose proper action is to give being, and this is God.

Moreover, only God is identical with his existence, while all else exists by participation, possessing a created existence deriving from his.

So we hear that "He made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them" (Psalm 146:6); "Your Lord is God who created the heavens and the earth in six days and then mounted the throne, making night cover the day as it eagerly pursues it, while the sun and the moon and the stars are subject to his order" (Qur'ân 7:54).

God brought things into being from nothing (II:16). Normally anything comes into being from pre-existing matter existing under another form; but all being, including matter, has its existence from God; so God's creative action does not require any pre-existing matter. That is because God is the universal and supreme cause of existence as such, whereas every other agent is limited to a specific effect by moving and altering pre-existing things.

Also, because God is the fullness of act, he is prior to the potentiality of matter; therefore he can produce the totality of a thing, whereas every other agent is only a partial cause, bringing a form out of pre-existent matter. So we read: "In the beginning God created heaven and earth" (Genesis 1:1); "Your Lord is God who created the heavens and the earth in six days" (Qur'ân 7:54).

It is, therefore, an error to assert that matter has no cause whatsoever. This error is based on the observation that in the actions of particular agents there is always an antecedent subject underlying the action, and so it is assumed that from nothing comes nothing. This is true of

particular agents, but not of the universal Agent which is productive of being in its totality, for his action presupposes nothing whatever.

Creation is not motion or change (II:17-18), since all motion and change take place in a subject which passes from one state to another; this is not true of creation, which is, rather, a relationship of dependency of the creature on the Creator.

Neither is creation successive (II: 19), since succession is proper to motion, in which something is transformed by stages over a period of time. But creation is the coming into being of the whole substance, and "substance is not susceptible of degrees" (Aristotle, *Categories*, 3:20). Creation, thus, is instantaneous. That creation took place in an indivisible instant is reflected in the text that God created heaven and earth "in the beginning" (Genesis 1:1); "All we have to do if we want something is to say to it 'Be', and it is" (Qur'ân 16:40).

No body is capable of creating (II:20), since bodies act only by changing position or altering within themselves, all of which takes place in time, not in an instant, as does creation.

Also, bodies do not act by the totality of what they are, but by specific powers that they have; therefore their effect is restricted to producing specific forms or dispositions in a thing, not the total thing.

Furthermore, the greater the power of an agent, the further does its effect extend; since the distance between being and non-being is infinite, an infinite power is required to create, and this cannot be contained in a body.

Again, a body must come into contact before it can act on another; this pre-supposes the existence of the other, which excludes creation.

The act of creating belongs to God alone (II:21). That is because creation is the first action, presupposing no other action, and the first action must belong to the first agent.

Also, God is the universal cause of everything, but directly and properly of existence, which is a universal effect common to everything; but to cause existence is creation, since it presupposes nothing pre-existent.

Furthermore, to be the author of existence includes being the author of the nature or essence of a thing; but particular agents do not produce any nature as such (e.g. as dog-ness), but only individuals of that nature (e.g. this or that dog), and they do so as instruments of the First Cause.

[There is some danger of misunderstanding Thomas's use of "instrument" in relation to finite beings, as it would seem to discount their significance or their role in the development of this world. The instrumentality spoken of in this context pertains only to the issue of the efficient cause of the *esse* or existence itself of a being. When, however, the issue is that of the cause of being rather than only of *esse*, and seen in the context of Thomas's emerging sense of the participation of finite beings in the divine, then the significance and role of finite beings emerges. They are seen by nature or essentially causative, and their effect is the total being of what is caused. As the first cause God causes the being of the effect properly as regards it *esse*, while creatures as second causes cause the being of the effect properly as regard its essence or nature. But both are causes of the total being and the finite being is the efficient cause by its very nature, not simply by an external force, even one that is divine. G.F.M.]

Again, any instrument acts dispositively to produce the effect intended by the primary cause; thus to be an instrument of creation would imply a pre-existing disposition to existence, which is impossible.

Once again, any natural agent is determined to replicating its own specific or generic qualities, but it presupposes and does not produce the individual existence by which the object of its action

is distinct from itself; this is reserved to the Creator, who has within himself the likeness of every being.

A natural agent, moreover, in making something new, is *per se* the cause only of the new form, and only accidentally the cause of its existence, since it made it out of something pre-existent, unlike the Creator. Thus not even an angel can create anything.

So we read: "In the beginning God created heaven and earth" (Genesis 1:1); "He created everything" (Qur'ân 6:101).

The Extent and Manner of God's Power (II:22-30)

God's power extends to everything (II:22). Some things must come immediately from God, including angelic creatures that are pure form, as well as all physical matter and the act of existence for everything. Thus God's power extends to everything that can exist, which excludes whatever implies self-contradiction, such as a square circle. And God's infinite active power corresponds with the full range of passive power for whatever created things are capable of becoming. So his power cannot be limited by lack of plan, since he is the exemplar of everything, nor by the size of the task, since his goodness and perfection exceed everything, nor by the indisposition of matter, since he is the Creator of matter.

Therefore the opinion of Plotinus and Ibn-Sînâ that God can directly create only one thing, and this in turn creates others, is ruled out. So God is called omnipotent or almighty: "Yours, Yahweh, are greatness and power, splendor, triumph and glory. Yours, Yahweh, are all heaven and earth; you are king and ruler of all" (1 Chronicles 29:11); "God is the owner of the heavens and the earth, and God is omnipotent" (Qur'ân 2:189).

God does not act determined by his nature (II:23), for the diversity of his works points to his free will. So also does the fact that the actual universe, without contradiction, could be constituted in infinitely different ways. The basic reason is that God's plan of action is not in him by way of instinct but by way of intelligence, which operates through the will. God's knowing and willing are immanent actions which are his self-perfection, identical with his essence, and are directed to the universal good; on these depend all actions of creatures, which are ordered to particular goods as their nature determines. So we read: "Whatever he wills, Yahweh does in heaven and on earth" (Psalm 135:6); "God surely does what he wishes" (Qur'ân 22:14).

God acts according to his wisdom (II:24), since he acts by free choice according as his own intellect knows himself and the pattern of everything that can be; this knowing of the divine essence and the order of all things among themselves and to their final end is wisdom.

Thus excluded is the view that God acts by arbitrary decree, as Moshe Ben Maimon and the Ash'arites tended to say.¹

God's supreme artistry is praised in these words: "How manifold are your works, Yahweh! With Wisdom at your side you made them all" (Psalm 104:24); "Blessed be God the best Creator" (Qur'ân 23:14).

Nonetheless, **there are some things that are impossible for God (II:25).** Since he has no passive potency, he cannot be a body (which is material and in potency to change); nor can he change in any way, or cease to exist, or lack anything, or be tired or forgetful, or be overcome or suffer any harm or violence; nor can he repent or be angry or sad, which would imply passion and defect.

Likewise, in creatures, he cannot make something which goes against the nature of being, such as making the very same thing both to be and not be, or to be both of two opposites, which is

contradictory; likewise he cannot make a thing lacking its essential principles, such as a man without a soul, or mathematical laws to be false, or to make what was not to have been.

Also he cannot do away with the dependent nature of creatures, such as by making another God or something equal to himself or something independent of himself. Similarly, he cannot do anything he cannot will, such as for himself not to exist or to be good and happy, or the evil of sin, or that whatever he wills should not be fulfilled — that is supposing that he wills it, even though absolutely he could will otherwise. For the same reason he cannot do what he did not fore-know.

So **there is no limit to what God's intellect and will can plan on doing** (II:26-27), since his essence and power are inexhaustible. An infinitude of creatures in number and species, whether they exist or not, cannot measure up to him, since his power extends to the whole range of being. Therefore God creates and disposes the universe according to his free choice, although he has chosen one particular order according to his wisdom. Thus we read; "Great is our Lord, surpassing in power; none can describe his skill" (Psalm 147:5); "If you count the count the favors of God you cannot number them" (Qur'ân 16:18).

Also, **God owes creation nothing by way of justice** (II:28-29), since what was created from nothing has no claim on its Author. Nor does God receive anything from creation that he should be indebted to it, nor is he in any way dependent on it, as a debt of justice would presuppose. So we hear "Who has ever known the mind of the Lord? Who has ever been his adviser? Who has given anything to him, so that his presents come only as a debt returned?" (Romans 11:34-35/ Isaiah 40:13); "He is not asked about what he does, but they are asked" (Qur'ân 21:23).

Although there is nothing in creation to which God is indebted, he still in a way owes it to his own goodness to give creatures what they require for perfection. That is by way of fittingness, and not strict justice, since there is no justice to oneself.

Within the order of creation, however, things are conditionally necessary when they are required for the existence of something that is naturally prior. Thus, since God decided to create a habitable world, he had to create conditions such as the sun and moon etc., which serve the needs of plants and animals. Similarly, since God decided to create man, he must give him a soul and a body with senses and other parts necessary for life. Yet all this necessity is confined to the order of created things and does not put God into any debt of strict justice.

Thus two extremities must be avoided: One is to say that God must do what he does; the other is to say that his governance of the universe is by arbitrary decree, without any reason or plan that can be discovered or attributed to his action.

Nevertheless, **some created things are absolutely necessary** (II:30), that is to say they are pure form, with no matter and consequently no passive potency to non-being. The only way they could cease to be is for the Creator to cease giving them existence, but that concerns his own active potency, not the passive potency of creatures. It is fitting for God to make some creatures as like to himself as possible; so spiritual creatures resemble God in being necessary, even though the necessity of their existence is caused. On the other hand, creatures composed of matter are necessarily corruptible.

Another kind of absolute necessity is for a thing to have its essential parts, such as in mathematical definitions and even in physical things, for instance, for a man to have an organic body and a rational soul and the properties immediately consequent upon these parts.

As for efficient causes, if something has an active quality, such as heat, it absolutely must be able to heat something else, but to do so actually depends on contact and the disposition of the recipient. As for final causes, there is an absolute tendency of natural things to their natural fulfillment, such as one mass to gravitate to another, or plants to grow if watered and sunned;

likewise the human will can only will something under the aspect of good. But for a final cause to be effectual the conditions for its functioning must be present.

This is only a sketch; a detailed discussion is not required here.

Whether Creation Is from Eternity (II:31-38)

First it must be shown that **creation from eternity is not necessary** (II:31). If it was necessary for any creature to have existed from eternity, such necessity would either be from itself, in which case it would have to be the first being or God and no longer a creature, or from another. In that case we would have to suppose that God created of necessity, which we have seen to be false (II:23), or that God needs the creature, which is false because he is an all-sufficient end to himself (I:75). Therefore the existence of creatures depends on the free will of God, who is under no obligation or compulsion to create anything. Rather, any necessity found in creation is in relation to other created causes and not to the First Principle of all; for instance, if someone is running he must be in motion, but it is not necessary for him to be running.

Objections and answers that creation is necessary on God's part (II:32,35): 1) An agent which is not always acting is moved to act; but God can be moved in no way but is always the same; so he must always have been creating. *Response:* God does not have to change when he makes something new, since his action is his essence.

2) If he were not always creating, some prior agent would have to move him to create. *Response:* God's action is eternal, but his creatures are not, because he creates voluntarily. That means that things begin to exist when he decides them to exist.

3) If God is the cause of creation and creation does not immediately follow, it would mean that he is not a sufficient cause and must have something added to him from outside to create, and that is impossible. *Response:* The proper effect of God's will is not for things to exist as long as his will exists, but to exist when he wishes them to be.

4) A voluntary agent does not delay action unless he is waiting for something to mature, either in himself or in outside conditions; but whatever God wills he willed from eternity, nor is anything lacking to his power, nor was there anything to wait for on the part of creatures; therefore he had to create from eternity. *Response:* The fulfillment of God's will is not delayed, but things come to be when he decided from eternity.

5) If there is no difference in objects there can be no choice of one over the other; but no one moment is preferable to another to begin creation; so creation must either be always or never. *Response:* Before creation there was no time or moments to choose from; the only choice is between creation from eternity or creation with a beginning point.

6) The purpose of creation is God's own goodness; if his goodness is eternal, then it seems creatures should also be eternal, since they always have the same relationship to God's goodness. *Response:* God's goodness is the purpose of creatures, but not in the sense that he has anything to gain from them; so his necessary love of his own goodness does not determine when he should choose creatures to exist.

7) God's goodness gains nothing from creatures, but they manifest it according to their degree of perfection; the more permanent their existence, the more they manifest God's goodness; so it seems some creatures should have existed from eternity. *Response:* On the other hand, it is fitting that creatures should have begun in time to illustrate the infinite distance between creature and Creator and the dependence of all creatures on him and his free will.

Objections and answers that creation is necessary on the part of creatures (II:33,36):

1) Some creatures have no potency to non-being, because they have no matter; so they should always have existed. *Response:* Such creatures, once existing, necessarily continue to exist, but their coming into existence was not necessary.

2) The power of spiritual creatures and of matter itself is to exist always; therefore they should always have existed. *Response:* Again, such power presupposes the fact of their coming into existence, which itself was not necessary.

3) Every motion is either preceded by another motion or is eternal, and if there always was motion then there always was something mobile; so the universe must be eternal. *Response:* Something can be moved without a previous motion on the part of God or of the thing, according to God's eternal will that such motion should have a beginning.

4) Species are naturally perpetual, while individuals come and go. *Response:* Such perpetuity presupposes that the species already exist.

5) Time must be from eternity because the point in time called "now" is both the end of the past and the beginning of the future. *Response:* It is not of the nature of a point always to be in the middle; it can be the beginning of a line (or of time) without being the end of something previous.

6) If time is not eternal then there must have been a "before time began", but time, being an accident, presupposes an existing mobile subject. *Response:* Before creation there was no time; the "before" refers only to imagined time, just as when we say "outside the universe" we are referring to imaginary place.

7) Some scientific truths are always true, but they are not God; therefore something other than God must be eternal. *Response:* Such truths, having an attribute necessarily predicated of a subject, have their reality either in the existing things of which they are true (which do not necessarily exist), or in the divine mind.

Objections and answers that creation is necessary on the part of the work of creation (II:34,37): 1) The axiom, "Something cannot be made from nothing," cannot be entirely wrong; so everything is made of something else or it is eternal. *Response:* This is an empirical observation of sense data. Earlier philosophers considered change of being only on the accidental level, such as from rare to dense, so that all such change would be only alteration; later philosophers came to the notion of prime matter and saw that one substance changes to another. Those who considered the question still more deeply, on the level of metaphysics, saw how the whole being of creation comes from one first cause, from nothing pre-existing.

2) Any becoming is the result of motion, which must be in a mobile subject; if the chain of becoming is not infinite, we come to a first subject that always existed. *Response:* Creation is not really a change, which is coming from something, so that there is no need for a pre-existing subject which was different and changed into a new thing.

3) Anything that comes into being must have been possible; such possibility requires a subject; thus again there is either an infinite series of becoming or some first thing that always existed. *Response:* Likewise, no passive potency pre-existed creation; there was only the active potency of the Creator and the logical potency that such a being was not self-contradictory.

4) The act of becoming presupposes a pre-existing subject in transition; so there must have been an infinite series of becoming or a first thing that always existed. *Response:* Only coming into being by way of dispositive motion presupposes a subject, but creation is a coming into being without motion.

So it is not necessary to say that the universe always existed. Thus we read: "In the beginning God created heaven and earth" (Genesis 1:1); "He created everything" (Qur'ân 6:101).

It is important to reply to **attempts to prove that the universe is not eternal** (II:38), lest a matter that we believe on the basis of revelation appear to rely on flimsy philosophical arguments. These are as follows: 1) God is the cause of all things, and causes must exist before their effects. *Response*: This is true of causes that operate through time and motion, but not of a cause that operates instantaneously.

2) All being was created by God from nothing, and this means having existence after non-existence. *Response*: The **nothing** that being was created from is not necessarily a previous non-existence but could simply mean that a being that always existed depends on God for its existence without ever having come from anything else.

3) If the universe always existed there would be an infinite number of days or revolutions of the earth. *Response*: A successive infinite number is possible, because only a finite number actually exists at one time.

4) The continued existence of time would mean that an finite addition to an infinite number. *Response*: Eternal time is infinite in the past, but finite in the future; so an addition can be made to such time under the aspect that it is finite.

5) If the universe always existed there would be an infinite series of efficient causes. *Response*: An infinite series of agents is impossible only when they are directly or *per se* dependent, but in causes that do not act together an infinite series is possible, such as a chain of generation within a species.

6) An actual infinite number of human souls would exist. *Response*: Different philosophers gave different bizarre solutions to this question, some saying that there is only one soul that remains, others that there is cyclic reincarnation of souls. But it is not impossible for there to be an actual infinite number of souls since they do not have any order or dependency on one another.

On the other hand, one of the plausible reasons given above for creation in time is that God's goodness is best shown by the fact that nothing but himself is eternal. So there are no cogent reasons for the eternity of the universe or for its temporal beginning. The fact of creation from a point of time is something we hold by faith alone.

The Distinction of Created Things (II:39-45)

The distinction of things is not by chance (II:39), because at least some creatures are incorruptible and therefore do not have the variability that is required for chance to operate; yet they are distinct from one another.

The same can be said of the distinction of species in material things, since this distinction comes from the form and not the matter, which is subject to variability.

Similarly, things were distinct at the beginning of creation, where the randomness of matter had no role to play.

Also, the regular (as opposed to chance) motion and activity characteristic of different natural species indicates that these species themselves do not have a random origin.

Finally, if God is the author of the universe and intended its universal good, he must have arranged the distinction and order of its parts.

Thus we read: "God divided light from darkness . . . God saw all that he had made, and indeed it was very good" (Genesis 1:4,31); "Praise be to him who created all the pairs of males and females among plants of the earth, among men themselves and among creatures they do not know of. Another sign for them is the night from which we detach the daylight, and then men are in darkness. And the sun runs to its fixed place according to the determination of the Mighty and Knowing. We

have determined stations for the moon until it returns like an old palm leaf. The sun is not to join the moon, nor the night to come early upon the day, but each follows its own course" (Qur'ân 36:36-40).

Therefore we reject the opinion of the ancient philosophers Democritus and Leucippus who reduced all the distinctions of nature to atoms that float freely until by chance they cluster in various configurations. The same criticism applies to an evolutionary theory that sees no stability in nature and no need for intelligence in the evolution of new species.

Matter is not the primary reason for the distinction of things (II:40), since it has no determination to anything, and this is precisely the meaning of chance.

Also, the agent and the form it intends are the primary determinants of what a thing will be; matter takes its shape from form, rather than the disposition of matter determining what the form will be; an exception is deformity, which results from the resistance of matter to the intention of the agent.

Besides, since matter, like everything else, is caused, its distinction is likewise caused by another and does not come from itself.

Finally, God, being an intelligent agent, orders lower things to be of service to higher things, in this case, matter to form; so specific differences do not result from differently disposed matter, but material differences result from different forms.

Things are not distinct because of distinct agents (II:41), because the distinct things in the universe are related to one another in a kind of order, and the order of the whole has to come from a single cause.

The main opposite opinion is Manichaeism, which posits two opposite principles of the universe, one good, the other evil. This position runs into the difficulty that if good things have to come from a source that is *per se* good, then evil things have to come from a source that is *per se* evil, but such would be a non-being, since evil is privation.

Also, evil, in so far as it is evil, is non-being and cannot act.

Likewise, evil as an effect has no cause except as it happens to be in something existent, which is good and has a cause.

Also, from the point of view of finality, evil as such cannot be intended, but only as it happens to be joined to something good.

Furthermore, contraries are the result of a single action, such as the generation of one thing which is the corruption of another.

So we read: "I am Yahweh, and there is no other; I form the light and I create the darkness; I make well-being and I create disaster" (Isaiah 45:6-7); "Every life tastes death, and we test you with evil and good as a trial; then you return to us" (Qur'ân 21:35). To "make disaster" or evil means making things which are good in themselves but harmful to others, such as wolves or mosquitoes.

Nor can the diversity of things arise from agents after God (II:42), as if to say that, because of his simplicity, God can only make one thing, and that in turn, because of its potentiality, is able to produce two different things and these still more different things; such seems to have been the opinion of Ibn-Sînâ. The first problem with this position is that it explains diversity by a number of causes each producing their own effects, leaving the total order of the whole universe to chance and the defective nature of secondary causes, rather than to God, who is properly responsible for the good of the universe.

Moreover, any secondary agents in the universe act as subsidiaries to the First Agent for the purpose of bringing about the order and good of the universe; thus the First Agent, who has the

plan of the whole universe, can immediately cause many different things. The simplicity of God, rather than limiting his effectiveness, is the reason why his power can reach infinitely different effects. Thus we read: "In the beginning God created heaven and earth . . ." (Genesis 1:1); "Praise be to God who created the heavens and the earth and set up darkness and the light" (Qur'ân 6:1).

Nor can it be said that God created matter, and angels gave it its different forms (II:43), since matter cannot exist without form.

Moreover, an angel would have to work with pre-existing things that are already formed, just as the generic agents of this world (e.g., sun, rain, wind) contribute to the generation of new individuals within pre-existing species, but do not make new species. Individuals of the same form are the proper causes of new individuals within a species, but the form itself, like existence, which belongs to an individual through its form and not its matter, is the proper effect of the First Cause.

Also, through their specific forms things have a likeness to God who is pure act, and likeness indicates the source of a form.

Thus we read: "God said, 'Let the earth produce every kind of living creature in its own species: cattle, creeping things and wild animals of all kinds'" (Genesis 1:24); "God created every sort of beast from water; some of them move on their stomachs, others on two feet, others on four feet. God creates what he wishes" (Qur'ân 24:45).

Nor do differences in creatures come from merits or demerits in a previous state (II:44), as Origen thought that all spirits were created equal and as a consequence of their choice some became angels and others men of different conditions and degrees of perfection, while other material creatures were made in relation to these. But this opinion is flawed because the order of the universe, to which many distinct things contribute by their distinct actions, is the primary good intended by the Creator. If this order were left to the choice of independent equal creatures it would be a matter of chance, not design; thus why should only one soul deserve to become the sun, rather than many?

Also, any difference arising from free choice is accidental to an intellectual creature and cannot determine its species. According to this opinion, therefore, all intellectual creatures, angels and men, would have to be of a single species, which is false.

Similarly, if the kind of body a soul is united to is the result of a previous choice, its union with the body would be an accidental addition to the complete nature it already had.

By the same reason a soul could continue to merit or demerit a better or a worse body, and thus transmigrate, which is not only against the Faith but also philosophically impossible, because determined forms require determined matter.

Moreover, Origen would have to explain how, if all spirits were created equal, they were different from one another before making any choice. It cannot be because of quantified matter, which only distinguished bodies. Therefore it would have to come from form; but no form is distinct from another unless by species.

Besides, if rational creatures do not need bodies, bodies are superfluous for their existence and differentiation; but if they do need them they should be created with them.

Also, the difference between a rational animal and a pure spirit is greater than any differences among pure spirits. Thus natural differences made by God are greater than any supposed differentiation of spirits resulting from their choice.

Furthermore, if the supposed equal spirits all made equal choices, then the material world corresponding to them would have to be all of a single form, which would not well reflect God's goodness.

Also, the opinion that spirits fall into such and such a body because of their sins implies that matter is evil, as the Manichaeans held. But of material creation we read: "God saw all he had made, and indeed it was very good" (Genesis 1:31); "Blessed be God the best Creator" (Qur'ân 23:14).

The manifestation of God's goodness, as he intends it, is the real reason for the diversity of creatures (II:45). Creatures can only imperfectly represent God's goodness by their likeness to him and few do so less perfectly than many; so the more diversity there is in creation the better creatures can represent him. Also, matter has a vast potentiality which would be imperfectly realized if only one or a few species existed; so it is fitting for God to manifest his likeness by a vast number of species, out of the infinite possible species that he knows. Besides, the diversity of creatures entails the communication of goodness from one creature to another, which is another way of manifesting God's own diffusive goodness. Thus the total order of the universe with a diversity of parts is better than any one thing in the universe, and better manifests God's goodness. So again we say: "God saw all he had made, and indeed it was very good" (Genesis 1:31); "Blessed be God the best Creator" (Qur'ân 23:14).

The Nature of Intellectual Creatures (II:46-55)

It is fitting that there be, at the apex of creation, intellectual creatures (II:46), because all creation which comes from God as a cause should return to him, completing the circle. All creatures do so by resembling God in their existence and nature, but intellectual creatures also on the level of activity, since God's intellect and will are the origin of creation, as seen above (II:23-24).

Moreover, such creatures participate in God's providence by communicating goodness to others by way of planning and free choice.

Above all, they participate in God's goodness by having him as an object of their knowledge; and as his knowledge includes all creatures as well, so intellectual creatures imitate him by the breadth of their knowledge.

Intellectual substances are endowed with a will (II:47), since everything has a desire for good (cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, I, ch. 1). There is a natural appetite in things that lack knowledge, a sense appetite in those that have sense knowledge, and a will in intellectual creatures. The first two do not really move themselves, but are determined by their nature and the objects of their appetite — thus bodies gravitate and animals pursue what is natural to them; only intellectual creatures are masters of their acts, being free to act or not act, since they can think and freely choose, because their knowledge is universal, not determining their will to one thing.

Intellectual substances have free will (II:48), as follows if their will is joined with intellectual knowledge by which they reflect and judge what to do. This knowledge begins with a universal idea of goodness, under which any number of particular goods can be considered and a free decision taken about which to pursue. This contrasts with inanimate things and plants, which act without knowledge, and animals which operate by determined instinct; an intellectual creature is determined only to goodness in its generality.

An intellectual substance is not a body (II:49), since bodies comprehend things only by physical embrace, but an intellect grasps something as a whole to a whole, without part by part contact.

Moreover, physical things are corrupted when they receive the form of another, but an intellect is only perfected by receiving the forms of all the things it knows.

Besides, forms received in matter must be particular, but those received in the intellect are universal.

Moreover, the intellect can know some things which are not bodies, and its knowledge is potentially infinite, which could be true if it were a body.

Also, an intellect can reflect on itself; a body is not capable of such immanent action.

So the word "spirit" is sometimes used of the imperishable part of man, as in the case of the girl who was raised from the dead: "And her spirit returned and she got up at that very moment" (Luke 8:55); "He created man, starting from clay . . . then he shaped him and breathed into him from his spirit, giving him hearing, seeing and inner organs" (Qur'ân 32:7-9).

Intellectual substances are immaterial (II:50), since all material things are bodies having extension.

Also, an intellect cannot be individuated by matter, since it knows things by uniting with their forms abstracted from individual matter.

Likewise, the action of something composed of individual matter and form would have to terminate at something similarly composed, but the object of intellectual knowledge is abstract from individual matter.

Thus the intellect does not physically become what it knows, but the forms of things exist in the intellect in an intelligible way. This permits contraries, such as hot and cold, to co-exist in the mind, which is impossible in material nature. So the intellect receives the forms of the things it knows without any disturbance to itself, but is rather perfected and finds rest in this knowledge.

So we read: "Wisdom is brilliant, she never fades. By those who love her she is readily seen; by those who seek her she is readily found" (Wisdom: 6:12); "God is the one who does alât over you and over his angels to bring you out of the darkness to the light" (Qur'ân 33:43).

Nor are intellectual substances material forms (II:51), in such a way that their existence depends on matter, because forms dependent on matter have a material existence, that is, one belonging to the composite of matter and form. Such forms cannot have any action independent of matter, such as an intellect has in receiving forms without individual matter.

In created intellectual substances essence and existence are really distinct (II:52); thus they fall short of divine simplicity, since God is subsistent being, pure act, infinite in perfection, and there can be only one such being; everything else is a particular kind of being, which is not identical with its existence, but it has existence from an outside cause by way of participation in Being Itself. Thus "God said to Moses, 'I am he who is.' And he said, 'This is what you are to say to the Israelites, 'I am has sent me to you.''" "God — there is no divinity other than he — the living, the subsistent, is not subject to slumber or sleep; his is everything in heaven and on earth" (Qur'ân 2:255).

In intellectual created substances there is also act and potency (II:53), since existence is related to essence as act to potency, where they are distinct. Existence is act because by it is produced by divine agency as a participated likeness of his own being.

The composition of essence and existence is different from that of matter and form (II:54), even though both are compositions of potency and act. That is because matter is only part of a substance that exists and it does not exist on its own; the same can be said of form, although form is said to be a principle of existing because it completes the substance, whose act is existence; thus form is a principle *by which* a thing exists, whereas substance is *what* exists.

In intellectual substances, which are not composed of matter and form, the very form is a subsistent substance and is the thing that exists. But in material things there is the double composition of matter and form and of essence and existence. Thus some things are common to

all created substances, such as reception and perfection, while others are proper only to material substances, such as generation.

Intellectual substances are incorruptible (II:55), since corruption is the separation of form from matter, and such substances have no matter.

Also, the form of a thing is the principle of its existence. A substance can lose its existence by losing its form, but if the substance is a subsistent form it cannot lose its existence, since no thing corrupts into nothing but into potency, and for it to go back to potency would mean for it to be a substance without existence, which is impossible.

Also, just as prime matter is incorruptible, so are immaterial substances, since both are prime potencies in the composition of being.

Besides, intellectual substances are not subject to motion or contraries which would corrupt them as in the material world, for contraries can co-exist in the intellect.

Likewise, corruption is the termination of sensible alteration and wearing down, which can only happen to bodies.

Also, the intellect cannot be compared to the senses which are corruptible when their physical organ corrupts or their object is too intense, like blindness from looking at the sun; for the intellect has no organ, and the greater the things it knows the better it can know lesser things.

Furthermore, what is intelligible is the perfection of the intellect and is commensurate with it. Since everything intelligible is as such incorruptible the intellect must also be so.

Also, there is a natural appetite in everything to resist corruption and continue in existence. Animals have sense experience of existence here and now. They unknowingly provide for the continuation of their species and knowingly resist destruction. But those who understand what perpetual existence is naturally desire it, and this desire cannot be in vain.

Finally, things cease to exist by the same powers that brought them into being. But intellectual creatures came into being by direct creation. Any potency to non-being is not in themselves but in God, who does not destroy what is proper to a nature.

So we read: "Praise him all his angels. . . . Alone he commanded and they were created. He stationed them from of old forever; he gave a decree which shall never pass away" (Psalm 48:2,5-6); "The guardians of Paradise say to the elect, 'Peace to you! You have done well; enter here and stay forever. . . . And you will see the angels encircling the throne and singing the praises of their Lord" (Qur'ân 39:73,75).

The Union of an Intellectual Substance to a Body (II:56-72)

How this is possible (II:56 & replies in 69). An intellectual substance cannot unite with a body by **mixing** with it, since a mixture requires alteration of each part, and this is possible only with bodies.

Likewise, in a mixture the parts do not keep an actual but only a virtual existence, but intellectual substances are incorruptible.

Nor can it be joined to a body by way of **contact**, since only bodies can contact one another when they touch. For the same reason it cannot be joined by way of **continuation** or **composition** or **attachment**, since all of these imply bodily contact.

One possible way an intellectual substance can be joined to a body is by way of **action**; such action involves touching without being touched and acting without being acted upon. By this contact of power an indivisible intellectual substance can touch the whole divisible surface of a body, which a bodily point cannot do; not only that, but it can penetrate the whole body and not

just the outer surface. Such a union of an intellectual substance with a body is not a substantial union, but as a mover to a distinct thing being moved.

To have **substantial** union with a body, an intellectual substance would have to be its substantial form; anything else would be an accidental union. But to this possibility there are many objections:

1) A body and an intellectual substance are both complete substances, so cannot be made into one. *Response:* They are not two actually existing substances, but one; the soul makes the body actually exist.

2) Matter and form should be in the same genus, but an intellectual substance and a body are different in genus. *Response:* Matter and form are not species of the same genus, but principles of the same species, as is true of the body and the soul when they are united.

3) The intellectual substance would no longer be immaterial if it were the form of a material body, since its existence would correspond to the form as it is in matter. *Response:* The human soul is not immersed in matter or entirely absorbed by it, but has its own immaterial existence which it shares with the body.

4) Anything whose existence is in the body cannot be separated from the body the way the philosophers say about the intellect. *Response:* The intellective soul is also the principle of the vegetative and sensitive operations of the body, and these powers of the soul are the forms of bodily organs; yet the soul's intellective power operates without a bodily organ and is therefore called "separate", together with the soul itself, which also actualizes and gives existence to the body.

5) Something whose existence is common with the body must act in conjunction with the body and not transcend it in action; thus intellectual action is impossible. *Response:* To be the act of the body does not limit the soul from other actions transcending the body, just as it transcends it in existence.

Plato's opinion on the union of body and intellectual soul (II:57): Because of the above objections Plato and his followers said that the intellectual soul is united to the body not as form to matter but as mover to a mobile, or "a captain in a ship" (Aristotle: *De anima*, I, ch. 13), which is only a contact of power. This amounts to saying that man is no longer a body and soul, but a soul using a body.

But this is impossible, since the contact of a soul merely by power cannot make a body vegetative and sensitive.

Also, besides intellective action, there are some actions like anger and sensation which involve both the body and the soul, but that would be impossible if the two were not substantially joined. Plato tried to say that these actions belong to the soul as mover and to the body as something moved, but this answer runs into the difficulty that sensation is a movement of the sense by a sensible object, not by the soul; the senses are passive powers in bodily organs, requiring a substantial union of body and soul.

Also, if the soul is the agent in sensation, as Plato says, even irrational animal souls will have an operation that is distinct from the body, and they would therefore survive the destruction of the body.

Moreover, according to this position, a corpse would not essentially differ from a living body.

Likewise, death would not be the corruption of anything, but a parting of two already separate substances.

Also, if the distinct soul is free to move or not move the body when it likes, it could just as well separate from the body and come back to it any time it likes.

But the human soul is the form of the body, since by the soul the body actually exists and lives.

Also, being and action belong to the composite; thus we say that a man is healthy by reason of body, and knowledgeable by reason of soul, or living and sensing by reason of the two together. A sensitive soul is related to the whole body as its sensitive powers are related to distinct bodily organs, of which they are the act; thus the soul, which is also sensitive, is the act of the body.

The nutritive, sensitive and intellective powers are not three souls in men (II:58), as Plato posits (*Timaeus*) in an attempt to escape the above difficulties. There cannot be three souls, because then it would be accidental for man to be an animal or living.

Moreover, he would be three substances, not one; what is basically a living vegetable would have added accidentally to it a sensitive and an intellectual soul.

Also, if man is a soul using a body, Plato should say which of the three souls; if it is the intellective, then it is a soul using an animal, since the body is animated with a sensitive soul.

Again, if man were to have several souls and a body, there would have to be something that unites them all; nothing could do this except a single soul which is the single substantial form.

Besides, each separate soul ought to have a special place in the body, as Plato says, the intellective in the brain, the sensitive in the heart and the nutritive in the liver (*Timaeus*); but the intellect does not have an organ, and the nutritive function is found everywhere in the body, as is apparent when plants are divided.

Finally, any intense activity, such as thinking or sensation or digestion etc. weakens the other activities of a person, which shows the unity of the person that comes from one principle, the soul.

The possible intellect in man is not a separate substance (II:59 & replies in 69). Ibn-Rushd (*Commentary on III De Anima*) and the Latin Averroists tried to maintain that this intellect, which is the power by which we know and retain knowledge, is separate, using the following arguments:

1) They quote Aristotle, who said that it is "separate", "not mixed with a body", "simple" and "impassible" (*De anima*, III, ch. 4, 429a 12-430a 6), which could not be said of the form of a body. *Response*: Aristotle's demonstration concludes from the nature of the operation to the nature of the principle of operation, which is the intellective power operating without a bodily organ. That does not prevent the intellective soul from also being the form of a body.

2) It must be in itself empty of all forms so as to be capable of receiving the forms of everything, but if it is the form of a body it would share in corporeity and thus not be empty. *Response*: The union of the soul with the body does not make its intellective power the act of a bodily organ; thus it remains in potency to receive all intelligible forms.

3) If it is the form of a body it must receive forms materially and individually; therefore it could not know universals. 4) If the possible intellect received forms like prime matter, it could not know anything. *Response*: The answer to both these objections is that the intellective power is not the act of any part of the body.

5) The possible intellect is potentially infinite in its knowledge, but an infinite power cannot exist in a body. *Response*: The infinite power of the intellect is founded in the nature of the intellective soul, which is immaterial.

Holding, because of these objections, that the possible intellect is separate from individuals and common for all mankind, Ibn-Rushd tried to show how individual men understand. And he said that our imagination comes into contact with this possible intellect when it comes into contact with any intelligible forms. *Response*: This position, however is untenable because only someone having an intellect can be said to understand; the contact he posits would only make the person understood by the separate intellect.

Also, the contact of the separate possible intellect with the phantasms of our imagination would only make the phantasm an object of understanding, not the subject, since the intelligible species that informs the possible intellect is related to the phantasm as the visible species that informs the eye is related to the outside object; and the outside object, for example, a stone, does not see but is seen. So a man who understands is related by his intellect to an intelligible object; it is not the object that is related to him.

Likewise, the principle of any action must be a form in the thing, and the possible intellect is the principle of our understanding.

Also, for an intellect to be in act is to have an object intelligible in act, just as to have a sense in act is to have something actually sensed; but a phantasm is not actually intelligible, but only when an intelligible species is abstracted from it; so it cannot be a medium of contact between us and a separate possible intellect. Even when the agent intellect makes the object actually intelligible, this object is not actually understood until it is impressed on the possible intellect.

Furthermore, a higher operation is an indication of a higher kind of life and a higher kind of soul; so intellectual operation is an indication of an intellective soul.

Moreover, such supposed contact of the imagination with a separate possible intellect is subsequent to the existence of the person; thus the person would not differ essentially from an irrational animal.

Finally, according to this position a child in the womb who does not yet have phantasms would not be human, because he is in no way rational.

One is human because of one's possible intellect, not because of one's cogitative sense (II:60), as Ibn-Rushd went on to say, calling it the "passive" rather than the "possible" intellect. Such a sensitive power, corresponding to instinct in irrational animals, has the function of distinguishing individual perceptions and comparing them with one another, just as the intellect does with universal ideas. Thus sense data are prepared to be made actually intelligible by the action of the agent intellect. But man cannot be specified by reference to the cogitative or any other sense power, because his proper operation is to understand and reason; this act must correspond to a non-bodily power within him. Thus also, man's own intellect is the power by which he moves himself and is responsible for his actions. Similarly, man's will, which tends to the universal good and thus is in the intellective part of man, is personal to him, since he is thereby responsible for his own actions.

Again, a child understands potentially before he comes of age; therefore he is not in contact with an outside possible intellect through an object actually understood, but has a possible intellect as part of himself right from the beginning. Ibn-Rushd replies to this argument saying that a child understands potentially, first because his phantasms are potentially intelligible, and secondly because he can come into contact with the separate possible intellect. *Response:* But, as for the phantasms, understanding is the passive reception of an intelligible form, whereas making phantasms actually intelligible is the action of the possible intellect.

Also, the power to understand follows upon being human, but having phantasms does not make someone human.

As for coming into contact with a separate possible intellect, no one can be said to understand potentially without having a power to understand.

Also, a child's potency to understand is not like a stone, with no principle of understanding, but like a car ready to go as soon as it is fueled and the ignition is turned on.

Furthermore, if understanding is the act of the possible intellect, then the habit of science is also in the possible intellect; but science is something in us, qualifying us as knowledgeable, and

this cannot be in the cogitative sense, because it has to do with universals and is the product of the agent intellect.

Moreover, the possible intellect by nature depends on sense knowledge to know anything; therefore it is part of man and not something above him. A sign of this is that the intellect does not directly know separate substances, but sensible substances directly and separate substances indirectly and always using phantasms. Otherwise its knowledge would be purely angelic and the senses would be superfluous, because an intellect could not know sensible and spiritual things without some order: either the spiritual through the sensible or the sensible through the spiritual.

Although he claims the authority of Aristotle, **Ibn-Rushd's opinion is not in agreement with Aristotle** (II:61), since Aristotle defined the soul as "the first act of an organic physical body potentially possessing life" (*De Anima*, II, 1, 412 28), and this definition applies to every soul. Later he says that "there is nothing to prevent some parts being separated, because they are not actualities of any body" (II, 1, 413a 7). As for the statement, "In the case of the mind and the thinking faculty nothing is yet clear; it seems to be a distinct kind of soul . . ." (II, 2, 413b 25), this does not contradict the generic definition of a soul, but merely shows how it is different: "it alone admits of being separated, as the immortal form the perishable" (*loc cit.*). He goes on to list the intellect among the powers of the soul: "Of the faculties of the soul . . . we have mentioned those for nourishment, for appetite, for sensation, for movement in space, and for thought" (II, 3, 414a 32). Elsewhere he calls the possible intellect a part of the soul: "Concerning that part of the soul by which it knows and thinks" (III, 4, 429a 10). He goes on to say: "By mind I mean that part by which the soul thinks and forms judgements" (III, 4, 429a 23).

The soul is not a bodily disposition, as Alexander of Aphrodisias thought (II:62). He assumed that an intelligent substance cannot be the form of a body; therefore the agent intellect is separate from man, while the possible intellect amounts to only a certain physical disposition.² *Response:* But this is contrary to Aristotle's principle that the possible intellect is not mixed with the body, since it receives and knows all sensible forms in a universal way; this cannot apply to a material disposition, but to a power ready to receive knowledge.

Furthermore, even sensation transcends bodily disposition and is an immaterial reception of a sensible form, and vegetative life transcends mere chemical disposition.

Basically, the possible intellect cannot be a material disposition because it is a principle of intellection, which is an immaterial operation, and the immaterial object of this intellection cannot reside in a material potency.

Moreover, Aristotle calls the possible intellect a part of the soul; but the soul is not a material disposition, but an act, which can have the further act of knowledge.

Finally, man is man because he is intelligent with a real power of intelligence, not just a material disposition.

The soul is not a physical complexion, as Galenus thought (II:63), because of the same reasons given against Alexander of Aphrodisias.

Besides, bodily complexion is just a matter of chemistry, which cannot account for life, much less sensation or intellection.

Also, complexion is an accidental disposition and not a substantial form like the soul.

Nor can bodily complexion account for the local motion of the body.

Moreover, the soul controls sensory passions which may be strong in certain persons because of their bodily complexion; bodily complexion is a disposition for passion, whereas the soul accounts for the formal aspect, such as desire for revenge in anger.

Nor is the soul a harmony of contrary elements, as Empedocles and others are said to have thought (II:64). Bodily harmony, like physical complexion, is accidental and changeable and cannot move or rule a body.

Also, harmony can apply to the body, but not easily to sensation or intellection.

Likewise, the various harmonies of different bodily parts would each require a different soul or they would have to be assigned to different parts of one soul, which is not easy to do.

Nor is the soul a body (II:65), since it is the form, not the matter of a living thing.

Also, two bodies cannot com-penetrates, which would be the case if the soul were a body.

Likewise, if the soul is a body it would have to be animated by another unifying principle or soul.

Besides, a soul moves without being moved, whereas a body cannot move unless moved.

Again, intellection is not an act of a body; so an intellective soul cannot be a body.

An objection is that children resemble parents even in soul characteristics. *Response:* But this comes from bodily disposition, which affects passions.

Another objection is that the soul suffers with the body. *Response:* But that is accidental, as the form of a body moves with the body.

A final objection is that the separation of the soul from the body implies they were in contact like two bodies. *Response:* But the contact in this case is that of form to matter, although there can be contact of a spirit with a body, as explained above (II:56).

Some people think that whatever is not a body does not exist; this is the opinion of the foolish: "The breath in our nostrils is a puff of smoke, reason a spark from the beating of our hearts" (Wisdom 2:2); "If we die and have become dust and bones, are we to be raised up?" (Qur'ân 37:16).

Nor is the intellect the same as sense (II:66), because many animals have sense without intellect, and cannot do opposite things but are determined by nature to uniform operations.

Also, sense knowledge is confined to singulars, whereas the intellect knows universals.

Moreover, sense knowledge extends only to bodily things, but an intellect can also know immaterial things, such as wisdom, truth and the relations between things.

Besides, no sense can know itself or its own operation, but the intellect can.

Finally, senses are damaged by an object that is too intense, but the intellect that is exposed to greater things can better understand lesser ones.

Nor is the possible intellect the same as the imagination (II:67), since even other animals have imagination, making them look for food or be cautious about danger even when these are not present.

Besides, imagination is confined to perception of the concrete and singular.

Moreover, the imagination could not supply data to the possible intellect if it were not distinct from it.

Besides, the imagination has an organ in the brain, unlike the possible intellect.

So we read: "Where is God, my Maker . . . who has made us more intelligent than wild animals, wiser than birds in the sky?" (Job 35:10-11); "We have certainly honored the sons of Adam and transported them over land and sea; we have enriched them with good things and favored them over the many things we have created" (Qur'ân 17:70).

An intelligent substance can be the form of a body (II:68), since other possibilities are eliminated, namely, that the human soul is separate and joined to the body as a mover, as Plato said, or in contact with the imagination, as Ibn-Rushd said, or that it is a bodily disposition, complexion or harmony. To be the substantial form of the body the soul must be the formal

principle of the body's existence, so that the soul and the body have one existence; there is nothing impossible for a subsistent form to share its existence with matter; thus the composite exists by virtue of the form.

One could object that the generic difference between the body and an intelligent substance requires generically distinct modes of existence. *Response*: But in this case existence corresponds to the soul, to which it primarily belongs, and is received by bodily matter participating in a higher existence. Thus we see a chain of being, where the least animals, such as coral, are hardly different from plants, and the highest animals combine with the lowest level of intelligent substance. The higher the level of material being, the more the form transcends matter, the greater is the unity that the form gives the matter and the higher are the operations that the being can perform. This extends all the way up to man, whose intellectual activity takes place without any bodily organ, although it takes data from the imagination and the senses; thus it is natural for the human soul to be united with the body to have the complete human species.

Aristotle held that man's intellectual soul is the form of his body (II:70), counter to the interpretation of Ibn-Rushd. This becomes apparent from Aristotle's belief that the heavenly bodies were animated (*Physics*, VIII, ch. 5, 256a; *De caelo*, II; implied also in *Metaphysics*, XI, ch. 7, 1072a; *De anima*, II, ch. 3, 414b 17) and that they seem to have an intellect without sensory powers (*De anima*, II, ch. 3, 415a, 9); in that case their intellect would be joined to their bodies without going through phantasms. Similarly, man's body should be joined to an intelligent substance as his own substantial form, and not as a separate form contacted through phantasms.

As for the question whether the heavenly bodies are animated or not, Thomas follows Augustine that this is a matter for science to decide, and it has no bearing on faith; Thomas personally opts for the negative view.

The soul is immediately united to the body (II:71), without any intermediary, whether phantasms or its own powers or a "bodily spirit", as some have supposed. That is because a form is united to matter as act to potency without any intermediary. The only way intermediacy can come in is the way the soul moves the body, since it does so through its powers, and one member through another.

The soul is totally in the whole and every part of the body (II:72). Because the soul is the act of an organic body (*De anima*, II, ch. 1, 412b 1), not of one organ only, it is the act of the whole; thus every part is animated by the same human soul. It is likewise the act of each part of the body, so that if the soul goes, the eyes and the hands are only equivocally the same. Because the soul, though simple in substance, has many different powers and operations, it needs different organs which it actuates and uses.

The Possible and Agent Intellects Are Personal Powers (II:73-78)

The possible intellect is not one for all mankind (II:73), as Ibn-Rushd said, because the soul is the form of the body, and one form can be the act of only one matter.

The soul is also adapted to a particularized body, and cannot fit any other body, either as a form or as a mover.

Moreover, each being has its unity from its form and could not be distinct from others if they all shared the same form; this form in man has to be intellectual, since that is the operation that makes man human. Ibn-Rushd's position would amount to there being just one man, the separate possible intellect, and many irrational animals (the men we know) whose phantasms are in contact with the mind of this man. The phantasms of the imagination, however, being accidental

perfections, are many and transient and cannot define any species. Neither the imagination nor the cogitative sense can understand or make man any different from irrational animals.

Besides, each person has his own knowledge and his own act of understanding which is not that of another person; the varying dispositions of people's exterior or interior senses are only a remote disposition to their intelligence, whereas science comes directly from mastering principles and drawing conclusions.

Again, if there were one intellect for all humankind it would have to have been in contact with the agent intellect and know everything from eternity, if it is eternal; thus it could learn nothing new, and all sense experience would be superfluous, whereas the intellect needs phantasms to learn and also actually to consider what it knows.

The possible intellect retains intelligible forms (II:74), and does not have knowledge only when it actually thinks, by coming into contact with the agent intellect, as Ibn-Sînâ held, who could not see how an intelligible species could be in the intellect without our actually knowing it; Ibn Sina explained learning as acquired through contact with the agent intellect. This position is hardly different from that of Plato, except that Plato held for the existence of many separate intelligible forms, not all united in an agent intellect.

Ibn-Sînâ thought that the possible intellect is stimulated into contact with the agent intellect by looking at the phantasms stored in the imagination. *Response*: This is contrary to what we would expect, since we are more disposed to receive inspiration from separate substances by being abstracted from sensory influence.

Plato was more consistent in saying that we have all knowledge in our intellects from the beginning, but separate forms help to purge our intellects from obstacles to remembering this knowledge.

Moreover, we should expect the intellect to be able to store knowledge, since it is more powerful and stable than sensory imagination which can do so.

Furthermore, if learning is only familiarity with the agent intellect, there is no reason why anyone should learn one science rather than another.

Aristotle, moreover, said that the possible intellect is "the place of forms" (*De anima*, III, ch. 4, 492a 28); he goes on to say that a learned man "can exercise his function by himself" (*ibid.*, 429b 8; cf. *Physics*, VIII, ch. 4, 255a); he also says that "for the mind phantasms are like sensible objects" (*De anima*, III, 431a 14; 432a 10), indicating that knowledge comes from sense data, not from a separate substance. Aristotle explains that habitual knowledge is a kind of act, intermediate between the pure potency of ignorance and the perfect act of actual thinking (*ibid.*, 429b 6-10). Sense memory is a distinct power that stores singular images of the past, whereas the intellect performs the functions both of storing ideas abstract from time and of actually thinking about them.

Ibn-Rushd's reasons why all men should have one soul, and replies (II:75): 1) The multiplication of any specific form must be by individuating matter; this matter cannot be part of the intellectual soul, but must be the body. Since it depends on matter for individuation, the soul must be a material form and cannot have any operation without a bodily organ; therefore the possible intellect must be separate and one for all mankind. *Response*: The possible intellect is of one species and numerically multiple, but the intellectual soul does not depend on the body for existence, although it is individuated by a relationship to a body numerically distinct from all others.

2) If each individual has his or her own possible intellect, then the intelligible forms that it knows are individualized according to the number of people who have this knowledge. In that case these intelligible forms would be singular and not universal. *Response*: Just as a visual image in

the retina is not what is seen, but that by which the color of an object is seen, so ideas, or intelligible forms in the intellect, are not **what** is understood, but **that by which** the essences of things outside the mind are understood. These essences, as they exist materially, are singular and intelligible only in potency; in the intellect they are actually intelligible and universal regarding their objects, but singular with reference to their subject, which is the possible intellect, being multiplied by the number of intellects which they inform. Even if there were a single separated possible intellect, it would know things the same way, by singular intelligible species. Although these intelligible forms are that by which things are understood, they can, by reflection, become the object of thought, both by self-consciousness of one's particular thought and by universal consideration, as is done in the science of logic.

3) A teacher would be multiplying knowledge numerically according to the number of his students, not differently from the manner in which a material agent multiplies material forms. *Response*: The knowledge that a teacher imparts is the same for all as far as what is known is concerned, but is multiplied as the intelligible species and habit of knowledge are multiplied according to the number of his students. A teacher does not act like a natural agent, but as an artist imitating and utilizing nature; a person could learn by himself, but a teacher helps him to do so faster and better.

The agent intellect is not a separated substance, but part of the soul (II:76), as opposed to the position of Alexander of Aphrodisias, Ibn-Sînâ and Ibn-Rushd. That is because it is related to the possible or passive intellect as its proper active principle. Since its function is to make sensory data intelligible so as to activate the possible intellect, it must be proportionate to it in being a part of the soul.

Also, just as material forms come from another natural agent and not from a separated substance, so the possible intellect should receive its forms from a power corresponding to it within the soul. In fact, the theory of a separated agent intellect hardly differs from the position of Plato, who said that our knowledge comes from separate subsistent ideas.

Besides, if the agent intellect were separate, it would have to act on us always or at least we would not be able to choose when to think or not to think about anything.

The same hypothesis requires all men to know the same things equally well, provided they all have the same phantasms.

One could object that the different action of the agent intellect could be explained by the different disposition of different people's cogitative sense, either — according to Ibn-Sînâ — disposing their possible intellect, or — according to Alexander of Aphrodisias and Ibn-Rushd — disposing the phantasms so that they can become actually intelligible. *Response*: As for the former, the possible intellect is always ready to receive and needs no disposition or intermediary; phantasms are not there to dispose the intellect, but they contain the object of intellection.

Besides, Ibn-Sînâ's position corresponds with his physics, which makes all natural agents mere dispositive causes of generation, with forms coming to matter from a separate agent intellect; in this case phantasms are really unnecessary, since the separate agent intellect can simply impress intelligible forms on the possible intellect. As for Alexander and Ibn-Rushd, their position also makes natural agents only dispose for the coming of a form from a separate agent.

Also, we have a desire and intention to understand, which indicates that we have the power to do so, just as any natural agent has within itself the principles of its action.

Besides, if man did not have this power, he could not be defined as rational, but rationality would be something supernatural to him.

Again, were all our ideas to come from a separate agent intellect, teaching would be impossible, since that would be somehow to do the work of the agent intellect.

Finally, if each man did not have his own agent intellect but were moved by an outside power, he would not be free or responsible for his actions, and there could be no moral science.

It is possible for the possible and the agent intellect to be both in the same soul (II:77) in spite of the apparent difficulty arising from the principle that nothing is both in act and in potency with regard to the same thing. While the passive intellect is in potency to receiving intelligible forms, the agent intellect takes phantasms, which represent sensible things, and, by stripping them of their particularized matter, makes them actually intelligible to the possible intellect. Thus the phantasm is not the agent nor does it impress its physical likeness on the intellect, but the agent intellect presents the content of the phantasm to the possible intellect in a higher, intelligible way. Thus also the essences of sensible things are the proper object of our intellect, whereas regarding separated substances we are as poor-sighted as an owl or bat in the daylight. Therefore Plato and all others who explain our understanding as coming into contact with immaterial forms or substances are indulging in flights of fantasy and are not facing the fact that we live in a sensible world and our knowledge is empirical, for which we have all the necessary powers.

Aristotle's opinion is that the agent intellect is part of the soul (II:78). With regard to the possible and agent intellects he says:

Since in every class of objects, just as in the whole of nature, there is something which is their matter, i.e., which is potentially all the individuals, and something else which is their cause or agent in that it makes them all (the two being related as an art to its material), these distinct elements must be present in the soul also. (*De anima*, III, 5, 430a 10-14)

Again, he goes on to say that the agent intellect is in the soul like a "habit" (*ibid.*, 430a 15), as opposed to privation. He describes it as "separable, impassive and unmixed, by its essence being in act" (*ibid.*, 430a 18); earlier he had said that the possible intellect is "separable" (429a 11, 429b 6), "unmixed with the body" (ch. 4, 429a 18,24), "impassive" (429a 15; 429b 24), although passive in a wide sense as receptive of intelligible species; so the word "separable" cannot be taken as referring to a separate substance, but to a power that "does not have an organ", as he said of the possible intellect. Then, after referring to knowledge in act as the formal identity of the mind in act with the intelligible in act, he says that "what is separated is only that which it is, and only this is immortal and everlasting" (430a 23); these words can only refer to the intellect in act which he was speaking about, which includes the possible and agent intellects, whereas the "passive intellect", which he says is corruptible (430a 24), must refer to the cogitative and other senses.

The Human Soul's Origin and Perpetuity (II:79-85)

The human soul is incorruptible (II:79), since every intelligent substance is such.

Moreover, the perfection of the soul comes from non-bodily activities, such as knowledge — which is the more perfect the more immaterial its object — and virtue, which keeps the soul from following bodily passions; such operation indicates the nature of its substance.

A sign of this is that man, in contrast to brutes, can understand the meaning of perpetual existence; so his natural desire to survive cannot be in vain.

Also, the act of understanding involves having intelligible ideas which are immaterial and universal. And it involves activity of the agent intellect which makes these ideas intelligible and incorruptible. So the intellectual soul must be also incorruptible.

Besides, the soul has no contrary nor does it depend on the body for its existence. If the mind gets tired, this is not because of its own weakness, but only because of weakness of the imagination, memory and cogitative senses which it needs for the supply of data.

So we hear the rumination of the foolish: "The fate of man and the fate of animal is the same; as the one dies, so the other dies; both have the selfsame breath. Man is in no way better off than animal — since all is futile" (Sirach 3:19); "[Pharaoh and his soldiers] thought they would not be returned to us" (Qur'ân 22:39).

Replies to objections (II:80-81): 1) If a man dies, his soul loses his body, the principle of his individuation; thus either the soul vanishes or all souls merge as one. *Response*: The existence of the soul does not depend on the body, although souls are multiplied according to bodies to which they are proportioned; this proportion remains even when the body is destroyed.

2) If there are many separated souls they would have to be different from one another formally, each in a different species; they could not change species by leaving the body; so even in this life each soul must be of a distinct species, and that is not plausible. *Response*: The difference among separated souls does not come from the form but from different relationships to a particular body, and this remains after death; otherwise the soul would be accidentally related to the body.

3) If the universe is eternal, then there would have to be an actually infinite number of separated souls, and that is impossible. *Response*: Some simply said that human souls die with the body; others said that only one separated soul survives, common to all, such as the agent intellect (Ibn-Sînâ) or also the possible intellect (Ibn-Rushd); others (Plato) held for recycling of souls by reincarnation. Others (Ibn-Sînâ) said that there is no impossibility in an infinite number of separated souls, since they have no relationship to one another; thus this is an accidental infinitude. Aristotle did not express an opinion about this, but the last possibility matches his principles, since he only tried to disprove an actual infinitude in material substances (*Physics*, III, ch. 5, 205a; *De caelo*, ch. 5, 271b). The problem does not arise for those whose faith teaches that the universe had a beginning.

4) If the soul is not lost with the corruption of the body, then it must be united to it accidentally, and man is not a composite of body and soul. *Response*: A composite of matter and form is not accidental; the survival of the soul without the body proves nothing, because even prime matter survives, although under another form.

5) Every human operation depends on the body, either as an organ or, in the case of the intellect, as supplying data for knowledge, so that the mind cannot operate without phantasms; but if these are all corrupted at death, then the separated soul must remain unconscious, without any operation. *Response*: Operations that are without an organ do remain, such as understanding and willing, but their manner of operation is different. In the body, the soul cannot understand without phantasms or remember without the sense memory and imagination; but, separated from the body, it has existence all for itself without the body, and thus can understand by itself, like angelic substances; it can also receive knowledge from higher spirits.

A sign of this is that temperance helps people better to understand higher things; also in dreams or ecstasy, when the exterior senses are quieted, people can receive knowledge from above that surpasses the human mode of understanding.

As for remembering, although sense memory goes at death, the intellect stores its knowledge indelibly. Sense emotions go, but the acts of the will remain, which can include joy, pleasure, the love of friendship etc.

The souls of irrational animals are not immortal (II:82), since all their operations depend essentially on the body.

Their lack of intelligence is shown because all animals of the same species do the same things, moved by nature and not by art; thus all sparrows make the same kind of nest and every species of spider makes the same kind of web.

A sign of this is the fact that no brute animal desires to exist perpetually, since all it knows is the particular here and now; they only act to preserve their species by generation.

Another sign is that the pleasures of brute animals all have to do with food or sex, so as to preserve themselves individually or as a species.

So we read: "The Lord looked at the earth and filled it with his good things. He covered its surface with every kind of animal, and to it they will return" (Sirach 16:29-30); "You have a lesson in your herds: We let you drink from their stomachs and they are very useful for you; you eat their flesh and ride on them as on ships" (Qur'ân 23:21-22).

This counters the opinion of Plato, who held that the souls of brute animals are immortal (*Phaedo*, 23-25). His opinion might seem true because the soul's activity of moving the body is not an action of the body; thus he called the soul a "self-mover"; he also said that the soul moves the body in sensation. *Response*: As for sensation, this is not an action of the sense but a passion, as it receives the action of particular sensible objects, unlike the intellect, which receives in an immaterial and universal way.

Besides, different senses have different objects and use different organs; if sensation did not need a bodily organ the same sense power could receive any sensible object, since immaterial powers are not restricted in their objects.

Again, senses are corrupted by too intense an object, but not the intellect.

As for the soul moving itself, this cannot be, since only a body can be moved; moreover in any self-mover, one part has to be in act and the other in potency.

Even so, Plato used the term "self-motion" not for physical motion but for the operation of the soul. *Response*: We have seen that sensation, and more so the passions of sense appetite, necessarily take place in a body. And a brute soul cannot move the body except through sensation and appetite. So a brute soul has no activity apart from the body; it therefore must die with the body.

The human soul comes to be with its body (II:83 & 84). Opposed to this is the position of Plato, Alexander of Aphrodisias and Ibn-Rushd that **the soul pre-existed from eternity**. They used the following arguments: 1) If something has power to exist always, there is no reason to say that at some time it did not exist. *Response*: But such power can be reckoned with only if the soul first exists; it cannot be applied to a previous non-existence. The existence of the soul from eternity is what the objector must prove, and cannot be assumed as a principle.

2) The truth of intelligible realities is necessary and eternal; the same can therefore be said of the intellective soul. *Response*: Intelligible truths as objects exist eternally in the First Truth, but a created knowing subject need not exist eternally; the fact that this truth is the final cause of the intellect proves that the soul will live forever, but the capacity of God as efficient cause to create the soul does not prove that he created it from eternity.

3) Intellective souls are principal parts of the universe, and if every day more of them come into being, the universe must have been fundamentally imperfect. *Response*: The universe is perfect as long as the human race is present; its perfection consists in the species rather than in the individuals.

4) If God rested on the seventh day (Genesis 2:2; cf. Qur'ân 7:54 etc.), then he could not be constantly creating new souls. *Response*: God's rest can be understood as finishing the creation of different species in the world, not of the individuals of these species.

Another opposite position is that of Origen, who held that **all souls were created at the beginning of the universe** and then incarnated as babies are conceived. *Response:* Against this and the position that souls are eternal is the fact that in generation the form is always posterior in time.

Moreover, the whole man, body and soul, is more perfect than the soul alone, and in natural agency the perfect should come first.

More basically, any natural form must be united to its proper matter. Were the soul to pre-exist it would then have an accidental union with the body.

The soul would also suffer violence by being forced into this union against its will, or by being told to wait when it naturally desired it.

If it is said to be natural for a soul to jump in and out of a body from time to time, as the Platonists say, then the body would be totally accidental to the soul.

Again, if the will of the parents and of the separated soul must concur for a child to be conceived, then the birth will be by chance, since the parents do not consult the soul that is to come into their child's body.

Also, if souls were created before their bodies, their separate status would be better for them, since God makes things good, and he would not demote them to a lower state in order to lift a body to a higher state.

Further against Origen's position is the fact that the soul needs senses to gain knowledge, and that is the purpose of having a body; therefore it would have to be created with a body. The only alternative would be for all its knowledge to be infused into it beforehand, as the Platonists maintained, so that learning in this life would only be remembering; in that case the body would be an impediment to knowledge and the soul's union with it would be accidental and unnatural.

Also, it is clear that all everyone knows without learning is general principles, or *being* in general and its immediate consequences, such as the principle that contradictories cannot both be true; even such knowledge comes from sense experience, such as of a particular whole to know that all wholes are greater than their parts.

Again, if souls pre-exist they must be infinite in number, since, even if the world did not always exist, nothing prevents it from lasting forever. Otherwise they must be finite and be re-used for different bodies; but that is also impossible, since were a soul to reincarnate it would have to be the same person that previously lived with that soul (as many people believe nowadays), since unity and being come from the form of a thing. Yet the individuality of the soul, like that of any form, comes from its relationship to a distinct matter or body due to which it is not only numerically distinct (by reason of division of extended quantity), but is also proportionate to a body of unique complexion and characteristics (fingerprints, DNA etc.), even in the case of identical twins.

Origen also said that souls were put into different bodies **to punish them** according to the gravity of their sins. *Response:* But something natural, such as the union of the soul with the body, cannot be a punishment, for that would mean that human nature is not good.

Besides, were the union of soul and body, which we say is a good, to arise from the evil of punishment, it would be a chance result, and that is against divine wisdom.

Further, we read God's words to Rebecca: "There are two nations in your womb . . . the elder will serve the younger" (Genesis 25:23), when neither had yet done anything either good or bad (cf. Romans 9:11); "God gives anyone (literally "any soul") responsibility only for what it can handle; to his credit will be what he merited and to his debit will be what he demerited" (Qur'ân 2:286). These and similar passages rule out merit or demerit in a pre-existent state.

All these reasons make untenable the position that the dead often return in their grandchildren, as is commonly believed in Africa. The resemblances of children to their ancestors can be explained by genetics and by their imitating the character and mannerisms of their parents; particular resemblances, such as scars or other marks, are coincidental.

One Qur'anic passage seems to imply human pre-existence: "When your Lord took the descendants of the sons of Adam from their scrotums and made them testify on their part: 'Am I not your Lord?', they answered, 'Yes, we so testify'" (Qur'ân 7:172). *Response:* This passage is not talking about souls pre-existing without a body, but is based on Semitic biological ideas that the seed of the father is the total child and is merely planted in the womb of the mother; thus all the descendants of Adam would somehow be actually present in his seed. This passage and various adîth about Muammad's pre-existence became associated with the popular idea that everyone is created Muslim; it can be taken as a metaphorical and dramatic way of expressing that each person at conception is naturally subject to God (though, according to Christian theology of original sin, lacking not a natural, but a supernatural, orientation to God).

On the origin of man's life we read: "Yahweh God shaped man from the soil of the ground and blew the breath of life into his nostrils, and man became a living being" (Genesis 2:7); "[God] who has created everything most excellently, began the creation of man from clay — then he made his descendance from an extraction of cheap liquid — then he shaped him and breathed into him from his spirit . . ." (Qur'ân 32:6-8). These passages imply the origin of man, soul with body, at the same time.

The soul is not from the substance of God (II:85), as many religious movements, from Manichaeism to Grail, have held, saying that the soul is a kind of divine spark fallen into matter. One reason is that the soul is not eternal, as has been seen.

Likewise it has been seen that God cannot be the form of anything (I:27); nor can he be in potency to what is made out of his substance, or be subject to change, as this position implies.

Besides, the human soul continues to change according to knowledge and virtue, which cannot be true of God.

The human soul, moreover, has potencies and action distinct from its substance, which is not true of God.

Again, were the soul to be divine, all human souls would have to be one, since God is one.

The opinion that the soul is part of God could come from a materialist way of thinking, whereby God is the principle element or "force" of the universe, the nature of which the intellectual soul shares. The idea also fits with those who make the soul a separated substance, the lowest in a hierarchy of cosmological divinities. Again, the very likeness of the human soul to God in intelligence could lead some to think it is of a divine nature, as also the verses quoted above (Genesis 2:7; Qur'ân 32:6-8). *Response:* But human intelligence falls way short of God's, and the phrases "breath of life" and "from his spirit" cannot be taken as if part of God's substance were cut off and put into man; they merely indicate an imperfect likeness of the human spirit to God's spirit.

The Way the Human Soul Originates (II:86-90)

It does not come from the genetic material of the parents (II:86), because anything whose operation, such as the intellectual operation of the soul, is without matter cannot originate from the body; if it did, its existence would depend on the body, like other material forms, and it would cease to exist at the death of the body.

It comes from God by creation (II:87). That is because it is not directly generated, since it is not a composite of matter and form; nor is it accidentally generated when the body is generated, as has just been seen. So the only alternative is for it to come into existence by creation, which is a work of God alone.

Moreover, the soul is not identified with its existence; so its existence must come from God. Because matter is not part of it, it cannot come to be because the body comes to be, even though it shares its existence with the body. So it must be created by God from nothing.

Besides, since the human soul is simple, its coming into being is not the acquisition of a form, which is a principle of existence coming from a natural agent, but is only the acquisition of existence, which is the proper effect of the universal agent who is God.

Also, since the end of a thing corresponds to its origin, and the end of the human soul is to know and love God, and this transcends the whole created order, the origin of the soul must be God.

So, though the earth is said to produce plants and the waters various living creatures (Genesis 1:11,20) God is said directly to have created man (see texts at end of II:84).

Objections attempting to show that the soul comes from the parents' genetic material (II:88-89): 1). Humans along with other animals have the same genus of sensitive soul; since in man this is substantially the same as the intellective soul, it should likewise come into being by physical generation. *Response:* The fact that man's soul is both sensitive and intellective makes him specifically different from brute animals; his difference of origin comes from the fact that his soul is intellective.

2) Different agents cannot terminate in one effect; so if body and soul make a unit and the agent of the body is genetic action, then this action alone should produce the whole man. *Response:* The objection holds only with regard to uncoordinated agents; but in the making of a man genetic action serves as an instrumental dispositive cause, whereas God alone does the principal action of creating the rational soul.

3) Genetic action is the means by which new individuals of the same species are produced; that includes the form which makes it what it is, the human soul in the case of man. *Response:* Genetic action is only dispositive to the principal action which belongs to God alone.

4) If the origin of souls is pushed off to God, then he should be blamed for the conception of children by adultery. *Response:* God cooperates in the work of nature which generation is, not in the evil will of the parents.

5) If the genetic material, or body, exists before the soul, that would be as problematic as if the soul existed before the body. *Response:* It is normal for matter which is in potency to a form to precede the actual form; so that the ovum and the sperm of the parents is only potentially a child.

6) An action seems imperfect if it only produces part of a thing and not the whole, which would be the case if God created the soul, and genetic action the body. *Response:* The process is not imperfect if it is all the action of God, using genetic action as a dispositive instrument.

7) In any seed, such as of that wheat or any other plant, the total plant is there, although it does not yet actually appear; the same should apply to the seed of man. *Response:* A seed or an embryo contains everything that does not exceed the corporeal nature of a thing; thus the human sperm and ovum cannot contain the intellective soul.

8) The end of the generative process should be the same as the middle and the beginning; but man starts from genetic material and gradually an embryo develops with different

organs. *Response*: This smooth development does not show that the sperm and the ovum have a human soul, but merely that they are material disposed for the reception of this soul.

9) Bodies are made for souls and configured to serve their activities; thus Aristotle says that "the soul is the efficient cause of the body" (*De anima*, II, ch. 4, 415b 9); therefore, if the body is shaped by genetic material, it must include the soul. *Response*: Genetic material, namely, the sperm and the ovum, are living with a vegetative soul, but this does not constitute a species of its own, but is transient, operating under the principal agency of the parent to dispose for their union and the reception of a rational soul.

10) If the soul does not exist before the body nor is already in the sperm, it seems that the body is first formed and then the soul infused; in this case the soul would seem to be made for the body, rather than vice versa. *Response*: Matter, which is for the completion of the being of the form, precedes form in time, although it is posterior in the sense that the form which is the end of generation determines what disposition it ought to have for the form.

It should be noted here that Thomas Aquinas thought that at conception the embryo is first vegetative; then at a point it substantially changes into something with a sensitive soul; finally it substantially changes by having a rational soul infused. This theory was based on Aristotle's principle that the soul is "the act of an organic body" (*De anima*, II, ch. 1, 412a 29). He could not see that a new embryo had enough diversity of organs to support a rational soul from the beginning of conception. This view is overturned by modern microscopic knowledge of the organic complexity of a newly conceived embryo. Not only does science support the full humanity of the embryo right from the start, but this is a simpler explanation than Thomas' hypothesis of a series of substantial changes from lower forms of life to higher ones.

An intelligent substance can be the form only of a human body (II:90), because such a soul requires a body of the highest physical complexity and a balance among its parts, so that simple elements or even the most complex organic compounds a laboratory can produce would not be suitable. As we go up the scale of life, the kinds of bodies become more and more complex, and their life depends on preserving that complexity against extremities of the natural elements (heat/cold, dryness/dampness etc.); the sense of touch is necessary to avoid these extremities, and that in itself requires a rather complex organization of cells and nerves. Thus is excluded the opinion that spirits, demons or angels have bodies of air, fire or whatever else.

Intelligent Substances Not United to Bodies (II:91-95)

Their existence (II:91): If human souls can subsist without their bodies, although this is not normal for them, we should expect there to be some separate substances which are naturally without bodies. The generic nature of an intelligent substance does not require being united with a body, although this is normally true for the species of intelligent substance which is the human soul.

Again, if we consider the scale of being, man occupies the highest place of material beings and the lowest of immaterial beings; so, for the completion of the order of creation, we should expect there to be higher spirits not united to bodies. These are more perfect because, being immaterial, they are totally and actually intelligible.

Likewise, it is fitting for there to be some intellects that directly know things that are actually intelligible, such as God and other spirits, since human knowledge is entirely restricted to knowing intelligible things through sensible things which are intelligible only in potency.

Thus we hear condemned the position of the Sadducees that "there is neither resurrection, nor angel nor spirit" (Acts 23:8); rather: "Piety is believing in God, the Last Day, the angels." (Qur'ân 2:177).

Passages such as the following might give the impression that spirits have bodies: "You created me [Iblîs, the angel who disobeyed] from fire, but you created him [Adam] from clay" (Qur'ân 38:86; see 55:15 for the jinn); "The angel of Yahweh appeared to Moses in a flame blazing from the middle of a bush" (Exodus 3:2). But in these cases the flame is symbolic of the spiritual nature and the power of such creatures, but need not be taken as literally indicating the components of their nature.

Their number (II:92): Aristotle held that intelligent substances are the movers of the heavenly bodies, and that there are as many such substances as there are heavenly spheres, no more and no less. We have seen that his whole supposition of angelic movers of the stars, sun, moon and planets collapses once we apply the notion of impetus to astrophysics (see I:13).

In following Aristotle, Thomas only disagreed with his limiting the number of separate intelligent substances; Thomas held for the existence of other substances who are not employed in the movement of the heavenly bodies, since that job is not as essential to them as is the work of understanding. Thomas is of the opinion that the more noble a being is the more numerous it should be, so that the number of separated substances should exceed the number of species of material things in the world; these, unlike Plato's separate forms, are not of the same species as material things.

Besides, mental possibilities, such as mathematical sizes, numbers and division, far exceed the real possibilities of nature; therefore it is possible to have more species of intelligent substances than of material ones.

So we read: "A thousand thousand waited on him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him" (Daniel 7:10); "I am giving you a thousand angels to help you" (Qur'ân 8:90).

Separated substances are not multiple within a single species (II:93), since each such substance is an essence, both in the concrete and in the abstract, whereas multiplication within a species requires matter, and the individuals of a material species are not the same as the species in the abstract (e.g. man is not humanity).

Moreover, the multiplication of separated substances by species adds more nobility to the universe than would the multiplication of individuals within a single species.

The human soul is not of the same species as any separate substance (II:94), since the difference between the human soul and any separate substance is greater than the differences among such substances.

Moreover the ability of the human soul to give being to a body and the fact that it is only part of the human species makes it radically different from other intelligent substances.

Also, a separate intelligence has a completely different way of knowing than a human soul, for the soul knows from sensible images, whereas a separate substance does not.

How genus and species are determined in separate substances (II:95): In material things the genus (e.g. animal) is taken from the matter, and the specific difference (e.g. rational) from the form, but separate substances have no matter. Rather, just as there are grades of perfection in the world of material species, so we can suppose that these simple separated substances are distinct because they have different degrees of perfection. Their genus has to be taken from the nature of immaterial being, while their specific difference is taken from the degree of natural perfection, which is a kind of termination of its being. Only God, who is in no way terminated, cannot be put in a genus or a species.

Thus excluded is Origen's opinion that all spiritual substances were originally created equal; rather none are equal, but each one is naturally in a unique level of perfection.

The Knowledge of Separated Substances (II:96-101)

They do not gain their knowledge from sensible things (II:96), since that would require sense powers with bodily organs.

Besides, since they are naturally superior to human souls, the object of their knowledge should be superior, namely, what is intelligible in itself, not just potentially intelligible like sensible things. So just as these substances are incorporeal, so should be the objects of their understanding, which excludes sensible things. Our intellect moves from potency to act when sensible things are made actually intelligible; separated intellects should by nature always be in the act of knowing what is actually intelligible, and not sensible things that need to be made intelligible by the agent intellect.

Since place and time are characteristics of sensible things, it should be clear also that distance in place or time has no effect on the knowledge of separated substances. Their knowledge is of immaterial being which, being actually intelligible, is outside of place and time. Our own knowledge is characterized by time because it comes from sense images, but time does not apply to the essences that we know universally, since the quiddity of things is abstracted from sensible matter.

The intellect of a separated substance is always in the act of understanding (II:97). One reason is that to go in and out of action presupposes time, while these substances are above time.

Besides, every living thing has some action going on all the time, such as metabolism for organic bodies; so some corresponding action should be always present in separated intellectual substances.

Again, to go in and out of action presupposes being moved at least accidentally, as our understanding is affected by the condition of our sensitive part; but separated substances are not subject to motion even accidentally.

Separated substances understand themselves and one another (II:98), since all of them, being immaterial, are actually intelligible. In the case of self-knowledge no intelligible species or idea in the mind is necessary, as in human knowledge, because the object is intelligible of itself.

A problem arises from the fact that none of these substances are of the same species, while knowledge implies having a likeness of the thing known. Since God created all of these substances directly, he knows them all directly as their proper cause, while these substances know God in as much as their being is a likeness of his.

Similarly, though the proper object of their knowledge is intelligible being, none of them know this comprehensively; so the higher angels have a wider knowledge through simpler concepts which are both more universal and more detailed about everything contained under these universals (contrary to universal knowledge in humans, which is imperfect until it is filled out with particular knowledge).

In any case, apart from their self-knowledge, these substances know through ideas or intelligible species, because it is impossible for the intelligible nature of another such substance directly to be the form of another intellect without being essentially identified with it as one being.

Separated substances know material things (II:99), since the scope of their intellect is being in its universality.

Besides, since these substances surpass the human intellect, they should also include in their knowledge what humans know, though in an intelligible, not a sensitive way.

Such substances know what is beneath them (lower separated substances or material things) without being degraded thereby, because the forms of lower things perfect their minds as intelligible species, and are not present in the mind as they are in their natural existence.

Separated substances know singulars (II:100). Although human intellectual knowledge is restricted to universals and we know particulars by reference to sense data, the universal knowledge of a separated substance can, by knowing a genus, also know the species and the individuating principles.

Besides, if the human soul knows singulars by two principles: sense and intellect, a separated substance, which is higher, should be able to know singulars by a single principle, the intellect.

Also, our knowledge comes by a process opposite to that of separated substances; we start from sensible singulars and abstract universals from their individuating conditions (hence we cannot know singulars by these universals), whereas separated substances have a knowledge that resembles divine creative knowledge, which extends not only to the form but also to the matter of a thing, which is the principle of its individuation.

Yet separated substances need not always understand everything at once (II:101). It is not necessary, just because an intelligible species is present in the intellect, that it should be actually thought of. In contrast, an intellectual substance can have many different ideas, and it has free will to think of one or another as it likes. Nevertheless, while attending to any one species it must understand all that this species contains. So a separated intellect can jump from one thought to another, but this is not reasoning and it is not, properly speaking, motion, since it is going from act to act, not from potency to act.

Only God's intellect knows everything all at once, because he knows everything through one thing, his essence, and his action is his essence. Therefore there is no succession in his understanding, but his understanding is wholly and simultaneously perfect, enduring for ever and ever. AMEN.

Notes

1. Maimonides, *Perplexed*, part 3, ch. 25.

2. Cf. Alexandri Aphrodisiensis *De anima liber cum mantissa* (Berlin: Reimer, 1887), II, especially p. 90, where he says that the "material" (= possible) intellect is corruptible, and only the agent intellect (separate and one for all mankind) is immaterial and eternal.

Part III

God, the Purpose of All Creation

Introduction (III:1)

In Part 1 we considered the perfection of the divine nature, and in Part 2 his power as the Creator and Lord of all. Part 3 will consider his dignity as the final goal or purpose of all creation and his providence in guiding them to this purpose.

God, as we have seen above, is not only the first and totally perfect being, but is also the principle of all other beings. He gives them being not by a necessity of his nature, but by his free will. Having made them all from nothing, he is absolute master of them all and directs each of them to fulfil its specific purpose. Things fulfil their purpose by their action.

Intelligent creatures, bearing the image of God, are not only directed but also direct themselves. If they do so according to God's law they fulfil their purpose and reach their goal; otherwise not.

For non-intelligent things this is through properties or instincts implanted in their natures. These are all corruptible and do not last in their individual existence. They also frequently fail in performing their natural activities, because of impediments or internal defects. Yet the death of one thing is the generation of another and any individual defect is compensated by another resulting good, so that everything is perfectly subject to God's power.

So we read: "Yahweh is the mighty El, the Great King over all the gods. In his hands are the holes of the underworld; and the peaks of mountains are his. His is the sea, since he made it, and the dry land moulded by his hands" (Psalm 95:3-5). "He lifted the vault of the sky and spread it out. He made the night dark and brought out the bright dawn. Then he extended the land, and made it spring with water and pasture. He set up the mountains for your own use and that of your animals" (Qur'ân 79:28-33).

The Purpose of Everything in the Context of Goodness and Evil (III:2-16)

Everything that acts for an end (III:2). This is most obvious in deliberate actions, as when a doctor tries to cure a patient. But non-deliberate action is also for an end; for example, one who shoots a gun aims at a target, but the motion of the bullet shares in the same aim. There is a great variety of natural action in the universe; each one is for a specific purpose.

We must distinguish, however, between transient action, where the end is external to the agent, and immanent action, where the action itself is an end, although it may be specified by an object, as in the case of knowing and willing.

The recognition that mistakes, failure or sin can take place is a recognition that things have purpose which it is possible for them to miss; otherwise a mistake would be no different from a successful action.

In any case, a chain of ends cannot be infinite, since an infinitely distant goal could never act as a motive for an agent to take the first step. Thus a builder may take many steps to complete a house; once it is built his job is over and he may use what he earned for another series of actions.

Everything in action acts for a good (III:3), because an end by definition is where the action is fulfilled and the desire of the agent rests, and that coincides with the definition of good. In the same way everything acts to avoid evil, which comes in when a thing fails to reach its end.

Evil, therefore, **happens apart from the intention of the agent** (III:4-6). That is because an agent intends good, and any failure to achieve this good is because of some defect in the active principle or because of an impediment. In all types of change the new form is the good intended by choice or aimed at by nature, whereas the loss of the old form is an incidental evil.

An objection is that if evil is unnatural or unintended it should not be so common, since natural activity is distinguished from chance by its regularity. *Response*: Corruption or death is not evil simply speaking, but only accidentally and to the outgoing individual, since matter is in potency to all forms and it is not expected to have one form rather than another, any more than a man is expected to have wings. Moreover, the generation of a new thing always entails the corruption of the old; so it is natural and not by chance. But if something is born defective, that is a non-intended evil; if it happens regularly that indicates a defect in the parent; otherwise it is by chance.

Another objection is that sin is voluntary, since no one would be punished unless he intended to do evil. *Response*: A voluntary agent is moved not by good in general but by a particular good. If a moral defect is usually or always attached to that good, it can be presumed to be known and intended and is therefore sinful, but if an evil happens rarely, such as an accident for a good driver, that is not intended or sinful. Deliberate sin occurs mostly because people live on the level of sense attraction and are prepared to forsake reason to get pleasure; they intend the evil indirectly, just as during a storm at sea someone willingly throws cargo overboard to save the ship and his own life.

Likewise, **nothing is essentially evil** (III:7-9), since evil is a privation of what should be present, and that is always in a subject that is good, since it is being. So we read: "God saw all that he had made, and indeed it was very good" (Genesis 1:31); "He made everything He has created good" (Qur'ân 32:7).

It could be objected that some moral actions are specifically and intrinsically evil, and a species indicates the essence of a thing. *Response*: The Goodness or evil of an action comes from its object which is always good in itself, but bad for man because it is not in accord with the order of reason.

Again, all the contraries of nature are positive, even if they are based on degrees of intensity of the same thing, such as hot and cold, white and black. Similarly, good and evil are contraries; so they should both be positive. *Response*: Moral evil is a privation of the good, but founded in something positive, just as a blind man is first of all a man and then blind.

Furthermore, evil is active, as when we say that evil corrupts. *Response*: We must observe that the power to corrupt is good, but corrupts by misuse, as happens with explosives and firearms.

Others point out that evil is an obvious reality in the world. But reality and being are the same thing; so it seems that evil has its own existence. *Response*: Being as reality does not include any privation or evil, but the being of judgement extends to privation and evil, as when we say that something *is* lacking what it should have.

This position counters the Manichaeans of old, who posited two principles of the universe: one good and spiritual and the other evil and material; their position was also held by later Zoroastrianism, the ancient religion of Persia. In our own times there are those who, insisting on the reality of evil in the world, tend to assume that it has some existence of its own. African traditional belief also tends in this direction, in assuming that there are some evil spirits who are not under God's control.

The **cause of evil is good** (III:10). That is because evil is not a being of its own; hence it cannot be a cause. But good causes evil only by accident, because good can only produce good, but its active power may be deficient, and so the effect is also deficient. So also defects can result from an imperfect instrument or lack of the proper matter, such as nutrition.

A moral evil consists in a defective act of the will. The will is defective not by nature nor by chance, but when the will is reviewing the various goods presented to it by the senses and the intellect it can manipulate reason to select what is not fitting in the present circumstances.

Evil is **rooted in good** (III:11), since it cannot exist on its own, but is a privation that can only exist in a subject. Any particular evil is not found in its specific opposite, such as blindness in sight, but in a substance, such as an animal.

However much it multiplies, evil **cannot totally overcome good** (III:12), because, as a privation, it must always have a subject which is good. Even though sight, for example, can diminish until it is totally gone, blindness remains in a subject.

But some good, especially moral good, is corrupted not so much by taking something away from a power but by piling up obstacles to its proper operation. This happens to the will by sinful actions; the more the will repeats these actions the deeper it gets stuck in the wrong direction and the more difficult it is to get out. Thus moral evil can be multiplied infinitely, but the natural goodness of the will remains.

Evil, then, **has a cause accidentally** (III:13-14). It has a cause because it is in a subject as a state opposite that of goodness and contrary to nature. But its cause is accidental, because every cause is directly a cause of some being and goodness. Either the efficient cause may be defective, as a machine that is not working well, or the material cause is deficient, as when a plant or animal is not adequately nourished, or one form is lost through the generation of a new thing, or a wrong end can prevent something from being ordered to the proper end.

There is **no supreme evil** (III:15). That is because there can be no evil entirely separated from good. Likewise, a supreme evil would have to be essentially evil, but any essence, as we have seen, is by nature good. Also evil cannot exist or act apart from the good in which it is rooted. Furthermore, a supreme evil would have to have no cause, but evil happens and is caused accidentally.

The **purpose of everything is a good** (III:16), since everything acts for a good, where its natural desire rests. Things which know the end are moved by themselves to the end, whereas things without knowledge are moved by another, such as a car by the driver or natural things by the author of their nature.

God Is the Purpose of Everything (III:17-24)

Everything is ordered to God as its purpose (III:17-18). Since God is the supreme good and the cause of the goodness in everything else, he is the cause of everything else being sought as an end. Just as all secondary causes act under the influence of the first efficient cause, so everything that participates in God's goodness finds its fulfillment in being ordered to God's goodness and serving his purposes, directly or indirectly. So we read: "Yahweh made everything for his purpose" (Proverbs 16:4). "God subjected to you everything in the heavens and everything on earth" (Qur'ân 31:20); "We belong to God and to him we are returning" (Qur'ân 2:156); this means that everything is for man and man is for God.

God, however, is not an end that is the realization of a process, like a game to be won. Rather, he exists before any process of motion towards him. Also he is not like a general for whose sake soldiers achieve victory. He acquires nothing from the action of creatures for his sake. On the contrary, being fully in act, he is the one who always gives, so that creatures are enriched by acting for him.

Everything seeks a likeness to God (III:19-20). That is because the perfection things acquire by their actions is a participation in God's goodness, being and perfection. Creatures imitate the divine goodness, but they cannot become goodness itself as only God is. Nor can they have every perfection, as God does, but each has its specific perfection imitating different aspects of God's perfection. Spiritual substances imitate God more perfectly, than material substances. Even prime matter, though it is only potentially a being, is actually good, because goodness consists in order to an end, and something ordered to a good end is good even before it reaches that end.

God's goodness is fertile, in that he liberally creates and distributes goodness countless ways. So creatures also tend to imitate God in being **the cause of other things** (III:21-22). It is clear that only mature or more perfect things can replicate themselves. This includes not only physical generation but also, in human affairs, education and spiritual formation. So we hear: "After all, we do share in God's work" (1 Corinthians 3:9). "Have they not looked at the earth, how many things we made grow on it from every sort of noble pair?" (Qur'ân 26:7).

Things fulfil their purpose of existence through operation, but **in different ways** (III:22). Sometimes it is by receiving, as when something is warmed. Sometimes it is by acting on another, such as by warming it. Other operations are not physical changes, but immanent action, such as sensation and understanding. The potency of matter is perfected to the extent that it has a more perfect form, so that there are steps of perfection, from simple elements to simple compounds, organic compounds, vegetative life, sentient life and finally intellective life.

Higher things depend on and use what is lower, since the perfections specific to any level are more intense at that level than at higher levels. Thus at the sentient level insects and animals have better powers of sense and mobility than have humans. The perfections of lower orders of existence which are not incorporated in higher orders serve the higher orders extrinsically; thus man obtains his nourishment, clothing, shelter, transport etc. by using lower things. So everything, including the cosmic order permitting life on earth, is ordered to the good of man. Thus we read: "You made him lord over the works of your hands, put all things at his feet" (Psalm 8:8). "He subjected ships to you so that you may voyage on the sea by his command; he subjected the rivers to you; he subjected to you the sun and the moon in their motion; he gives you whatever you ask of him. If you count the blessings of God you cannot number them" (Qur'ân 14:32-34).

Even **things that lack knowledge reach for a good which is a divine likeness** (III:24). These things act for an end directed by God who created their natures and preserves them individually in existence. The purpose of their actions is a goodness or perfection which is a participation in God's goodness. Since these things are under the direction of God, the first cause, their prior purpose is to participate in God's goodness as the final purpose of everything; secondarily this participation happens to be their own good.

Here we can distinguish different levels of participation in God's goodness: The lowest level is the tendency to preserve one's individual existence. A higher level is to reproduce other individuals of the same species. A still higher level is to produce generic goods that benefit other species as well, such as trees which produce fruit for animals or men to eat; this is found in an exceedingly complex and marvelous way in the balance of the cosmic eco-system. The highest but simplest level of participation in God's goodness is in the act of existence which resembles God analogically and directly depends on him.

The Purpose of Intellectual Creatures (III:25-37)

Knowing God is the purpose of every intellectual creature (III:25). That is because every creature reaches to God through the operation that is highest and most proper to it, and for man that is knowledge. And God, who is the most intelligible being, is the most perfect object of the intellect, no matter whether the intellect in question is the sharpest angel or the dullest man. Thus all practical sciences and arts are not desirable as an end, but only as a means of providing the necessities of life and leisure; among leisure activities play or recreation is only a means of refreshing the mind so that it can contemplate truth. In the area of truth we naturally desire to go all the way to the first cause of everything, which is the highest kind of knowledge. So we read: "Blessed are the pure in heart: they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). "That day their faces will be bright, looking at their Lord" (Qur'ân 75:22-23).

Finding happiness or reaching God is **not primarily through the will** (III:26), such as by loving God. That is because the intellect attains God before the will, since the will loves only what is known. Any act of the will, such as desire, love or pleasure, is only consequent to knowledge. God is good and lovable because he is supremely intelligible. Knowing him is the perfection of the intellect and the most satisfying human activity.

Neither does happiness consist in **sensual pleasure** (III:27), such as food and sex, because the pleasure of these acts is so that they can achieve the purpose, common to all animals, of sustaining the individual or the species, neither of which is the ultimate purpose of man.

Moreover, sensible goods are not only inferior to the world of the intellect, but they can only be enjoyed in moderation, whereas there is no limit to enjoying the supreme good which is above us. In fact, sense pleasure can impede approaching God by contemplation.

So we read the thought of the godless: "True happiness lies in eating and drinking and enjoying whatever has been achieved under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 5:7); "Let us leave the signs of our revelry everywhere, since this is our portion, this our lot!" (Wisdom 2:9). "[The unbelievers] delight in this life below, but this life below is only a faint pleasure compared to the next life" (Qur'ân 13:26); "Men are misled by love of the pleasures of women, children, money fashioned from gold and silver, race horses, cattle and farms. Those are faint pleasures of this life below, but with God there is a good place of retirement" (Qur'ân 3:14).

Nor does happiness consist in **honor** or **popularity** (III:28-29), since they are extrinsic to man and presuppose a higher good that is more worthy of honor.

Moreover, honor is out of the control of man and it can even be given to evil people.

Popularity or fame, likewise, which consists in being known, is highly subject to error and very unstable, because opinion can be manipulated and one little thing can make a popular person unpopular.

Nor does happiness consist in **riches** (III:30), since these are only means of making life possible and comfortable. They are not only subservient to man, who is a higher good, but can be lost by good people and had by bad people. In fact, it is more praiseworthy to give money away than to hoard it.

Nor does happiness consist in **political power** (III:31), which is another good that is exterior to man. It also is highly unstable and depends on many other people and circumstances. Besides, since it does not presuppose that its holder is virtuous, it can easily be misused.

Nor does happiness consist in **bodily well-being** (III:32), such as health, beauty and strength, since these can be had by good and evil people alike, and are highly unstable and passing. Besides, the good of the soul is higher and specific to man, whereas bodily well-being is common to all animals. In fact animals excel man in bodily condition.

Nor does happiness consist in **sense knowledge** (III:33), since this also is common to all animals, and inferior to intellectual knowledge. Sensation is important for its usefulness in bodily needs and also as a source for intellectual knowledge; in that case it is subservient to a higher good.

Nor does happiness consist ultimately in **the practice of the moral virtues** (III:34), since each of them is subservient to a higher good; thus justice is for the sake of peace, and the moderation of emotions and passions is for the sake of leading a life according to reason, wherein God's own perfection is most perfectly reflected.

Nor does happiness consist ultimately in the practice of the practical intellectual virtue of **prudence** (III:35), or good sense, since this is the exercise of reason only with respect to the practice of the moral virtues. It determines the mean to be observed in controlling emotions and conducting oneself in society.

Nor does happiness consist in the exercise of **art** (III:36), another intellectual virtue, consisting in the knowledge and ability to make things, either for the use of man or for enjoyment. Thus all the branches of technology produce things for the consumption or service of man, while the fine arts produce works of beauty which are recreative and dispose for the contemplation of truth.

Nor does happiness consist in **sports and entertainment**, even though they seem preferable to ordinary work. These exist only to restore the body and soul to a state of freshness, so that a person can not merely return to work but, on a higher plan, devote time to the contemplation of truth, especially divine truth.

Happiness, finally, does consist in **the contemplation of God** (III:37). Since happiness is not found in exterior things, nor in bodily goods, nor in the sensitive part of the soul, nor in intellectual virtues pertaining to action, what remains is the act of the intellect in contemplating the truth. This action is proper to man and shared by no lower creature. Contemplation of the truth is an end in itself, towards which everything else in life is ordered. But, since there are different levels of things that can be known, human happiness does not consist so much in knowing lower things as in knowing the highest things, particularly the origin of all, which is God.

What Kind of Knowledge of God Is Required for Happiness? (III:38-48)

Happiness, however, does not consist in that had by most **ordinary people outside the monotheistic religions** (III:38). Almost everyone has at least a general and confused idea of God, since reason leads people intuitively to know that the universe has an external cause and designer. But many are not sure whether this cause is one or many, or whether it is a force distinct from nature. Such knowledge is not only mixed with error, but is very rudimentary and general, whereas happiness consists in a perfect operation of the intellect.

Nor does happiness consist in the knowledge of God **had by demonstration** (III:39), such as that which shows God to be unchangeable, eternal, incorporeal, completely undivided and one etc. This kind of knowledge is not completely satisfying, for several reasons: All of these demonstrations show what God is not, but do not tell us what he is.

Moreover few people are able to get even so far as this demonstrative knowledge, whereas happiness ought to be available to the whole human race.

Moreover, many philosophers who engage in such demonstrations fall into various errors and uncertainty about God, but happiness cannot be found in the presence of error and uncertainty.

Nor does happiness consist in knowledge of God **by faith** (III:40). Revelation does step in to correct the errors of philosophy and give us a better knowledge of God. But faith is essentially

about truth that is not seen or understood, but accepted on the word of another. Even if this other is God, the truths proposed still leave the intellect starved and even more anxious to see these truths directly. Thus we read: "As long as we are at home in the body we are exiled from the Lord, guided by faith and not yet by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:6-7). "Those are truly the believers; they will have high standing with their Lord along with forgiveness and generous provision" (Qur'ân 8:4).

Nor does happiness consist in knowing God **through knowing spirits** (41-46), as Ibn-Rushd thought [*Commentary on De Anima*, III, 36]. His reason is that knowing spirits allows us to participate in the superior knowledge of God that they have by knowing their own essence directly which reflects the perfection of their Maker. One problem with this theory is that in this life all our knowledge comes through sense images. Like our knowledge of God, our knowledge of spirits comes from knowing their effects in the sensible world; these may tell us the existence of spirits and much of what they are not, but not what they are. Even our own soul we cannot know directly in this life, but by seeing ourselves in action.

Another problem is that, even if we were to know spirits directly in themselves and share their knowledge of God, this would still be an imperfect knowledge of God, since it is only seeing him reflected in his effects, even though these spiritual creatures are more brilliant reflections of God than material things.

We can conclude that **in this life we cannot know God's essence** (III:47), since all our thought derives from, and utilizes, sense images. Wherever Scripture talks of someone seeing God, it must be understood as through sensible representations, either physical or formed in the imagination, or that the person sees God through spiritual effects.

St. Augustine's illumination theory of knowledge, which posits that all our knowledge comes from God, the First Truth, must be understood to mean that all our knowledge is a created reflection of God's own eternal knowledge, not that we know sensible things by seeing God's essence.

So we read: "No man can see me and live" (Exodus 33:20); "Now we see only reflections in a mirror, mere riddles, but then we shall be seeing face to face" (1 Corinthians 13:12). "Mortals can be addressed by God only through symbols or behind a veil or he sends a messenger who indicates what God wants by his permission" (Qur'ân 42:51).

We can also conclude that **perfect happiness cannot be had in this life** (III:48), since by none of the forms of knowledge reviewed can we know his essence, but they all leave us hungry for a more perfect knowledge. Also, this life is very unstable, and sickness or tragedies can prevent us from enjoying whatever makes us happy in this life. For it is impossible completely to avoid hunger, thirst, too much heat or cold; no one is totally exempt from disordered passions which make him swerve more or less from the mean of virtue; no one is never mistaken in some matters or at least is ignorant of what he would like to know. Moreover, moral and intellectual maturity attained by a lifetime of striving is quickly crowned by death.

Several philosophers, therefore, concluded that the maximum human happiness is what we attain in this life, even though it is imperfect. For Aristotle it consisted in knowledge of God through metaphysics; for Ibn-Rushd it consisted in contact with angels. Yet, in struggling with this question, these great minds could not answer the fact that a natural desire, such as we have for perfect happiness, cannot be in vain and forever frustrated. We are saved from this dilemma if we take the position that perfect happiness cannot be had in this life, but only in the next. There the soul will have a superior way of knowing, like that of the angels. So we hear: "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven" (Matthew 5:12). "This life below is only a joke and a laugh, but the dwelling hereafter is better, for those who are reverent" (Qur'ân 6:32).

Knowing God in the Next Life (III:49-63)

Separated substances — angels and human souls after death — know God by their direct knowledge of themselves, but **this is not to know the divine essence** (III:49). That is because their direct or intuitive knowledge of God as the efficient and exemplar cause of their own being gives them little idea of the infinite power of God who is infinitely superior to any creature. Nevertheless this limited natural knowledge of theirs is far above our knowledge in this life, since their own essences image God's perfection more than anything we know; they also see much better the extent of God's creative action and, finally, they understand better what God is not. The latter is the most perfect natural knowledge we have of God, as is symbolized in these passages: "Moses approached the dark cloud where God was" (Exodus 20:21). "Are they waiting for when God and his angels will come to them in the darkness of the clouds?" (Qur'ân 2:210).

Such knowledge that separated substances have of God through knowing themselves **is not satisfying** (III:50), since their indirect knowledge of God naturally makes them desire to know God directly, to know what he is and not just the fact that he is. Separated substances, whose minds know God through his created wonders much more clearly than we do and without discursive reasoning, consequently have an immensely greater desire than we do to know God as he is in himself. We can observe that our desire for anything is satisfied when it achieves that thing, but our desire to know truth is infinite and does not rest until we know the origin of all things. This is symbolically described in the following texts: "Wisdom despatched her maidservants and proclaimed. . . . Come and eat my bread, drink the wine which I have drawn! Leave foolishness behind and you will live, go forward in the ways of perception" (Proverbs 9:3-6). "[Here is] an image of a garden promised to the pious, where there are rivers of non-stagnant water, rivers of non-souring milk, rivers of tasty wine, rivers of pure honey; every kind of fruit is there for them, with forgiveness from their Lord" (Qur'ân 47:15).

If we are going to see God and our natural desire is to be satisfied, this can be through no created representation or idea, but only **through himself** (III:51), so that he is both what we know and the idea by which we know him. Our knowledge of other things cannot be in this way, but must be through ideas in our mind distinct from their objects. That is because other things are not pure form, but form in matter or form in potency to existence. Only God, who is his own existence, is both true and truth itself. He, therefore, can inform a created intellect directly, in place of an idea. This takes place without fusion or composition of created and uncreated being; God joins a created intellect to himself by being an extrinsic perfection to that intellect.

This vision of God, we must realize, is beyond the power of a created intellect to achieve, and it **must be given by God** and received by the intellect (III:52). That is because knowing God's essence is an act proper to God, in which a created intellect can only share as a junior partner, passive to God's free action of drawing the intellect into communion with himself. So we read: "The gift freely given by God is eternal life" (Romans 6:23). "The winners, these are the ones who are brought near [to God] in gardens of delight" (Qur'ân 56:10-12).

When a created intellect knows God by being related to him as an extrinsic form, it still must be **specialty empowered by God** for such an act (III:53-54). This divinely infused power is called the *light of glory*, because it enables the intellect to be joined to God's essence as an intelligible form. Since God's being is knowledge and is the cause of knowledge in others, we read: "No more will the sun give you daylight, nor moonlight shine on you, but Yahweh will be your everlasting light, your God will be your splendor" (Isaiah 60:19). "God is the light of the heavens and the

earth. His light is like a niche containing a lamp, and the lamp is inside a glass, and the glass is like a shining star; the light is fuelled from a blessed olive tree that is neither eastern nor western, whose oil would give light even if it were untouched by fire. Light upon light, God guides to his light those he wishes" (Qur'ân 24:35).

An objection against the possibility of seeing God is the infinite distance between God's perfection and any created intellect, which cannot be bridged by any created light of glory. We can answer that God is not outside the range of intelligibility, as sound is out of the range of sight, but, since he is simply exceedingly intelligible, the intellect needs a special light to be connected with him. This light connects the intellect with him not by bridging the infinite distance in being between it and God, but by joining it to God as to a separate intelligible being informing the created intellect.

Nevertheless, the beatific vision is **not comprehensive** (III:55). That is because the light of glory which enables this vision cannot compare with God's own perfect vision of himself, so as to know him to the full extent that he is knowable. Not being comprehensive does not mean that the beatific vision extends to some part of God and not another, since God's being is completely simple and undivided; rather God is not perfectly seen by the created intellect to the extent that God is knowable.

Likewise, through the beatific vision the created intellect does **not see all that God sees apart from himself** (III:56). That is because one can know all the possible effects of a cause only when one has comprehensive knowledge of the cause, which a created intellect does not have of God, since God's intellect surpasses it infinitely in power and scope. Besides, creation depends on God's free will, so that by knowing his essence we cannot guess what he chooses to create.

The beatific vision is **available to everyone** (III:57), since the light of glory is a gift of God and not a natural power dependent on the strength or weakness of anyone's intellect. Differences in intelligence among different created intellects are finite and almost nothing compared with the infinite distance between any created intellect and God. So the natural desire of everyone to see God is realizable. Thus we hear: "They are like the angels in heaven" (Matthew 22:30). "The angels will welcome them saying 'This is your day which you were promised'" (Qur'ân 21:103).

Nevertheless, there are **degrees of participation in the beatific vision** (III:58), since all do not have the same moral virtue, which is a preparation for this vision. Even though they all have the same object of reward, they share in it unequally. So we hear: "In my Father's house there are many places to live in" (John 14:2). "You will be divided into three groups: those on the right (and what are they?), those on the left (and what are they?), and the winners, the ones who are brought near [to God] in gardens of delight" (Qur'ân 56:10-12).

The beatific vision includes **knowledge of the order of the universe and of everything in nature** that one might like to know (III:59), since this also is a natural desire, and by knowing God the intellect is not contracted, but expanded so as to take in all that it is naturally capable of knowing. Nonetheless, a created intellect cannot know everything that God is able to create, since that is infinite. Also, a created intellect cannot know the purposes of everything according to the order of God's wisdom and providence, since that would be to comprehend God's goodness and wisdom. Furthermore, a created intellect cannot know what depends exclusively on God's free will, such as whom he predestines and justifies and whatever else pertains to the sanctification of man. So we read: "He it was who gave me sure knowledge of what exists, to understand the structure of the world and the action of the elements. . . . And now I understand everything, hidden or visible" (Wisdom 7:17, 20). "God gave [David] kingship and wisdom, and taught him whatever he wanted" (Qur'ân 2:251). On the other hand we read: "I have scrutinised God's whole creation:

you cannot get to the bottom of everything taking place under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 8:17). "God will not allow you to look on what is hidden" (Qur'ân 3:179).

In the beatific vision the mind does not jump from one thing to another, but **sees everything by a single constant vision**(III:60). That is because happiness consists in act and not in potency or habit. Moreover a single vision is necessary to take in all that is to be known, especially infinite numbers, which cannot be grasped part by part.

Such vision **constitutes eternal life** (III:61), because in it there is no succession; it is a total simultaneous act, participating in God's own eternity. That is because the object of vision is God's eternal being, which is also the means by which it and every other thing is seen, and the intellect itself exists beyond time. Thus the action of the human soul in dealing with temporal things in this life is temporal, but its action in relating to superior things in the next life participates in eternity. So we read: "Eternal life is this: to know you, the only true God" (John 17:3). "Those whose faces are bright [at seeing God] are in the favor of God, and are there eternally" (Qur'ân 3:106).

Similarly, those who enjoy the beatific vision **can never lose it** (III:62). That is because these intellectual creatures are not subject to temporal alteration. Rather, their closeness to God makes them share in his own immutability, as their will rests permanently in the object of their desire. They can never be saddened by fear of losing it by violence, by ceasing to exist, by losing the light of glory or God himself as the object of vision, or by the desire for something better.

Also, this vision can never become boring, because that happens by fatigue of sense organs, which are necessary even for intellectual activity in this life; but the vision of God takes place without sense organs and does not weaken our intellect but rather strengthens it. Moreover, the fact that the intellect does not have comprehensive knowledge of God leaves it always full of wonder, which excludes boredom.

This position counters Plato and Origen who maintained that, after reaching final happiness, one could reincarnate.

So we read: "Happy are they who ever dwell in your house" (Psalm 84:5). "They are the citizens of the garden and are there forever" (Qur'ân 46:14).

We can also conclude that the beatific vision **fulfills every human desire** (III:63), as is said: "He will imbue your eternity with his beauty" (Psalm 103:5). "They will enter the gardens of delight with its running streams, where they have all that they wish" (Qur'ân 16:31).

Thus it fully satisfies the desire to know the truth, since in the First Truth one sees all else that one naturally desires to know. The desire for ethical integrity is fulfilled, because then one's reason is in full strength and cannot deviate by any moral weakness.

As for honor, no one can aspire to anything greater than the union of one's mind with God by seeing him, as is said: "They will reign for ever and ever" (Revelation 22:5). "If [the deceased] is among those drawn near, he will have ease and comfort in a garden of delight. If he is among those on the right, he will hear 'Peace to you who belong with those on the right!'" (Qur'ân 56:88-91).

As for popularity, no one can aspire to anything greater than the true acclaim that comes from God and the blessed, as is said: "And with glory take me to yourself" (Psalm 73:24). "My reward is only with God, and he is witness of everything" (Qur'ân 34:48).

As for riches, the blessed enjoy God himself, who contains the perfection of every good, as is said: "In her company all good things came to me" (Wisdom 7:11). "They will be adorned with golden bracelets and will wear embroidered robes of green silk, as they rest on easy-chairs" (Qur'ân 18:31).

As for pleasure, that of the intellect in seeing God is far greater than any sensual pleasure, as well as being more durable and free from any saddening ingredient, as is said: "They feast on the

good food of your house; you serve them drink from the river of your goodness" (Psalm 36:9). "Golden plates and pitchers will be brought around, containing everything that the soul desires or the eye delights in; and you will be there forever" (Qur'ân 41:71).

As for security of life, the blessed are permanently immune from any harm, as is said: "They will never hunger or thirst again; sun and scorching wind will never plague them" (Revelation 7:16). "There they will never hear ugly talk or blame, but only 'Peace, peace!'" (Qur'ân 56:25-26).

Thus in the beatific vision there is integral happiness and every desire is fulfilled. In this life the nearest that can come to it is the life of contemplating the truth, as we read: "Mary has chosen the better part, and it is not to be taken from her" (Luke 10:42). "What of he who spends the night in devotion, prostrating and standing, cautious over the next life, hoping for the mercy of his Lord? Say, 'Are those who know and those who do not know equal?' Only those with the habit of intelligence are contemplatives" (Qur'ân 39:9).

God's Providence (III:64-74)

God **directs everything to its purpose by his providence** (III:64). Since everything is ordered to God as its ultimate purpose, it pertains to God, as the supreme governor and artist of the universe, to lead everything to its assigned purpose. That includes guiding natural things, which have no knowledge, to their intrinsic finality, such as a tree to producing fruit, and directing them to serve the needs of other things in the world's eco-system in a harmonious balance. So we hear him called "the Great King over all the world" (Psalm 47:2) and "Lord of the universe" (Qur'ân 1:2). This position counters those who would exclude God from the process of natural or cosmic evolution.

God **preserves things in being** (III:65), since continuation in being is presupposed to any operation towards an end. A parent generates its individual offspring and its activity stops there; it is not responsible for the continued existence of its offspring nor for the nature of the species (manifested in genes). Whatever is not its own existence has existence by participation and direct dependence on God's existence, while the nature of its species, or essence, is similarly dependent directly on God's direct causality. So, just as any man-made object presupposes the work of nature in its components, so the work of nature presupposes God's creating and sustaining hand. So we hear him described as "sustaining all things by his powerful command" (Hebrews 1:3). "God is the creator of everything, and he is the one and the dominating" (Qur'ân 13:16).

The above outline of how all things constantly depend on God's power is quite different from that of certain Ash'arite theologians, such as al-Bâqillânî, who denied the existence of nature or a natural unit, and said that everything is nothing more than an accidental formation of infinitesimal atoms which have no continuity in space or time, but cease to exist and are recreated every successive instant.

Yet **no agent gives existence except as an instrument of God's power** (III:66), since any agent is itself directly dependent on God for existence. So whatever any agent does to bring something into being, its action is dispositive to the crowning act of existence, which is the proper effect of God as the first agent. So we read: "To exist — for this he created all things" (Wisdom 1:14). "If we will something, all we need to say to it is 'Be', and it is" (Qur'ân 16:40).

Similarly, **God is the cause of action in everything** (III:67). That is because everything depends on God not just as the originator of its nature, but also for its continued existence and for every action, so that if God's influence stopped, all action would stop.

Also every action is in some way the cause of being, either substantial or accidental, and as such the action is an instrument of God.

Besides, every action has its own finality or purpose, which is directed by God. So many events are attributed to God as to their first cause, as we read: "Yahweh, you will grant us peace, having completed all our undertakings for us" (Isaiah 26:12). "Victory comes only from God. . . . You were not fighting them, but God fought them; you were not shooting, but God was shooting" (Qur'ân 8:10,17).

Therefore, **God is everywhere** and in all things (III:68), since he sustains all things in being and moves them to action by his power. Also, since his power is infinite, it must extend everywhere without exception.

Thus God's power touches constantly and directly without any intermediary: 1) the existence of any created thing, 2) its specific essence, apart from its individuality, 3) prime matter, 4) immaterial forms, that is, separated substances. So we read: "Do I not fill heaven and earth?" (Jeremiah 23:24). "God owns everything in the heavens and on earth, and God encompasses everything" (Qur'ân 4:126).

Nonetheless, we also read of heaven as the place of God: "High above all nations is Yahweh, above the heavens is his glory. Who is like Yahweh our God, who is enthroned on high?" (Psalm 113:16). "Who is the Lord of the seven heavens, the Master of the mighty throne?" (Qur'ân 23:86). This is only a reference to his power over the universe as a whole, in which our earth is a small dependent part. But, being simple and undivided, his power extends equally and totally everywhere, without his being contained in any place.

On the other hand, we must maintain that **creatures do have their own natural causality** (III:69-70), contrary to the opinion of a number of thinkers, starting with Plato. He argued that forms which exist in matter do not exist on their own but derive from immaterial forms, so that the world of ideal forms is the real cause of sensible things and there is no natural causality.

Ibn-Sînâ was of the same line of thought in attributing the generation of everything in this world to a separate agent intellect as a cause.

Some Ash'arite theologians, notably al-Ghazâlî [*Tahâfut al-falâsifa*, q. 17], imagine that natural causality would stand in competition with God's power. So they deny all causality to nature and attribute it exclusively to God, reducing natural things to occasions of God's action, backing up this position by atomism, as was explained above.

Similarly, David Hume denies all causality among things, calling into question the validity of any natural science.

This position goes against sense evidence, which attests to definite effects coming regularly from definite things, such as heat from fire and not from ice. It is also contrary to divine wisdom to cause all action directly and at the same time bring in various things as useless occasions. Also, to reduce nature to an atomized occasion of God's direct action is to detract from God's power, since his power is shown in the perfection of his effects rather than in their poverty. Likewise God's goodness is manifested in the fecundity of nature; to deny that is to detract from his goodness. Also, such a position removes the whole order of the universe, whereby one thing depends on another.

So, holding that natural things are active in so far as they are in act by their own form, we admit that their causality extends not only to accidental effects, such as heat and pressure, but also to substance, in generating their like. At the same time we attribute all these effects to God who acts through nature as his instrument.

Those who deny natural causality object that one action cannot come from two agents, one natural and the other God. Their problem is that they do not understand secondary or subordinate causality, how one cause can act instrumentally through the influence of a higher agent. It is not a question of partitioning the action and the effect between two agents, as when two workers cultivate different sections of a farm, or even when two men lift the same load. One cannot assign a certain percentage to God and another to the created agent, as the Mu‘tazilites held and the Ash‘arites denied, but the work belongs 100% to both, at different levels of causality.

God’s providence **does not exclude all evil** (III:71). That is because secondary causes can be defective, as when a good artist works with bad tools; and it is not for a good ruler to intervene constantly in his subordinates’ performance of their duties.

It also serves the ecological good of the universe that the corruption of one thing should be the generation or sustenance of another.

Also, greater moral good accidentally arises from the presence of evil, such as injustice and persecution, since these are occasions for good people to practice heroic virtue.

Evil, or the privation of good, also makes the good stand out and thus helps us to appreciate it better, as well as the fact that we receive it from God’s generosity and not from any obligation he has towards us.

So we read: "Does misfortune come to a city if Yahweh has not caused it?" (Amos 3:6). "We put your faith to the test with evil and with good" (Qur’ân 21:35).

So those who deny God’s existence because of the presence of evil are mistaken, because evil presupposes good and ultimately a perfect good, so that we can argue on the contrary: If there is evil, God exists!

At the same time we can solve the question whether evil actions are from God: As far as they are actions, or being, they are ultimately from God, but as far as they are defective, or lacking in being, they are not, but arise from defective secondary causes.

Also, God’s providence does not impose necessity on things so as to exclude **contingency** (III:72). This is evident from the fact that things change and are corrupted and are often impeded in producing their effects; thus most seeds do not germinate. On the other hand, God allows the human soul and separated substances to enjoy immortality by the necessity of their natures.

Nor does God’s providence exclude **free will** (III:72), since it is a perfection more closely resembling divine perfection than any natural power, since it is not determined to a single pattern of acting.

Also, were God to eliminate free will, many good things would be missing, as are included in the whole range of human virtue and good character.

So we read: "He himself made human beings in the beginning, and then left the free to make their own decisions" (Sirach 15:14). "Whoever wishes will believe; and whoever wishes will disbelieve" (Qur’ân 18:29).

Nor does God’s providence exclude **chance** (III:74); otherwise everything would happen necessarily and nothing would be contingent. In that case, nothing would be corruptible and the balance of nature would suffer.

Also, the proper activity of natural things is restricted to intrinsic finality, such as for a tree to produce fruit; what happens to that fruit is a matter of chance, as far as the tree is concerned. So, if nothing happened by chance, there would be no balance of nature and many good things would be missing.

So we read: "Another thing I have observed under the sun: that the race is not won by the speediest, nor the battle by the champions; it is not the wise who get food, nor the intelligent wealth, nor the learned favor: chance and mischance befall them all" (Ecclesiastes 9:11). "They will have eternal torment, like those before them who were stronger than them and had more wealth and children than them" (Qur'ân 9:68-69).

How God's Providence Is Both Immediate and Intermediate (III:75-93)

Since God's providence allows for contingency and chance, it positively includes **care for individual contingent things**(III:75). If his providence did not extend to them, it would be either because he does not know them, or is unable to care for them, or does not will to do so. But his infinite knowledge and power does reach them, while his will extends to every good thing. He cares for them by freely keeping them in being and enabling them to carry out all their actions and fulfil their purpose of being. Thus the perfection of God's knowledge and power is shown when he cares for each smallest detail of the universe. So we read: "Can you not buy two sparrows for a penny? An yet no one falls to the ground without your Father knowing. Why, every hair on your head has been counted" (Matthew 10:29-30). "To him belongs everything in the heavens and on the earth, what is between them, and what is under the soil" (Qur'ân 20:6).

Some blame Aristotle for holding the contrary to this position, but such an opinion cannot be substantiated in his words.

God's providence extends to every single thing **immediately** (III:76). This is counter to an opinion attributed to Plato, that God's direct providence concerns only spiritual creatures, and through them indirectly to everything else. Such a position is an anthropomorphism, because in human affairs a head of state cannot know every detail of a country, but must leave most of the details of administration to subordinates who know the details better. But God is not like that; rather, he knows everything and regulates every detail directly. So we read: "What is, what will be, you have planned; what has been, you designed" (Judith 9:5). "With him are the keys of the mysteries; only he knows them. He knows what is on the dry land and in the sea. Not a leaf falls but he knows it, nor a grain into the dark earth nor a fresh or dry branch but it is all in a clear book" (Qur'ân 6:59).

God's providence makes use of **intermediaries in its execution** (III:77). Although it is immediate with regard to planning and regulating every detail, and therein his perfect wisdom is at work, the execution of his providence is fittingly left to secondary causes which are proportionate to the envisaged effects. In this way the different levels of goodness found in creation share in God's own diffusive goodness and an order of inter-dependence is established in the universe. So we read: "Bless Yahweh, all his soldiers, his ministers who do his will" (Psalm 103:21). "In charge of that fire are fierce and severe angels who do not disobey God in whatever he orders them; they do whatever they are commanded to do" (Qur'ân 66:6).

Intellectual creatures are the primary intermediaries in the execution of divine providence (III:78-79), since they are superior to all other creatures. They participate in God's providence through their ability not only to carry out instructions, but also to understand and apply them intelligently. An intellectual power can plan and direct, whereas creatures that have no intellect are directed by the necessary orientation of their nature or by training, as in the case of domestic animals.

Among intellectual creatures, it is natural for the lower to be directed by the higher, since these have a greater share of God's wisdom. Thus there are varieties of **angels** with different

functions (III:80), some concerned with the overall plan of creation, others with one area or another, and others with various needs of man. Thus we hear of Seraphim (Isaiah 6:2,6) and Cherubim (Ezekiel 10 etc., Hebrews 9:5), who are closest to God (compare Qur'ân 40:7), Archangels (1 Thessalonians 4:16), particularly Michael (Daniel 10:13,21, Jude 9; Qur'ân 2:98), Angels (throughout), particularly Gabriel (Luke 1:19,26; Qur'ân 2:97-98, 66:4).

The word "angel" means messenger, and that is what their job is said to be (e.g. Acts 10:4-6; Qur'ân 81:19); elsewhere they are said to offer men's prayers to God (Tobit 12:12), to guide and heal (in the case of Raphael, Tobit 12:14), to fight for the faithful (e.g. 2 Kings 19:35; Qur'ân 8:9,12), to record men's actions against the Day of Judgement (e.g. Qur'ân 82:10) and to carry souls at death (e.g. Qur'ân 32:11).

As for Principalities, Ruling Forces, Powers and Sovereignities (Ephesians 1:21), some were considered promulgators of the Mosaic law (Galatians 3:19) but then all of them were rejected as demonic powers who enslaved people to the law, distracting them from their Creator (Galatians 4:3, Colossians 2:15, Ephesians 1:21, 2:2, 6:12; 1 Corinthians 15:24).

Human intelligence is at a disadvantage because one starts life with only a vague idea of the general lines of God's providence. To learn the detailed order of things requires study of the world about us. Nonetheless, because **man stands over irrational animals** (III:81), we read: "Let them be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven, the cattle, all the wild animals and all the creatures that creep along the ground" (Genesis 1:26). "God has subjected to you everything on earth as well as the ships that sail on the sea by his command" (Qur'ân 22:65).

Animals, likewise, stand over plants and other things that lack knowledge, as we hear: "I give you all the seed-bearing plants everywhere on the surface of the earth, and all the trees with seed-bearing fruit; this will be your food. And to all the wild animals, all the birds of heaven and all the living creatures that creep along the ground, I give all the foliage of the plants as their food" (Genesis 1:29-30). "We poured out rain abundantly and ploughed the earth well; we made grain spring up, along with grapes, canes, olive and palm trees, luxuriant gardens, fruits and pasture, for your enjoyment and that of your flocks" (Qur'ân 80: 25-32).

Within man, too, his bodily power should serve his power for sensation, and his sensitive powers should serve his intellect and be guided by its commands.

Within human society **those endowed with greater intelligence naturally should take the leadership** in coordinating the talents of others for the common good. So we read: "From all the people at large choose capable and God-fearing men . . . and make them the people's permanent judges" (Exodus 18:21). "Obey the Apostle and those in authority among you" (Qur'ân 4:59).

Nevertheless, this order is frequently inverted, just as sensuality can take over a man's intellect. So some people seize power by violence or bribe their way in. But God's providence allows these defects of human agents; yet even here he preserves some sanity by providing wise men who can sometimes advise and guide less insightful rulers, or help good rulers to rule better. So we hear: "Plans are matured by consultation; take wise advice when waging war" (Proverbs 20:18). "Take counsel with them in the affair" (Qur'ân 3:159).

To complete the picture of providence, we can observe that most of the energy of the universe is in non-living **physical and chemical forces** (III:82-83). In this terrestrial world, most of this is controlled and directed by the sun, as the earth goes through daily and annual cycles of position towards the sun, causing an alteration of heat and cold, with winds and many other consequences. The moon and other heavenly bodies have a lesser influence. All of these are executors of God's providence to support life on the earth.

On the other hand, heavenly bodies **cannot impress ideas on our minds or move our wills** (III:84-88), although it is possible for them to reach our intellect and will indirectly by affecting our bodies. But that influence, apart from our moods being affected by the weather, has been grossly exaggerated by ancient and medieval philosophers and modern astrologists with no scientific basis.

In any case, stellar or any other physical influences cannot compel the human will in its choice. Nor do they make every natural event in this world happen from necessity.

Neither can **spirits** directly influence our will; the most they can do is influence our imagination, which is a sensitive power in a physical organ. A voluntary act, by definition, cannot be forced, since it comes from the interior of the soul. A man or an angel can move someone's will only by persuasion, which is an approach to the intellect by proposing some good which the person may freely choose.

Only God can move the will without violence and from within, since he is its creator who gave it its natural hunger for good, and he keeps it in being and in operation. So we read: "Like flowing water is a king's heart in Yahweh's hand; he directs it wherever he pleases" (Proverbs 21:1). "God guides those he wishes in the right way" (Qur'ân 2:213).

Thus God not only gave us the power to will, but also **moves our will to act** (III:89-90). This is only an instance of the general principle shown above that God moves everything in its own acts in the same way that a workman uses a tool. So we read: "It is God who, in his good will toward you, begets in you any measure of desire or achievement" (2 Philippians 2:13 NAB). "Had God so willed, he would have made all of you one people" (Qur'ân 5:48).

Thus all human acts and choices fall under God's providence, even more than events in the physical world, because intellectual beings are closer and more beloved to God, and through them he cares for the rest of creation. Thus we hear the view condemned: "Yahweh has abandoned the country, Yahweh cannot see" (Ezekiel 9:9), whereas "God knows what is in front of them and what is behind them" (Qur'ân 2:255).

On the other hand we hear: "He himself made human beings in the beginning, and then left them free to make their own decisions" (Sirach 15:14); "God will repay everyone according as he deserves" (Qur'ân 14:51). These passages refer to human free will and show that God's providence does not make human actions flow from the human will by necessity.

In his providence God **cares for us directly or indirectly in all our weaknesses** (III:91). Since our wills are shaky and fallible, as is evidenced by the fact of sin, we depend directly on him, whose will is unchangeable and who alone can touch our will. Our intellects are likewise prone to error as it tries to organize rationally multiple and complicated sense data; in this we can be helped by God through angels, whose intellects see all that they know in a single glance that cannot be mistaken. Our bodies are also unstable as they require times for nourishment, exercise and rest; this is regulated and given a measure of stability by cosmic rhythms, such as the revolution of the earth on its axis and around the sun.

God's providence also covers **fortune** (III:92-93), which is something that happens to a person without his intending it, as when a farmer ploughing his field finds a buried treasure, or when two people go somewhere and unexpectedly meet. All of this is chance as far as created causality is concerned, but is part of God's universal plan, whereby he both directs human choice towards good and provides the means to carry out this choice. In this, God can use angels to inspire ideas of good things, but they cannot compel choice. He may also use natural circumstances to incline us to do things, such as the weather, the sights that we see and the sounds that we hear.

In any case, we must reject astrological explanations of human character, since even natural events cannot be traced to the stars with any scientific certitude.

The Inevitability of God's Providence (III:94-97)

God's providence is **universal** (III:94), so that nothing escapes it; it is **unchangeable** by God's eternal decision (95); yet does **not make things happen from necessity**. The universality of God's providence follows from the fact that he brought all things into being and sustains them in being and operation so as to bring them to perfection.

God's providence is perfect in that his planning reaches every detail of the universe, while at the same time he executes this plan through a splendid concatenation of secondary causes. While the universe as a whole achieves the purpose for which it was made, in being ordered to the good of man, whose own good is God, not everything in the universe has equal perfection or reaches its own perfection as an individual; many things are hardly born before they are consumed for the good of something else.

As each secondary cause operates according to its own nature, it interacts with other things according to chance and not necessity. Science can predict some of this interaction to a limited extent, such as weather for a few days ahead, but God knows from eternity the interaction of every particular thing with another according to the plan that he wills. So everything inevitably happens according to God's plan, but not according to the nature of any individual thing.

The inevitability of God's providence does **not make prayer useless** (III:96), since the purpose of prayer is not to change the eternal plan of God's providence, but to obtain from God what he decided to give in answer to prayer. Since intellectual creatures share in God's goodness more than any other creatures, he loves them more and wishes to see them reach happiness through fulfilling their good desires. These desires, expressed in prayer, are a disposition and condition for God to give people what is good for them. So we read: "Yahweh performs the will of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them" (Psalm 145:8). "I am near and hear the prayer of a supplicant when he calls on me; so ask me to hear you and believe in me" (Qur'ân 2:186).

At times God does **not hear prayers**. That can be because something is requested that is not really good for the person, whether he realizes it or not, as we hear: "You do not know what you are asking" (Matthew 20:22); "When you pray and do not receive, it is because you prayed wrongly, wanting to indulge your passions" (James 4:3); we should rather be like "those who pray seeking from their Lord the means to be the closest [to him], hoping for his mercy and fearing his punishment" (Qur'ân 17:57).

Or he does not hear because a person's desire slackens and he stops praying; thus we hear of "the need to pray continually and never lose heart" (Luke 18:21).

Or he does not hear because the person does not pray humbly, devoutly and with faith, as we hear: "It was because you do not have enough faith" (Matthew 16:20). "Those only are believers whose hearts become full of fear when Allah is mentioned, and when His communications are recited to them they increase them in faith, and in their Lord do they trust" (Qur'ân 8:2).

Or it can be because the person has abandoned God's friendship by sin, or if one prays for someone else who is not in God's friendship, as we hear: "You may multiply your prayers, I shall not be listening. Your hands are covered in blood" (Isaiah 1:15); "Call on your Lord humbly and in secret; he does not love transgressors" (Qur'ân 7:55).

What we have said excludes two errors concerning prayer. The first is to say that all prayer is useless, either because God has no providence at all, as the Epicureans said, or it does not reach

human affairs, or because everything happens of necessity, as the Stoics said. The second error is to say that prayer works by changing the mind of God. Some Scripture passages could be taken in this sense, such as: "Should the nation I have threatened abandon its wickedness, I then change my mind about the disaster which I had intended to inflict on it" (Jeremiah 18:8); "If anyone repents and reforms after committing a crime, God will repent towards him; God is forgiving and merciful" (Qur'ân 5:39). But we have seen before that God does not change, nor does his universal plan of providence change. Yet this plan can include change of particular chains of consequences; thus God can move a person from a habit of sin leading to hell to a habit of virtue and prayer leading to heaven. In this case, God is said metaphorically to repent.

God's providence operates according to a **rational plan** (III:97). This is shown first in the great diversity found in his creation, since any single creature reflects a small aspect of God's goodness, whereas all together they reflect many different aspects of his goodness at different levels of perfection. Because things are different, they have different operations, different bodily shapes and parts, and different kinds of interaction with other things. So there are different orders of causal dependency in the world which God uses to accomplish his purposes, such as evaporation, clouds, wind and condensation to produce rain.

The rationality of God's providence counters the occasionalism we saw above [III:68], which would have fire equally warm or chill something, depending simply on God's will. It also counters the view that everything in the world happens from necessity, allowing no place for chance. So, regarding the first cause of all things, we hear: "Whatever he wills, Yahweh does in heaven and on earth (Psalm 135:6), but regarding the order of secondary causality we hear: "You ordered all things by measure, number and weight" (Wisdom 11:20). With respect to both we hear: "God creates what he wishes and then chooses what is best for the good" (Qur'ân 28:68).

Miracles: True and False (III:98-110)

(III:98) Although God's universal plan of providence is unchangeable, so that he cannot do anything that he does not know or will or that is not ordered to his own goodness, **he can operate outside the order of created causality**. That is because he has the primary and universal power over the universe, and he operates by free choice and not like natural causality which cannot regulate its output. As the creator of the nature and the being of all things, God can produce anything that his creatures can produce, directly and without them. That he should sometimes do so is reasonable, in that it serves the purpose of instructing man about God's power.

(III:99-100) When God by-passes natural causality, he is not acting against nature, since everything is naturally subject to God and may be acted upon by him to receive or communicate something of which it is not capable by the active powers of its own nature. Such extraordinary acts of God are called **miracles**, that is, provoking admiration. That is because their cause is unknown, not in the sense of awaiting a scientific explanation, but because their cause is God, whose essence is unknowable to us in this life.

There are various types of miracles, the first being what nature can never do, such as the compenetration of two bodies. The second kind is what nature can do, but not in that order, as for someone to see after blindness. The third kind is what nature can do, yet God does it without natural means, such as curing a fever by his word.

(III:101-102) In any case, only God can work miracles, since that is transcending the powers of nature; were nature able to do the action it would not be a miracle, even though it may appear

astounding to someone who does not understand the cause. So we find God described as "the only worker of wonders" (Psalm 136:4). "Signs are found only with God" (Qur'ân 6:109).

(III:103) Although **separated substances** (angels, demons or human souls after this life) cannot work a miracle, since a miracle is something that transcends all natural power, they are reputed to work wonders of a sort or to be instruments of God in working miracles. Plato and Ibn-Sînâ thought that spirits can effect any kind of change in physical things, since, according to them, all material forms are infused from a separate spiritual power. But Aristotle [*Metaphysics*, VI, 8, 5] empirically insists that physical forms come from the potency of matter under the action of physical agents. So he only admits that spirits can move bodies according to local motion (especially in his theory of how heavenly bodies are kept in motion); by moving physical agents around they can produce all the wonders credited to them. Thomas Aquinas accepts this and adds that physical agents can be more potent under the influence of spirits, but does not admit that a separated human soul can do likewise, since its power is restricted to moving its own body [*Summa theologiae*, I, 117, 4]. But any angel or man can cooperate in the working of a miracle, either by intercession or by being used instrumentally.

A problem with spirits being able to move bodies locally is that even local motion involves producing a form (impetus) in the body, whereas Thomas maintains that all physical forms are produced either directly by God or by physical agents, but not immediately by a spirit [*Summa theologiae*, I, 110, 2]. God knows best-*Allâhu a 'lam!*

Magic has many explanations (III:104-105). Most magical tricks involve signals which the magician knows and from which he distracts people's attention. But some magic is preternatural, involving voices, apparitions, knowledge of things the magician would have no natural way of knowing, and physical action for the advantage or harm of people. This kind of magic does not come from any learning or natural ability of the magician, or from any meaning in the mathematical patterns in the stones or shells he casts, but by collusion with spirits. This is confirmed by the prayers, prostrations and sacrifices that are often made in such ceremonies. There is evidence that the spirits in question are evil, since this magic is used by evil people, so that they can commit crimes, get rich or be confirmed in religious error, but not to do anything praiseworthy.

Evil spirits are **not substantially evil, but evil by sin** (III:106-110). The being of everything as made by God is good, and every intellectual creature has a natural tendency to truth and goodness, and an angelic intellect cannot err. The sin of an angel cannot arise, as in man, from a disorder of passions, since angels have no bodies and no passions, but from a choice regarding its ultimate good. By nature an intellectual creature must desire its own perfection, but it is not forced to seek that perfection outside itself, in a superior good. So an angel could choose its own excellent nature as its ultimate good and refuse to be subject to God; that is the sin of pride, as Isaiah said of the king of Babylon: "I shall climb high above the clouds, I shall rival the Most High" (Isaiah 14:14). "When we told the angels to bow down to Adam, they all bowed except Iblîs, who refused out of pride and became one of the unbelievers" (Qur'ân 2:34). The other angels then split between those who rallied behind Satan and those who remained loyal to God.

God's Providence for Men (III:111-118)

God has a special concern for rational creatures, because of their superior nature and their destiny, which is God himself. Therefore God **provides for man for his own sake, but for the rest of the physical universe for the sake of man**(III:111-112). In the physical world only man

is free to direct his own acts, while other things are directed by nature and ultimately by the author of their nature; things thus passively used are instruments for the sake of a higher good.

Moreover, man is the only physical creature that can reach God directly by knowing and loving him; any other thing can only go part way and must therefore find its fulfillment in serving man, who can reach God.

Besides, all other things are perishable, indicating that they have only a temporary use, whereas only man, in his soul, is imperishable.

Also, in any whole there are principal parts and other adjunct parts ordered to the former; thus some things are there to feed man, others to serve his other needs, but all are there for the perfection of his mind as he knows them and through them knows something about God.

In this way everything is important: Individual things are subservient to the good of their species, so that the whole species can be subservient to man, and not just one man, but the whole human race collectively, while all men, finally, find their perfection in God and in their place in the universe and the society of other intellectual creatures.

So we read: "Every living thing that moves will be yours to eat, no less than the foliage of the plants" (Genesis 9:3). "Eat and drink what God has provided for you" (Qur'ân 2:60).

Thus we reject as erroneous the opinion that we may not kill animals. Since God made them for the use of men, we can legitimately kill and eat them or use them for any other service. Scriptural references to avoiding cruelty to animals (e.g. not killing a hen with chicks, Deuteronomy 22:6, or killing a sacred camel, Qur'ân 26:155-158, etc.) are to teach people not to act similarly towards men, or to prevent mutilation, scarcity or danger to the species.

For irrational creatures the survival of the species is important, while the individual is expendable. The human race, on the contrary, is secondary to the value of the individual.

God directs human actions not merely as human but also **as they belong to each individual** (III:113). That is because each person exists not merely for the sake of their species but also in their own right with an immortal destiny. Moreover, their actions are not determined by their nature but by their own free will; the great diversity of human action that results from this must all come under God's providence. Besides, by intellect and free will persons, as individuals, are instruments of God in governing other creatures. Therefore we hear: "What is man that you should think of him, or the son of man that you should care for him?" (Psalm 8:5), or in words ascribed to Joseph: "Lord, you have given me authority and taught me interpretation of proverbs. Creator of the heavens and the earth, you are [my] protector in this life and the next" (Qur'ân 12:101).

Therefore it is necessary for God to **give men laws** to direct them towards their goal, since law is an ordinance of reason guiding action to the common good (III:114). Besides, since men share in God's providence in ruling over human society and the rest of creation, they need guidance from the Supreme Ruler of all. So we read: "Within them I shall plant my Law, writing it on their hearts" (Jeremiah 31:33). "These [commandments] are part of the wisdom with which your Lord has inspired you" (Qur'ân 17:39).

The purpose of divine law is **to direct people to God** (III:115), since the purpose for which God created them is happiness with God, and every human action is good to the extent that it contributes to this purpose. So we read: "And now, Israel, what does Yahweh your God ask of you? Only this: to fear Yahweh your God, to follow all his ways, to love him, to serve Yahweh your God with all your heart and all your soul" (Deuteronomy 10:12). "Anyone who hopes to meet his Lord should do good works and not worship anyone alongside his Lord" (Qur'ân 18:110).

The purpose of divine law specifically is the **love of God** (III:116), since that is the chief way we can reach God in this life. The highest human action, knowing God, is imperfect in this life and is completed by the act of the will directed to God. The will can be directed to God either by love or by fear. Fear keeps us loyal to God in order to avoid evils that come from not being loyal to him, but love directs us to God for his own sake. Besides, someone is called good because he has a good will, and his will is good because he loves what is good, especially the Supreme Good. Love also is the strongest, sweetest and most perfect way of being directed towards God. So we hear: "Love is the fulfillment of the Law" (Romans 13:10). "If you abandon God's religion, he will bring another people whom he loves and who love him" (Qur'ân 5:54), as if to say that love is the summation of religion.

Divine law also includes **love of neighbor** (III:117), since those who are going in the same direction should be joined by a common spirit and help one another on the way. Also, those who love God should love those whom God loves, which includes all men. Besides, peace is required for the worship and the study of divine things, and peace is secured mainly by mutual love. So we hear: "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18). "God established concord in the [believers'] hearts; were you, [Muammad], to spend all the money on earth you would not have been able to establish concord in their hearts, but God established concord among them" (Qur'ân 8:63).

Divine law **obliges men to seek the right faith** (III:118). If we are to love God, we must first have an idea of him as an object of happiness, which only faith, which exceeds natural reason, can tell us about. The faith we embrace must give us a correct idea of God, since God cannot ask anyone to believe in falsehood, especially since any error about God, who is utterly simple, makes us miss him entirely. For instance, someone who believes that he is a body does not know him at all. So we hear: "Listen, Israel: Yahweh our God is the one, the only Yahweh. You must love Yahweh your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength" (Deuteronomy 6:4). "Your God is one God, there is no God but him, the Merciful and Compassionate" (Qur'ân 2:163).

Conclusion

We have gone far along a common Christian-Muslim path. The remaining chapters of Book III of the *Contra gentiles* bring up matters where the two faiths undergird distinctive cultural traditions. Much is shared, but the search for a common stand would tend to lose differences important to the two traditions on such matters as principles of worship, sexual morality, natural law, evangelical counsels or religious life, sin and punishment, actual and sanctifying grace, charisma, deliverance and preservation from sin, and predestination. Book IV is devoted exclusively to Christian beliefs.

In matters of faith there can and should be dialogue. This book, however, is confined to shared preambles of faith. These constitute a shared horizon which invites not only dialogue, but effective collaboration in enabling human life to continue to be inspired by its transcendent religious context.

Appendix I
Prefaces to Books I-III
Thomas Aquinas

BOOK I. GOD

Chapter 7. That the Truth of Reason Is not Opposed to the Truth of the Christian Faith

[1] Now, although the truth of the Christian faith which we have discussed surpasses the capacity of the reason, nevertheless that truth that the human reason is naturally endowed to know cannot be opposed to the truth of the Christian faith. For that with which the human reason is naturally endowed is clearly most true; so much so, that it is impossible for us to think of such truths as false. Nor is it permissible to believe as false that which we hold by faith, since this is confirmed in a way that is so clearly divine. Since, therefore, only the false is opposed to the true, as is clearly evident from an examination of their definitions, it is impossible that the truth of faith should be opposed to those principles that the human reason knows naturally.

[2] Furthermore, that which is introduced into the soul of the student by the teacher is contained in the knowledge of the teacher-unless his teaching is fictitious, which it is improper to say of God. Now, the knowledge of the principles that are known to us naturally has been implanted in us by God; for God is the Author of our nature. These principles, therefore, are also contained by the divine Wisdom. Hence, whatever is opposed to them is opposed to the divine Wisdom, and, therefore, cannot come from God. That which we hold by faith as divinely revealed, therefore, cannot be contrary to our natural knowledge.

[3] Again. In the presence of contrary arguments our intellect is chained, so that it cannot proceed to the knowledge of the truth. If, therefore, contrary knowledge were implanted in us by God, our intellect would be hindered from knowing truth by this very fact. Now, such an effect cannot come from God.

[4] And again. What is natural cannot change as long as nature does not. Now, it is impossible that contrary opinions should exist in the same knowing subject at the same time. No opinion or belief, therefore, is implanted in man by God which is contrary to man's natural knowledge.

[5] Therefore, the Apostle says: "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart. This is the word of faith, which we preach" (Rom. 10:8). But because it overcomes reason, there are some who think that it is opposed to it: which is impossible.

[6] The authority of St. Augustine also agrees with this. He writes as follows: "That which truth will reveal cannot in any way be opposed to the sacred books of the Old and the New Testament." (*de genesi ad litteram*, II, c. 18 [PL. 34. col. 280]).

[7] From this we evidently gather the following conclusion: whatever arguments are brought forward against the doctrines of faith are conclusions incorrectly derived from the first and self-evident principles imbedded in nature. Such conclusions do not have the force of demonstration;

they are arguments that are either probable or sophistical. And so, there exists the possibility to answer them.

Chapter 8. How the Human Reason Is Related to the Truth of Faith

[1] There is also a further consideration. Sensible things, from which the human reason takes the origin of its knowledge, retain within themselves some sort of trace of a likeness to God. This is so imperfect, however, that it is absolutely inadequate to manifest the substance of God. For effects bear within themselves, in their own way, the likeness of their causes, since an agent produces its like; yet an effect does not always reach to the full likeness of its cause. Now, the human reason is related to the knowledge of the truth of faith (a truth which can be most evident only to those who see the divine substance) in such a way that it can gather certain likenesses of it, which are yet not sufficient so that the truth of faith may be comprehended as being understood demonstratively or through itself. Yet it is useful for the human reason to exercise itself in such arguments, however weak they may be, provided only that there be present no presumption to comprehend or to demonstrate. For to be able to see something of the loftiest realities, however thin and weak the sight may be, is, as our previous remarks indicates, a cause of the greatest joy.

[2] The testimony of Hilary agrees with this. Speaking of this same truth, he writes as follows in his *De Trinitate*: "Enter these truths by believing, press forward, persevere. And though I may know that you will not arrive at an end, yet I will congratulate you in your progress. For, though he who pursues the infinite with reverence will never finally reach the end, yet he will always progress by pressing onward. But do not intrude yourself into the divine secret, do not, presuming to comprehend the sum total of intelligence, plunge yourself into the mystery of the unending nativity; rather, understand that these things are incomprehensible." (St. Hilary, *De Trinitate*, II, 10, ii [PL. coll. 58-59].)

Chapter 9. The Order and Manner of Procedure in the Present Work

[1] It is clearly apparent, from what has been said, that the intention of the wise man ought to be directed toward the twofold truth of divine things, and toward the destruction of the errors that are contrary to this truth. One kind of divine truth the investigation of the reason is competent to reach, whereas the other surpasses every effort of the reason. I am speaking of a "twofold truth of divine things", not on the part of God Himself, Who is truth one and simple, but from the point of view of our knowledge, which is variously related to the knowledge of divine things.

[2] Now, to make the first kind of divine truth known, we must proceed through demonstrative arguments, by which our adversary may become convinced. However, since such arguments are not available for the second kind of divine truth, our intention should not be to convince our adversary by arguments: it should not be to answer his arguments against the truth; for, as we have shown (SCG, I, 7), the natural reason cannot be contrary to the truth of faith. The sole way to overcome an adversary of divine truth is from the authority of Scripture — an authority divinely confirmed by miracles. For that which is above the human reason we believe only because God has revealed it. Nevertheless, there are certain likely arguments that should be brought forth in order to make divine truth known. This should be done for the training and consolation of the faithful, and not with any idea of refuting those who are adversaries. For the very inadequacy of

the arguments would rather strengthen in their error, since they would imagine that our acceptance of the truth of faith was based on such weak arguments.

[3] This, then, is the manner of procedure we intend to follow. We shall first seek to make known that truth which faith professes and reason investigates (SCG, I-III). This we shall do by bringing forward both demonstrative and probable arguments, some of which were drawn from the books of the philosophers and of the saints, through which truth is strengthened and its adversary overcome. Then, in order to follow a development from the more manifest to the less manifest, we shall proceed to make known that truth which surpasses reason, answering the objections of its adversaries and setting forth the truth of faith by probable arguments and by authorities, to the best of our ability (SCG, IV).

[4] We are aiming, then, to set out following the way of the reason and to inquire into what the human reason can investigate about God. In this aim the first consideration that confronts us is of that which belongs to God in Himself (SCG, I). The second consideration concerns the coming forth of creatures from God (SCG, II). The third concerns the ordering of creatures to God as to their end (SCG, III).

[5] Now, among the inquiries that we must undertake concerning God in Himself, we must set down in the beginning that whereby His Existence is demonstrated, as the necessary foundation of the whole work. For, if we do not demonstrate that God exists, all consideration of divine things is necessarily suppressed.

BOOK II. CREATION

Chapter 1. The Connection between the Following Considerations and the Preceding Ones

"I meditated upon all Thy works: I meditated upon the works of Thy hands." (Ps. 142.5)

[1] Of no thing whatever can a perfect knowledge be obtained unless its operation is known, because the measure and quality of a thing's power is judged from the manner and type of its operation, and its power, in turn, manifests its nature; for a thing's natural aptitude for operation follows upon its actual possession of a certain kind of nature.

[2] There are, however, two sorts of operation, as Aristotle teaches in *Metaphysics IX, 8* (1050a 25): one that remains in the agent and is a perfection of it, as the act of sensing, understanding, and willing; another that passes over into an external thing, and is a perfection of the thing made as a result of that operation, the acts of beating, cutting and building, for example.

[3] Now, both kinds of operation belong to God: the former, in that He understands, wills, rejoices, and loves; the latter, in that He brings things into being, preserves them, and governs them. But, since the former operation is a perfection of the operator, the latter a perfection of the thing made, and since the agent is naturally prior to the thing made and is the cause of it, it follows that the first of these types of operation is the ground of the second, and naturally precedes it, as a cause precedes its effect. Clear evidence of this fact, indeed, is found in human affairs; for in the thought and will of the craftsman lie the principle and plan of the work of building.

[4] Therefore, as a simple perfection of the operator, the first type of operation claims for itself the name of operation, or, again, of action; the second, as being a perfection of the thing made, is called making so that the things which a craftsman produces by action of this kind are said to be his handiwork.

[5] Of the first type of operation in God we have already spoken in the preceding Book of this work, where we treated of the divine knowledge and Will (SCG, I. ch. 44-102). Hence, for a complete study of the divine truth, the second operation, whereby things are made and governed by God, remains to be dealt with.

[6] In fact, this order we can gather from the words quoted above. For the Psalmist first speaks of meditation upon the first type of operation, when he says: "I have meditated on all Thy operations"; thus, operation is here referred to the divine act of understanding and will. Then he refers to meditation on God's works: "and I meditated on the works of Thy hands"; so that by "the works of Thy hands" we understand heaven and earth, and all that is brought into being by God, as the handiwork produced by a craftsman.

Chapter 2. That the Consideration of Creatures Is Useful for Instruction of Faith

[1] This sort of meditation on the divine works is indeed necessary for instruction of faith in God.

[2] First, because meditation on His works enables us in some measure to admire and reflect upon His wisdom, For things made by art are representative of the art itself, being made in likeness to the art. Now, God brought things into being by His wisdom; wherefore the Psalm (103: 24) declares: "Thou hast made all things in wisdom." Hence, from reflection upon God's works we are able to infer His wisdom, since, by a certain communication of His likeness, it is spread abroad in the things He has made. For it is written: "He poured her out," namely, wisdom, "upon all His works" (Eccli. 1:10). Therefore, the Psalmist, after saying: "Thy knowledge is become wonderful to me: it is high, and I cannot reach it," and after referring to the aid of the divine illumination, when he says: "Night shall be my light," etc., confesses that he was aided in knowing the divine wisdom by reflection upon God's works, saying: "Wonderful are Thy works, and my soul knoweth right well" (Ps. 138:6, 11, 14).

[3] Secondly, this consideration [of God's works] leads to admiration of God's sublime power, and consequently inspires in men's hearts reverence for God. For the power of the worker is necessarily understood to transcend the things made. And so it is said: "If they," namely, the philosophers, "admired their power and effects," namely of the heavens, stars, and elements of the world, "let them understand that He that made them is mightier than they" (Wisd. 13:4). Also it is written: "The invisible things of God are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made: His eternal power also and divinity" (Rom. 1:20). Now, the fear and reverence of God result from this admiration. Hence, it is said: "Great is Thy name in might. Who shall not fear Thee, O King of Nations?" (Jer. 10:6-7).

[4] Thirdly, this consideration incites the souls of men to the love of God's goodness. For whatever goodness and perfection is distributed to the various creatures, in partial or particular measure, is united together in Him universally, as in the source of all goodness, as we proved in Book I, ch. 28 and 40. If, therefore, the goodness, beauty, and delightfulness of creatures are so alluring to the minds of men, the fountainhead of God's own goodness, compared with the rivulets of goodness found in creatures, will draw the enkindled minds of men wholly to Itself. Hence it is said in the Psalm (91:5): "Thou hast given me, O Lord, a delight in Thy doings, and in the works of Thy hands I shall rejoice." And elsewhere it is written concerning the children of men: "They shall be inebriated with the plenty of Thy house," that is, of all creatures, "and Thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of Thy pleasure: for with The is the fountain of life" (Ps. 35:9-10). And, against certain men, it is said: "By these good things that are seen," namely, creatures, which are good by a kind of participation, "they could not understand Him that is" (Wis. 13:1) namely, truly good; indeed, is goodness itself, as was shown in Book I, ch.38.

[5] Fourthly, this consideration endows men with a certain likeness to God's perfection. For it was shown in Book I that, by knowing Himself, God beholds all other things in Himself. (SCG, i, ch. 49-55) Since, then, the Christian faith teaches man principally about God, and makes him know creatures by the light of divine revelation, there arises in man a certain likeness of God's wisdom. So it is said: "But we all beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, are transformed into the same image" (II Cor. 3:18).

[6] It is therefore evident that the consideration of creatures has its part to play in building the Christian faith. And for this reason it is said: "I will remember the works of the Lord, and I will declare the things I have seen: by the words of the Lord are His works" (Ecclus. 42:15)

Chapter 3. That Knowledge of the Nature of Creatures Serves to Destroy Errors Concerning God

[1] The consideration of creatures is further necessary, not only for the building up of truth, but also for the destruction of errors. For errors about creatures sometimes lead one astray from the truth of faith, so far as the errors are inconsistent with true knowledge of God. Now, this happens in many ways.

[2] First, because through ignorance of the nature of creatures men are sometimes so far perverted as to set up as the first cause and as God that which can only receive its being from something else; for they think that nothing exists beyond the realm of visible creatures. Such were those who identified God with this, that, and the other kind of body; and of these it is said: "Who have imagined either the fire, or the wind, or the swift air, or the circle of the stars, or the great water, or the sun and moon to be the gods" (Wis. 13:2).

[3] Secondly, because they attribute to certain creatures that which belongs only to God. This also results from error concerning creatures. For what is incompatible with a thing's nature is not ascribed to it except through ignorance of its nature — as if man were said to have three feet. Now, what belongs solely to God is incompatible with the nature of a created thing, just as that which is exclusively man's is incompatible with another thing's nature. Thus, it is from ignorance of the creature's nature that the aforesaid error arises. And against this error it is said: "They gave the

incommunicable name to stones and wood" (Wis. 14:23). Into this error fell those who attribute the creation of things, or knowledge of the future, or the working of miracles to causes other than God.

[4] Thirdly, because through ignorance of the creature's nature something is subtracted from God's power in its working upon creatures. This is evidenced in the case of those who set up two principles of reality; in those who assert that things proceed from God, not by the divine will, but by natural necessity; and again, in those who withdraw either all or some things from the divine providence, or who deny that it can work outside the ordinary course of things. For all these notions are derogatory to God's power. Against such persons it is said: "Who looked upon the Almighty as if He could do nothing" (Job 22:17), and: "Thou showest Thy power, when men will not believe Thee to be absolute in power" (Wis. 12:17).

[5] Fourthly, through ignorance of the nature of things, and, consequently, of his own place in the order of the universe, this rational creature, man, who by faith is led to God as his last end, believes that he is subject to other creatures to which he is in fact superior. Such is evidently the case with those who subject human wills to the stars, and against these it is said: "Be not afraid of the signs of heaven, which the heathens fear" (Jer. 10:2); and this is likewise true of those who think that angels are the creators of souls, that human souls are mortal, and, generally, of persons who hold any similar views derogatory to the dignity of man.

[6] It is, therefore, evident that the opinion is false of those who asserted that it made no difference to the truth of the faith what anyone holds about creatures, so long as one thinks rightly about God, as Augustine tells us in his book *On the Origin of the Soul* (IV, 4 [PL, 44, col. 527]). For error concerning creatures, by subjecting them to causes other than God, spills over into false opinion about God, and takes men's minds away from Him, to whom faith seeks to lead them.

[7] For this reason Scripture threatens punishment to those who err about creatures, as to unbelievers, in the words of the Psalm (27:5): "Because they have not understood the works of the Lord and the operations of His hands, Thou shalt destroy them, and shalt not build them up"; and: "These things they thought and were deceived," and further on: "They esteemed not the honor of holy souls" (Wis. 2.21-22).

Chapter 4. That the Philosopher and the Theologian Consider Creatures in Different Ways

[1] Now, from what has been said it is evident that the teaching of the Christian faith deals with creatures so far as they reflect a certain likeness of God, and so far as error concerning them leads to error about God. And so they are viewed in a different light by that doctrine and by human philosophy. For human philosophy considers them as they are, so that the different parts of philosophy are found to correspond to the different genera of things. The Christian faith, however, does not consider them as such; thus, it regards fire not as fire, but as representing the sublimity of God, and as being directed to Him in any way at all. For as it is said: "Full of the glory of the Lord is His work. Hath not the Lord made the saints to declare all His wonderful works?" (Ecclus-42:16-17).

[2] For this reason, also, the philosopher and the believer consider different matters about creatures. The philosopher considers such things as belong to them by nature — the upward tendency of fire, for example; the believer, only such things as belong to them according as they are related to God—the fact, for instance, that they are created by God, are subject to Him, and so on.

[3] Hence, imperfection is not to be imputed to the teaching of the faith if it omits many properties of things, such as the figure of the heaven and the quality of its motion. For neither does the natural philosopher consider the same characters of a line as the geometrician, but only those that accrue to it as terminus of a natural body.

[4] But any things concerning creatures that are considered in common by the philosopher and the believer are conveyed through different principles in each case. For the philosopher takes his argument from the proper causes of things; the believer, from the first cause — for such reasons as that a thing has been handed down in this manner by God, or that this conduces to God's glory, or that God's power is infinite. Hence, also, [the doctrine of the faith] ought to be called the highest wisdom, since it treats of the highest cause; as we read in Deuteronomy (4:6): "For this is your wisdom and understanding in the sight of nations." And, therefore, human philosophy serves her as the first wisdom. Accordingly, divine wisdom sometimes argues from principles of human philosophy. For among philosophers, too, the first philosophy utilizes the teachings of all the sciences in order to realize its objectives.

[5] Hence again, the two kinds of teaching do not follow the same order. For in the teaching of philosophy, which considers creatures in themselves and leads us from them to the knowledge of God, the first consideration is about creatures; the last, of God. But in the teaching of faith, which considers creatures only in their relation to God, the consideration of God comes first, that of creatures afterwards. And thus the doctrine of faith is more perfect, as being more like the knowledge possessed by God, who, in knowing Himself, immediately knows other things.

[6] And so, following this order, after what has been said in Book I about God in Himself, it remains for us to treat of the things which derive from Him.

Chapter 5. Order of Procedure

[1] We shall treat of these matters in the following order: first, the bringing forth of things into being (ch. 6-38), second, their distinction (ch. 39-45), third, the nature of these same things, brought forth and distinct from one another, so far as it is relevant to the truth of the faith (ch. 46-101).

BOOK III. PROVIDENCE

Chapter 1. Prologue

"The Lord is a great God and a great King above all gods" (Ps. 94:3). "For the Lord will not cast off His people" (Ps. 93:14)"For in His hand are all the ends of the earth, and the heights of

the mountains are His. For the sea is His and He made it, and His hands formed dry land." (Ps. 94:4-5)

[1] That there is one First Being, possessing the full perfection of the whole of being, and that we call Him God, has been shown in the preceding Books. From the abundance of His perfection, He endows all existing things with being, so that He is fully established not only as the First Being but also as the original source of all existing things. Moreover, He has granted being to other things, not by a necessity of His nature but according to the choice of His Will, as has been made clear in our earlier explanations (SCG, II. ch. 23). From this it follows that He is the Lord of the things that He has made, for we are masters of the things that are subject to our will. In fact, He holds perfect dominion over things produced by Himself, since to produce them He is in need neither of the assistance of an external agent nor of the underlying presence of matter, for He is the universal maker of the whole of being.

[2] Now, each of the things produced through the will of an agent is directed to an end by the agent. For the proper object of the will is the good and the end. As a result, things which proceed from will must be directed to some end. Moreover, each thing achieves its ultimate end through its own action which must be directed to the end by Him Who gives things the principles through which they act.

[3] So, it must be that God, Who is in all ways perfect in Himself, and Who endows all things with being from His own power, exists as the Ruler of all beings, and is ruled by none other. Nor is there anything that escapes His rule, just as there is nothing that does not receive its being from Him. As He is perfect in being and causing, so also is He perfect in ruling.

[4] Of course, the result of this rule is manifested differently in different beings, depending on the diversity of their natures. For some beings so exist as God's products that, possessing understanding, they bear His likeness and reflect His image. Consequently, they are not only ruled but are also rulers of themselves, inasmuch as their own actions are directed to a fitting end. If these beings submit to the divine rule in their own ruling, then by virtue of the divine rule they are admitted to the achievement of their ultimate end; but, if they proceed otherwise in their own ruling, they are rejected.

[5] Still other beings, devoid of understanding, do not direct themselves to their end, but are directed by another being. Some of these are incorruptible and, as they can suffer no defect in their natural being, so in their own actions they never fail to follow the order to the end which is prearranged for them. They are unfailingly subject to the rule of the First Ruler. Such are the celestial bodies whose motions occur in ever the same way.

[6] Other beings, however, are corruptible. They can suffer a defect in their natural being, yet such a defect works to the advantage of another being. For, when one thing is corrupted, another comes into being. Likewise, in their proper actions they may fall short of the natural order, yet such a failure is balanced by the good which comes from it. Thus, it is evident that not even those things which appear to depart from the order of the primary rule do actually escape the power of the First Ruler. Even these corruptible bodies are perfectly subject to His power, just as they are created by God Himself.

[7] Contemplating this fact, the Psalmist, being filled with the Holy Spirit, first describes for us the perfection of the First Ruler, in order to point out the divine rule to us: as a perfection of nature, by the use of the term "God"; as a perfection of power, by the use of the words, "great Lord" (suggesting that He has need of no other being for His power to produce His effect); and as a perfection of authority, by the use of the phrase, "a great King above all gods" (for even if there be many rulers, they are all nonetheless subject to His rule).

[8] In the second place, He describes for us the manner of this rule. First, as regards those intellectual beings who are led by Him to their ultimate end, which is Himself, he uses this expression: "For the Lord will not cast off His people." Next, in regard to corruptible beings which are not removed from the power of the First Ruler, even if they go astray sometimes in their own actions, He says: "For in His bands are all the ends of the earth." Then, in regard to celestial bodies which exist above all the highest parts of the earth (that is, of corruptible bodies) and which always observe the right order of the divine rule, he says: "and the heights of the mountains are His."

[9] In the third place, he indicates the reason for this universal rule: the things created by God must also be ruled by Him. Thus it is that he says: "For the sea is His," and so on.

[10] Therefore, since we have treated of the perfection of the divine nature in Book One, and of the perfection of His power inasmuch as He is the Maker and Lord of all things in Book Two, there remains to be treated in this third Book His perfect authority or dignity, inasmuch as He is the End and Ruler of all things. So, this will be our order of procedure: first, we shall treat of Himself, according as He is the end of all things; second, of His universal rule, according as He governs every creature (ch. 64-110); third, of His particular rule, according as He governs creatures possessed of understanding (ch. 111-163).

Appendix II
Contemplation as Fulfillment of the Human Person
Gerald F. Stanley

(This is section III and IV of an extended study published in full in *Personalist Ethics and Human Subjectivity*, ed. George F. McLean [Ethics at the Crossroads, vol. II; Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1996], pp. 363-420.)

Section I treated "Contemplation as Fulfillment: the Thomistic Teaching Stated", pp. 363-377; Section II treated "Mission as Fulfillment: The Thomistic Teaching Challenged", pp. 377-387. These indeed reflect the Aristotelian and Augustinian traditions which Thomas was challenged to integrate. G. Stanley's analysis of Thomas's response to that challenge follows here.

Both Contemplation and Vision as Human Fulfillments: The Thomistic Problem Resolved

Introductory Notes

It is clear from the first and second sections that Thomas Aquinas somehow maintains the existence of two different, if not separate, ends or fulfillments of the natural inclination of the human person. Having already eliminated the distinction between this life and the after-life as an adequate explanation of this double fulfillment, it would be logical here to initiate immediately a study of the proper distinction, as found in the writings of Thomas. But before this study can be directly undertaken, a number of preliminary steps must be taken. The first is an analysis of the position of the supernatural in Thomas' understanding of vision. The second is to list some texts in the *Summa Contra Gentiles* in which the problem of the double end seems to lead Aquinas into difficulties.

It must be recalled that the divine nature cannot be located among sensible species, nor can it be grasped by a separate substance or separated soul through an analysis of its own essence. Rather, the divine essence can be understood by the human intellect only if that essence itself acts as its own intelligible species, not informing the human intellect to be sure, but rather enabling it through a contemplation of that species to see what it otherwise could not.¹⁴³ This is to strengthen a finite area of vision by an infinite power, extending that vision into a new area of understanding.¹⁴⁴ Because this is the strengthening of one power or nature by another higher power or nature, it cannot be effected by the lower power. "A lower nature cannot acquire a higher nature except through the action of the higher nature to which the property belongs."¹⁴⁵ Thomas strengthens this point by drawing an analogy from natural fulfillment on the lowest, physical, level of nature: water cannot become hot by itself, but needs a higher "specification" by fire.

Four brief reasons justify this position. In the first place, it is "the special prerogative of any agent to perform its operation through its own form."¹⁴⁶ As the divine operation is the contemplation of the divine essence, should any nondivine agent participate in this operation it must act through the divine form. Secondly, "the form proper to any being does not come to be in another being unless the first being is the agent of this event."¹⁴⁷ God must act upon the human intellect in order that the latter come to the vision of the divine essence. Thirdly, "if any two factors are to be mutually united, so that one of them is formal and the other material, their union must be completed through action coming from the side of the formal factor."¹⁴⁸ Since the divine

intelligence is the agent of the intellectual information, it must be the source of the action. Finally, "whatever exceeds the limitation of a nature cannot accrue to it except through the action of another being."¹⁴⁹ Again, using the physical example that water is unable to flow upward, Thomas makes it clear that, though vision is the natural end of man, it cannot be achieved by the natural action of man.¹⁵⁰ It is a natural end supernaturally achieved. While this factor of supernatural achievement is concerned solely with the way to the end, with the method of the attainment of fulfillment, and therefore cannot stand as a proper distinction between vision and contemplation, it does give an initial direction toward the final solution.

A second pointer to a solution to the problem of two natural ends existing simultaneously is the subtle shift of approach or point of view which occurs in the midst of Thomas' analysis of fulfillment. It has already been established that one cannot say that Thomas centers his discussion on Aristotelian contemplation from the twenty-fifth through the thirty-seventh chapters of his treatment, and then after the thirty-seventh chapter initiates a consideration of a totally new subject, that is, vision. It is clear from the opening paragraphs of his study that Thomas orientated his entire discussion to the conclusion of fulfillment in vision.¹⁵¹ Yet it seems odd that Thomas has no difficulty in accepting the entire Aristotelian corpus of principles when treating contemplation, but then immediately upon his first mention of vision as in opposition to other types of contemplation, begins a subtle, but unmistakable, reinterpretation of those principles. The change of emphasis cannot be attributed to the fact that vision is an object of revelation. In this context, where the entire discussion is encased in an Aristotelian framework, vision is being considered as a natural fulfillment of man. It would seem, therefore, that the principles of Aristotle should apply in their unaltered originality. Yet this is not the case.

In the beginning of his discussion, for instance, Thomas stated that the fulfillment of any being was to be found in the perfecting of that being and to the extent that it participated "somewhat" in God's likeness.¹⁵² In the spirit of Aristotle, Thomas saw perfection as limited by the ability of the particular being and did not promise any degree of absolute perfection for any being. As has been stated often, human beings were considered happy, but happy as humans. By a process of induction, human happiness was found to reside in contemplation of God. This was Aristotle's conclusion. It was necessarily a fallible one, not in so far as it stated that human fulfillment was to be found in the intellectual possession of the highest knowable, but rather in so far as Aristotle's personal interpretation of the particular and specific nature of that fulfillment was subject to error. The perfection of man is more technically stated not as knowledge by contemplation, but as knowledge of more and more, as the putting off of ignorance.¹⁵³

Yet it must be conceded that the arguments used by Thomas against simple knowledge and demonstration as fulfillments are not based upon an experience of a higher knowledge more perfectly offering this fulfillment. Rather, he bases his new approach upon a direct analysis of simple knowledge and demonstration to show that in themselves, rather than by comparison with something else, they do not contain absolute perfection. But in the Aristotelian framework there had never been a necessity for absolute perfection. The very characteristics of these species of knowledge used as arguments for exclusion by Thomas are the ones considered by Aristotle as establishing human fulfillment precisely as human. The presence of error, potency, and imperfection in simple knowledge and demonstration render them non-fulfilling in the Thomistic understanding. According to Aristotle, who was also aware of these imperfections, these same forms of knowledge were declared to be the source of human fulfillment.¹⁵⁴

Briefly, therefore, whereas for Aristotle humans are happy as humans, for Thomas in their present state humans simply are not happy.¹⁵⁵ The requiring of ever-perfecting fulfillment in

human happiness is quite obviously Aristotelian, but the demanding of perfect fulfillment for this happiness is a new addition to the argument. Some have interpreted Aquinas to hold that such a demand implies the rejection of contemplation, as Aristotle understood it, as able to fulfill human nature. Rather, this study will conclude that in some sense Aquinas must hold for more than one type of fulfillment on the natural level.

The Thomistic Teaching on the Duality of the Natural End

The object of the remainder of this section will be to justify the position that Aquinas maintains the philosophic possibility of a double natural end. His analysis of the inner tendency of human nature reveals that it is simultaneously directed to two different, but strongly interconnected, "natural places." The principle behind this position of Thomas is not stated in the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, where that principle finds its application. Rather, it is drawn elsewhere from the writings of Aquinas, from the *Quaestiones Disputatae de Veritate*. In the fourteenth question's second article entitled, "What is Faith", Thomas states:

Man, however, has a twofold final good, which first moves the will as a final end. The first of these is proportionate to human nature since natural powers are capable of attaining it. This is the happiness about which the philosophers speak, either as contemplative, which consists in the act of wisdom, or active, which consists first of all in the act of prudence, and in the acts of the other moral virtues as they depend on prudence. The other is the good which is out of all proportion with man's nature because his natural powers are not enough to attain to it either in thought or desire. It is promised to man only through the divine liberality. "The eye hath not seen. . . . This is life everlasting.¹⁵⁶

The point of this text is that the ultimate finality or fulfillment of man is in some sense twofold. Somehow, in Thomas Aquinas, there are two ultimate ends of man, two natural ends, as has been implied elsewhere in the *Summa Contra Gentiles* itself. It should be noted in the text of the *Quaestiones Disputatae de Veritate* that Thomas' consideration of the supernatural is limited to the question of the required means of attaining to vision, and does not pass judgment on the nature of the tendency of that end itself. To justify how two separate, if somewhat connected, activities can both serve as ultimate ends is a difficult task, made more difficult because Thomas stands alone in the main stream of Christian thought as maintaining such a solution to the question of natural human finality. As seen above, great thinkers before him tended to transform the activity of contemplation into at best a preparation for vision, considered as the sole ultimate end of man. After Thomas, many who follow his thought have concluded to a single end for man.

The famous Thomistic commentators, Thomas de Vio Cajetan and Dominic Bañez, for example, rejected Thomas' position that vision was a natural fulfillment of man. Faced with Thomas' own words, Cajetan accused Aquinas of being mistaken on the subject. Surely vision could be an object of the natural desire of man, if by natural desire was meant "an elicited yet determined operation of the intellectual appetite following cognition," which Cajetan referred to as *actus secundus*. But if by desire one meant *actus primus*, the natural tendency, Cajetan considered the Thomistic position to be untenable.¹⁵⁷ Cajetan admitted the presence in the nature of man of an obediencial capacity for vision, but placed this passive capacity far below the active drive of a tendency. This interpretation is definitely at variance with the Thomistic understanding,

for Aquinas knew of the concept of obediential capacity, had used it elsewhere in his works, but chose in this context to speak rather of natural tendency.

In the same tradition as Cajetan, holding that there exists only the one natural fulfillment of man, contemplation, Dominic Banez added to the view of Cajetan a reason for Thomas' treatment of vision in the context of natural desire. Placing natural desire on the level Cajetan termed *actus secundus*, Banez held that Thomas was simply presenting an argument *ex convenientia* or *contra repugnantiam*, stating that there was no contradiction involved in natural intellectual being desiring through the natural powers of its will what had been supernaturally revealed.

On the opposite side of the argument other philosophers have continued the Augustinian tradition of vision as the sole fulfillment of human tendency. Not only does Duns Scotus consider vision as the only end of man, but he seems to take the entire argument out of the Aristotelian-Thomistic, and possibly even the technically Augustinian context. The radical basis for an understanding of Thomas' double finality, as will be explained in detail later, is the teaching of Aristotle and Thomas that the fundamental tendency of man as an intellectual being is not to know in contemplation or to know in vision, but simply to know more and more, the most general formulation possible. The reason for the generality of the statement is that while the natural tendency is in itself an intellectual process, the human person being an intellectual being and acting according to this mode, the particular end of this tendency cannot be dependent upon one's knowledge. As was stated above, the witness of all philosophy is that the majority have been mistaken as to the particular object of their fulfillment.

For Scotus, however, the natural tendency of man is not this general drive, but rather a particular appetite, particularized by his historical, redeemed situation, whereby man "necessarily and perpetually and in the highest way tends to beatitude, and this in particular." The distinction drawn here is absolutely essential for an understanding of the issue. Whereas in Thomas the desire is general and is fulfilled upon attainment of an end, in Scotus it is particularized in the very nature of the will. (Immediately it should be apparent that the distinction of fulfillments is therefore not to be found in the desire itself, but in the level of being, natural or supernatural, upon which the being attains its end.) Placing vision as the particularized object of human desire, Scotus is, therefore, forced to reject contemplation as fulfillment in any way. If the will desires vision, it cannot be satisfied in any way, on any level, by something else. This is further corroborated by the fact that the mention of levels of being implies Thomistic analogy, a teaching again rejected by Scotus, who himself considered the object of human intellect as not *ens analogice consideratum*, but *ens universale*.¹⁶³

How then does Scotus explain the fact that the human intellect in this life cannot attain the object of its desire? Unable to speak of levels of being, Scotus is forced into the position of saying that it is either the will of God, a higher voluntarism, or a defect existing in the human state, caused possibly by sin, preventing the intellect from seeing the divine essence, and forcing man now to see God as dimly as one in this life sees by the light of a candle.¹⁶⁴ Thus, the fact that man does not presently possess the fullness of his desired happiness is explained either through a voluntaristic principle or through a moral fault. The entire position, on the one hand, offers a confusing picture of the natural order, even implying the possibility of injustice on the part of the orderer himself.¹⁶⁵ On the other hand, the position seems to dispense entirely with the supernatural aid demanded by Thomas to elevate nature to the capacity of direct vision of God.¹⁶⁶

The explanation of natural end by Henri de Lubac is somewhat in the same line. Again in the Augustinian tradition, de Lubac considers man as he exists in his present historical situation, that is, (though the word is admittedly theological), redeemed. Man is "not a thing of nature", de Lubac

states;¹⁶⁷ there is no order of pure nature. Further, given the will of God, such an order is inconceivable. Rather, there has always existed and exists now only one order, which is "supernatural", better called "superadded".¹⁶⁸ De Lubac is not stating that the natural has an exigency for its complementing supernatural. His position is that given the totally gratuitous will of God creating things as they are, man is of necessity directed to finality in vision. Once again, there appear a dominance of voluntarism and a weakening of absolute necessity as understood by Thomas. It is in no sense a question of presupposing natural beings upon which is bestowed a supernatural and gratuitous finality; the entire order, neither natural nor supernatural in the common understanding of those terms, is gratuitous. "The divine generosity does not presuppose receivers; it prepares them", a commentator of de Lubac explains.¹⁶⁹

Again, as with Scotus, difficulties emerge. If within the very nature of being—that whole nature being a univocally gratuitous establishment—there is a fundamental and necessary tendency to vision, how can de Lubac justify what he chooses to call superaddition?¹⁷⁰ One must credit the logic of de Lubac's thought. He cannot be challenged to justify the natural, as in the case of Scotus, for he has eliminated the natural; similarly he has eliminated the supernatural. But the philosophic mind, it would seem, would require his further rejection of the superadded to perfect the unity of his system. So long as he leaves some room for distinction, he must justify the passage of being from one level to the other, the question faced by Thomas and answered by the need for aid from the higher level of activity.¹⁷¹

Thus it is not in the elimination of either vision or contemplation as natural fulfillments that the correct understanding of natural end as conceived by Thomas Aquinas is to be found. For while Thomas' faith convinced him that the final end and consummation of all human desire is to be found in vision, a proper understanding of the very tendency directed to this vision, together with a proper distinction of the notions of nature and supernature, reveals that for man there must be a two-fold natural end, a two-fold fulfillment. The basis of the argument, as stated above, is found in the correct understanding of the object of natural desire, which is not contemplation or vision, but rather the knowledge of more and more until full knowledge is attained. It is this knowledge of more and more which, for the rationality of the entire natural order, must be attainable by every intellectual being according to its mode of action. "It is impossible for natural desire to be unfulfilled, since 'nature does nothing in vain'."¹⁷² This knowledge of more and more is not to be interpreted as a mathematically infinite progression. Seen in itself, it could be considered infinite.¹⁷³ But if there existed no term, no point to end the process, the natural order would still be shrouded in unintelligibility, for the end of human desire would be an ever-receding mirage, never to be attained. Rather, there must be a term of the progression, a definite highest point, the most knowable object, to which the desire to know more and more is directed and at which it is fulfilled. This point is God.

It must be stressed again that God as the end of the process of knowledge is not intrinsic in the process seen solely as process. The process is directed to knowing, and God is the most knowable.¹⁷⁴ Toward this most sublime point the intellect steadily progresses, ever accelerating its polarized movement, the closer it approaches the source of its fulfillment.¹⁷⁵ Thomas never abandons the fundamental physical analogue upon which his philosophy of fulfillment is based. Man's natural desire is thus a tendency to knowledge, which knowledge must be of God. Once one attains this knowledge of God, to the highest degree possible on the level of being on which one is acting, one is fulfilled.¹⁷⁶

The fact that there are two fulfillments of intellectual desire can in no way be derived from the nature of that desire, as Scotus tended to do. The fact of two sources of fulfillment, two natural

ends, is based entirely upon the philosophic possibility and the theological fact that there are two levels of being in which man can attain the knowledge of God. On the level of being proper to himself, man finds his natural fulfillment, the perfection of his desire to know all possible, in contemplation of God, the highest possible activity proper to his state. On another level of being, not proper to him, but to which he has been supernaturally raised, he also finds in vision his natural fulfillment, the perfection of this same desire to know all possible. On this level, the human person's natural fulfillment acquires the unique quality of exceeding the capacity of his human nature, and therefore of being attainable solely through supernatural assistance.¹⁷⁷ Thomas states, "Although man is naturally inclined towards his final end, he cannot naturally attain it except through grace. This is because of the eminence of that end."¹⁷⁸

Thus it must be concluded that vision is the natural end of man, the fulfillment of all human fulfillments. It is the attainment of human finality upon the highest level of being which is possible to man. But because the absolutely necessary assistance needed for the elevation of man to this high level of being is totally supernatural and therefore not necessary to the proper functioning of the nature of man, to save the rationality of nature as nature, it must be concluded that some form of natural fulfillment must be present on the level of being proper and natural to man. That natural fulfillment is what in the Aristotelian and Thomistic perspectives has been called contemplation. There is no room for the Scotistic view that the human inability to see the divine essence in this present state of being is due to moral fault. If Thomas himself does at times speak of human nature as defective in relation to the vision of God's essence, he should be understood as speaking of nature in comparison with supernature and not as referring to any factor within nature itself impeding the attainment of one's natural end through natural means.¹⁷⁹

As the attainment of natural end is in Thomas intellectual, he has grounded his distinction between the levels of being in that category. On its naturally attainable level of being, human knowledge of all things, and therefore human knowledge of God, falls far short of the vision of the divine essence. In this life, all human knowledge must be mediated by the sensible phantasm and must possess some element of the potency-act relationship in order to be matter for abstraction from the phantasm. Certain elements concerning God, primarily the fact of his existence, can be so understood by the human mind, but the understanding of these elements is infinitely removed from and inferior to the understanding proper to vision. In no way can the essence or quiddity of God be "specified", i. e., reduced to a sensible species in order to be abstracted.¹⁸⁰ In the next life, moreover, in which man's knowledge does attain to a quasi-vision of separate substances, the divine essence again cannot be grasped. In no way can the infinity of God be comprehended and defined by the soul after death.¹⁸¹ Thus, if the limited mind of a separate substance or vision of God is to be considered by Thomas as the perfect fulfillment of man, of his natural desire to know, a new power of knowledge must be communicated to man, this power being the unmediated divine essence itself. But introduction into human knowledge of this new specification is not to be understood as a rejection of the mode of knowing proper to the nature of man and due to him from his nature. This leads to fulfillment, to a knowledge of God that is perfect and perfecting in its own order of being.

Considering the object of knowledge in the context of being, this distinction between contemplation and vision as fulfillments can be drawn more clearly in the light of the analogy of being. The object of human knowledge is being, but not the univocal being posited by Scotus. All being known by man must be known according to the mode of his own being, and that mode is one of composition, infinitely below the simple being of God, yet proportioned to it by way of analogy. "Knowledge always takes place according to the way in which the knowing subject

exists", a commentator explains.¹⁸² Even though with the removal of what Thomas has called the defect of human nature man can come to the fulfillment of vision, still on his own level of understanding, in the mode of composition, he also can attain his fulfillment.

However small the amount of divine knowledge that the intellect may be able to grasp, that will be for the intellect, in regard to its ultimate end, much more than the perfect knowledge of lower objects of understanding. . . . The ultimate end of man is to understand God, in some fashion (*quoquo modo*).¹⁸³

This *quoquo modo* fashion of understanding God is the ultimate human fulfillment of contemplation.

Undoubtedly the most striking passages of Aquinas in the particular section here under consideration are the ones which seem to draw a definite distinction between contemplation and vision and attack directly the view that vision is the complement of contemplation, or that contemplation is a means to vision. These are found in the fifty-seventh question of the discussion. A rather lengthy quotation is deemed necessary.

Since the created intellect is exalted to the vision of the divine substance by a certain supernatural light . . . there is no created intellect so low in its nature that it cannot be elevated to this vision. The gap between the intellect, at its highest natural level,¹⁸⁴ and God is infinite in perfection and goodness. But the distance from the highest to the lowest intellect is finite, for there cannot be an infinite distance between one finite being and another. So, the distance which lies between the lowest created intellect and the highest one is like nothing in comparison to the gap which lies between the highest created intellect and God. . . . Therefore, it makes no difference what level of intellect it is that is elevated to the vision of God by the aforementioned light: it may be highest, the lowest, or one in the middle.¹⁸⁵

Just as it requires no greater power to perform a miracle in curing a grave disease than it would to cure a simple one (Thomas' example from the same chapter), the elevation of the intellect to the wonder of vision is in no way dependent upon the stage of contemplation it presently enjoys. It may seem as if the text quoted above is entirely theological. Even with this granted, the point of Thomas' thought is unmistakable. The fulfillment of contemplation is not the same in species as the fulfillment of vision, and while in practice they may have strong connections, they are technically two separate activities, two separate approaches to fulfillment, functioning on two separate levels of being. If vision is the perfection of man's nature, his highest fulfillment, contemplation is also in its own right a perfecting activity of human nature, a fulfillment in its own order of being.

In conclusion, there is no doubt, from textual analysis, that Thomas Aquinas considered the vision of the divine essence to be the final and ultimate end of man. Vision totally and infinitely transcends the feeble and frustrating attempt of contemplation to understand God. In holding this position, Aquinas is simply taking his place as a believer living in the Christian era, and as a theologian echoing the great Christian minds before him. But there is no doubt as well that in searching for a philosophic understanding of his faith, under the influence of Aristotle Thomas pursued pathways of thought radically different from many of his antecedents, contemporaries, and followers. Though it was as evident to him as it was to Augustine and Scotus that man's natural

inclination was directed to the vision of God, it was equally as evident that the truths of faith could not contradict the truths of wisdom, and that one could not simply speak of an inner drive of nature to be fulfilled solely in the state of supernature.

It was in his analysis of this inner drive of nature that Thomas found a reconciliation, a solution which showed that the object of human inclination was neither contemplation nor vision, but, as Aristotle had carefully expressed it before him and as Thomas repeated, the activity of knowledge in general, the non-specified knowing of more and more, grasped according to the capacities and limitations of each knowing intellect. Thus it was that Aristotle, who knew only of natural knowledge through abstraction, could posit contemplation as the fulfillment of man, the highest mode of knowledge possible to a being whose understanding comes ultimately and always through sense experience. Thomas, who knew of the after-life, could perfect that contemplation to the quasi-vision of separate substances. But knowing through faith that the total fulfillment of man was to be had on a higher level of being, Thomas could posit vision as the end and total perfection of man. Finally, relying on his basic analysis of human inclination, Thomas could conceive a double ultimate end of man, based upon the existence of two levels of being, in both of which fulfillment was possible.

Contemplation and vision may thus both be said to be fulfillments of the natural desire of man for a knowledge of more and more, for a putting away of all ignorance. What has been said in the preceding two sections concerning the qualities of vision as fulfillment has been said with the sole purpose of elaborating a clear understanding of the role contemplation, the direct subject of this study, plays in perfecting human nature. With contemplation now justified as an end of man, albeit not the most perfect end in the Thomistic framework, an opening has been created for a further study of this activity, no longer simply as the fulfillment of a natural tendency, but in the next section as the final perfection on the natural level of the entire human nature, the total human person.

Contemplation as Fulfillment: The Thomistic Teaching Re-Stated and Amplified

With the fact of a double end of man in the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas established, this final section will return to a discussion of its central theme, the nature of contemplation as human fulfillment. In the first section above, the position of contemplation as natural end of man was set forth solely through a consideration of the nature of natural finality as understood by Thomas and as rooted in the physical and metaphysical principles of Aristotle. In this final chapter, an attempt will be made to understand contemplation as natural end, not through this skeletal development, but through a discussion of this "divine" activity as the total fulfillment and actualization of the entire and integrated human person in his present state of existence.

Technically speaking, the most fully developed understanding of contemplation would have to be seen in a study of this activity as it is engaged in by separate substances and by souls after death.¹⁸⁶ But as the purpose of this study is to discuss contemplation as it exists in the human person as a composite of soul and body, a treatment of this activity in separate substances would not be to the point. This discussion of contemplation in man in his present state of existence will be two-fold. It will consist in the first place of a discussion of contemplation as fulfillment in itself, and secondly, of a philosophical exposition of those characteristics of this activity which serve to make it, though totally separate from vision, the most perfect analogue and associate of vision within the capabilities of man unaided by supernatural assistance. Finally it must be pointed out that though the central theme of this chapter will be a continuation of the discussion of

contemplation as natural fulfillment, as found in the *Summa Contra Gentiles*. However, the material in this section will be extended to include a study of man as fulfilled a total person, rather than simply as a natural being. Hence, a somewhat more diversified use of sources will be employed. The central source for this chapter will continue to be the *Summa Contra Gentiles*. Its contributions to the discussion will be amplified, however, by material drawn from other writings of Thomas Aquinas, as well as from the works of other philosophers who have addressed themselves to this subject.

First Thomas' contention should be reiterated that on the natural level contemplation is a fulfillment of man, and as such, a source of his happiness, albeit an imperfect source. "Imperfect beatitude, such as can be had here, consists primarily and principally in contemplation."¹⁸⁷ The very possibility of a fulfillment of any type, intellectual or not, on the earthly level of human existence has been a source of great discussion throughout the history of philosophy, both by those philosophers who, because of a lack of Revelation, could offer nothing else as source of greater fulfillment, and by those thinkers in the Christian era, who were faced with the challenge of reconciling the findings of natural philosophy with the content of supernatural Revelation. In the writings of Thomas, there are passages in which he states quite clearly that in no sense can man be called happy in his present state. Yet it is equally true that Thomas speaks of an earthly happiness, which is a participation in the divine beatitude, the only fully perfect state of fulfillment.¹⁸⁸ The basis for this difference of opinion expressed by the same writer seems to lie, as do so many other differences, in the two seemingly conflicting understandings or rather emphases that are possible in the question of the analogy of being. In one sense, all being which is not perfect being or supreme being can be said to be no being at all. This is the negative understanding of reality. Yet, on the other hand, in so far as all participated being derives its being from perfect being and in some sense possesses that being, in that sense it can be said indeed to have being. So also is the question of happiness to be understood. In one sense, no man is happy.¹⁸⁹ In another sense, given his position in life, with its necessary imperfections, man is happy. Through his participation in the beatitude of God, he is perfectly happy in accord with his own limited situation, and this happiness is achieved through the activity of contemplation.¹⁹⁰

It is interesting to note that a passage within the very section of the *Summa* under discussion here and commonly understood to state that only in vision is fulfillment to be found, is capable of more positive interpretation in the light of the analogy of being. For the sake of clarity in this distinction, the Latin text must be quoted. In the sixty-third question of the third book of the *Summa*, Thomas states:

Est enim quoddam desiderium hominis, in quantum intellectualis est, de cognitione veritatis; quod quidem homines consequuntur per studium contemplativae vitae. Et hoc quidem *manifeste* in illa visione consummabitur, quando per visionem primae veritatis omnia quae intellectus naturaliter scire desiderat ei innotescunt. (italics added by the writer)

In translation this passage reads as follows:

For there is in man, in so far as he is intellectual, one type of desire, concerned with the knowledge of truth; indeed, men seek to fulfill this desire by the effort of the contemplative life. And this will *clearly* be fulfilled in that vision, when, through the vision of the First Truth, all that the intellect naturally desires to know becomes known to it.

The point of this statement is that man's intellectual fulfillment is to be found clearly in vision, there being no provision established for any other type of perfecting activity.

There is, however, a variant reading for this passage, in which the words of Aquinas are as follows: "Est enim . . . contemplativae vitae. Et hoc quidem *maxime* in illa visione consummabitur . . . ei innotescant." The translation of this version would state that it is in vision that man's intellectual desire is "most *perfectly*" or "most *especially*" fulfilled, but would make no explicit exclusion of contemplation.¹⁹¹ Without passing judgment on which reading is correct, it would seem that the second version is more in line with Thomas' views on the double end of man. Whether or not the second reading is the one to be accepted, the point remains that in the light of the doctrine of analogy, as contemplation can be understood as fulfillment in its own order of being, so all that is predicated of vision as fulfillment in its higher order of perfection by analogy can be predicated of the state of contemplation.¹⁹²

This approach to an understanding of contemplation is not pursued without justification. It is precisely the approach adopted by Thomas in the *Summa Contra Gentiles*. His entire discussion of contemplation found in the first part of the section under discussion and drawn from Aristotle's treatment of the same subject in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, has been used by Thomas as material in his discussion of vision as well. If the basic principle of the third section of this study be accepted, that the difference between man's tendency to contemplation and his tendency to vision is not to be found in the tendency itself, but in the level of being on which it is in operation, then it must be justifiable to apply what has been said of vision on one level of being to contemplation on another. Naturally, any element of vision which is not directly connected with this activity's position as a fulfillment of human understanding cannot be so transferred to the order of contemplation. With this approach justified, a final review of the position of contemplation as natural fulfillment of man now will be offered.

Contemplation as Fulfillment of Natural Tendency

"The end of man is to arrive at the contemplation of truth."¹⁹³ This was the position of Aristotle and Plato and it is the position as well of Thomas Aquinas.¹⁹⁴ On the level of being which can be entered into by man's natural powers, it is in contemplation that the total actualization or perfection possible to man is attained. An activity perfect in its imperfection, contemplation is the most perfect source of human happiness, human delight and human pleasure possible to man in his present state. More surely than all other sources of human fulfillment, contemplation brings to man the joy that is necessarily connected with all perfection.¹⁹⁵ Of all human activities, it is the most self-sufficient, the one least in need of external aids. Once attained, it is not possessed as a means for the attainment of anything else, but entered into as an end in itself. It fulfills all else, and looks to nothing else for its own fulfillment.¹⁹⁶ In what might be termed a utopian flight of fancy, Thomas Aquinas saw in contemplation the consummation of the entire life of the state. "The whole of political life seems to be ordered with a view to attaining the happiness of contemplation."¹⁹⁷ Aquinas himself more fully expressed this view when he said that contemplation was the goal of man's whole life.¹⁹⁸

Again in the tradition of Aristotle and Thomas, and in perhaps the most obvious application of the analogue between natural desire and natural place, contemplation gives to man the peace of rest in fulfillment, true leisure in a sense that will be explained in a subsection to follow. It "brings to a termination man's natural appetite, in the sense that, once the end is acquired, nothing else will be sought."¹⁹⁹ Though source of total fulfillment and of rest from desire, contemplation also

must be, and according to the potential of man in this life is, a continuous and unwearied activity, a permanent operation. Aristotle had stated centuries before Thomas that the permanency possessed by contemplation of its very nature was subject to all the inconsistencies and fortuitous circumstances of the total picture of human existence, that human happiness or human fulfillment was happiness and fulfillment only in a human manner, but of its nature the contemplative process, the process of knowing more and more until all is known, is endless. All can never be grasped by a finite being, because all includes the infinite, which the finite mind cannot comprehend. Yet of all human activity, contemplation represents by itself "the higher and more enduring part in the soul's life. . . . Even on earth, the contemplative moments are the highest and the most condensed."²⁰⁰

Contemplation has been called by both Aristotle and Thomas a divine activity. It is divine because through its operation man is united in an intentional union with God himself. Further, seen in itself, it is the most noble analogue of the proper activity of the divine, for it is the activity of knowing all things, of knowing the self, and in the highest order of cognition known to Aristotle, of knowing its own process of knowing.²⁰¹ In attaining to this reflexive intuition, it achieves the pinnacle of all knowledge, the supreme activity of God. Finally, in the hierarchical view of nature adopted by Thomas, as the highest operation proper to man, it unites him by way of likeness with the beings superior to him, with separate substances and, indeed again, with God Himself.²⁰²

Contemplation as Fulfillment of the Total Person

An analysis of the inner nature of this knowing activity shows it to be the perfection of the nature of the human person and the link joining one in the order of intentionality with the supreme contemplator, God. But there is far more to be understood concerning the fulfillment of contemplation than can be seen in an analysis of its own intrinsic nature. It is only when the effects of this activity upon the existing person in one's situation in life are seen that the full value of the activity can be appreciated, and that contemplation can be seen as the actualization of the total person, as the source of one's "rounded perfection."²⁰³ It is to these effects that this study now briefly turns. They may be described succinctly as, first, the intimate, wonder-filled presence of the contemplated to the contemplator, and, secondly, the a-temporality of the contemplative act.

Presence. The ramifications of contemplation seen in the light of this first effect are startling. Through contemplation, the knower assimilates to himself in the order of intentionality all nature, and indeed God himself. In this activity, one arrives at the highest and most intimate mode of possessing all reality, but also in a most intimate and personal way one becomes all reality.²⁰⁴ One's relation with all the world around and with God may be said to be "beyond all bounds."²⁰⁵ Giving expression to the boundless dimensions of the contemplative act, Thomas says that "it is possible that in a single being the whole comprehensiveness of the universe may dwell."²⁰⁶

In a society where separation and absence have been described and attacked so poignantly by modern philosophers, the very fact that contemplation renders all reality present to the knower shows this activity to be indeed fulfilling. The charge has been made that intellectual consideration of reality does not bring man into contact with that reality, but rather separates him hopelessly from the facts of true existence. Especially this criticism has been made regarding the understanding of the person: that intellectual consideration does not give one the reverence and honor due as a person, but rather objectifies one as a thing. This view greatly mistakes the truly unitive value of the knowledge process. Understanding or knowing a person does not separate one

from the knower, but draws one into an intimate unity, an assimilation with the knower which in modern philosophy has come more and more to be referred to as intuition.²⁰⁷ Contemplative knowledge, as one author has put it, is "the intuitive penetration of the essence of a thing . . . the conscious 'dwelling' in a truth . . . a communing therewith in awareness of everything it means."²⁰⁸ Perhaps the union achieved between the known and the knower, the presence of the known to the knower, can be understood most vividly through a reference to the meaning of the word "to know" in the Hebrew language. Far from connoting an image of separation, the word "to know" in Hebrew bears strong connotations of intimate union, being applied even to the unity achieved by two persons with one another in the marital act. The marital act was for the Hebrew the vivid realization and actualization of the knowledge one person can possess of another. Far more intimate is the union achieved between persons in contemplation, where the knower and the known are not only physically joined to form one in the flesh, but spiritually are made one in the one being of the knower. Further, if the act of knowledge is entered into mutually, the union of the two persons becomes even more strongly knit, even more personal, and the presence of the two to each other even more total. In Augustinian terminology, while the most abstractive logic may see the known as solely a thing to be manipulated, to be used (*uti*), the intimate knowing of contemplation grasps the known as person. In this knowledge, the knower enters into the total enjoyment of the known dwelling within his very being, and comes to a joyful and fulfilling rest in its presence within him (*frui*).

Linked with the presence of the known face-to-face with the knower in the very depths of his nature is the ever deepening wonder and awe brought necessarily by this intimate knowledge. Thomas Aquinas said that the divine never ceases to amaze the contemplator.²⁰⁹ While he was speaking directly of vision, the knowledge of God possible to man here on this earth and the further contemplation by man of the wondrous works of God, though less perfect than vision, never leave him wearied or unwilling to come to a knowledge of more. Again, here is seen the paradox of being ever fulfilled, yet never filled; of being possessed with a total awe at the wonder of God, yet ever able to be further amazed, further filled with wonder.

A-Temporality. Although totally surrounded and penetrated by the wondrous presence of God, the human person in contemplation remains obviously always within the limits of one's finite nature. Yet, in the act of contemplation, more than in any other possible human operation, one is able somehow to transcend the limits of one's state, to step beyond the bounds of time within which one's existence is restrained. Through this act of transcendence one becomes involved in an operation and activity of such intensity that it seems to be totally bound up in a single dynamic act. No longer progressing from one step to another in knowledge, the contemplator enters into a simple, unified act, in which one takes to oneself at one moment the entire reality existing about him. In its higher forms of operation contemplation has an aura of a standing still in the midst of the flux of all reality, yet of grasping at the same time that entire flux. Modern writers have called it "feeling unhistorically", a "restful attitude" which is an actualization of one's entire being. Contemplation is an operation or activity which, in one author's phrase, is a unique and express now, "a particularly momentous moment".²¹⁰

In this moment, one soars above the temporal and limiting time-experience to penetrate into the essence of the known, to take it totally to himself, be that known the totality of all being, God himself, or a single person contemplated in an act motivated by love. Aristotle had stated that in this life this divine activity is subject to every distraction pulling it back to the earth-boundness of the temporal. Yet in the fleeting moments of contemplation, when one finds oneself freed from the

tension of passing from the past through the present to the future, one enters into the aeviternal mystery of the now, the present, the timeless possession of all reality in a single act.

It is in this timeless, restful, yet supremely active penetration into all reality and into God that true humanistic leisure is attained. Rest, and therefore leisure, can be acquired only when true fulfillment has been reached. The unfulfilling and false rest, the frantic, passing leisure which comes to man in attainment of pleasure, honor, or power is far removed from the truly humanizing fulfillment possible to, and destined for, man in this life by his very nature. The separation of man from the tension of the passing of time gives one through contemplation a control over one's own situation in life which the person seeking vainly for fulfillment in lower levels of reality can never attain. Aquinas saw the person in contemplation as master over all his or her affairs, as ordering them all into a unified pattern, enabling one to live one's entire life according to the order of virtue.²¹¹ It is in this sense that the contemplative person above all others can be seen as the true humanist.²¹² Seeing God everywhere and in all things, one approaches the world and all in it with the most profound respect, not as something to be used as a thing, but rather to be entered into as a living reality, almost as a person, in so far as it is the reflection of the person of God.²¹³

One cannot contemplate in any sense, according to the religious or Aristotelian understanding of the activity, without in the first place being recollected. Seen again in its timeless aspect, contemplation involves the total gathering together of all the faculties of the body and the soul, and their direction to the object of contemplation in a single act transcending all time, even the time necessary to the very functioning of the body and soul. In contemplation, one achieves total inner perfection, unification of all one's faculties, under the control of one's highest faculty in its highest operation. In the fullest sense possible, one becomes not only one with the other as described above, but one with oneself.²¹⁴

Contemplation Related to Other Human Faculties. Thus it can be concluded that contemplation is not only the elevating of the intellect to the highest operation possible to it, but also the perfecting of the operations of all the other faculties of the human person. It is the entire person who contemplates; and while the activity is rooted in the intellect, the recollection needed for the intellect to engage in its activity demands the ordering of the entire personality towards its one supreme end. In particular, both the will and the body are brought to the realization of their highest potential in this activity.

1. The Will. While the rest and the fulfillment spoken of above as essential to contemplation refers directly to rest and leisure for the intellect in so far as in contemplation the human person attains the highest good in the highest possible way to him, all the desire of one's other faculties must at the same time be fulfilled. It was established in the first section that the conscious choosing of the will was not essential to human fulfillment, for the drive of the person to know more and more does not need a specified act of the will to set it in motion.

While this is true, it is readily to be admitted that once the intellect has attained its highest good, the very possession of this good must offer to the will a total quenching of its every desire. In visualizing the human person as a totality, Hugh of St. Victor described happiness as the knowledge of the truth and the love of the good.²¹⁵ In the most accurate manner of speaking, this is not true. Happiness and fulfillment for man technically are rooted principally in the knowledge of the true, which knowledge must, nevertheless, be seen by the will of the person as good. In the practical order, the cooperation of the will seeking the good is essential to the intellect's attainment of the true. It was in this light that Thomas Aquinas said that one cannot attain to contemplation unless one is first possessed of virtue.²¹⁶ Throughout his discussion of contemplation as man's final end in the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Thomas often established contemplation as the only

source of human fulfillment on the grounds that it is the only species of fulfillment which can be possessed solely by good men.²¹⁷ It is true to say that in its most technical sense human fulfillment is to be rooted in intellectual possession, not in love.

But in so far as the highest intellectual possession is necessarily intuitive and of the intentional order, it must be added that that intellectual hold can not be simply of a thing, but must be rather of a loved thing, a person in the broadest sense of the term. One cannot take a thing into oneself and form with it such an intimate union that in a sense one becomes that thing, without having for that thing a deep love, without developing with it what Martin Buber in more recent philosophy has called an "I-Thou" relationship. Surely human fulfillment is not "love of what is possessed" in the most technical sense; but even speaking with technical language it is "possession of what is loved". It is in the expression of a modern Thomistic commentator, "a loving attainment of awareness, an intuition of the beloved object."²¹⁸

2. The Body and the Sense Faculties. As in the case of the will, so also in the act of contemplation the body is drawn into a share in the fulfillment of the unified human person. The human person properly and totally understood, Thomas Aquinas states, is not the bodiless soul, but rather the being composed of body and soul acting together for the perfection of one's nature.²¹⁹ Contemplation of God is the highest approximation of the perfect fulfillment the human person will achieve in the vision of God. Further, the sense knowledge received into the body by means of the faculties of the bodily organs is essential to any human understanding of God in this life. In the very nature of this highest of all actions, therefore, the body has an integral role to play.

In the question of external aids to the person in contemplation, the body plays an important role. Perfection of the body and its faculties, especially in the order of health, but possibly even in the order of beauty, aids the intellect in its pursuit of wisdom. For the entire body, as well as the will and the intellect, must be gathered into unity through the process of recollection, in order that one may enter fully into the operation of contemplation. Thus, the body is seen to play a necessary role as means to the attainment of this divine activity. It also, moreover, participates in the end of the contemplation itself, in particular, in the joy the entire human person experiences in the fulfillment of his or her nature.

Contemplation and Aesthetic Experience. A discussion of contemplation as fulfillment of the total person would not be complete without mention of that aspect of fulfillment which comes through one's knowledge of the truth in the light of its beauty. There exists a vital relationship in man between the contemplation of the truth and the aesthetic experience of the beautiful; this may be said to be more vital than the relationship between the contemplation of the truth and the love of the good. For while love and the fulfillment which accrues to man in that activity refer primarily to the operation of the will, already established as not being the focal point of human perfection, the aesthetic experience of the beautiful is ultimately related to the intellect and its understanding of the true, to that activity wherein fulfillment primarily is to be found. The fulfillment and perfection attained by the person when, with all faculties gathered together under the control of his or her intellect, one enters into an experiencing of the beautiful at times defies all description and analysis. At times it seems to offer a perfection higher and more noble than that offered by contemplation itself. But in so far as this experiencing brings the total man ultimately to a deeper, more intense, and more affective knowledge of the true, it can be said to find its basic meaning in the direction of man to the fulfillment of his intellectual activity.

An appreciation of the aesthetic experience casts a greater light of understanding upon the true dignity of one's intellectual encounter with reality. Just as the good is good and fulfilling because it is true, so also the truth found in the essence of the beautiful constitutes the beautiful as the true

source of human fulfillment. Beauty is indeed according to Augustine the *splendor veri*. The aesthetic experience is, therefore, one further dimension of the total fulfillment realized by the person in contemplation of truth. Taken in the abstract one's perfection must root one's fulfillment in the activity of his intellect. However, because man is a unified being of many faculties in the real order that perfection must be understood as fulfillment of the entire intellectual, volitional, spiritual, and physical nature by which one exists.²²⁰

Thus it can be seen that contemplation on the finite level of being is the source of the total fulfillment of one's inner natural tendencies. It offers a fulfillment completely attainable by natural human powers. If there were no higher possibility for man's natural desire to know more and more in order to be fulfilled on the level of being, contemplation would stand, as Aristotle first envisioned it, as the highest activity of human nature. Exercised upon the highest possible object, God himself, beyond any other activity within the capacity of man's nature, would fulfill the human intellect as well as the entire human person. Sufficient to itself, it would so fulfill the person that one would be led to seek nothing else. Yet once again, in the words of Aristotle, it would give to him a fulfillment that could be described only as human. Seen in itself, contemplation is fulfillment, but fulfillment always shrouded by the spectre of some inner imperfection, some possibility of a higher completion which is unattainable, yet in the most intimate depths of the human person intensely desired.

Contemplation and Vision: Possible Further Interconnections. There is no further naturally known mode of knowledge upon which this study can philosophize. Yet there is a truth, known by faith, that a higher perfection of man actually does exist, and that this perfection, achieved in the direct vision of the divine essence, is promised to man in the world to come. Some say that to philosophize upon this truth is simply to enter into another field of study, that of theology. Were one to base one's thought entirely upon a consideration of the facts of revelation, this objection would be valid. But Frederick Copleston notes that if one treats the object of his faith in its relation to the basic questions of all philosophic search, one cannot be eliminated from the category of philosophy simply because his faith prompts him to orientate his thought in a certain direction.²²¹ The vision of God's essence is presented by Thomas as the fulfillment of the inner tendencies of human nature. Therefore it falls within the philosophic category of finality and can be analyzed in that category.

The purpose of this study is not to initiate a direct analysis of vision as fulfillment. All mention of vision in this concluding consideration will be directed to a deeper understanding of the position of contemplation as perfection of man on the finite level of being. The question to be answered in the subsequent paragraphs is, in particular, the following: granted that vision is to be considered as the most perfect fulfillment of the nature of man, is there any further philosophic understanding of contemplation to be derived from seeing it not only as an end, but as an end and a perfection somehow able to be outperformed by another state of completion? In other words, does a philosophic analysis of contemplation, considered in the light of the content of faith, reveal within the nature of this activity any aspects which might establish that, while it fulfills one in its own proper order, it also leaves one open to further fulfillment in another order of being?

Surely to the person of faith, contemplation can be seen in another light as a preparation or means to vision. If vision is to be merited by good works and by a virtuous life, there is no more certain method of achieving a unity of one's nature, a harmony of all one's faculties in the order of virtue under the control of the intellect and will, than through contemplation. Yet, for contemplation as an end in itself to be able to play a role in relation to vision as fulfillment on a different level of being, something more is required. One cannot, on the other hand, establish a

connection between contemplation and vision in a certain exigency of the former for the latter, a certain complement between the two, making them but two stages of the same process. This they certainly are not, for although Thomas does admit that on this earth contemplation is the highest approximation of vision, he is equally insistent that one need not have attained any stage of contemplation in order to be elevated by God to the eternal enjoyment of the divine essence.²²²

There may be, however, a correct method of linking the two intellectual processes, so that, while they are not seen to be two parts of the same activity, contemplation is seen to be far more than an extrinsic preparation for, and means to, vision. The approach to a possibly acceptable solution to the problem will be made through two considerations: first, a further discussion of the nature of contemplation as an activity or operation, and, secondly, an attempt to deepen and enlarge the understanding of one aspect of the nature of human finality on the finite level.

1. *Unity of Activity.* At the risk of confusion, it is here stated that contemplation, fully understood, is more properly rendered by the verbal form "contemplating." It was in this manner that Aristotle referred to it, when he chose the Greek infinitive form to express his understanding of the activity. Just as the true finality of the activity of eating or drinking is not totally grasped by a study of the object of the process after it has been eaten or drunk, but also includes the very process itself; and just as the true finality of a ship is not to be understood or comprehended solely by an examination of its arrival at its port of destination, but rather must include the entire activity of its journey; so the true finality of contemplation should not be considered solely as the object of thought, for example God, residing in the mind of the contemplator, but must also include the very process of contemplating or understanding that object.²²³

As has been stressed above, the fulfillment of contemplation is not had at a particular moment, beyond which no further fulfillment can be attained. Rather, while at any moment the activity of contemplating may offer fulfillment in so far as the contemplator is involved in the fulfilling process of knowing more and more, at no moment is this fulfillment totally accomplished. Of its very nature, contemplation offers a fulfillment of such a type that it ever deepens in its perfection and ever grows in its richness. Man is a being in motion to perfection,²²⁴ and in the analogy of motion to a natural place, the intensity of that motion increases the greater the degree of one's fulfillment.²²⁵

The result of this phenomenon is that in the finite order of earthly contemplation, while man is ever increasing his fulfillment he is intensifying his activity of contemplating.²²⁶ Thus it can be said that the higher the degree of contemplation, the higher the intensity of the operation.

Thus, contemplation can be seen not only as an end, but also as an endless activity, an ever greater fulfilling and fulfillment of the basic human tendency to know more and more. This aspect of contemplation would seem to throw light on the explanation of the basic reason for the frustration encountered by Aristotle and Thomas in the process of contemplation. While the tendency to fulfillment within the contemplator continually increases in intensity, the point of fulfillment seems as it were to recede from the contemplator with equal rapidity. Contemplation is, therefore, a dynamic but frustrated activity of knowing.

Vision too is an activity of knowing, an operation also dynamic and carried out on a level of being higher than, but analogically related to, the level of being upon which contemplation is exercised. In so far as vision is a total fulfillment and the only fulfillment which can satisfy without frustration the desire of man to know, it can in a sense be considered the completion of what was indeed fulfilled, but was still perpetually being rendered imperfect and unfulfilled by the spectre of its own inherent frustration. The operation of vision can be said to fulfill the operation of contemplation. The point is not that one operation is related to the other as two stages of the same

process. Contemplation and vision are to be found on separate levels of activity. The point made is rather that the frustration encountered in the one activity is dispelled when the contemplator begins to carry on his fulfilling activity of knowing on another level of activity. Contemplation and vision are therefore to be seen as two activities of knowing on separate levels of being, yet related as fulfillment and fulfillment of fulfillment in the similarity of their operation. It is in this context that Aquinas can say that contemplation is the beginning of eternal life, when by eternal life he understands vision.²²⁷

What must remain perfectly clear in this discussion is that it is only through the necessarily gratuitous intervention of God himself that the fulfillment of contemplation is carried to a higher level and to a more perfect completion. Of its nature and even granting the will of God, it does not possess any exigency to be so directed. But granted that it is directed to the vision of the divine essence, as an activity of knowing more and more about being, it can be seen from one point of view to be similar to vision, to which it is linked in the order of activity just described.

2. *The Openness of Natural Being.* Early in the history of thought, the philosopher Plotinus realized the essential frustration of man's highest activity and sought a way out of that frustration through an appeal to a possible union with the One from which man had emanated. While it is obvious that the position of Plotinus has no connection with the doctrine of vision, it is interesting to note that this ancient philosopher found his answer through the postulation of a certain openness on the part of the nature of man to an area lying beyond him, an openness somehow also inherent in his very nature. With the awareness that there actually did exist a source of man's fulfillment lying beyond the reach of his natural capacities, yet still acting as a fulfillment of his natural tendencies, there has been a constant attempt among Christian thinkers to find a solution to the question of the relation of man to his higher natural end.

Thomas Aquinas based his understanding of man's approach to this more perfect fulfillment upon his teaching of a double natural end. Yet Thomas' commentators have been divided on the precise aspect of the nature of man which allows him to be open to this higher perfection. Some have established in human nature an obediencial capacity, a potency in the nature of man to be elevated to a higher realm of being. Others, directing their analysis precisely upon the natural finality of man, have pointed out that there is nothing intrinsic to the nature of natural finality that would demand that the person or thing it finalizes be prevented from attaining further perfection on another level of being. This opinion has been clearly expressed by William O'Connor.

The capacity of the intellect for truth can never be filled naturally, and this condition belongs to the nature of a spiritual creature. It is purely an assumption that the natural end of man must be a terminative end, completely and perfectly satisfying his natural cravings for truth and for happiness on the natural plane.²²⁸

This is exactly the truth that Aristotle had seen, but for want of a knowledge of the supernatural could not explain. In the Christian context, the solution to Aristotle's frustration is discovered. Contemplation does fulfill man on the finite level, but the fulfillment does not prevent man from being further perfected on a higher level of being. Rather, in his very fulfillment man is left open to a further perfection which, while it has no intrinsic connection to contemplation, can be seen to be intimately related to that activity. In the beautiful expression of a modern writer:

To have achieved human happiness is to have discovered that the perfection of human nature is openness to absolute happiness. To be thoroughly human is to have cast aside homocentricity. For the perfection of the relative is precisely to be relatively to the absolute.²²⁹

Conclusion

In the progress of this study, it has been established that human nature finds its fulfillment in the highest operation of its highest faculty directed upon the highest possible object. Man's inner natural tendency is towards knowledge. He is driven to know more and more about all reality, and in particular about the highest reality, God, in a process which lasts his entire earthly life. Though he may never exhaust the object of his knowledge, and though he is always plagued with the frustrating realization that he is somehow unable to penetrate the inner nature of the reality upon which he is exercising his understanding, he is able to achieve a measure of happiness, sufficiently delightful and satisfying to give him the fullest measure of perfection and fulfillment possible in his present state. It is in the intellectual process or activity of contemplation that he achieves this perfection. Man's natural tendency to fulfillment is not based upon what he may happen to know concerning that which will fulfill him, but is a process as certain and as predictable as the path of a stone falling to the earth. This is not to say that man cannot impede his attainment of perfection. Rather, as through violence one can divert the falling body from its true finality, so one can divert himself from his natural end. But when one puts no obstacle in his or her path, but wills to function according to his or her nature, that is, through the operation of his or her intellect, one will attain the perfection and the finality determined by one's very nature.

Yet, as said before, the finality and perfection of man is in its most technical sense not to be equated with contemplation. Rather contemplation is the most perfect activity in man's present state of existence which can fulfill one's inner tendency, technically stated as the tendency to know more and more. The presence of another form of human fulfillment on an entirely different level of being, fulfilling the desire of man to know more and more in an entirely different way, is totally compatible with the philosophic principles of human nature and its finality. Given the fact of faith that there is on a totally different level of being from contemplation a fulfillment of man called vision, it is quite justifiable in the order of philosophy to admit the possibility, unknown to Aristotle but known to Thomas, the man of faith, that there can be two natural human finalities and fulfillments, each existing on different but analogically related levels of being.

There is no need for the existence of any connection between these two fulfillments, outside of the necessary similarities they possess by their very definitions, that is, that they both are fulfillments of the nature of man in the order of knowledge. Yet, an attempt can be made, and has been made in this study, to draw further connections between them on the grounds that they are both activities, and that there may be a philosophically analyzable connection between the presence of a higher form of fulfillment and the presence of an otherwise inexplicable frustration in the fulfillment known as contemplation.

The purpose of this study was to analyze the position of contemplation as fulfillment of man, seen first of all as a being possessed of natural finality, and secondly, as a total person existing in a life situation. All references to vision were made solely with the intention of clarifying the nature of contemplation. The interest of this paper was not with the total perfection of vision, but rather with the imperfect perfection of the activity of contemplation. Be there a vision of the divine essence or not, it is a fundamental teaching of Thomas Aquinas' philosophy of finality as it is found in the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, in the third book, from the twenty-fifth to the sixty-third chapters, that contemplation as practiced by man in this life (or also in the next life) is an activity capable of fulfilling his internal and natural tendency to perfection.

Notes

143. Cf. *Summa Contra Gentile*, Chapter 51.

144. In modern terminology one might use the analogy, drawn from the world of visual electronics, of enabling a receiver naturally able to receive a "very high frequency" transmission, to receive "ultra high frequency" transmissions.

145. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book III, Chapter 52. "Happiness is a good surpassing created nature. Therefore, it is impossible that it be bestowed through the action of any creature: but by God alone is man made happy—if we speak of perfect happiness." *Summa Theologiae*, I, II, 5, 6, c.

146. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book III, Chapter 52.

147. *Ibid.*, Chapter 52.

148. *Ibid.*, Chapter 52.

149. *Ibid.*, Chapter 52.

150. "We have shown that man's happiness . . . consists in this divine vision, and we are said to attain it by God's Grace alone, because such a vision exceeds all the capacity of a creature and it is not possible to reach it without divine assistance." *Ibid.*, Chapter 52. How this assistance is given is a question to be answered in theology.

151. Cf. *Ibid.*, Chapter 25.

152. Cf. *Ibid.*

153. Cf. *Ibid.*, Chapter 50. It is interesting to note that Thomas is aware that he is carrying Aristotle's principles to a further development. He states, "Later men have endeavored to add something pertinent to divine knowledge to the things which they found in the heritage of their predecessors. Chapter 39.

154. Cf. *Ibid.*, Chapters 38-39.

155. Cf. *Ibid.*, Chapter 48. "No person is happy in this life."

156. Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae de Veritate*, 14, 2 c.

157. Cf. William R. O'Connor, *The Eternal Quest* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1947), pp. 33-38.

158. Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.

159. Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 31-33.

160. Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 126ff.

161. "De illo appetitu naturali patet, quod voluntas necessario et perpetuo et summe appetit beatitudinem, et hoc in particulari. " *Opera*, XXI, 318.

162. In this question, as in others, the voluntaristic tendencies of Scotus are apparent.

163. Cf. Etienne Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (New York: Random House, 1955), pp. 455-457, for a brief discussion of the univocity of being in Scotus. Cf. also Patrick K. Bastable, *Desire for God* (London: Burns, Oates, and Washbourne, 1947), pp. 84-97; and William R. O'Connor, *The Natural Desire* (Milwaukee: Marquette University, 1948), pp. 39ff.

164. Cf. John Duns Scotus, *In I Sent*, d. 3, n. 24. "Si quaeritur quae est ratio istius status, respondeo, status non videtur esse nisi stabilis permanentia legibus divinae sapientiae firmata. Stabilium est autem illis legibus sapientiae, quod intellectus noster non intelligat pro statu isto, nisi illa quorum species relucet in phantasmate, et hoc sive propter poenam originalis peccati, sive propter naturalem concordiam potentiarum, animae in operando."

165. There is a possibility here for a position holding that God Himself prevents man from attaining the natural end divinely planted in his nature, in so far as a fault not proper to a man would be understood to have deprived him of an end to which by his very nature he was entitled to attain.

166. Thomas Aquinas treated this question in Book III, Chapter 52 of the *Summa Contra Gentiles*. It should be noted here that this question is not theological. It is a philosophical principle of Thomas that for a nature to be elevated to a higher nature (granting the possibility of that higher nature), the assistance of that higher nature or of some other higher nature would be required.

167. Cf. Anton C. Pegis, "Nature and Spirit: Some Reflections on the Problem of the End of Man", *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* (Washington, D. C.: Catholic University of America, 1949), p. 62.

168. Cf. Gerard Smith, "The Natural End of Man", *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* (Washington, D. C.: Catholic University of America, 1949), p. 51.

169. Anton C. Pegis, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

170. One here wonders if de Lubacs superaddition is related to Bonaventure's "contuition" in the sense that Bonaventure would seem to require something of the nature of superaddition to bring his already supernatural vision of God to an even higher supernatural state.

171. Cf. again Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book III, Ch. 52.

172. *Ibid.*, Chapter 48. Cf. also Chapters 51 and 57.

173. Cf. William R. O'Connor, *The Eternal Quest*, pp. 142-144.

174. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book III, Chapters 25.

175. Cf. *Ibid.*, Chapter 50.

176. Again, in the sense that "nothing finite can fully satisfy intellectual desire" (*Ibid.*, Chapter 50), the difficulty of what Thomas means by fulfillment remains.

177. Cf. *Ibid.*, Book III, Chapter 52.

178. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the De Trinitate of Boethius*, VI, 4, and 5.

179. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Fourth Book of the Sentences*, d. 49, q. 2, a. 1, ad 13: "As God by His nature is the greatest being, so in Himself He is most intelligible. The fact that, at times, He is not known by us arises from a defect in ourselves. "

180. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book III, Chapter 41.

181. Cf. *Ibid.*, Chapter 49.

182. William R. O'Connor, *The Natural Desire*, p. 37.

183. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book III, Chapter 25.

184. This level can be conceived to be either earthly contemplation or quasi intuition of separate substances.

185. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book III, Chapter 57.

186. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, Chapter 48.

187. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, II, 3, 5, c.

188. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book III, Chapter 48 and Book I, Chapter 102 for these two opposing emphases.

189. Cf. Josef Pieper, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-28. The axiom "Bonum ex integra causa; malum ex quocumque defectu" may be seen to apply here.

190. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, II, 2, 3, and 4.

191. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Opera-Omnia* (Paris: Ludovicum Vives, 1874), Vol. XII, p. 331, esp. n. 1.

192. Cf. Joseph Buckley, *Man's Last End* (St. Louis: Herder, 1949), pp. 23-24. Buckley seems to root the doctrine of a double natural end in a far more recent source than Thomas Aquinas. He adds an interesting distinction to the discussion by calling happiness in vision happiness *simpliciter* and happiness in contemplation happiness *secundum quid*.

193. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book II, Chapter 83.

194. Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1177a10-b25, and Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange. *Beatitude*, trans. Patrick Cummins (St. Louis: Herder, 1956), p. 78.

195. Cf. Josef Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation* (London: Faber, 1958), p. 46, and Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, II, 4, 1, c.

196. This is not to say that contemplation cannot be fulfilled in a certain sense on another level of being, as will be explained later.

197. Thomas Aquinas, *In decem Libros Ethicorum Aristotelis ad Nicomachum Expositio*, X, 11, no. 2102.

198. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II, II, 180, 4, c.

199. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book III, Chapters 40 and 48.

200. Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Transformation in Christ* (Baltimore: Helicon, 1948), p. 111. Though this work is professedly theological, the author has many valuable insights which are purely philosophical.

201. Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1074 b15-34.

202. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book III, Chapter 37.

203. Cf. Josef Pieper, *op. cit.*, pp. 56-57; and Etienne Gilson, *Moral Values and the Moral Life* (St. Louis: Herder, 1941), p. 40.

204. Cf. Josef Pieper, *op. cit.*, pp. 68-69.

205. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio super Librum De Causis*, 18; and Josef Pieper, *op. cit.*, pp. 102-103.

206. Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae de Veritate*, 2, 2.

207. Cf. Josef Pieper, *op. cit.*, pp. 57-60.

208. Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Transformation in Christ* (Baltimore: Helicon, 1948), pp. 93 and 97.

209. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book III, Chapter 62.

210. Cf. Josef Pieper, *op. cit.*, p. 105; and Dietrich von Hildebrand, *op. cit.*, p. 97 and 101.

211. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book III, Chapter 63.

212. Cf. Etienne Gilson, *Moral Values and the Moral Life* (St. Louis: Herder, 1941), pp. 48-49.

213. Cf. Josef Pieper, *op. cit.*, pp. 83-84.

214. For a study of the relationship between contemplation and recollection, cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, *op. cit.*, pp. 86-120.

215. Cf. Josef Pieper, *op. cit.*, p. 63. The quotation is from Migne's *Patrologia Latina*, 175, 1065.

216. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book III, Chapter 58.

217. Cf. *Ibid.*, Chapters 28, 31, 32. Though it is generally conceded that only those who live according to the order of virtue can come to a true fulfillment, a survey of the history of philosophy with reference to the question of human finality shows that the ethical values and aspects have not always been given an equal amount of emphasis in this study. Werner Jaegar has done an extremely interesting study of this problem in reference to the development of the ideas of the one philosopher in his book entitled *Aristotle*, pp. 426-61. This particular problem is a subsection of the much wider

question of the relationship between ethics and metaphysics in philosophy. Two other interesting studies in this field are Anton-Hermann Chroust, "Philosophy in the Hellenistic-Roman World", *Thomist*, XVII (1954), 197-253; and Cornelia J. de Vogel, "What Philosophy Meant to the Greeks", *International Philosophical Quarterly*, I (1961), 35-57.

218. Cf. Josef Pieper, *op. cit.*, p. 66 and 75.

219. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book II, Chapter 83. With reference to the participation of the will and the body in the fulfillment of man, it is well to point out that some Thomistic commentators prefer to speak of earthly happiness in the context of the perfection of the total person, without any direct reference to contemplation as the focal point of this fulfillment. This seems to be an entirely different tradition of interpretation, and is mentioned here simply to point out another possible approach to the problem of natural finality. For a further treatment of this approach, confer James Mullaney, "The Natural, Terrestrial End of Man", *Thomist*, XVIII (1955), 373-395.

220. For a further discussion of the relationship between contemplation of truth and aesthetic experience of the beautiful, cf. Charles A. Hart, *Thomistic Metaphysics* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1959), pp. 386-394. Further implications of the relation of the entire human person, body and soul, to his fulfillment can be derived from the theological consideration of the resurrection of the body. Such implications are beyond the scope of this paper.

221. Cf. Frederick Copleston (New York: Doubleday, Image, 1962), Vol. II, Part I, p. 273-274.

222. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book III, Chapter 57.

223. An extremely interesting parallel view of the activity of understanding is offered by Martin Heidegger in his *Letter on Humanism*: "The essence of action is fulfillment. To fulfill is to unfold something in the fullness of its essence, to usher it forward into that fullness: *producere*."

224. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book III, Chapter 48. 225. Cf. *Ibid.*, Chapter 50.

226. Cf. *Ibid.*, Chapter 50. The very fact that the finite order is unable to offer man perfect satisfaction renders his search for fulfillment on that order mathematically infinite. The process of greater fulfillment and greater intensity of search is interminable in the finite order.

227. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II, II, 180, 4, c., and *Summa Contra Gentiles* Book III, Chapter 25.

228. William R. O'Connor, *The Natural Desire for God*, pp. 48-49.

229. James V. Mullaney, "The Natural, Terrestrial End of Man", *Thomist*, XVIII (July, 1955), p. 395.

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