

# Philosophy in the Middle Ages

*The Christian, Islamic, and Jewish Traditions*

Third Edition

Edited by  
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and  
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# PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

The Second Edition of *Philosophy in the Middle Ages* has served teachers and students of medieval philosophy admirably for a quarter century, and our aim in the Third Edition has been to make only modest changes. The selection of authors has been left unchanged except for the deletion of a couple of figures whose writings, we discovered, were practically never assigned and the addition of a brief selection from Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, whose influence on medieval thought surely earns him a place in an anthology like this one. Since the publication of the Second Edition, many excellent new translations of medieval philosophical texts have been published as well, thanks in no small part to Hackett Publishing Company. We have drawn on these new translations as much as possible. Moreover, many readings have been translated anew on the basis of critical editions that were not available when the Second Edition was published; where we have used older translations, we have checked them wherever possible against new editions. We have also expanded somewhat the coverage of ethics, particularly in the sections on thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Latin philosophy. The introductions to the volume and to each of the sections have been left almost entirely unchanged for the Third Edition, and the introductions to each thinker have been changed only as necessary to reflect changes in the selections.

The section on Early Medieval Christian Philosophy now offers the whole of Augustine's *The Teacher* as well as two additional selections from the *Confessions*—the story of the theft of the pears, from Book 2, and the account of Augustine's encounter with Platonism, with its attendant reflections on the nature of good and evil, from Book 7—and a short but important anti-skeptical passage from *On the Trinity*. The selection from Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* has been greatly enlarged, so that it now starts at the point in Book 3 at which Lady Philosophy begins to lay out the nature of true happiness and continues without interruption through the end of the work. New selections from *Contra Eutychen* and *On the Trinity* present, in a remarkably compact form, the elements of Boethius' metaphysics of substance and accident, form and matter, and identity and difference. The complete text of *The Mystical Theology* has been added to provide a sense of the remarkable style of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite as well as an overview of his teaching. The selection from Anselm has been expanded to include the theistic arguments of the first four chapters of *Monologion* as well as the complete text of *Proslogion*. The selection from Abelard's *Glosses on Porphyry* has been extended to include his engagement with Boethius' treatment of the problem of universals.

In the section on Islamic Philosophy, a few readings that many users of the Second Edition found obscure have been replaced by readings that we think will be more accessible but still representative of their authors. Al-Fārābī is now represented by *The Principles of Existing Things*, which presents his basic metaphysics of causality, modality, and form and matter, as well as sketches his views on cosmology, predication concerning the First Existent, and the nature of the intellect. We have included an additional selection from al-Ghazālī's *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* that engages with the eternity of the world, an issue taken up in different ways by several of the thinkers represented in this volume. The selections from Ibn Rushd now include more of the *Long Commentary on "The Soul"* as well as his reply in *The Incoherence of "The Incoherence"* to al-Ghazālī's arguments concerning the eternity of the world. The Jewish Philosophy section has been left unchanged except for the use of slightly different selections from *The Guide of the Perplexed*, taken from Julius Guttmann's abridgment of the Chaim Rabin translation.

In the section on Latin Philosophy in the Thirteenth Century, we have replaced *Retracing the Arts to Theology* with the complete text of Bonaventure's *The Mind's Journey into God*, providing a more comprehensive look at Bonaventure's distinctive approach to philosophy and theology. Additional selections from Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae* include discus-

sions of the nature of goodness and of the active and passive intellect, and a fuller treatment of theological semantics, creation, and human nature. All 219 propositions condemned in 1277 are listed.

The readings in Latin Philosophy in the Fourteenth Century are largely the same, although there are some new translations (or older translations checked against new editions). The only major changes are in the readings from John Duns Scotus. The considerable advances in textual scholarship on Scotus and the admirable progress made on the critical edition of the *Ordinatio* have necessitated the replacement of the reading on contingency, a text now known to be inauthentic, with a parallel text from the *Lectura*, as well as the use of new translations from the critical edition of all the remaining material, which is from the *Ordinatio*.

I am grateful to Deborah Black and Jon McGinnis for their help and advice concerning the revisions of the Islamic Philosophy section; to Jack Zupko for his assistance with the fourteenth-century Latin Philosophy section; and to Paul Vincent Spade, whose extensive comments some years ago concerning a proposed revision of the Second Edition proved very helpful to me in preparing this Third Edition and who generously permitted us to use several of his own translations in this edition.

T.W.

# INTRODUCTION

The editors of this volume hope that it will prove useful for the study of philosophy in the Middle Ages by virtue of the comprehensiveness of its selections. The reader will find here the major representative thinkers of that period and a wide range of topics, including ethics and political theory as well as the more frequently studied epistemology, metaphysics, and natural theology. The reader will also find three groups of philosophers not usually given the scope they have here, and who are historically and philosophically more important than their comparative neglect would indicate. These are the Muslim, Jewish, and fourteenth-century Latin Christian philosophers.

There is little agreement as to just who should be classified as a medieval philosopher. Some scholars, defining medieval philosophy by reference to the effort to resolve the apparent inconsistencies between scriptural revelation and Greek philosophy, look to thinkers of the second century A.D. or even back to Philo of Alexandria in the first century A.D. for their point of departure. Others, seeing a sharp distinction between patristic and scholastic writings, would begin the Middle Ages in Latin Christian philosophy with Eriugena in the ninth century or with Anselm of Canterbury in the eleventh. The other boundary is drawn just as variously: some scholars look upon William of Ockham in the fourteenth century as the last medieval philosopher worthy of the name, while others would

go on to Nicholas of Cusa in the fifteenth century or to Suarez in the sixteenth. We have here rather arbitrarily begun with Augustine in the fourth century and ended with Buridan in the fourteenth. Muslim philosophy is sometimes regarded as having originated toward the end of the eighth century, when Mu'tazilites (see page 216) applied Greek philosophical conceptions to the interpretation of Islamic doctrines, although the first formal philosopher is al-Kindī, who died some time after 870. Largely because of religious and political developments, the last important Muslim philosopher in the Middle Ages is Ibn Rushd (Averroes), who died at the end of the twelfth century. For the Jews, one can begin with Philo and end with Spinoza, but it is customary to begin with Saadia Gaon in the tenth century and end with Albo in the fifteenth. We have again rather arbitrarily begun with Saadia and ended with Crescas, who died near the beginning of the fifteenth century.

It is not too long since the very proposal for a work of this kind would have provoked incredulity. The tradition of serious modern scholarship on medieval philosophy—Muslim and Jewish as well as Latin—begins in the mid-nineteenth century with such scholars as Prantl, Hauréau, Renan, and Munk; and the labor of a hundred years has not eradicated the negative attitudes toward medieval figures popularized in the satires of Rabelais and Erasmus on the subtlety and dis-

putatiousness of the schoolmen, and in philosophical treatments such as Francis Bacon's contemptuous rejection of "contentious learning." Indeed, there is a derogatory value judgment implied in the very labeling of the period as the "middle" ages. Various forms of this expression were used during the Renaissance (*media tempestas*, 1469; *media aetas*, 1518; *medium aevum*, 1604), with the sense that this was the age *between* the more significant ages of antiquity and modern times. Those two ages contrast with the middle one in manifesting such civilized virtues as a sense of beauty, respect for personality, and freedom of thought. Few informed persons today would subscribe to the judgment that medieval cathedrals, illuminated manuscripts, and so forth, are ugly or barbaric, or would refuse to recognize respect for personality of a high order in the great medieval saints; but the question of freedom of thought still sometimes serves as a deterrent to the appreciation of medieval philosophy. It is felt that since philosophy was the handmaiden of religion during this period, it must have been servile, its problems raised and decided by theological authority rather than by autonomous reason. In which case, it was hardly philosophy at all.

There would be little sense in denying the very close relationship of philosophy and religion during the period covered by this anthology. The question is whether that association really entails such woeful conclusions. To suppose that it does reflects a considerably oversimplified understanding of medieval thought. On the assumption of the total authority of scriptural revelation, one might presume that because of the differences between the three major religions involved, there would be three independent philosophical traditions in the Middle Ages. But even superficial examination reveals a large area of common ground, even in topics sensitive to religious influence. For example, Avicenna the Muslim, Maimonides the Jew, and Thomas Aquinas the Christian all present the proof for the existence of God which argues to the being of a necessary existent from the experienced fact of contingent existences. This philosophical common ground consisted largely in the philosophical movements of Neoplatonism and Aristotelianism, of which the former exercised an earlier influence and conditioned the understanding of the latter. Thus, the ini-

tial persisting interpretations of Latin Christianity were effected through Neoplatonism, as is abundantly clear in the writings of Augustine. Among the Jews this neoplatonic movement is evident in Ibn Gabirol. Among the Muslims, although there seems to have been no relatively pure Neoplatonism, the understanding of Aristotle was from the beginning influenced by neoplatonic writings such as the spurious *Theology of Aristotle*. Neoplatonism, with its emphasis on supersensible reality and its conception of the emanation of all being from a single divine unity, lent itself more easily to philosophical interpretation of the religious conceptions of the immortality of the soul and the creation of the world than did Aristotelianism. Indeed, Aristotle's doctrines that the soul is the form of the living body and that the thinking of the divine intellect in some way activates the hierarchy of astronomical and natural processes were reinterpreted along neoplatonic lines, yielding the views that the soul is an independent being bringing life and thought to the body and that the hierarchy of processes emanates from the activity of the divine intellect. Philosophers in all three traditions attempted to recover the true meaning of Aristotle behind such reinterpretations.

The relation of religion to philosophy, then, depends in part upon the philosophy involved. But it also depends upon the religion. All three scripturally derived religions shared problems involving the doctrine of the creation of the world, but they differed in the extent of other stumbling blocks to philosophical reason. The Jews had certain problems about such matters as the election of Israel and the eternity of the Law, and the Muslims were concerned as to whether the Qur'an as the word of God is created or eternal. But the Christians had a whole series of such problems, eventually classified as "mysteries," of which the doctrines of the Holy Trinity and the sacrament of the Eucharist may be taken as typical. The doctrine of the Trinity is that there is one God in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which seems to imply that God is one and three at once. The sacrament of the Eucharist, on one interpretation at least, involves the conversion of the eucharistic bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ — the process known as transubstantiation. This seems to imply that the very same set of sensible qualities can, without alteration, characterize successively

two completely different substances. One can say, then, that in some ways Christianity represents a more formidable challenge to philosophy than does Islam or Judaism.

In the light of these differences—Aristotelianism being less compatible with the scriptural religions than Neoplatonism, and Christianity being less compatible with philosophy than Islam and Judaism—the historical sequence of the interrelations of these movements is quite interesting. Philosophy gained a foothold among Christians through Neoplatonism, and Aristotelianism gained its foothold among Muslims and Jews after having some small impact on Byzantine thought. It was only after Muslim and Jewish thinkers had undertaken judicious interpretations of scriptures and of Aristotle that the two apparently least compatible movements, i.e., Aristotelianism and Latin Christianity, came face to face. The task of a Thomas Aquinas or Duns Scotus was thus in some ways more difficult than that of an Avicenna or Maimonides, except that the former could make use of the labors of the latter. In all three traditions, it should also be noted, there was philosophically informed criticism of efforts at the synthesis of religion and philosophy. Al-Ghazālī among the Muslims, Halevi and Crescas among the Jews, and several of the fourteenth-century Latin figures carried out critiques of philosophical pretensions in this area.

Since Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are all practical religions with concern for the goals of human life in this world and the next and for the function of political organization, ethical and political speculation formed an important part of medieval philosophical thought. Certain complexities parallel to those outlined above should be spelled out for these areas as well. Again we find some common ground; thinkers within the three traditions found it possible to adopt such notions as Aristotle's theory of the moral and intellectual virtues, the Stoic account of law, and the neoplatonic doctrine of the ascent of the soul. But further differences seem to have been more pronounced in these areas than in metaphysics or even psychology. For theological and historical reasons, Christian ethical and political doctrines were distinct from those of Judaism and Islam. One difference was determined by different conceptions of man. For Christian thinkers,

man was fallen and hence required the grace of God for his salvation. So no matter how much Christian philosophers admired the temporal results of ethical and political doctrines, they considered such doctrines and results insufficient for man's salvation. By contrast, a number of Muslim and Jewish thinkers, especially those of Aristotelian leanings, described the good life as consisting in the development of moral and intellectual virtues, and identified the afterlife with the incorporeal existence of the intellect, whether one for all mankind or many individual intellects. To be sure, scripture was required and its role was conceived in various ways: for ordaining the proper setting for the intellectual life, for making general laws specific, for making correct opinions available to all men and not merely philosophers, or for providing certain insights not otherwise obtainable. But for Jews and Muslims, the teachings of moral and political philosophy were not too far from those of religion.

Christians differed from Muslims and Jews also in their evaluation of the state. Already the Gospels had distinguished between what is God's and what is Caesar's, and this distinction was to remain fundamental for a good part of medieval Christian thought. Whether Christian philosophers envisaged the state after the Augustinian fashion as merely ensuring a limited measure of temporal peace or whether they accepted the more inclusive functional account presented in Aristotle's *Politics*, it was evident that the temporal state was separate from the church and in some way subordinate to it. Much of medieval political life was marked by controversies concerning the respective powers of the church and state, and the various opinions on this issue are mirrored in philosophical developments. The distinction between the two realms was further emphasized by the separate development of canon and civil law. Judaism and Islam, on the other hand, were religious laws wedded to a political community. For these religions, the law was brought by a legislative prophet; and the religiously determined state provides the best setting for the attainment of the good life. In such a setting, an explicit and developed distinction between religious and civil law is inapplicable. It is interesting to note that perhaps merely because of historical accident or perhaps because of doctrinal affinity, the central political doc-

uments for Jews and Muslims were Plato's *Republic* and *Laws*, whereas after the reception of Aristotle, his *Politics* was the basic work for the Christians. It should also be noted that an exception to this description of the Christian situation can be found in the late medieval movement sometimes described as "political Averroism." Proponents of this position, of whom Marsilius of Padua was the leading representative, set out to develop a philosophy of the state independent of theological teachings, even going so far as to see the clergy in its political role as a functionary of the state.

One more difference between the three traditions is found in their approaches to the problem of the will. Though most thinkers of the three groups (with the possible exception of the Muslim Ash'arites and Crescas the Jew) affirmed the freedom of human acts, Christians emphasized the will more than did Jews and Muslims. For example, the question whether the act of intellect or that of will is more fundamental, which became an important point of difference between Thomists and Scotists, seems to have no precise analogue in Jewish and Muslim thought. In the latter traditions, willing is often viewed simply as the decision-making act of the intellect, rather than as a distinct act of a distinct faculty, as it was among the Latins.

With all these complications, it is little wonder that this very problem of the relation of religion to philosophy was given extensive philosophical attention in the Middle Ages. Thinkers confronted by apparent inconsistencies between revelation or tradition and this or that philosophy did not merely adjust the immediately offending positions. They probed deeper into the very nature of the confrontation itself and conceived a variety of interpretations of it, ranging from the view that religion is simply true philosophy to the view that the two have strictly nothing to do with one another. The attitude that there could be no genuine philosophy as a handmaiden to religion thus reflects only one of the several types of philosophy involved, only one of the several versions of religion, and one of the more extreme solutions to the problem of the possible relationships.

There is another way to approach this issue. As understood by Hegel and others, philosophy as the handmaiden to religion would presumably be theology—

the attempt, for example, to interpret the religious dogma about the Eucharist by means of Aristotle's distinction between substance and quality. This kind of thing comes in for attack both from many philosophers and from a long tradition among the devout, who cannot see what Athens has to do with Jerusalem, or subtle disputation with simple piety. But these properly theological subjects hardly exhausted the attention of medieval philosophers. Such subjects stand at one end of a spectrum. Next to them are the problems of what was called natural theology, of which the existence of God is a good example. This problem has been included in the philosophical canon since the days of Xenocrates and has perhaps never been so thoroughly discussed as in the Middle Ages. We should not suppose that the medievals merely sought more or less ingenious ways to ratify a foregone conclusion; the various proofs were carefully criticized, and the outcome for many critics was that God's existence could not be proved at all by philosophical methods. Next to the topics of natural theology we may place certain issues which, while perhaps not exactly generated by scriptural revelation, certainly were pursued intensively because of it. Typical of these are the immortality of the soul and the freedom of the will, and one can hardly exaggerate the intricacy of medieval treatments of these problems. Then there are the classic or standard philosophical problems concerning being, knowledge, the good, and so forth. Again we should not be misled by an unrealistic picture of the Middle Ages as a time of monolithic harmony. Rationalism and empiricism, teleological and deontological ethical theories, and a great variety of metaphysical positions were developed. And finally, there are subjects such as logic and the natural sciences, which seem to be quite remote from theology. The Middle Ages is one of the great eras in the history of logic, along with antiquity from the rise of the Sophists to the decline of Greek Stoicism, and the modern world from the second half of the nineteenth century. Philosophers in all three traditions wrote summaries or commentaries concerning Aristotle's *Organon*, and a few in the Latin tradition were genuinely creative logicians. As for the natural sciences, one of the great triumphs of modern scholarship is to have uncovered the surprising extent and depth of medieval advances. Once again, then,

the view that there could be no genuine philosophy in such a time ignores all but a small segment of the available evidence.

It is true that a characteristic feature of much medieval thought is its architectonic quality, its systematic interconnectedness, so that theological commitments had their impact on philosophical subjects. But it is equally true that positions taken elsewhere on the spectrum outlined above had their impact on theology. Indeed, the complaint of Erasmus and company was not that philosophy had been theologized but that theology had been made needlessly subtle by its subjection to technical logical analysis and metaphysical refinements. Now that subtlety has once again become an intellectual virtue, perhaps that complaint can be set aside. Even as a handmaiden, then, philosophy had much to say and no mean influence on her mistress.

Erasmus and Rabelais also complained of the contentious character of the philosophy of the schools, a complaint which reached the dignity of a position in Francis Bacon's assumption that the schoolmen aimed merely at victory rather than at truth. This is a serious charge, and should be investigated, for certain features of medieval thought may well be misunderstood in this way. We have here to do with the Latin tradition, for, lacking an analogue to the Renaissance, neither Muslims nor Jews were exposed to this kind of charge. In the Latin tradition, the method of instruction and one of the most prominent vehicles of expression in the Middle Ages was the system of the disputation. A master proposed a problem, often citing authorities on both sides of the issue. A student took his position and stated his arguments, to which the master or another student replied. Further distinctions were drawn and eventually the master resolved the question. This method, like most others, has its vices; human aggressiveness, for instance, is sorely tempted by debate. But this method produced little literary or personal flourish covering over confusion or fallacy, and it gave very little scope to rhetoric. One should not suppose that philosophers trained in expressing themselves in this way were more sophisticated or quarrelsome than those working through ways less subject to immediate and public rejoinder. Another point of some relevance to Bacon's accusation has to do with

the situation in the later Middle Ages. The intensification of critical rigor at this time led to the demotion of many previously accepted beliefs to the level of probabilities. Furthermore, it was shown that some positions for which philosophical arguments could be constructed were counter to the faith. These positions had then to be maintained as what reason would believe on the natural evidence of the senses if God had not miraculously made things different. There was thus a good deal of philosophical thought about positions which the philosophers could not honestly claim to be true. One may suspect that the sophistication of this situation eluded the critics, who saw in this determination of less-than-conclusive grounds for belief only sophistry. But to evaluate different kinds of evidence is not to have some end in view other than truth.

There remains one more misconception that should be corrected. This is the view that, regardless of any range of issues discussed, the domination of religion over philosophy during this period was pernicious because it inculcated a habit of relying on authority, whether scriptural or philosophical. As the criticism has been concisely put, medieval thought, including philosophy, was exegetical in character. Certainly when one goes to a typical medieval philosophical work, one finds quotations identified as "authorities." But in the same writing, the philosopher often proves his point "by reason as well as authority." And even if the philosopher seems to be following an authority, he had to find reasons for following this one rather than another. The medievals were aware of this, and the slogan "Authority has a nose of wax" (and hence can be turned wherever one wishes) is attributed to several medieval figures and seems to have been something of a commonplace. One should ask, then, just how these so-called authorities function in the actual argument, keeping in mind the difference between using a text to settle an issue, to delineate a problem by presenting representative positions, to serve as a point of departure for finer discriminations, or simply to serve, as do many modern footnotes, as a reference to fuller discussions elsewhere. Nor should the reader be unaware of medieval ingenuity in putting a favorable interpretation on a text whose obvious sense one might wish to avoid.

It would indeed be surprising if philosophical work of a high caliber had not been accomplished during the Middle Ages. For hundreds of years in all three traditions self-criticism and development were continuous; and just because of the involvement with theology in a deeply religious period, the finest intellectual talent was drawn into the field. Much of what was done is of genuine philosophical interest to a variety of modern points of view: existentialists, for instance, may find in the distinction of natures and wills a conception to deepen their concern for the irreducibility of freedom; metaphysicians may find new perspectives in the vast literature on essence and existence and on the problem of individuation; semanticists should certainly find suggestions in the equally vast literature on universals and on problems of truth and reference. And medieval philosophy must now be accorded an essential place in the history of philosophy. As recent

scholarship has shown, humanist antischolasticism may have succeeded in popularizing attitudes of rejection, but it hardly accomplished a genuine hiatus in the history of thought. The commonplaces of medieval philosophy abound in those very philosophers of the seventeenth century who are so forceful in disavowing their immediate past.

The editors wish to emphasize that this anthology is not intended as a substitute for a full-fledged history of medieval philosophy. Our policy has been to allot space to major figures at the expense of minor ones, and, of course, not everyone will agree with our judgment in this matter. We have also kept the introductions to a minimum so that more space could be given to the selections. For fuller background and interpretation, the reader should consult one or more of the excellent histories of this period; we have provided an introductory bibliography to aid in this further study.

# EARLY MEDIEVAL CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY

Looking back at the origins of Christian philosophy from the perspectives of the dialectical subtleties of the twelfth century, or the magisterial syntheses of the thirteenth, or, again, the critical reactions of the fourteenth, it is difficult to realize that when Christian philosophy began, Christians formed a small minority in the pagan world, many theological concepts still required clarification, and the question “What does Athens have to do with Jerusalem?” had not yet been answered. Under these circumstances it became the task of early Christian thinkers to defend the Christian faith against the arguments of pagans, to give precision to New Testament doctrines and refute heretical interpretations, and to investigate how Christian teachings are related to philosophical truths. From these rather humble foundations arose the great intellectual edifices of later times.

By necessity, the inquiry into the origins of Christian philosophy must begin with the New Testament itself. Certain philosophical terms occurring in the Pauline writings (e.g., 1 Cor. 1:24) and the doctrine of the Logos in the Gospel according to John pose the question whether the canonical writings manifest the influence of Greek philosophical ideas. Some Protestant scholars of an earlier generation answered this

question by distinguishing between the pure Christian teachings contained in the synoptic Gospels and later philosophical accretions, while their Catholic counterparts, though admitting the philosophical sound of certain New Testament terms, warned against mistaking form for substance.

Speaking for the former group, Adolf Harnack wrote:

. . . the most important event which ever happened in the history of Christian doctrines took place at the beginning of the second century, on the day when Christian Apologists laid down the equation: “The Logos is Jesus Christ.”

By contrast, Etienne Gilson described the Catholic view by stating:

. . . [the] position which is generally held by Catholic historians does not deny the important part played by Greek philosophy in the formulation and interpretation of the Christian dogmas, but it stresses the fact that what was thus formulated and interpreted always remained

the authentic teaching of Christ, which has come to us whole through the Catholic theological tradition. In this . . . view not a single Greek philosophic notion, taken precisely as philosophical, has ever become a constitutive element of Christian faith as such.<sup>1</sup>

Whatever the solution to the scriptural problem, it is clear that by the second century—when the patristic period began—Christian philosophy, or at least its precursor, was on its way. From that century on, Greek and Latin Apologists and Fathers, some of whom had been pagan philosophers before their conversion, wrote in defense of Christianity and in exposition of its doctrine. Though Aristotelian, Stoic, and even materialist doctrines are found in these writings, their prevailing philosophical tenor was Platonic.

To discover whether the saving truths of Christianity are in any way related to the results of philosophical speculations was the most important philosophical issue of this formative period. As was to be expected, Christian thinkers quickly arranged themselves into two groups. Though for both groups the Christian teachings were supreme, there were those who felt that philosophy could be helpful in their exposition, while there were others who saw faith and reason as antagonistic. Among the Greek Apologists of the second century Justin Martyr viewed the study of philosophy positively, holding that “whatever things are rightly said among all men, are the property of us Christians,” while his student Tatian, suspicious of philosophy, maintained that whatever was good within philosophy had been borrowed by it from scripture. During the same period Athenagoras noted an agreement between certain Christian and philosophical teachings, while Hippolytus saw in philosophy the origin of heresies. Hippolytus, together with his teacher Irenaeus, was also active in combating the teachings of gnostics. Among the Latin Apologists (who include Minucius Felix, Arnobius, and Lactantius), Tertullian is the one who is probably the best known. His oft-repeated question, “What has Athens to do with

Jerusalem?” has been taken to place him squarely in the antiphilosophical camp.

Christian speculations took a somewhat more substantial form in the writings of the so-called Alexandrians. Clement of Alexandria (c.150—sometime before 215), who devoted part of his efforts to the persuasion of unbelievers, lauds Greek philosophers for having shown man’s need for a spiritual religion, and philosophy, for him, is a good willed by God and communicated by the Logos to all. Making use primarily of Platonic, but also Aristotelian and Stoic, teachings (often as transmitted by Philo), Clement undertook to transform simple faith into a reasoned belief. In similar fashion, Origen (c.185—c.254), who, like Plotinus, had studied under Ammonius Saccas, distinguished between the literal and allegorical sense of scripture; and he was the first Christian thinker to establish the immateriality of God by means of philosophical arguments.

The early fourth century brought a turning point in the fortunes of the Christian Church. Constantine now made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire, and this recognition helped to produce the political structure of the church. At the same time, the Council of Nicea (325) fixed the conception of the Trinity by declaring the Son to be consubstantial with the Father—a doctrine the Arians had denied. The Greek theologians of the fourth century (the so-called Cappadocians) include Eusebius, Gregory of Nazianz, Basil the Great, and Nemesius, but the most important was Gregory of Nyssa. Gregory was the first who tried to find rational arguments for all the teachings of the church (the mysteries included), and his attempt was repeated later by Anselm of Canterbury and Richard of St. Victor. His kind of Platonism, with its emphasis on the purification of the human soul and man’s return to God, influenced the philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena, as well as the mystical theology of Bernard of Clairvaux.

The Latin theologians of the fourth century include Marius Victorinus (the translator of Platonic writings) and Ambrose, but they were overshadowed by their “disciple,” Augustine (354–430). Interpreting Christian doctrines in the light of neoplatonic teachings, Augustine, in writings often intensely personal and reflecting the heat of intellectual battle, discussed

1. For both quotations, see E. Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, New York, 1955, p. 5.

the great themes of truth, God, the human soul, the meaning of history, the state, and salvation, in a manner that made him the greatest Father of the Latin Church. For over a thousand years to come there hardly appeared a Latin theological or philosophical work that did not invoke his authority, and Augustine remains a respected member of the philosophical pantheon of all times.

Though that part of Christian philosophy known as the patristic age was to continue after the early fifth century, it was also beginning to draw to a close. Among Greek writers, Pseudo-Dionysius (a writer of the late fifth century whose works were attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite, a disciple of Paul), Maximus the Confessor (c. 580–662), and John of Damascus (eighth century) were to influence later medieval thought, while among the Latins, Boethius (c. 475–526), through his translations of Aristotelian works, his mathematical writings, and his theological treatises, was to become one of the schoolmasters of the later Latin world.

Pseudo-Dionysius became influential through a variety of doctrines. Among them is his notion of a threefold theology according to which God is to be described in positive, negative, and superlative terms. Pseudo-Dionysius views the world as proceeding from God (the supreme good) by way of “illumination,” or, alternatively, creation is described by him as “theophany”—God revealing Himself. In creating the world, God made use of prototypes, also called divine Ideas, volitions, and predestinations, and the created order possesses a hierarchical structure. Finally, the world not only emanated from God, but also flows back to Him. These great Dionysian themes (together with similar notions of Maximus the Confessor) have their echoes in the later Latin world, and their influence may be gauged from the fact that John Scottus Eriugena, Hugh of St. Victor, Robert Grosseteste, Albertus Magnus, Bonaventure, and Aquinas commented on Dionysian works.

After the sixth century learning declined in the Latin world, and Christian philosophy lay dormant until Charles the Great (crowned emperor in 800), who decided that his political conquests should be paralleled by a revival of learning. To further what came to be called the Carolingian Renaissance, Charles brought foreign scholars to his court, chief

among them Alcuin (730–804), an English master. In exaggerated but nevertheless significant fashion, a ninth-century chronicler said of him, “Alcuin’s teaching was so fruitful that the modern Gauls, or Frenchmen, became the equals of the Ancients of Rome and Athens.”

Charlemagne’s greatest contribution to the advancement of learning was the establishment of schools. Prior to his time education had been private, but he now decreed that it should be the concern of established schools. In a famous capitulary he proclaimed that

... in every bishop’s see, and in every monastery, instructions shall be given in the psalms, musical notation, chant, the computation of years and seasons, and in grammar . . .<sup>2</sup>

The schools resulting from Charlemagne’s effort are divisible into three kinds. There was, first of all, the Palatine school connected with the royal court. Its pupils were at first drawn from court circles, but other students were admitted later on. Then there was the episcopal or cathedral school, which, directed by a bishop or master, was largely for those destined for the priesthood. But by far the most important and enduring was the monastic school, which conducted classes for the younger members of the monastic community as well as for students coming from without. So important were the monastic schools that the two centuries after Charlemagne have been described as the monastic (or Benedictine) centuries.

Important as the revival of learning was, the curriculum of the new schools was modest by later standards. Besides the Bible and the writings of the Fathers (particularly for those who planned to enter the priesthood), the trivium (grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric) and the quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music) formed the major areas of study. However, until about the year 1000 the quadrivium was in eclipse and, of the trivium, grammar (which included

2. Cited by David Knowles, *The Evolution of Medieval Thought*, London, 1962, p. 72. Knowles’ work contains a fine summary of the state of education during this period.

literature) and rhetoric were the primary disciplines. From the eleventh century on, dialectic became central and exercised considerable influence on theology. No major revision of the curriculum occurred until the introduction of Aristotle's physical and metaphysical works beginning in the late twelfth century.

John Scottus Eriugena (c.800–c.877), the major figure of the period sometimes described as prescholastic, fused Christian and neoplatonic teachings into a metaphysical system in the grand manner. But Eriugena was to remain without successors, and Christian philosophy after his time developed in an unspectacular fashion. Wars, invasions, the division of the empire, and the decline of the Carolingian dynasty were not conducive to the advancement of Charlemagne's educational vision. Though learning continued (particularly in the Benedictine monasteries), no major philosopher or theologian was to appear until Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109) who, following Augustine, defended a Christian neoplatonic position. Anselm wrote on such topics as God, divine attributes, creation, knowledge, and will, but among philosophers, he will probably always be remembered for formulating what Kant later called the "ontological proof" for the existence of God.

Though the eleventh and twelfth centuries manifested varied philosophical and theological interests, there is a sense in which the problem of universals was the major issue of the period. Using as their basic text a passage from Porphyry's *Isagoge*, as transmitted and commented upon by Boethius (see page 100), philosophers inquired whether genera and species exist only in the mind or in reality; and if the latter, whether they exist in individual substances or in separation from them. In answer to this question a spectrum of positions developed, ranging from realists, who affirmed the independent existence of universals (in the manner of Platonic Ideas), to nominalists, who held that universals were mere names. These dialectical speculations, it should be noted, were not mere

logical exercises, but, in the absence of Aristotle's psychological and metaphysical writings, they became the only means for solving an important philosophical question.

The outstanding dialectician, and for that matter, the outstanding philosopher of the twelfth century was Peter Abelard who, in writings marked by logical subtlety, contributed to the discussion of the problem of universals, to ethics, and to the development of the scholastic method.

The twelfth century also saw a vital Platonic movement whose center was the school of Chartres. Characterized by a great admiration for the accomplishments of antiquity, Chartres became a great center of humanistic studies. But Chartres also manifested a marked interest in natural philosophy and science. Plato and Boethius were the major philosophical authorities used, but the writings of Hippocrates, of Galen, and of Arabic physical and medical authors were among the works studied. Though Aristotle was considered inferior to Plato, it was at Chartres that the "new logic" (see page 101) was first received and that Aristotle's physical writings made their first appearance. As was to be expected from the Platonic orientation of the school, its members defended the real existence of universals. Among the masters of Chartres and those who followed the spirit of the school are to be numbered Adelard of Bath, Thierry of Chartres, Clarenbaud of Arras, William of Conches, Gilbert de la Porrée, John of Salisbury, and, finally, Alan of Lille.

In bringing this review of early medieval Christian philosophy to a close, brief mention should be made of the mystical movement of the twelfth century. Bernard of Clairvaux, rejecting the speculations of Abelard and Gilbert de la Porrée, sought the good life in mystical experience and contemplation, desiring only "to know Jesus and Jesus crucified." At the same time, masters of the school of St. Victor attempted to fuse dialectical and mystical teachings.

# Augustine, 354–430

Augustine, the greatest of the Fathers of the Western Church, was the outstanding and most influential Christian Neoplatonist. His teachings dominated Christian thought until the rise of Aristotelianism in the early thirteenth century; he also influenced the Christian Aristotelians, and Augustinianism remained a major intellectual movement throughout the rest of the Middle Ages and beyond. Some of his doctrines had a formative influence on the development of modern philosophy (e.g., Descartes), and his theological views guided the Protestant reformers.

Like his personal life, so Augustine's writings were marked by a passionate quest for certain truth, giving to the theory of knowledge an important place in his thought. Well aware of the skeptical critique of perception, Augustine nevertheless affirms that we have some measure of reliable knowledge about the physical world. Perception for him is not simply the passive reception of sense impressions by bodily organs, but all sensations are combined with rational judgments of some kind. One object is perceived to be more beautiful than another by reference to some absolute standard of beauty, and one line is said to be straighter than another by reference to some absolute standard of straightness. "To sense," Augustine states in language having a Platonic ring, "does not belong to the body, but to the soul through the body." He also said that "the soul gives something of its own substance in forming the images of bodies," a position to which he was committed by his acceptance of the fundamental neoplatonic principle that the lower does not affect the higher.

Far more significant than knowledge of the physical world is knowledge of God and the human soul.

"God and the soul," Augustine writes, "that is what I desire to know. Nothing more? Nothing whatever." Man gains knowledge of God and his soul by looking inward, not by examining the outside world. Searching within, man finds that his own existence is a most certain truth. For even if, as the skeptics argue, I may be deceived when I think I know, I still must exist in order to be deceived. But not only my own existence is certain; it is equally certain that I am alive and that I understand.

Knowledge, in the true sense of the term, is knowledge of immutable Ideas, not knowledge of changing substances within the world. Accepting this Platonic notion, Augustine develops it in his own manner. The Ideas, he holds, do not exist in some "place" or intelligence of their own, but in the mind of God; and they are not known through recollection, but by divine illumination. But Augustine did not develop these doctrines fully in his works and, as a result, a variety of interpretations of his illuminationism arose.

No matter which interpretation one is inclined to follow, it is clear that Augustine has in mind knowledge that can be acquired by all men, not some mystical intuition produced by a special act of divine grace. Moreover, it appears that man knows the Ideas as separate from God. That is, it is not the case that man in knowing the Ideas knows the essence of God. Again, it does not seem to follow from Augustine's description that God infuses the Ideas directly into the human mind or that there exists within the mind an Agent Intellect such as Aquinas posits later on. As some historians have suggested, it is perhaps best to let Augustine's metaphor of illumination carry the burden of his argument. As sunlight makes perceptible

objects visible to the human eye, so divine illumination makes truths, and especially necessary truths, intelligible to the human mind. Illuminationism, it should be noted, became extremely important in the psychological and epistemological theories of later medieval times.

The search for truth finds its goal in God, who is Truth. As the source of truth, He is the internal teacher who, whenever man understands, teaches him the truth. For Augustine, God is the triune God of Christianity, who is best known through scripture and the teachings of the church. At the same time, the world and human nature contain evidence that He exists. Augustine offers a number of arguments for the existence of God, but they are more like guideposts directing the mind to God than demonstrations in the manner of Aristotelian proofs that a prime mover or first cause exists. Augustine uses arguments taken from the order apparent in the world and from "the agreement of all"; but by far his favorite seems to be the argument from truth. It is evident, this argument proceeds, that human beings know some truth. But it is also clear that human truth, being "yours" and "mine," is partial and changeable. Human truth thus points toward a Truth that is total and immutable, and this Truth is God.

God, for Augustine, is the highest being—perfect, eternal, and unchangeable. None of the Aristotelian categories apply to Him, and He is perhaps best described by propositions stating what He is not. But God is not the neoplatonic One causing the emanation of the world through the necessity of its own nature. Instead, He is the God of scripture who in his infinite goodness freely decided to create a world out of nothing. This world is good, manifesting measure, form, and order; and any evil appearing in it is the privation of some good, not the creation of some independent principle of evil. God created the world according to His wisdom, implanting within its matter "seminal reasons" (an adaptation of the Stoic *logoi spermatikoi*, which are germinal principles from which all things develop in the course of time).

The world is arranged according to number, which is the basis for the intelligibility of the natural order. This mathematical understanding of the world became one of the characteristic features of Augustinianism, contributing in some measure to the rise of

mathematical science. Within the natural world the highest being is man, whom God created as a unitary being. But Augustine frequently uses Platonic language in describing man as an immaterial soul inhering in a body, and he defines the soul as "a special substance, endowed with reason, adapted to rule a body." The man whom God created was endowed by Him with all human perfections, including a free will. No other doctrine is more central to Augustine's moral and political thought than that of human freedom and the concomitant doctrine of love. Rational judgments, to be sure, frequently influence human conduct, but human actions are determined by the free decision of the will and by the objects of love toward which the will is directed. Describing human nature as man's "weight," Augustine writes, "My weight is my love!" There are two primary objects of love for the human will. Man may direct his will toward God, in the possession of whom in love and understanding the greatest human happiness consists, or man may turn in pride toward himself and the world beneath him. In thus falling away from God, he does evil. It is not God who is the author of moral evil, but man himself. To guide man in his moral decisions, God instilled within him by a kind of moral illumination the immutable principles of the eternal law.

However, man existing in the here and now is not the perfect man created by God, but fallen man blemished by original sin. According to the Christian teaching on which Augustine's doctrine rests, Adam, the first man, sinned by disobeying God's command. As a result, his intellect was dimmed by ignorance, his will weakened by concupiscence, and he became subject to death. These blemishes were transmitted by heredity to the descendants of Adam, so that all men born after him were born with a defective nature. But God did not leave all mankind to eternal damnation. In His mercy, expressed in the Incarnation, God freely selected certain men to be saved. These theological doctrines modified Augustine's philosophical account of human freedom. Man, to be sure, retained his freedom of choice even after the Fall; but liberty, the ability not to sin, was gone. Only the grace of God can restore to man his original liberty; and it is the Christian's hope, according to Augustine, that those saved, though free, no longer will be able to sin.

A social nature was among the perfections granted by God to man, and this nature is retained in some measure even after the Fall. Hence, all men live in families and organize states for the attainment of tranquility and peace. But just as natural morality is inadequate for the attainment of ultimate human happiness, so is the temporal political state insufficient for bringing eternal peace. Like happiness, peace can only come through God's grace, even though temporary peace and partial justice can exist even in the pagan state. God's division of mankind into the saved and the damned brings about the existence of two realms or cities. The City of God consists of those who, manifesting love of God, are saved. The City of Man embraces those who, manifesting love of self, are damned. These two cities, it should be noted, are not to be confused with the church and states existing here and now.

Augustine was born in the small city of Tagaste in the province of Numidia (modern Tunisia) on November 13, 354. His father, Patricius, was a pagan; his mother, Monnica, a Christian. Augustine was reared as a Christian by his devout mother; but, in accordance with the custom of the times, he was not baptized as a child. Having received his early education in his native city and nearby Madaura, he went to study rhetoric at Carthage. This was in 370, the year his father died having previously become a Christian. Carthage was a metropolitan center, and there Augustine became acquainted with the many intellectual currents abroad. He soon forsook Christian teachings as illogical and barbaric and became a Manichean. Mani (215–279) had taught that the world is governed by the two principles of light, or good, and darkness, or evil. In these teachings Augustine found an answer to the problem of evil that was to trouble him much of his life. At Carthage he took a mistress with whom he had a son named Adeodatus (his interlocutor in *The Teacher*). Upon completion of his studies, Augustine returned for a short time to Tagaste and then settled in 374 in Carthage, where he opened a school of rhetoric. He immersed himself in the study of Manicheanism, but doubts began to grow in his mind. In 383 a Manichean bishop named Faustus came to Carthage; and when Faustus was unable to resolve those doubts, Augustine began to abandon Manicheanism. Shortly

thereafter we find Augustine in Rome, and then in Milan, at that time a more important center than Rome itself. In 384, Augustine was appointed municipal professor of rhetoric there, and was perhaps moving toward still higher office. During this period he finished with Manicheanism and was influenced by the skepticism of the New Academy. But he was not to remain a skeptic for long. In Milan he heard the sermons of Bishop Ambrose and began reading neoplatonic writings (among them some of Plotinus' *Enneads*), newly translated by Marius Victorinus. These studies taught him that true reality is spiritual, not material, as the Manicheans taught, and that evil is not an independent principle, but a lack of good. Though he admired the Neoplatonists, their doctrines did not satisfy his spiritual quest. Having read scripture, especially the writings of Paul, he gained the conviction that not philosophy, but only the grace of God can provide salvation for fallen man, a conviction that was strengthened through conversations with Simplicianus, an old priest, and Ponticianus. Augustine's spiritual crisis came to a head when after the famous scene in the garden when he heard a child's voice chant "take up and read, take up and read" (*Confessions* 8.12), he decided to become a Christian. On Holy Saturday of 386, after a year's retreat at Cassiciacum, he was baptized by Ambrose. He decided to return to Africa, but his mother's death at Ostia delayed the journey. The year 387 found Augustine in Tagaste, where he founded a small religious community with friends. In 391 he was ordained priest; in 395, auxiliary bishop; and in 396, when Valerius, the bishop of Hippo, died, Augustine was chosen to fill his place. Teacher, philosopher, and theologian until then, Augustine now became pastor of his flock, a task calling for the administration of educational and even judicial functions in addition to religious responsibilities. As bishop he also fought incessantly against heretics, denouncing their doctrines in numerous writings and securing their condemnations by church councils. Among these were the dualistic Manicheans, the Pelagians, who placed insufficient emphasis on divine grace in human salvation, and the Donatists, who held that only a priest free of sin was fit to administer the sacraments. Augustine died on August 28, 430, while the Vandals were at the gates of Hippo.

Augustine was an unusually productive writer who left behind a veritable library of works. He wrote out of the depths of his spiritual struggles and the exaltations of his spiritual victories. M. C. D'Arcy put it well when he stated that Augustine had the power "of making what is intensely personal pass into the universal." His writings abound in biblical citations and references and allusions to Latin literature, and his rhetorical training shines through every page of his works. Even those who do not share his religious fervor respond to his eloquence in the *Confessions*, a work that has become a classic of world literature. Though he did some writing during the teaching years at Carthage, Augustine's literary career began during the retreat at Cassiciacum. During that year (385–386) he wrote his attack on the academic skeptics, *Against the Academics* (*Contra Academicos*), *On the Happy Life* (*De beata vita*), and *On Order* (*De ordine*). Within the short space of two years (386–388) there followed *On the Immortality of the Soul* (*De immortalitate animae*), *Soliloquies*, *On Free Choice of the Will* (*De libero arbitrio voluntatis*), and *On the Quantity of the Soul* (*De quantitate animae*). Between his return to Africa and his ordination as priest (388–391) he wrote *The Teacher* (*De magistro*) and *On the True Religion* (*De vera religione*), and he completed *On Music* (*De musica*). Most of Augustine's major works were written after his ordination as bishop. Between that time and his death he wrote *On Christian Doctrine* (*De doctrina Christiana*), *Confessions*, *On Nature and Grace* (*De natura et gratia*), *On the Trinity* (*De Trinitate*), *On the Soul and Its Origin* (*De anima et eius origine*), *The City of God* (*De civitate Dei*), and the *Enchiridion*. Of special interest are his two books of *Reconsiderations*

(*Retractationes*), which contain Augustine's critical review of his writings and are important for fixing the chronology of his works. To this impressive list must be added his numerous shorter works, his biblical commentaries, his sermons, and his letters.

The following selections aim at presenting a cross section of Augustine's views. The first, *The Teacher*, contains his account of signification and one of the statements of his doctrine of illumination. The second selection, from *On Free Choice of the Will*, deals with his theory of knowledge and his early doctrine of the will. Of special interest in it are his proof of the existence of God from truth and his account of the relation of divine foreknowledge to the freedom of the human will. This selection is neatly balanced by one from the *Reconsiderations* in which he attempts to rebut the claim of the Pelagians that the views he expressed in *On Free Choice of the Will* put him on their side. After a brief passage from *On the Trinity* in which Augustine makes his case against skepticism, there are three selections from the *Confessions*. In the first, Augustine recounts his theft of some pears, an act he finds worth discussing not because it was particularly wicked but because it was particularly puzzling. In the second, Augustine tells of his encounter with Platonism and reflects on the nature of good and evil. The third selection from the *Confessions* contains a brief account of creation and, after that, his famous discussion of the nature of time. Finally, selections from *The City of God* contain some of the major aspects of his ethical and political doctrines. Marcus Varro (116–27 B.C.), who is mentioned in these selections, composed a treatise *On Philosophy*, now lost; Book 19 of *The City of God* is our only source of information about that work.

# 1. The Teacher<sup>1</sup>

## [The Purpose of Language]

[1.1] AUGUSTINE. When we speak, what does it seem to you we want to accomplish?

ADEODATUS. So far as it now strikes me, either to teach or to learn.

AUGUSTINE. I see one of these points and I agree with it, for it's clear that by speaking we want to teach. But to learn? How?

ADEODATUS. How do you suppose we learn, after all, if not when we ask questions?

AUGUSTINE. Even then I think that we want only to teach. I ask you: do you question someone for any reason other than to teach him what you want [to hear]?

ADEODATUS. You're right.

AUGUSTINE. So now you see that we seek nothing by speaking except to teach.

ADEODATUS. I don't see it clearly. If speaking is nothing but uttering words, I see that we do this when we're singing. Given that we often sing while we're

alone, without anyone present who might learn, I don't think we want to teach anything.

AUGUSTINE. Well, for my part I think there is a certain kind of teaching through reminding—a very important kind, as our discussion will itself bring out. Yet if you don't hold that we learn when we remember or that the person who reminds us is teaching, I won't oppose you. I now stipulate two reasons for speaking: to teach or to remind either others or ourselves. We do this even when we're singing. Doesn't it seem so to you?

ADEODATUS. Not exactly. I would seldom sing to remind myself; I do it only to please myself.

AUGUSTINE. I see what you mean. But aren't you aware that what pleases you in a song is its melody? Since this melody can be either added to or taken away from the words, speaking is one thing and singing is another. There are [musical] songs on flutes or on the guitar, and birds sing, and we occasionally make some musical sound without words. This sound can be called 'singing' but can't be called 'speaking.' Is there anything here you would object to?

ADEODATUS. Nothing at all.

[1.2] AUGUSTINE. Then doesn't it seem to you that speaking is undertaken only for the sake of teaching or reminding?

ADEODATUS. It would seem so were I not troubled by the fact that we certainly speak while we're praying, and yet it isn't right to believe that we teach God or remind Him of anything.

AUGUSTINE. I dare say you don't know that we are instructed to pray "in closed chambers"<sup>2</sup>—a phrase that signifies the inner recesses of the mind—precisely because God does not seek to be taught or reminded by our speaking in order to provide us what we want. Anyone who speaks gives an external sign of his will by means of an articulated sound.<sup>3</sup> Yet God is to be

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From Augustine, "Against the Academicians" and "The Teacher," tr. Peter King (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1995). Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

1. Augustine, *Reconsiderations* 1.12: "I wrote a work entitled *The Teacher* [in 389]. There it is debated, sought, and found that there is no teacher giving knowledge to man other than God. This is also in accordance with what is written by the Evangelist: *Your teacher, Christ, is unique* (Matt. 23:10)." The brevity of Augustine's entry is remarkable. In *Confessions* 9.6.14 he writes: "In our book entitled *The Teacher*, [Adeodatus] there speaks with me. You, Lord, know that all the thoughts put in there in the person of my interlocutor were his, though he was only sixteen years old. I have experienced many more wonderful things in him at other times: I was in awe of his talents." This suggests that Augustine's love for his dead son may have prevented him from making any revisions to *The Teacher*.

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2. Matt. 6:6.

3. As a technical definition of speaking, a necessary condition is that an utterance be produced which is literally

sought and entreated in the hidden parts of the rational soul, which is called the ‘inner man’; for He wanted those parts to be His temples. Have you not read in the Apostle:<sup>4</sup>

Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells within you?

and:<sup>5</sup>

Christ dwells in the inner man.

Didn’t you notice in the Prophet:<sup>6</sup>

Speak in your hearts and be stricken in your bedchambers; offer up the sacrifice of justice, and hope in the Lord.

Where do you think the “sacrifice of justice” is offered up but in the temple of the mind and in the bedchambers of the heart? What is more, one should pray where one should sacrifice. There is accordingly no need for speaking when we pray. That is, there is no need for spoken words—except perhaps to speak as priests do, for the sake of signifying what is in their minds: not that God might hear, but that men might do so and by remembering might, with one accord, be raised to God. Do you hold otherwise?

ADEODATUS. I agree completely.

AUGUSTINE. Then doesn’t it trouble you that when the supreme Teacher was teaching His disciples to pray, He taught them certain words?<sup>7</sup> In so doing,

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‘articulated’—expelled air intentionally modulated by the muscles of the larynx, palate, tongue, and the like. This sets speaking apart from involuntary sounds, such as snoring or cries of pain; see *On Christian Doctrine* 2.1.2. Articulated sounds are ‘external signs’ of something internal, namely, the will. Much of the rest of *The Teacher* is devoted to exploring how a given sound can be a sign.

4. 1 Cor. 3:16.

5. Eph. 3:16–17.

6. Pss. 4:5–6 (Vulgate) = 4:4–5 (RSV).

7. The Lord’s Prayer: Matt. 6:9–13 and Luke 11:2–4.

what He seems to have done is precisely to have taught them how we ought to speak when we pray.<sup>8</sup>

ADEODATUS. Nothing at all troubles me on that score. He taught them not the words but the things themselves by means of the words. With these words they remind themselves of Whom they should pray to and of what they should pray for, since they would be praying in the inner recesses of the mind, as mentioned [1.2].

AUGUSTINE. You understand this correctly. Someone might object that, although we don’t produce any sound, nonetheless we do ‘speak’ internally in the mind, since we think these very words. Yet I believe you’re also aware that in ‘speaking’ in this way we do nothing but remind ourselves, since by repeating the words our memory, in which the words inhere, makes the very things of which the words are signs come to mind.

ADEODATUS. I understand, and I go along with this.

### [The Nature of Signs]

[2.3] AUGUSTINE. Then we are in agreement: words are signs.

ADEODATUS. Yes.

AUGUSTINE. Well, can a sign be a sign if it doesn’t signify anything?

ADEODATUS. It can’t.

AUGUSTINE. Consider this line of verse:<sup>9</sup>

If nothing from so great a city it pleases the gods  
be left . . .

How many words are there?

ADEODATUS. Thirteen.

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8. Augustine discusses this extensively in his *Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount* 2.3.10–14.

9. Virgil, *Aeneid* 2.659: *Si nihil ex tanta superis placet urbe relinqui*, spoken by Aeneas to his father, Anchises, in reference to the imminent destruction of Troy. Adeodatus takes up the first three words in order, namely, *si* (‘if’), *nihil* (‘nothing’), and *ex* (‘from’).

AUGUSTINE. Then there are thirteen signs?  
 ADEODATUS. Yes.  
 AUGUSTINE. I believe you understand this line of verse.

ADEODATUS. Quite well, I think.  
 AUGUSTINE. Tell me what each word signifies.  
 ADEODATUS. Well, I do see what 'if' signifies, but I don't know any other word by which it can be explained.  
 AUGUSTINE. At least you know where anything signified by this word would be.

ADEODATUS. It seems to me that 'if' signifies doubt. Now where is doubt but in the mind?  
 AUGUSTINE. I accept that for now. Continue with the other words.

ADEODATUS. What else does 'nothing' signify except that which doesn't exist?  
 AUGUSTINE. Perhaps you're right, but I'm hesitant to agree with you, because you granted above that there is no sign unless it signifies something [2.3]. Yet what does not exist can't in any way be something. Accordingly, the second word in this line of verse isn't a sign, because it doesn't signify anything. So we were wrong to agree either that all words are signs or that every sign signifies something.

ADEODATUS. You're really pushing too hard. It's stupid to utter a word when we don't have anything to signify. Yet in speaking with me now I believe you yourself aren't making a sound pointlessly. Instead, you're giving a sign to me with everything that comes out of your mouth, so that I may understand something. Thus you shouldn't enunciate those two syllables [*no-thing*'] when you speak if you don't signify anything with them! If you see that they are necessary for producing an enunciation, and that we are taught or reminded when they strike the ears, then surely you also see what I want to say but can't explain.

AUGUSTINE. What then are we to do? Given that one doesn't see a thing and furthermore finds (or thinks oneself to have found) that it doesn't exist, shall we not say that this word ['nothing'] signifies a certain state of mind rather than the very thing that is nothing?

ADEODATUS. Perhaps this is the very point I was trying to explain.

AUGUSTINE. Then be the matter as it may, let us move on from here so that the most absurd thing of all doesn't happen to us.

ADEODATUS. Which is?  
 AUGUSTINE. If *nothing* holds us back, and we suffer delays!

ADEODATUS. This is ridiculous, and yet somehow I see that it can happen—or rather, I clearly see that it has happened.

[2.4] AUGUSTINE. We shall understand this kind of difficulty more clearly in due order, God willing.<sup>10</sup> Now return to that line of verse and try to explain, as best you can, what the other words in it signify.

ADEODATUS. The third word is the preposition 'from,' for which I think we can say 'out of.'

AUGUSTINE. I'm not looking for this, that in place of one familiar word you say another equally familiar word that signifies the same thing—if really it does signify the same thing; but for now let us grant that this is so. Surely if the poet had said 'out of so great a city' instead of 'from so great a city' and I were to ask you what 'out of' signifies, you would say 'from,' since these words ['from' and 'out of']—that is, these signs—do signify some one thing, as you think. I'm asking for that one thing itself, whatever it is, that is signified by these two signs.

ADEODATUS. It seems to me that they signify some kind of separation with regard to a thing in which something had been. This ['something'] is said to be "from" that thing, whether that thing (a) does not continue to exist, as for example in this line of verse some Trojans were able to be "from" the city when it no longer existed; or it (b) continues to exist, as we say that there are traders in Africa "from" the city of Rome.

AUGUSTINE. Even supposing that I grant you these claims and do not enumerate how many exceptions to your rule may perhaps be discovered, surely it's easy for you to notice that you have explained words by means of words. That is to say, you have explained signs by means of signs and familiar things by the same familiar things. I would like you to show me the very things of which these words are the signs, if you can.

[3.5] ADEODATUS. I'm surprised that you don't know, or that you're pretending not to know, that what you

10. See 8.22–8.24 below, where Augustine discusses the autonomous and referential use of signs.

want can't be done in my answer while we're engaged in discussion, where we can only answer with words. Furthermore, you're asking about things that, whatever they may be, surely aren't words—and yet you're also asking me about them with words! First raise the question without words, so that I may then answer under that stipulation of yours.

AUGUSTINE. You're within your rights, I admit. But if when one says 'wall' I were to ask what this one-syllable<sup>11</sup> word signifies, couldn't you show me with your finger? Then when you pointed it out I would straightaway see the very thing of which this one-syllable word is a sign, although you used no words.

ADEODATUS. I grant that this can happen only in the case of names that signify bodies, so long as the bodies themselves are present.

AUGUSTINE. Do we call color a body? Don't we instead call it a quality of a body?

ADEODATUS. That's true.

AUGUSTINE. Then why can this too be pointed out with a finger? Are you also adding the qualities of bodies to bodies [in your proposal], so that those qualities too, when they are present, may nonetheless be taught without words?

ADEODATUS. Well, although I said 'bodies,' I wanted all corporeal things—that is, all the things sensed in bodies—to be understood [in my proposal].

AUGUSTINE. Consider whether you should make some exceptions even to this claim.

ADEODATUS. Your warning is a good one! I should have said 'all *visible* things' rather than 'all *corporeal* things.' I admit that sound, smell, flavor, weight, heat, and other things that pertain to the rest of the senses, despite the fact that they can't be sensed without bodies and consequently are corporeal, nevertheless can't be exhibited through [pointing] a finger.

AUGUSTINE. Haven't you ever seen that men "converse" with deaf people by gesturing? That deaf people themselves, no less by gesturing, raise and answer questions, teach, and indicate all the things they want, or at

least most of them? When this happens, they show us without words not only visible things, but also sounds and flavors and other things of this sort. Even actors in the theaters unfold and set forth entire stories without words—for the most part, by pantomime.

ADEODATUS. I have nothing to say against this, except that neither I nor even that pantomiming actor could show you without words what 'from' signifies.

[3.6] AUGUSTINE. Perhaps you're right, but let's imagine that he can. You do not doubt, I suppose, that any bodily movement he uses to try to point out to me the thing signified by the word ['from'] isn't going to be the thing itself but a sign [of the thing]. Accordingly, he too won't indicate a word with a word. He'll nonetheless still indicate a sign with a sign. The result is that this syllable 'from' and his gesture signify some one thing, which I should like to be exhibited for me without signifying.

ADEODATUS. Who can do what you're asking, pray tell?

AUGUSTINE. In the way in which the wall could [be exhibited].

ADEODATUS. Not even [the wall] can be shown without a sign, as our developing argument has taught us. Aiming a finger is certainly not the wall. Instead, through aiming a finger a sign is given by means of which the wall may be seen. I see nothing, therefore, that can be shown without signs.

AUGUSTINE. What if I should ask you what walking is, and you were then to get up and do it? Wouldn't you be using the thing itself to teach me, rather than using words or any other signs?

ADEODATUS. I admit that this is the case. I'm embarrassed not to have seen a point so obvious. On this basis, too, thousands of things now occur to me that can be exhibited through themselves rather than through signs: for example, eating, drinking, sitting, standing, shouting, and countless others.

AUGUSTINE. Now do this: tell me—if I were completely ignorant of the meaning of the word ['walking'] and were to ask you what walking is while you were walking, how would you teach me?

ADEODATUS. I would do it a little bit more quickly, so that after your question you would be prompted by something novel [in my behavior], and yet nothing would take place other than what was to be shown.

11. Literally, 'these three syllables,' referring to the syllables *par-i-es* of *paries* ('wall'). Here and elsewhere the number of syllables of Latin terms has been altered to fit the English translation.

AUGUSTINE. Don't you know that *walking* is one thing and *hurrying* another? A person who is walking doesn't necessarily hurry, and a person who is hurrying doesn't necessarily walk. We speak of 'hurrying' in writing and in reading and in countless other matters. Hence given that after my question you kept on doing what you were doing, [only] faster, I might have thought walking was precisely hurrying—for you added that as something new—and for that reason I would have been misled.

ADEODATUS. I admit that we can't exhibit a thing without a sign if we should be questioned while we are doing it. If we add nothing [to our behavior], the person who raises the question will think that we don't want to show him and that we are persisting in what we were doing while paying no heed to him. Yet if he should ask about things we can do, but when we aren't doing them, after his question we can point out what he's asking about by doing the action itself rather than by a sign. (That is, unless he should happen to ask me what speaking is while I'm speaking, namely because no matter what I say I must be speaking to teach him.) In this way I'll confidently teach him, until I make clear to him what he wants, neither getting away from the thing itself that he wanted to be pointed out nor casting about beyond the thing itself for signs with which I might show it.

[4.7] AUGUSTINE. Very acute. See then whether we're now in agreement that the following things can be pointed out without signs: (a) things we aren't doing when we are asked [about them] and yet can do on the spot; (b) the very signs we happen to be 'doing' [when asked about them], just as when we speak we are making signs (and [the word] 'signifying' is derived from this [activity]).<sup>12</sup>

ADEODATUS. Agreed.

12. "And [the word] 'signifying' is derived from this [activity]: *de quo dictum est significare*, literally, "from which signifying is so called." That is, the word 'signifying' (*significare*) is derived from the activity of making signs (*signa facere*).

## [Fundamental Division of Signs]

AUGUSTINE. Thus [1] when a question is raised about certain signs, these signs can be exhibited by means of signs. Yet [2] when a question is raised about things that aren't signs, [these things can be exhibited] either [(a)] by doing them after the query [has been made], if they can be done, or [(b)] by giving signs with which they may be brought to one's attention.

ADEODATUS. That's right.

## [Discussion of Division [1]]

AUGUSTINE. Then in this threefold classification let us consider first, if you don't mind, the case in which signs are exhibited by means of signs. Are words the only signs?

ADEODATUS. No.

AUGUSTINE. Then it seems to me that in speaking we designate with words either (a) words themselves or other signs, such as when we say '*gesture*' or '*letter*,' for what these two words signify are nonetheless signs; or (b) something else that isn't a sign, such as when we say '*stone*'—this word is a sign because it signifies something, but what it signifies isn't necessarily a sign. Yet the latter kind of case, namely when words signify things that aren't signs, isn't relevant to the part [of the threefold classification] we proposed to discuss. We have undertaken to consider the case in which signs are exhibited by means of signs, and in it we have discovered two subdivisions, since with signs we teach or remind someone of either the same signs or other signs. Doesn't it seem so to you?

ADEODATUS. That's obvious.

[4.8] AUGUSTINE. Then tell me to which sense the signs that are words are relevant.

ADEODATUS. Hearing.

AUGUSTINE. What about gestures?

ADEODATUS. Sight.

AUGUSTINE. Well, when we come upon written words, aren't they understood more accurately as *signs* of words than as words? After all, a word is that which is uttered by means of an articulated sound accompanied by some significate. A sound, however, can be perceived by no sense other than hearing. Thus it is

that when a word is written, a sign is produced for the eyes, and by means of this [inscription] something that strictly pertains to the ears comes into the mind.

ADEODATUS. I agree completely.

AUGUSTINE. I think you also agree that when we say ‘name’ we signify something.

ADEODATUS. That’s true.

AUGUSTINE. What then?

ADEODATUS. Obviously, what each thing is called; for example, ‘Romulus,’ ‘Rome,’ ‘virtue,’ ‘river,’ and countless others.

AUGUSTINE. Do these four names signify nothing?

ADEODATUS. No, they each signify something.

AUGUSTINE. Is there any difference between these names and the things signified by them?

ADEODATUS. There is a great difference.

AUGUSTINE. I should like to hear from you what it is.

ADEODATUS. Well, in the first place, the fact that the former are signs whereas the latter are not.

AUGUSTINE. Do you mind if we call things that can be signified by signs and yet aren’t signs ‘signifiable,’ as we call things that can be seen ‘visible,’ so that we may discuss these things more easily from now on?

ADEODATUS. Not at all.

AUGUSTINE. Well, those four signs you cited a little earlier [4.8]—[‘Romulus,’ ‘Rome,’ ‘virtue,’ ‘river’]—aren’t they signified by any other signs?

ADEODATUS. I’m surprised you think I have already forgotten that we found written [inscriptions] to be signs of spoken signs [4.8].

AUGUSTINE. Tell me what the difference between them is.

ADEODATUS. That the former are visible whereas the latter are ‘audible’—why don’t you also allow this name, given that we allowed ‘signifiable’?<sup>13</sup>

AUGUSTINE. I do allow it, and I’m grateful [for the suggestion]. Yet I ask again: can’t these four signs be signified by another audible sign, just as the visible signs you remembered?

13. Adeodatus proposes coining the term ‘audible’ (*audibile*), on a par with Augustine’s earlier coinage ‘signifiable.’ See Ambrose, *Noah* 15.52: “Sight sees the visible and the listener hears the audible.”

ADEODATUS. I remember that this too was mentioned recently. I had answered that ‘name’ signifies something and put these four names under its signification [4.8]. Furthermore, I know that both the former and the latter, if they are actually uttered by a sound, are audible.

AUGUSTINE. Then what’s the difference between an audible sign and audible significates that in turn are signs?

ADEODATUS. I see this difference between what we call a ‘name’ and these four names that we put under its signification. The former is an audible sign of audible signs. The latter are audible signs, but not of signs: some are audible signs of visible things (such as Romulus, Rome, and a river) and others are audible signs of intelligible things (such as virtue).

[4.9] AUGUSTINE. I accept and approve [your distinction]. Yet do you know that all things that are uttered by an articulated sound accompanied by some significate are called ‘words’?

ADEODATUS. I do.

AUGUSTINE. Then a name is also a word whenever we see that it is uttered by an articulated sound accompanied by some significate. When we say that an eloquent man employs ‘good words,’ he surely is also employing names; when the slave in Terence replied to his aged master:<sup>14</sup>

Good words, if you please!

the latter had also spoken many names.

ADEODATUS. I agree.

AUGUSTINE. Then you grant that with the one syllable we utter when we say ‘word’ a name is signified as well, and so the former [‘word’] is a sign of the latter [‘name’].

ADEODATUS. I do grant this.

AUGUSTINE. I would like your answer on this point as well. ‘Word’ is a sign of ‘name’ and ‘name’ is a sign of ‘river,’ and ‘river’ is a sign of a thing that can

14. Terence, *The Lady of Andros* 204. Davos uses the formula *bona verba quaeso* ironically to his master Simo, who is angrily threatening him with dire punishments and calling him names.

be seen. You have already said what the difference is between this thing [the river] and ‘river’ (the sign of [the river]). [You have also said what the difference is] between the sign [‘river’] and ‘name,’ which is the sign of the sign [‘river’]. Now what do you suppose is the difference between the sign of a name—which we found to be ‘word’—and ‘name’ itself, of which [‘word’] is the sign?<sup>15</sup>

ADEODATUS. I understand this to be the difference [between words and names]. On the one hand, things signified by ‘name’ are also signified by ‘word.’ A name is a word, and thus [the name] ‘river’ is a word. On the other hand, not all the things signified by ‘word’ are also signified by ‘name.’ The ‘if’ at the very beginning of the line of verse you mentioned, and the ‘from’—we’ve come upon these matters after our lengthy discussion of the [‘from’], guided by the argument—[the ‘if’ and ‘from’] are both words, but they aren’t names. Many such cases are found. Consequently, since all names are words but not all words are names, I think it’s obvious what the difference between ‘word’ and ‘name’ is—namely, [the difference] between the sign of a sign that signifies no other signs, and the sign of a sign that in turn signifies other signs.

AUGUSTINE. Don’t you grant that every horse is an animal, but that not every animal is a horse?

ADEODATUS. Who will doubt it?

AUGUSTINE. Then the difference between a name and a word is the same as the difference between a horse and an animal. Yet perhaps you’re kept from agreeing by the fact that we also say ‘word’ [*verbum*]<sup>16</sup>

15. This paragraph involves several ambiguities, including some (deliberate?) confusion of use and mention, that are difficult to preserve in translation. Augustine considers three cases: (i) ‘word’ signifies names, perhaps among other things; (ii) ‘name’ signifies the particular name ‘river,’ among other things; (iii) the particular name ‘river’ signifies this very river; e.g., the Nile, among other rivers. Now Adeodatus has already explained (iii) and (ii): names are not to be confused with what they name, and a particular name is picked out by the general term ‘name.’ Therefore Augustine is asking Adeodatus about (i), that is, about the difference between words and names.

16. The single Latin term *verbum* does duty for both English terms ‘word’ and ‘verb.’

in another way, one in which it signifies things inflected by tenses, as for example ‘I write, I have written’ and ‘I read, I have read’: these are clearly not names.

ADEODATUS. You have said precisely what was making me doubtful.

AUGUSTINE. Don’t be troubled on that score. We do generally call ‘signs’ all those things that signify something—the condition we also found words to be in. Again, we speak of ‘military banners’ [*signa militaria*]<sup>17</sup> that are then named ‘signs’ in the strict sense, a condition to which words do not pertain. Yet if I were to say to you that just as every horse is an animal but not every animal is a horse, so too every word is a sign but not every sign is a word, I think you wouldn’t hesitate to agree.

ADEODATUS. Now I understand. I agree completely that the difference between *word* in general and *name* is the same as the difference between *animal* and *horse*.

[4.10] AUGUSTINE. Do you also know that when we say ‘*an-i-mal*,’ this three-syllable name uttered by the voice is one thing and what it signifies is another?

ADEODATUS. I have already granted this point for all signs and all things that are signifiable.

AUGUSTINE. Now it doesn’t seem to you that all signs signify something other than what they are, does it? For example, when we say ‘*an-i-mal*,’ this three-syllable word in no way signifies the very thing that it itself is.

ADEODATUS. Not exactly. When we say ‘*sign*,’ not only does it signify the other signs, whatever they are, it also signifies itself, for it is a word, and certainly all words are signs.

AUGUSTINE. Well, when we say ‘*word*,’ doesn’t something of the sort happen in the case of this monosyllable? If everything that is uttered by an articulated sound accompanied by some significate is signified by this monosyllable [‘*word*’], then [‘*word*’] itself is included in this class.

ADEODATUS. That’s true.

AUGUSTINE. Well, isn’t it likewise for ‘*name*’? For [‘*name*’] signifies names of all classes, and ‘*name*’ it-

17. The Latin term *signum* may refer to a banner or standard, as well as having the more general sense ‘sign.’

self is a name of neuter gender.<sup>18</sup> Alternatively, if I should ask you what part of speech a name is, could you answer anything but ‘name’ correctly?

ADEODATUS. You’re right.

AUGUSTINE. Then there are signs that also signify themselves with the other things they signify.

ADEODATUS. Yes.

AUGUSTINE. Surely you don’t think that when we say ‘*con-junc-tion*’ this three-syllable sign is this kind of sign, do you?

ADEODATUS. Not at all, because while [‘conjunction’] is a name, the things it signifies aren’t names.

[5.11] AUGUSTINE. You have been properly attentive. Now see whether we find [two] signs that signify each other mutually, such that the former signifies the latter, while at the same time the latter signifies the former. This three-syllable word (when we say ‘*con-junc-tion*’) and the words signified by [‘conjunction’] (when we say ‘*if*,’ ‘*or*,’ ‘*for*,’ ‘*surely*,’ ‘*unless*,’ ‘*therefore*,’ ‘*since*,’ and similar words) are not related to one another in this way. The reason for this is that these words are signified by that one three-syllable word [‘*con-junc-tion*’], although it isn’t signified by any of them.

ADEODATUS. I see, but I want to know which signs do signify each other mutually.

AUGUSTINE. Then don’t you know that when we say ‘*name*’ and ‘*word*’ we are saying two words?

ADEODATUS. I know that.

AUGUSTINE. Well, don’t you know that when we say ‘*name*’ and ‘*word*’ we are saying two names?

ADEODATUS. I know that too.

AUGUSTINE. Then you know that ‘*name*’ is signified by ‘*word*’ as well as ‘*word*’ by ‘*name*.’

ADEODATUS. I agree.

AUGUSTINE. Can you say what the difference between them is, apart from the fact that they are written and pronounced differently?

ADEODATUS. Perhaps I can, for I see that it’s what I said a little while ago. When we say ‘*words*,’ we sig-

nify everything that is uttered by an articulated sound accompanied by some significate. Accordingly, every name—and when we say ‘*name*,’ that too—is a word. Yet not every word is a name, although when we say ‘*word*’ it is a name.

[5.12] AUGUSTINE. Well, if anyone should say to you and prove that just as every name is a word, so too every word is a name, will you be able to discover in what respect they differ, apart from the differing sound of the letters?

ADEODATUS. No. I don’t think they differ in any respect at all.

AUGUSTINE. Well, if all things uttered by an articulated sound accompanied by some significate are both words and names, but are words for one reason and names for another reason, will a name and a word differ at all?

ADEODATUS. I don’t understand how that could be.

AUGUSTINE. At least you understand this: everything colored is visible and everything visible is colored, even though these two words [‘colored’ and ‘visible’] signify distinctly and differently.

ADEODATUS. I do understand this.

AUGUSTINE. Then what if every word is a name and every name is a word in this fashion, even though these two names or two words themselves—‘*name*’ and ‘*word*’—have a different signification?

ADEODATUS. Now I see that this can happen. I’m waiting for you to show me how it happens.

AUGUSTINE. You observe, I think, that everything expressed by an articulated sound accompanied by some significate (i) strikes the ear so that it can be perceived, and (ii) is committed to memory so that it can be known.

ADEODATUS. I do.

AUGUSTINE. Then these two things happen when we utter something by such a sound.

ADEODATUS. Yes.

AUGUSTINE. What if words are so called because of one of these and names are so called because of the other—‘*words*’ from striking [the ear] and ‘*names*’ from knowing<sup>19</sup>—so that the former deserve to be

18. This translation depends on taking *genus* in two distinct ways: as ‘kind’ or ‘class,’ and as the gender of the name. If we insist on a uniform reading, the latter part of the sentence might be translated: “and ‘name’ is a name of neither class [i.e., neither *word* nor *sign*].”

19. The false etymological connection proposed here may seem more plausible in Latin: words (*verba*) are so

called after the ears, whereas the latter deserve to be called after the mind?

[5.13] ADEODATUS. I'll grant this once you have shown me how we can correctly call all words 'names.'

AUGUSTINE. That's easy. I believe you have accepted and do maintain that what can take the place of a name is called a 'pronoun,'<sup>20</sup> although it marks out a thing with a less complete signification than a name does. The person whom you paid to be your grammar teacher, I believe, defined it as follows: a pronoun is that part of speech which, when put in place of a name, signifies the same object but less completely.

ADEODATUS. I remember this, and approve of it.

AUGUSTINE. Then you see that according to this definition pronouns can only serve in place of names and can be put only in the place of names. For example, we say "this man," "the king himself," "the same woman," "this gold," "that silver." Now 'this,' 'himself,' 'the same,' and 'that' are pronouns;<sup>21</sup> 'man,' 'king,' 'woman,' 'gold,' and 'silver' are names. Things are signified more completely by these [names] than by the pronouns.

ADEODATUS. I see and agree with you.

AUGUSTINE. Now then: enunciate a few conjunctions for me—whichever you like.

ADEODATUS. 'And,' 'too,' 'but,' 'also.'

AUGUSTINE. Doesn't it seem to you that all these you have mentioned are names?

ADEODATUS. Not at all.

AUGUSTINE. Doesn't it seem to you that I spoke correctly when I said, "all these you have mentioned"?

ADEODATUS. Quite correctly. Now I understand how surprisingly you have shown me to have enunciated names, for otherwise 'all these' could not have been said of them correctly.

Yet I still suspect that the reason it seems to me that you spoke correctly is as follows. I don't deny that these four conjunctions are also words. Hence 'all these'

may be correctly said of them, because 'all these words' is correctly said of them. Now if you should ask me what part of speech 'words' is, I'll answer that it's only a name. Thus perhaps the pronoun ['these'] was [implicitly] attached to this name ['words'], so that your locution ['all these (words)'] was correct.

[5.14] AUGUSTINE. Your mistake is subtle. Pay closer attention to what I say so that you may stop being mistaken—at least, if I should be able to say it as I wish; for discussing words with words is as entangled as interlocking one's fingers and rubbing them together, where hardly anyone but the person doing it can distinguish the fingers that itch from the fingers scratching the itch.

ADEODATUS. Well, I'm paying close attention, for your analogy has aroused my interest.

AUGUSTINE. Words surely consist of sound and letters.

ADEODATUS. Yes.

AUGUSTINE. Then, to employ in the best way the authority most dear to us, when the Apostle Paul says:<sup>22</sup>

In Christ there was not Yea and Nay, but in Him was Yea,

I don't suppose it should be thought that when we say 'Yea' these three letters [y-e-a] we enunciate were in Christ, but what is signified by them.

ADEODATUS. You're right.

AUGUSTINE. Then you understand that a person who says "in Him was Yea" only said that what we call 'Yea' was in Him. In the same way, if he had said "in Him was virtue," he certainly would be taken to have only said that what we call 'virtue' was in Him, nor

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called from striking the ear (*verberando*), and names (*nomina*) are so called from knowing (*noscendo*).

20. A pronoun (*pronomen*) is what can take the place of a name (*nomen*), which is why it is so called (*pro-nomen*).

21. That is, they are pronouns when used by themselves. In 'this man,' 'this' is an adjective.

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22. 2 Cor. 1:19. The Greek text has: *Nai kai Oū*, which means "Yea or Nay." Yet there is no straightforward way to say "yes" in Latin; locutions saying that something is the case were typically used instead—*sic, est, ita*. Various translators used the standard substitute, "It is so" (*est*), which can also simply be translated "is." Thus the Latin text reads "There was not in Christ *is* and *is not*, but in Him was *is* only." That is why Augustine argues later that it has the dual force of both verb (as 'is') and name (as 'yes').

should we think that these two syllables we enunciate when we say ‘*vir-tue*’ were in Him rather than what is signified by these two syllables.

ADEODATUS. I understand, and I follow you.

AUGUSTINE. Don’t you also understand that it makes no difference whether anyone says “it is called ‘virtue’” and “it is named ‘virtue’”?

ADEODATUS. That’s obvious.

AUGUSTINE. Then it’s obvious that it makes no difference whether one says “what is called ‘Yea’ was in Him” and “what is named ‘Yea’ was in Him.”

ADEODATUS. I see that this too makes no difference.

AUGUSTINE. Now do you see what I want to show you?

ADEODATUS. Not quite yet.

AUGUSTINE. Really? Don’t you see that a name is that by which a thing is named?

ADEODATUS. I see clearly that nothing is more certain than this!

AUGUSTINE. Then you see that ‘Yea’ is a name, given that what was in Christ is named ‘Yea.’

ADEODATUS. I can’t deny it.

AUGUSTINE. Well, if I should ask you what part of speech ‘Yea’ (*est*) is, I think you would say that it isn’t a name but a verb, although the argument has taught us that it is also a name.<sup>23</sup>

ADEODATUS. It’s exactly as you say.

AUGUSTINE. Do you still doubt that other parts of speech are also names in the same way in which we have demonstrated [a verb to be a name]?

ADEODATUS. I don’t doubt it, insofar as I admit they signify something. Now if you should inquire what each of the things they signify is called (i.e., what they are named), I can only reply that they are the very parts of speech we do not call ‘names’—but I see we’re proven to be wrong [with this answer].

[5.15] AUGUSTINE. Aren’t you at all troubled that there might be someone who would make our argument totter by saying that authority over things rather than words should be attributed to the apostles? So the basis of our conviction isn’t as secure as we think, be-

23. Augustine’s point is that ‘*est*’ is, strictly speaking, a verb. See the preceding note.

cause it may happen that Paul, although he lived and taught most correctly, spoke less correctly when he says “in Him was Yea,” especially since he admits himself to be unskilled in speech.<sup>24</sup> How then do you think this objector should be refuted?

ADEODATUS. I have nothing to say against him! Please find someone among those to whom the most profound knowledge of words is granted, by whose authority instead you might bring about what you wish.

AUGUSTINE. Does the argument itself seem less adequate to you once the authorities are put aside? It demonstrates that every part of speech signifies something and that it is so called on this basis. Yet if a part of speech is called something, then it is named; if named, surely it is named by a name.

This is most easily recognized in the case of different languages. Anyone can see that if I should ask, “What do the Greeks name what we name ‘who’?” the answer given to me is *τίς*; and likewise for ‘I want’ *θέλω*; for ‘well’ *καλῶς*; for ‘written’ *το γεγραμμένον*; for ‘and’ *καί*; for ‘by’ *ἀπό*; for ‘alas’ *οἶ*. Yet in all these parts of speech I have just listed,<sup>25</sup> it can’t be that anyone who asks what they are in this way would speak correctly unless they were names. We can therefore maintain by this argument that the Apostle Paul spoke correctly, while putting aside the authority belonging to all eloquent people. What need is there to ask who supports our view?

[5.16] If there is someone slower or more impudent who still doesn’t give in, and asserts that he isn’t going to give in at all except to those authors who everyone agrees are paradigms of proper language—what in the Latin language more excellent than Cicero can be found? Yet in his noblest speeches he called ‘in the presence of’ (*coram*)—which is a preposition, or rather in this passage is an adverb—a name.<sup>26</sup>

24. 2 Cor. 11:6.

25. The seven question-answer pairs above correspond to seven of the eight parts of speech, respectively: pronoun, verb, adverb, adjective, conjunction, preposition, interjection. The other part of speech is the name, which surely includes names, and so can be left out of Augustine’s argument.

26. When Cicero describes Verres’ forgery of judicial

Now perhaps I don't understand that passage from Cicero sufficiently well, and I myself or another person might explain it differently at other times. Yet there is, I think, another point to which no reply can be made. The most eminent teachers of dialectic hand it down that a complete sentence, which may be affirmed and denied, consists of a name and a verb. (Cicero somewhere calls this kind of thing a 'proposition.'<sup>27</sup>) When the verb is in the third person, they say that the nominative case of the name ought to accompany it. This is correct. If you should consider with me that when we say "The man sits" or "The horse runs," I think you recognize that they are two propositions.

ADEODATUS. I do recognize that.

AUGUSTINE. You observe in each case that there is a single name, 'man' in the one and 'horse' in the other, and that there is a single verb, 'sits' in the one and 'runs' in the other.

ADEODATUS. Yes.

AUGUSTINE. Then if I were to say only 'sits' or only 'runs,' you would correctly ask me "Who?" or "What?" To that question I would reply "the man" or "the horse" or "the animal" or anything else, so that a name, when added to the verb, could complete the proposition. That is to say, it could complete a sentence that can be affirmed and denied.

ADEODATUS. I understand.

AUGUSTINE. Pay attention to the rest: imagine that we see something far away and are uncertain whether it is an animal or a stone or something else, and I say to you: "Because it is a man, it is an animal." Wouldn't I be speaking carelessly?

ADEODATUS. Very carelessly. You clearly wouldn't be speaking carelessly if you were to say: "If it is a man, it is an animal."

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records to make it appear that Sthenius, tried *in absentia*, was instead present at the trial, he writes: "Don't you see this whole name 'in the presence of' [*coram*] is in the text where [Verres] put it?" [*Viditisne totum hoc nomen coram ubi facit delatum esse in litura?*, *The Action against Verres* 2.2.104]. Augustine admits that he is unsure about his reading of the passage.

27. Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 1.7.14.

AUGUSTINE. You're right. So the 'if' in your statement is acceptable to me and acceptable to you, whereas the 'because' in mine is unacceptable to both of us.

ADEODATUS. I agree.

AUGUSTINE. Now see whether these two sentences are complete propositions: "'If' is acceptable" and "'Because' is unacceptable."

ADEODATUS. They are complete.

AUGUSTINE. Now do this: tell me which are the verbs and which are the names in those sentences.

ADEODATUS. I see that there the verbs are 'is acceptable' and 'is unacceptable.' What else are the names but 'if' and 'because'?

AUGUSTINE. Then it has been adequately proved that these two conjunctions ['if' and 'because'] are also names.

ADEODATUS. Yes.

AUGUSTINE. Can't you derive for yourself the self-same result in the case of the other parts of speech, so as to establish the same rule for them all?

ADEODATUS. I can.

[6.17] AUGUSTINE. Then let's move on from here. Now tell me whether it seems to you that, just as we have found that all words are names and that all names are words, so too all names are terms [*vocabula*] and all terms are names.

ADEODATUS. I don't see what difference there is between ['name' and 'term'], aside from the different sound of the syllables.

AUGUSTINE. I don't raise any objection to your reply for the time being. Although there is no lack of people who distinguish them even by signification, there is no need to consider their view now. Surely you're aware that we have now come to signs that signify one another mutually, differing in nothing but sound, and that signify themselves along with all the other parts of speech.<sup>28</sup>

ADEODATUS. I don't understand.

AUGUSTINE. Then don't you understand that 'name' is signified by 'term' and 'term' is signified by 'name' in such a way that there is no difference between them, aside from the sound of their letters? At

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28. See 5.11.

least, so far as ‘name’ in general is concerned—for we also say ‘name’ specifically as one of the eight parts of speech, such that it does not contain the other seven parts of speech.

ADEODATUS. I understand.

AUGUSTINE. This is what I said: that ‘term’ and ‘name’ signify each other mutually.

[6.18] ADEODATUS. I understand that, but I’m asking what you meant when [you said] they also “signify themselves along with the other parts of speech” [6.17].

AUGUSTINE. Hasn’t the argument above taught us that all parts of speech can be called names as well as terms—that is to say, they can be signified by both ‘name’ and ‘term’?

ADEODATUS. That’s true.

AUGUSTINE. What if I should ask you what you call name itself, that is, the sound expressed by the single syllable [*name*]? Won’t you correctly answer me ‘name’?

ADEODATUS. Yes.

AUGUSTINE. When we say ‘*con-junc-tion*,’ this sign that we enunciate with three syllables doesn’t signify itself in this fashion, does it? The name [*con-junction*] can’t be counted among the things that it signifies.

ADEODATUS. I accept that.

AUGUSTINE. That is, [you accept] what has been said: that ‘name’ signifies itself along with the other things it signifies. You also may understand this for yourself regarding ‘term.’

ADEODATUS. Come on! That’s easy. Yet now it strikes me that ‘name’ is said both generally and specifically, whereas ‘term’ isn’t taken to be among the eight parts of speech. Accordingly, I think that [‘name’ and ‘term’] also differ from one another in this regard, aside from the difference in sound.

AUGUSTINE. Well, do you think that ‘name’ [*nomen*] and ὄνομα differ from one another in any regard, aside from the sound by which the two languages are also distinguished?

ADEODATUS. Here I see no other difference.

AUGUSTINE. Then we have arrived at signs: (a) that signify themselves; (b) each of which is mutually signified by the other; (c) wherein whatever is signified by the one is also signified by the other; and (d) that differ from each other in nothing aside from sound. To

be sure we have discovered only (d), for (a)–(c) are also understood for ‘name’ and ‘word.’

ADEODATUS. Absolutely.

[7.19] AUGUSTINE. Now I should like you to review what we have found out in our discussion.

ADEODATUS. I’ll do so as best I can.

First, I remember that we spent some time inquiring why we speak. It was found that we speak for the sake of teaching or reminding, given that when we ask questions we do so only in order that the person who is asked may learn what we wish to hear.

Now in the case of singing, which it seems we do for pleasure (and this is not a proper feature of speaking), and in the case of praying to God, Who we cannot suppose is taught or reminded, words are for the purpose either of reminding ourselves or that others may be reminded or taught by us.

Next, since we were sufficiently in agreement that words are only signs and that things not signifying anything can’t be signs, you put forward a line of verse:<sup>29</sup>

If nothing from so great a city it pleases the gods  
be left . . .

and I undertook to show what each word in this line of verse signifies. Though the second word of this line of verse, [‘nothing’], is familiar and obvious, in the end we didn’t uncover what it signifies. Since it seemed to me that we don’t use it pointlessly when we speak, but with it we teach something to the person who is listening, you replied that when one finds or thinks oneself to have found that the thing one seeks doesn’t exist, perhaps a state of mind is indicated by this word. Yet you avoided any depth there may be to the question with a joke and postponed it to be explained at another time—don’t think that I have forgotten your obligation too!

Then, since I was hard pressed to explain the third word in this line of verse, [‘from’], you urged me to show you not another word that had the same meaning but instead the thing itself signified by the word. Because I had said that we could not do this while engaged in discussion, we came to those things that are

29. Virgil, *Aeneid* 2.659.

exhibited to people raising such questions by [pointing] a finger. I thought all these things were corporeal, but we found that they are only the visible things.

From here we moved on—I don't know how—to the case of deaf people and actors, who signify with wordless gesturing not only things that can be seen, but many other things besides, and nearly everything that we talk about. Just the same, we found that gestures themselves are signs.

At that point we began again to inquire how we could show without any signs the things themselves that are signified by the signs, since it was proved that even a wall, or color, or anything visible that is shown by aiming the finger is shown by a definite sign. Here I was mistaken since I had said that nothing of the sort could be found.

Eventually we agreed that we can point out without a sign those things we aren't doing when we are asked about them but we can do after the inquiry. Yet it was apparent that speaking isn't that kind of thing, given that when we're asked what speaking is while we're speaking, it's easy to illustrate speaking through itself.

[7.20] After that, our attention was called to the fact that either [1] signs are exhibited by means of signs, or [2] things that we can do after a question [has been raised] are exhibited without a sign, or [3] other things, which are not signs, are exhibited with signs.<sup>30</sup> We undertook to consider and discuss carefully [1].

In the debate [regarding (a)], it was revealed that on the one hand there are signs that could not in turn be signified by the signs they signify, as for example when we say the three-syllable word '*con-junc-tion*'; on the other hand there are signs that could in turn be signified by the signs they signify; for example when we say '*sign*' we also signify '*word*' and when we say '*word*' we also signify '*sign*' (for '*sign*' and '*word*' are both two signs and two words).

However, in this class of signs that signify each other mutually, it was established that some mean not so much, some mean just as much, and some even

mean the same.<sup>31</sup> The fact is that when we say this one-syllable word '*sign*,' which makes a certain sound, it signifies absolutely everything by means of which anything is signified. Yet when we say '*word*,' it isn't a sign of all signs but only of signs uttered by an articulated sound. Accordingly, it's clear that although '*word*' is signified by '*sign*' and '*sign*' is signified by '*word*'—that is to say, the former syllable is signified by the latter and the latter syllable is signified by the former—'*sign*' nevertheless means more than '*word*' does, given that the former syllable signifies more things than the latter.

Yet '*word*' in general means just as much as '*name*' in general. The argument has taught us that all the parts of speech are also names, since (a) pronouns can be added to [names]; (b) it can be said of all parts of speech that they name something; (c) there is no [part of speech] that can't complete a proposition by means of an added verb.

Although '*name*' and '*word*' mean just as much, in that all things that are words are also names, they don't mean the same. We probably discussed sufficiently the

30. Adeodatus gives [3] before [2] in his summary here; I have reversed the order to conform to Augustine's earlier presentation of the fundamental division.

31. The phrases 'not so much,' 'just so much,' and 'the same' are adverbial modifiers, describing the kind of signification possessed by terms. Adeodatus seems to be talking on the one hand about inclusion-relations among the class of significates, and on the other hand about sense (or intension). Let *x* and *y* signify each other mutually. The class of *x*-significates may be a subclass of the class of *y*-significates, so that *x* "means not so much" as *y*; or the class of *x*-significates and the class of *y*-significates may be the same, so that *x* and *y* "mean just as much." (Adeodatus does not mention the case in which the classes overlap, but neither is completely contained within the other.) The Latin term '*tantum*' indicates quantity, and suggests this extensional reading. However, the case in which terms "mean the same" is not a case in which the extensions are equal (that case is covered by terms that "mean just as much"). Adeodatus offers two ways in which terms can fail to mean the same: (a) they may have a sense that is derived from their initial use, revealed by etymology; (b) they are not interchangeable in ordinary contexts. Hence this case seems to include a difference in 'meaning' beyond the comparison of significate-classes. Thus it appears to be a difference not in extension, but in intension or sense.

reason some are called ‘words’ and others ‘names,’ if it has been ascertained that one of these is for marking out the striking of the ear, the other for marking out the mind’s recollection [*commemorationem*]. Or perhaps the point can be understood on this basis, namely, that when we want to commit something to memory, we speak most correctly when we say “What is this thing’s name?” whereas we are not accustomed to saying, “What is this thing’s word?”<sup>32</sup>

We found that ‘name’ and ὄνομα signify not only just as much but also exactly the same, and there is no difference between them aside from the sound of the letters. The point had really slipped my mind that in the class of signs that signify one another mutually we found no sign that doesn’t also signify itself, among the other things that it signifies.

I’ve recalled these things as best I could. You, I believe, haven’t said anything in this discussion except with knowledge and assurance. Now see whether I have reviewed these matters properly and in order.

[8.21] AUGUSTINE. You have accurately recalled from memory all I wanted. I must admit to you that these distinctions now seem much clearer to me than they were when the two of us, by inquiry and discussion, unearthed them from whatever their hiding places were.

However, with so many detours, it’s difficult to say at this point where you and I are trying to get to! Maybe you think we’re playing around and diverting the mind from serious matters by some little puzzles that seem childish, or that we’re pursuing some result that is only small or modest—or, if you suspect that this discussion might issue in some important result, you want to know straightaway what it is (or at least to hear me say what it is!). Well, I’d like you to believe that I haven’t set to work on mere trivialities in this conversation. Though we do perhaps play around, this should itself not be regarded as childish. Nor are we thinking about small or modest goods. Yet if I were to say that there is a happy and everlasting life, and I want us to be led there under the guidance of God (namely Truth Himself) by stages that are suitable to our weak steps, I’m afraid I might seem laughable for having set out on

32. The argument given in this sentence is new.

such a long journey by considering signs rather than the things themselves that are signified.

So then, you’ll pardon me if I play around with you at first—not for the sake of playing around,<sup>33</sup> but to exercise the mind’s strength and sharpness, with which we’re able not only to withstand but also to love the heat and light of that region where the happy life is.

ADEODATUS. Continue as you have begun! I would never think to belittle what you think ought to be said or done.

### [Discussion of Division [2]]<sup>34</sup>

[8.22] AUGUSTINE. Then come now, let’s consider the division [of signs] where signs do not signify other signs but instead things, which we call ‘signifiables.’ First tell me whether man is man.

ADEODATUS. Now I don’t know whether you’re playing around with me.

AUGUSTINE. Why so?

ADEODATUS. Because you think it necessary to ask me whether man is anything but man!

AUGUSTINE. Then I believe you’d also think I was merely playing around with you if I were to ask whether the first syllable of this name [‘man’] [*homo*] is anything but ‘ho-’ and the second syllable anything but ‘-mo.’

ADEODATUS. Yes! I would!

AUGUSTINE. Yet those two syllables [‘ho-’ and ‘-mo’] conjoined are man [*homo*]. Will you deny it?

ADEODATUS. Who could deny it?

AUGUSTINE. Then I ask the question: are you those two conjoined syllables?

33. There is some untranslatable wordplay here: *si praeludo tecum, non ludendi gratia*.

34. Division [2] deals with signifiates that are non-signs. More precisely, it deals with the extent to which things that may be signifiable (but are not themselves signs) can be known, either (a) in their own right or (b) through signs. Before Augustine and Adeodatus can address (a) and (b), a possible source of confusion has to be ruled out, namely, the case in which a sign is used to exhibit itself *qua* sound (8.22–24). See 4.7 above.

ADEODATUS. Not at all, but I see where you're headed.

AUGUSTINE. Then you shall tell me, so you don't think I'm being offensive.

ADEODATUS. You think it follows that I'm not a man.

AUGUSTINE. Well, don't you think the same thing? You grant that all those claims above, from which this conclusion has been deduced, are true.

ADEODATUS. I won't tell you what I think until I have first heard from you whether in your question about man being man you were asking me about those two syllables ['*ho-mo*'] or about the very thing they signify.

AUGUSTINE. Reply to this instead: from what standpoint have you taken my question? If it's ambiguous, you ought to have guarded against this first, and not answered me before you made certain precisely how I put the question.

ADEODATUS. Why should this ambiguity be any obstacle, since I have replied to each? Man is certainly man: those two syllables ['*ho-mo*'] are nothing other than those two syllables, and what they signify is nothing other than what it is.

AUGUSTINE. Of course you know this. Yet why have you taken only the word 'man' in each way, and not also the other words we have spoken?

ADEODATUS. On what grounds am I proven wrong not to have taken the others in this way too?

AUGUSTINE. To put aside other reasons—if you had taken that first question of mine entirely from the standpoint in which the syllables are mere sounds, you wouldn't have made any reply to me, for I could have seemed not to ask you anything. Yet now, given that I uttered three words—one of which I repeated in the second and fourth place<sup>35</sup>—saying “whether man is man,” you clearly took the first word and the third word not as signs themselves but as the things they signify. This is obvious from the fact that you were immediately certain and confident that the question ought to be answered.

ADEODATUS. You're right.

AUGUSTINE. Then why did it suit you to take only the word in the second and fourth place both according to what it sounds like and according to what it signifies?

ADEODATUS. Look, now I take the whole thing only from the standpoint of what is signified. I do agree with you that we can't carry on a conversation at all unless the words we hear direct the mind to the things of which they are the signs. So now show me how I was misled by the line of reasoning in which it's deduced that I'm not a man.

AUGUSTINE. Instead, I'll ask the same questions again, so that you yourself may discover where you stumbled.

ADEODATUS. Fine!

[8.23] AUGUSTINE. I won't repeat my first question, [namely, whether man is man], because now you haven't granted it. So, then, examine more carefully [my second question]: whether the syllable '*ho*' is anything but '*ho*' and whether '*mo*' is anything but '*mo*.'

ADEODATUS. I don't see anything else here at all.

AUGUSTINE. See also whether man [*homo*] is not made from these two syllables ['*ho*' and '*mo*'] in combination.

ADEODATUS. I should never have granted this! It was agreed, and rightly so, that when a sign is given we should pay attention to what is signified, and from the consideration of this to admit or to deny what is said. Yet when the syllables ['*ho*' and '*mo*'] are enunciated separately, it was granted that they are the sounds themselves, since they are sounds without any signification.

AUGUSTINE. Then it is agreed, and firmly established in your mind, that questions should be answered only on the basis of the things signified by the words.

ADEODATUS. I don't understand why this is unacceptable—so long as they *are* words.

AUGUSTINE. I'd like to know how you would refute the man we often hear about while we're telling jokes, who drew the conclusion that a lion came out of the mouth of the person with whom he was arguing. He had asked whether what we say comes out of our mouth. His interlocutor couldn't deny it. He then easily contrived to make his interlocutor use the name 'lion' during the conversation. When this happened, he began to taunt his interlocutor and ridicule him,

35. “In the second and fourth place”: literally, ‘in the middle,’ since the question is *utrum homo homo sit*.

saying that a man who wasn't a bad fellow seemed to have vomited up a monstrous beast! For his interlocutor had admitted that whatever we say comes out of our mouth, and he couldn't deny that he had said 'lion.'

ADEODATUS. Well, it wasn't difficult at all to refute this clown. I wouldn't grant that whatever we say comes out of our mouth. We signify the things that we say, and what comes out of the speaker's mouth isn't the thing signified but the sign by which it is signified—except when the signs themselves are signified, and we discussed this class [of signs] a little while ago. [8.24] AUGUSTINE. In this way you would have been well armed against him. Yet what will you say to me upon being asked whether man is a name?<sup>36</sup>

ADEODATUS. What except that it is a name?

AUGUSTINE. Well, do I see a name when I see you?

ADEODATUS. No.

AUGUSTINE. Then do you want me to say what follows?

ADEODATUS. Please don't! I declare for myself that I'm not a man—for when you asked whether man is a name, I answered that it was a name. As a matter of fact, we had already agreed to grant or deny what is said based on the thing signified.

AUGUSTINE. It seems to me, however, that you didn't fall into this answer without grounds. The law of reason that is implanted in our minds overcame your caution.<sup>37</sup> If I should ask what man is, you probably would answer "an animal." If I were to ask what part of speech man is, you could only answer correctly "a name." So although man is found to be both a name and an animal, the former is said from the standpoint in which it is a sign; the latter, the standpoint in which it is signified.

36. Here and in the next several paragraphs I have not inserted quotation marks, since Augustine's argument turns on blurring the distinction between man and 'man.'

37. The "law of reason" is to follow explicit contextual signs in disambiguating questions, which overcame Adeodatus' rule always to interpret questions from the standpoint of what is signified. Augustine suggests in the next paragraph that Adeodatus' rule comes into play in the absence of contextual signs, and in his last speech in this section he perhaps suggests that this is natural.

If anyone asks me whether man is a name, then, I would answer that it is nothing else, for he signifies well enough that he wants to hear the answer from the standpoint in which it is a sign. If he asks whether man is an animal, I would give my assent much more readily. If without mentioning "name" or "animal" he were to inquire only what man is, then in virtue of that agreed-upon rule of language the mind would quickly move along to what is signified by this syllable [*'man'*], and the answer would simply be "an animal"; or even the whole definition, namely, "a rational mortal animal," might be stated. Don't you think so?

ADEODATUS. I do, entirely. Yet since we have granted that [man] is a name, how shall we avoid the offensive conclusion in which it's deduced that we aren't men?

AUGUSTINE. How do you think but by establishing that the conclusion was not inferred from the standpoint in which we agreed with the questioner?

On the other hand, if he were to admit that he draws the conclusion from this standpoint, then it isn't to be feared in any way. Why should I be afraid to admit that I'm not man—that I'm not that syllable?

ADEODATUS. Nothing is more true! Then why is saying "Hence you are not a man" offensive to the mind, since according to what we granted nothing more true could be said?

AUGUSTINE. Because as soon as the words [of the conclusion] are uttered, I can't help thinking that what is signified by the syllable [*'man'*] is relevant to the conclusion, by virtue of the law that naturally has the most power—so that once the signs are heard, the attention is directed to the things signified.

ADEODATUS. I agree with what you say.

[9.25] AUGUSTINE. Now then, I want you to understand that the things signified should be valued more than their signs. Whatever exists on account of another must be worth less than that on account of which it exists—unless you think otherwise.

ADEODATUS. It seems to me that assent shouldn't be given lightly at this point. When we say 'filth,' for instance, I think the name is far superior to the thing it signifies. What offends us when we hear it isn't the sound of the word itself. When one letter is changed, the name 'filth' [*caenum*] becomes 'heaven' [*caelum*], but we see what a great difference there is between the

things signified by these names ['filth' and 'heaven']! For this reason, I certainly wouldn't attribute to the sign ['filth'] what we so loathe in the thing it signifies, and hence I rightly prefer the former to the latter, for we're more willing to hear the sign than to come into contact with the thing it signifies by any of the senses.

AUGUSTINE. You're most certainly on your guard. Then it's false that all things should be valued more than their signs.

ADEODATUS. So it seems.

AUGUSTINE. Then tell me what you think the men who gave the name ['filth'] to so vile and loathsome a thing were aiming at, and whether you approve or disapprove of them.

ADEODATUS. For my part, I do not venture either to approve or to disapprove of them, and I don't know what they were aiming at.

AUGUSTINE. Can't you at least know what you are aiming at when you enunciate this name?

ADEODATUS. Obviously I can. I want to signify, in order to teach or recall to the person I'm talking with, the thing I think he should be taught or recall.<sup>38</sup>

AUGUSTINE. Well, the teaching or recalling (or being taught or recalled) that you conveniently furnish by the name (or that is furnished to you by the name)—shouldn't it be held more valuable than the name itself?

ADEODATUS. I do grant that the very knowledge that results from the sign should be preferred to the sign, but I don't think that therefore the thing should be.

[9.26] AUGUSTINE. In this theory of ours, then, although it's false that all things should be preferred to their signs, it's not false that anything existing on account of another is worth less than that on account of which it exists. The knowledge of filth, for the sake of which the name ['filth'] was instituted, should be held more valuable than the name itself—and we found that this is in turn to be preferred to filth. This knowl-

38. This awkward sentence has a simple meaning: Adeodatus uses the name 'filth' when he wants to talk about filth with someone—that is, to convey knowledge, which is a matter of either teaching or recalling, according to the start of the dialogue.

edge is preferable to the sign we're speaking about [namely 'filth'] precisely because the latter demonstrably exists on account of the former, and not the other way around.

This [rule] also holds, for example, in the case of the glutton and "worshipper of his stomach" (as the Apostle says),<sup>39</sup> who said that he lived to eat: the temperate man who heard him protested and said: "How much better that you should eat to live!"<sup>40</sup> Each man, however, spoke according to this very rule. The only reason the glutton evoked displeasure was that he valued his life so little that he should lead it in a worthless fashion for the pleasure of his palate, saying that he lived on account of meals. The only reason the temperate man deserves praise is that, understanding which of these two things should occur on account of the other (namely, which one is subordinate to the other), he gave the reminder that we should eat to live rather than the other way around.

Likewise, if a talkative word-lover says "I teach in order to talk," you and any other person judging things with some experience might perhaps respond to him: "Why don't you instead talk in order to teach?"

Now if these things are true, as you know they are, surely you see how much less words are to be valued than that on account of which we use words. The use of words should itself already be preferred to words: words exist so that we may use them. Furthermore, we use them in order to teach. Hence teaching is better than speaking to the same extent that the speaking is better than the words. The teaching<sup>41</sup> is, therefore, that much better than words. I want to hear any objections you think perhaps should be offered against this.

[9.27] ADEODATUS. I do agree that the teaching is better than words. I don't know whether any objection

39. Rom. 16:18

40. The story is an old one. The saying is reported in Pseudo-Cicero, *Rhetoric for Herennius* 4.28.39, and in Quintilian, *Oratorical Guidelines* 9.3.85; it is attributed to Socrates by Aulus Gellius in *Attic Nights* 19.2.7.

41. The earlier occurrences of 'teaching' have referred primarily to the activity (*ad docendum, docere*); here Augustine subtly moves to the distinguishing feature of the activity (or to its content): *doctrina*.

can be raised against the rule according to which everything that exists on account of another is said to be inferior to that on account of which it exists.

AUGUSTINE. We'll discuss this more opportunely and more carefully at another time. Right now what you concede is sufficient for what I'm trying to establish. You grant that knowledge of things is more valuable than the signs of things, and for this reason knowledge of the things signified should be preferable to knowledge of their signs. Doesn't it seem so to you?

ADEODATUS. Surely I haven't conceded that knowledge of things is superior to the knowledge of signs, and not just superior to the signs themselves, have I? So I have misgivings about agreeing with you on this score. The name 'filth' is better than the thing it signifies. What if knowledge of this name is then likewise to be preferred to knowledge of the thing, although the name itself is inferior to that knowledge? There are obviously four things here:

- (a) the name
- (b) the thing
- (c) knowledge of the name
- (d) knowledge of the thing

Just as (a) surpasses (b), then, why shouldn't (c) also surpass (d)? Yet even if (c) were not to surpass (d), surely (c) isn't then to be subordinated to (d), is it?

[9.28] AUGUSTINE. I see with great admiration that you've held fast to what you conceded and explained what you thought. I think you understand, however, that the one-syllable name pronounced when we say 'vice' is better than what it signifies, although knowledge of the name ['vice'] itself is far inferior to knowledge of vices.<sup>42</sup> So although you may distinguish those four things and reflect upon them—the name, the thing, knowledge of the name, knowledge of the

42. As Augustine points out, here (a) is superior to (b), since the name 'vice' is preferable to an actual vice, but (d) is superior to (c), since knowledge of the vice is preferable to merely knowing the name 'vice.'

thing—we rightly prefer (a) to (b). For instance, when Persius says:<sup>43</sup>

But this man is besotted with vice . . .

putting the name ['vice'] into the poem didn't do anything vicious to his line of verse, but even embellished it. When, however, the very thing signified by the name ['vice'] is present in anyone, it compels him to be vicious. Yet we don't see that (c) surpasses (d) in this way. Instead, (d) surpasses (c), since knowledge of the name ['vice'] is worthless compared to knowledge of vices.

ADEODATUS. Do you think this knowledge should be preferred even when it makes us more miserable? Among all the punishments contrived by the cruelty of tyrants or meted out by their cupidity, Persius himself puts first the one that tortures men by forcing them to recognize vices they can't avoid.

AUGUSTINE. In the same way you also can deny that knowledge of virtues itself should be preferred to knowledge of the name ['virtue']. Seeing virtue and not possessing it is a torment, one that the same satirist wished tyrants would be punished with.<sup>44</sup>

ADEODATUS. May God turn aside this madness! Now I understand that the items of knowledge themselves, with which the best education of all has filled the mind, are not to be blamed. Instead, those men should be judged the most miserable—as I think Persius also judged them—who are afflicted with such a disease that not even so great a remedy provides relief for it.

AUGUSTINE. That's right. But what do we care whatever Persius' opinion may be? We aren't subject to the authority of these men<sup>45</sup> in such matters. Con-

43. Persius, *Satires* 3.32.

44. Persius, *Satires* 3.35–38: "Great Father of the Gods! When detestable lust attainted with dreadful venom has moved the souls of cruel tyrants, let it be your will to punish them in no other way but this: let them look upon virtue and pine away for leaving it behind!"

45. "Of these men": *horum*. It is unclear who Augustine means to single out here—satirists? poets? pagans?

sequently, it isn't easy to explain at this point whether some item of knowledge is to be preferred to another item of knowledge. I'm satisfied that we have shown that knowledge of things signified is preferable to the signs themselves, though not to knowledge of signs.

[Discussion of Division [2(a)]]

Therefore, let's now analyze more completely the class of things we said can be exhibited through themselves, without signs, such as speaking, walking, sitting, lying down, and the like.

ADEODATUS. I now recall what you're describing.  
[10.29] AUGUSTINE. Does it seem to you that all the things we can do once we've been asked about them can be exhibited without a sign? Is there any exception?

ADEODATUS. Considering this whole class over and over again, I still don't find *anything* that can be taught without a sign—except perhaps speaking, and possibly if someone should happen to ask the very question “What is it to teach?”—for I see that no matter what I do after his question so that he may learn, he doesn't learn from the very thing he wants exhibited to him.

For example, if anyone should ask me what it is to walk while I was resting or doing something else, as was said, and I should attempt to teach him what he asked about without a sign, by immediately walking, how shall I guard against his thinking that it's just the amount of walking I have done? He'll be mistaken if he thinks this. He'll think that anyone who walks farther than I have, or not as far, hasn't walked at all. Yet what I have said about this one word ['walking'] applies to all the things I had agreed can be exhibited without a sign, apart from the two exceptions we made.

[10.30] AUGUSTINE. I agree with this point. Yet doesn't it seem to you that speaking is one thing and teaching another?

ADEODATUS. It does. If they were the same, nobody would teach except by speaking; but seeing that we also teach many things with other signs besides words, who would have any doubt that there is a difference?

AUGUSTINE. Well, is there any difference between teaching and signifying, or not?

ADEODATUS. I think they're the same.

AUGUSTINE. Anyone who says that we signify in order to teach is right, isn't he?

ADEODATUS. Completely right.

AUGUSTINE. Well, if someone else were to say that we teach in order to signify, wouldn't he easily be refuted by the view given above?

ADEODATUS. That is so.

AUGUSTINE. Then if we signify in order to teach, and we don't teach in order to signify, teaching is one thing and signifying another.

ADEODATUS. You're right. I was wrong in answering that they are the same.

AUGUSTINE. Now answer this: does the person teaching what it is to teach do so by signifying, or in another way?

ADEODATUS. I don't see how he can do it in another way.

AUGUSTINE. Then you stated a falsehood a little while ago, namely, that a thing can be taught without signs when the question is raised what teaching itself is. Now we see that not even this can be done without signification, since you granted that signifying is one thing and teaching another: if they're different things, as they appear to be, and the latter is shown only through the former, then it isn't shown through itself, as you thought. So we haven't yet uncovered anything that can be exhibited through itself—except speaking, which also signifies it, among other things. Since speaking itself is also a sign, though, it isn't yet entirely apparent whether anything seems able to be taught without signs.

ADEODATUS. I have no reason for not agreeing.

[10.31] AUGUSTINE. Then it has been established that nothing is taught without signs, and that knowledge itself should be more valuable to us than the signs by means of which we know, although not all things signified can be superior to their signs.

ADEODATUS. So it seems.

AUGUSTINE. I ask you—do you remember how circuitous was the path by which we finally reached such a slight result? Ever since we started bandying words with one another, which we've been doing for

a long time now, we have been working to find out these three things: whether anything can be taught without signs; whether certain signs should be preferred to the things they signify; and whether knowledge of things is itself better than the signs. Yet there is a fourth, and this I should like to know about from you briefly: whether you think of these discoveries in such a way that you can't now have doubts regarding them.

ADEODATUS. I should hope that by these great detours and byways we have arrived at certainties! Yet somehow this question of yours disturbs me and keeps me from agreeing. I think you wouldn't have asked me this unless you had an objection to offer, and the intricacy of these matters doesn't allow me to investigate the whole issue and answer with assurance. I fear there is something hidden in these great complexities that my mind is not keen enough to illuminate.

AUGUSTINE. I commend your hesitation; it bespeaks a circumspect mind, and this is the greatest safeguard of tranquility. It's extremely difficult not to be perturbed when things we were holding with easy and ready approval are undermined by contrary arguments and, as it were, are wrenched out of our hands. Accordingly, just as it is right to yield to arguments that have been thoroughly considered and scrutinized, so it is hazardous to regard what is unknown as known. There is a danger that when things we presume are going to stand firm and endure are regularly overturned, we fall into such a great hatred and mistrust of reason<sup>46</sup> it seems that confidence should not even be had in the plain truth itself.

[10.32] Well then, let's straightaway reconsider now whether you were correct in thinking that these things should be doubted. Consider this example. Suppose that someone unfamiliar with how to trick birds (which is done with reeds and birdlime) should run into a birdcatcher outfitted with his tools, not birdcatching but on his way to do so. On seeing this birdcatcher, he follows closely in his footsteps, and, as it happens, he reflects and asks himself in his astonishment what ex-

actly the man's equipment means. Now the birdcatcher, wanting to show off after seeing the attention focused on him, prepares his reeds and with his birdcall and his hawk intercepts, subdues, and captures some little bird he has noticed nearby. I ask you: wouldn't he then teach the man watching him what he wanted to know by the thing itself rather than by anything that signifies?

ADEODATUS. I'm afraid that everything here is like what I said about the man who asks what it is to walk. Here, too, I don't see that the whole of birdcatching has been exhibited.

AUGUSTINE. It's easy to get rid of your worry. I add that he's so intelligent that he recognizes the kind of craft as a whole on the basis of what he has seen. It's surely enough for the matter at hand that some men can be taught about some things, even if not all, without a sign.

ADEODATUS. I also can add this to the other case! If he is sufficiently intelligent, he'll know the whole of what it is to walk, once walking has been illustrated by a few steps.

AUGUSTINE.<sup>47</sup> You may do so as far as I'm concerned; not only do I not offer any objection, I even support you! You see, each of us has established that some people can be taught some things without signs, and what seemed apparent to us a little earlier [10.29–31]—that there is absolutely nothing that can be shown without signs—is false. These examples already suggest not one or another but thousands of things that are exhibited through themselves, without any sign being given.

Why, I ask you, should we doubt this? For example (passing over the performances of men in all the theaters who display things themselves without a sign), doesn't God or Nature show and display to those paying attention, by themselves, this sun and the light pervading and clothing all things present, the moon and the other stars, the lands and the seas, and the countless things begotten in them?

46. "Hatred and mistrust of reason": possibly "hatred and mistrust of argument"—in any event, a clear reference to Plato's discussion of 'misology' in *Phaedo* 89d–e.

47. Here Augustine begins his closing monologue, which occupies the last quarter of the work.

## [Discussion of Division [2(b)]]

[10.33] Well, if we should consider this more carefully, perhaps you'll discover that nothing is learned through its signs. When a sign is given to me, it can teach me nothing if it finds me ignorant of the thing of which it is the sign; but if I'm not ignorant, what do I learn through the sign?

For example, when I read:<sup>48</sup>

... and their *sarabarae* were unchanged.

the word doesn't show me the thing it signifies. If certain head-coverings are denominated by this name [*'sarabarae'*], have I learned upon hearing it what the head is or what coverings are? I knew these things before; my conception of them wasn't fashioned because they were named by others, but because I saw them. The first time the syllable *'head'* struck my ears I was just as ignorant of what it signified as when I first heard or read *'sarabarae'*. Yet since *'head'* was often pronounced, noting and observing when it was pronounced, I discovered that it was the term for a thing already familiar to me by sight. Before I made this discovery, the word was a mere sound to me; but I learned that it was a sign when I found out of what thing it is the sign—and, as I said, I learned this not by anything that signifies but by its appearance. Therefore, a sign is learned when the thing is known, rather than the thing being learned when the sign is given.

[10.34] So that you may understand this more clearly, suppose that we hear *'head'* now for the first time. Not knowing whether that utterance is a mere noise or also signifies something, we ask what *'head'* is. (Remember we want to have a conception not of the thing signified but of the sign itself, which we surely don't have as long as we don't know what it's the sign of.) If, then, the thing is pointed out with the finger after we

raise the question, once it has been seen we learn the sign, which we had only heard and didn't know at that point.

Now there are two elements in the sign: the sound and the signification. We don't perceive the sound by the sign, but when it strikes the ear. We perceive the signification, however, by seeing the thing signified. Aiming with the finger can only signify what the finger is aimed at, and it's aimed not at the sign but at the bodily part called the head. Consequently, by aiming the finger I can't know either the thing (which I knew already) or the sign (at which the finger isn't aimed).

I don't much care about aiming with the finger, because it seems to me to be a sign of the pointing-out itself rather than of any things that are pointed out. It's like the exclamation *'look!'*—we typically also aim the finger along with this exclamation, in case one sign of the pointing-out isn't enough.

Most of all I'm trying to persuade you, if I'll be able to, that we don't learn anything by these signs called words. As I have stated, we learn the meaning of a word—that is, the signification hidden in the sound—once the thing signified is itself known, rather than our perceiving it by means of such signification.

[10.35] What I've said about *'head'* I also might have said about *'coverings'* (and about countless other things!). Although I already knew them, I still don't yet know them to be *sarabarae*. If anyone should signify them to me with a gesture, or represent them, or show me something similar to them, I won't say that he didn't teach me—a claim I might easily maintain should I care to speak a little longer—but I do state something close to it: he didn't teach me with words. Even if he happens to see them when I'm around and should call them to my attention by saying *"Look: sarabarae!"* I wouldn't learn the thing I was ignorant of by the words that he has spoken, but by looking at it. This is the way it came to pass that I know and grasp what meaning the name has. When I learned the thing itself, I trusted my eyes, not the words of another—though perhaps I trusted the words to direct my attention, that is, to find out what I would see by looking.

[11.36] To give them as much credit as possible, words have force only to the extent that they remind us to look for things; they don't display them for us to know. Yet someone who presents what I want to know to my

48. Dan. 3:94 (Vulgate) = 3:27 (Septuagint). (The Vulgate has *sarabala* rather than *sarabara*.) I have left *sarabarae* untranslated, since Augustine is employing a deliberately unfamiliar word to make his point. A good thing, too: the form and meaning of the word are extremely unclear.

eyes, or to any of my bodily senses, or even to my mind itself, does teach me something.

From words, then, we learn only words—rather, the sound and noise of the words. If things that aren't signs can't be words, then although I have already heard a word, I don't know that it is a word until I know what it signifies. Therefore, knowledge of words is made complete once the things are known. On the other hand, when words are [only] heard, not even the words are learned. We don't learn words we know. Also, we have to admit that we learn words we didn't know only after their signification has been perceived, and this happens not by hearing the mere sounds uttered but by knowing the things signified. This is a truthful and solid argument: when words are spoken we either know what they signify or we don't; if we know, then it's reminding rather than learning; but if we don't know, it isn't even reminding, though perhaps we recollect that we should inquire.

[11.37] You may object: granted that (a) it's only by sight that we can know those head-coverings, whose name [*'sarabarae'*] we only take as a sound; and (b) we know the name itself more fully only when the things are themselves known. Yet we do accept the story of those boys—how they overcame King Nebuchadnezzar and his flames by their faith and religion, what praises they sang to God, and what honors they merited even from their enemy himself.<sup>49</sup> Have we learned these things otherwise than by words?

I reply to this objection that everything signified by those words was already known to us: I'm already familiar with what three boys are, what a furnace is, what fire is, what a king is, and finally what being unharmed by fire is, and all the other things that those words signify. Yet Ananias, Azarias, and Misahel are just as unknown to me as the *sarabarae*, and these

49. Ananias, Azarias, and Misahel were cast into a fiery furnace by King Nebuchadnezzar; because of their piety, God made the flames powerless to harm them, whereupon they were hauled out, pardoned, and richly rewarded by the king. This story is recounted in Daniel 3, where the word '*sarabarae*' appears (Septuagint 3:21 and 3:94; Vulgate 3:21).

names didn't help me at all to know them, nor could they help me.

I do admit that I *believe* rather than *know* that everything we read in the story happened then just as it is written. Those whom we believe are themselves not unaware of the difference, for the Prophet says:<sup>50</sup>

Unless you believe, you shall not understand.

He surely would not have said this if he had thought there was no difference. Therefore, what I understand I also believe, but not everything I believe I also understand. Again, everything I understand I know; not everything I believe I know. Hence I'm not unaware how useful it is to believe even many things I do not know, and I also include in this usefulness the story of the three boys. Accordingly, although the majority of things can't possibly be known by me, I still know how useful it is to believe them.<sup>51</sup>

[11.38] Regarding each of the things we understand, however, we don't consult a speaker who makes sounds outside us, but the Truth that presides within over the mind itself, though perhaps words prompt us to consult Him. What is more, He Who is consulted, He Who is said to  *dwell in the inner man*,<sup>52</sup> does teach: Christ—that is, *the unchangeable power and everlasting wisdom of God*,<sup>53</sup> which every rational soul does consult, but is disclosed to anyone, to the extent that he can apprehend it, according to his good or evil will.<sup>54</sup> If at times one is mistaken, this doesn't happen

50. Isa. 7:9. The Vulgate has *permanebitis* in place of Augustine's *intelligetis*.

51. Augustine expresses his point at the end of this paragraph obscurely. Briefly: knowledge and understanding entail belief, but not conversely; belief, even when unaccompanied by knowledge, can be useful (and one can know this last fact). The story of the three boys falls into the category of useful belief that is not knowledge.

52. Eph. 3:16–17.

53. 1 Cor. 1:24.

54. In his early works Augustine is attracted to the idea that wisdom depends on moral rectitude: see *On the True Religion* 3.3, *On Order* 2.8.25, and *Soliloquies* 1.1.2 (the last of which Augustine repudiates in *Reconsiderations*

by means of a defect in the Truth consulted, just as it isn't a defect in light outside that the eyes of the body are often mistaken—and we admit that we consult this light regarding visible things, that it may show them to us to the extent that we have the ability to make them out.

[12.39] Now, on the one hand, regarding colors we consult light, and regarding other things we sense through the body we consult the elements of this world, the selfsame bodies we sense, and the senses themselves that the mind employs as interpreters to know such things. On the other hand, regarding things that are understood we consult the inner Truth by means of reason. What then can be said to show that we learn something by words aside from the mere sound that strikes the ears?

Everything we perceive, we perceive either by one of the bodily senses or by the mind. We name the former sensible, the latter intelligible—or, to speak in the fashion of our authorities, carnal and spiritual. When we are asked about the former, we answer, so long as the things we sense are present at hand. For example, while looking at the new moon we're asked what sort of thing it is or where it is. In this case if the person raising the question doesn't see the object, he merely believes our words (and often he doesn't believe them!). He doesn't learn at all unless he himself sees what is described, where he then learns not from words but from the things themselves and his senses. Words make the same sounds for the one who sees the object as for the one who doesn't see it.

When a question is raised not about things we sense at present but about things we sensed in the past, then we speak not of the things themselves but of the images impressed by them and committed to memory. I don't know how we state truths even though we look upon these false [images],<sup>55</sup> unless it's because we report not that we are seeing or sensing [the things themselves], but that we have seen or sensed them. We carry

these images in the recesses of our memory in this way as certain attestations of things sensed previously. Contemplating them in the mind, we have the good conscience that we aren't lying when we speak. Yet they are proofs for us [alone]. If anyone hearing me was then present and sensed these things, he doesn't learn from my words but knows them again from the images stored away within himself. If he hasn't sensed them, isn't it obvious that he merely believes my words rather than learns from them?

[12.40] When we deal with things that we perceive by the mind, namely, by the intellect and reason, we're speaking of things that we look upon immediately in the inner light of Truth, in virtue of which the so-called inner man is illuminated and rejoices. Under these conditions our listener, if he likewise sees these things with his inward and undivided eye, knows what I'm saying from his own contemplation, not from my words. Therefore, when I'm stating truths, I don't even teach the person who is looking upon these truths. He's taught not by my words but by the things themselves made manifest within when God discloses them.<sup>56</sup> Hence if he were questioned, he could give answers even about these matters. What is more absurd than thinking that he's taught by my speaking, when even before I spoke he could explain these very matters were he questioned?

Now it often happens that someone denies something when questioned about it, and is brought around by further questions to admit it. This happens because of the weakness of his discernment. He can't consult that light regarding the whole matter. Yet he is prompted to do it part-by-part when he's questioned about the very parts that make up the whole, which he didn't have the ability to discern. If he's guided in this case by the words of his questioner, the words nevertheless do not teach him, but they raise questions in such a way that he who is questioned learns within, corresponding to his ability to do so.

For example, if I were to ask you about the very matter at issue, namely whether it's true that nothing can be taught by words, at first it would seem absurd to you, since you aren't able to examine it as a whole.

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1.4.2 for the obvious reason: non-Christians often seem to know quite a lot).

55. The images are "false" in that they are not the things themselves, but mere representations of the things themselves.

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56. See *Confessions* 11.3.5 (page 72).

It would therefore be necessary to ask you questions suited to your abilities to hear the Teacher within you. Thus I might say: "The things I'm saying that you admit to be truths, and that you're certain of, and that you affirm yourself to know—where did you learn them?" Maybe you would reply that I had taught them to you. Then I would rejoin: "What if I should say that I had seen a flying man? Do my words then make you as certain as if you were to hear that wise men are better than fools?" Surely you would deny it and reply that you do not believe the former statement, or even if you did believe it that you do not know it; whereas you know the latter statement with utter certainty. As a result, you would then understand that you hadn't learned anything from my words, neither in the former case (where you did not know although I was asserting it) nor in the latter case (where you knew quite well), seeing that when questioned about each case you would swear the former was unknown and the latter known to you. Yet at that point you would be admitting the whole that you had [initially] denied. You came to know that the [parts] in which it consists are clear and certain—namely, that whatever we may say, the hearer either (a) doesn't know whether it is true; (b) knows that it is false; or (c) knows that it is true. In (a) he either believes it or has an opinion about it or doubts it; in (b) he opposes and rejects it; in (c) he bears witness to the truth. Hence in none of these three cases does he learn. We have established that the one who doesn't know the thing, the one who knows that he has heard falsehoods, and the one who could when questioned have answered precisely what was said, have each clearly learned nothing from my words.

[13.41] Consequently, even in the case of matters discerned by the mind, anyone who can't discern them hears in vain the discourse of one who does, save that it's useful to believe such things so long as they aren't known. Yet anyone who can discern them is inwardly a student<sup>57</sup> of Truth and outwardly a judge of the speaker, or rather of what he says. Often he knows

57. For 'student' Augustine uses *discipulus*, derived from *discere* (to learn): this connection is lost in the translation.

what is said even when the speaker doesn't know it. For example, if anyone believing the Epicureans and thinking that the soul is mortal should set forth the arguments for its immortality (discussed by more prudent thinkers) in the hearing of someone able to look upon spiritual things, then he judges that the speaker is stating truths. The speaker is unaware that he's stating truths. Instead, he holds them to be completely false. Should it then be thought that he teaches what he doesn't know? Yet he uses the very same words that someone who does know also could use.

[13.42] Accordingly, words don't have even the minimal function of indicating the speaker's mind, since it's uncertain whether he knows the truth of what he says. Moreover, in the case of liars and deceivers it's easy to understand that their minds are not only not revealed but are even concealed by their words. I don't by any means doubt, of course, that the words of those who tell the truth attempt to make the speaker's mind evident and somehow declare it. They would accomplish this, everyone agrees, if liars were not permitted to speak.

We have often had the experience in ourselves and in others, however, of words being uttered that don't correspond to the things thought about. I see that this can happen in two ways: (a) when a speech that has been committed to memory and often run through pours out of the mouth of someone thinking about other things, as frequently happens to us while we're singing a hymn; (b) when by a slip of the tongue some words rush out in place of others against our will, and here too signs are heard that aren't about the things we have in mind. (Liars also think of the things they say, so that although we don't know whether they're speaking the truth, we know that they have in mind what they're saying, should neither (a) nor (b) occur.) If anyone contends that (a) and (b) occur only occasionally and that it's apparent when they occur, I make no objection, though they are often unnoticed and they have often deceived me upon hearing them.

[13.43] There is another class in addition to these, one that is widespread and the source of countless disagreements and quarrels: when the speaker does signify the selfsame things he's thinking about, but for the most part only to himself and to certain others, whereas he

doesn't signify the same thing to the person to whom he's speaking and again to several other persons.

For example, let someone say in our hearing that man is surpassed in virtue by some brute animals. We immediately can't bear this, and with great vehemence we refute it as false and harmful. Yet perhaps he's calling physical strength 'virtue' and enunciating what he was thinking about with this name. He would be neither lying nor in error about things. Nor is he reeling off words committed to memory while turning something else over in his mind. Nor does he utter by a slip of the tongue something other than he wanted. Instead, he's merely calling the thing he's thinking about by another name than we do; we should at once agree with him about it if we could look into his thinking, which he wasn't yet able to disclose to us by the words he had already uttered in expressing his view.

They<sup>58</sup> say that definitions can remedy this kind of error, so that in this case if the speaker were to define what 'virtue' is, he would make it plain, they say, that the dispute is over the word and not the thing. Now I might grant this to be so. Yet how many people can be found who are good at definitions? In any event, there are many arguments against the system of definitions, but it isn't opportune to discuss them here; nor do I altogether approve them.

[13.44] I pass over the fact that there are many things we don't hear clearly, and we argue forcefully at great length about them as if they were things we heard. For example, you were saying recently, Adeodatus, that although I had asserted that mercy is signified by a certain Punic word, you had heard from those more familiar with this language that it signifies piety. Well, I objected to this, insisting that you completely forgot what you were told, because it seemed to me that you had said faith rather than piety;—though you were sitting right next to me, and these two names don't at all trick the ear by any similarity in sound. Yet for a long time I thought you didn't know what was said to you, whereas it was I who didn't know what you had said. If I had heard you clearly, it would never have seemed absurd to me that piety and mercy are named by a single Punic word.

58. Augustine likely has in mind the Peripatetics here.

These things often happen. Let's pass over them, as I said, so that I not seem to be stirring up quibbles against words because of the carelessness of hearing, or even of men's deafness. The cases we listed above are more bothersome, where we can't know the thoughts of the speakers, though we speak the same language and the words are Latin and are clearly heard.

[13.45] See here: I now give in and concede that when words are heard by someone who knows them, he can know that the speaker had been thinking about the things they signify. Yet does he for this reason also learn whether the speaker has stated truths, which is the question at hand?

[14.45] Do teachers hold that it is their thoughts that are perceived and grasped rather than the very disciplines they take themselves to pass on by speaking? After all, who is so foolishly curious as to send his son to school to learn what the teacher thinks? When the teachers have explained by means of words all the disciplines they profess to teach, even the disciplines of virtue and of wisdom, then those who are called 'students' consider within themselves whether truths have been stated. They do so by looking upon the inner Truth, according to their abilities. That is therefore the point at which they learn. When they inwardly discover that truths have been stated, they offer their praises— not knowing that they are praising them not as teachers but as persons who have been taught, if their teachers also know what they are saying. Men are mistaken in calling persons 'teachers' who are not, which they do because generally there is no delay between the time of speaking and the time of knowing; and since they are quick to learn internally after the prompting of the lecturer, they suppose that they have learned externally from the one who prompted them.

[14.46] At another time we shall, God willing, look into the whole problem of the usefulness of words— which, if considered properly, is not negligible! For the present, I have prompted you that we should not attribute more to words than is suitable. As a result, we should by now not only believe but also begin to understand how truly it has been written on divine authority that we should not call anyone on earth our teacher, since *there is one in heaven Who is the Teacher of all*. Furthermore, He Himself will teach us what 'in

heaven' is—He Who prompts us externally through men by means of signs, so that we are instructed to be inwardly turned toward Him. To know and love Him is the happy life which all proclaim they seek, although there are few who may rejoice in having really found it.

Now I would like you to tell me what you think of this whole disquisition of mine. On the one hand, if you know that what has been said is true, then if you were questioned about each of the points you would have said that you knew them. Therefore, you see from Whom you have learned these points. It isn't from me. You would have given all the answers to me were I to have questioned you. On the other hand, if you don't know that what has been said is true, neither I nor He has taught you—not I, since I can never teach; not He, since you still are not able to learn.

ADEODATUS. For my part, I have learned from the prompting of your words that words do nothing but prompt man to learn, and that the extent to which the speaker's thought is apparent in his speaking amounts to very little. Moreover, I have learned that it is He alone who teaches us whether what is said is true—and, when He spoke externally, He reminded us that He was dwelling within. With His help, I shall love Him the more ardently the more I advance in learning.

However, I'm especially grateful for this disquisition of yours, which you delivered without interruption, for this reason: it has anticipated and resolved everything that I had been prepared to say against it, and you didn't overlook anything at all that had produced a doubt in me; that private Oracle answered me about everything exactly as you stated in your words.

## 2. On Free Choice of the Will

### Book 2

3. But if you don't mind, let's pose our questions in the following order. First, how is it manifest that God exists? Second, do all things, insofar as they are good, come from God? And finally, should free will be counted as one of those good things? Once we have answered those questions it will, I think, be clear whether free will ought to have been given to human beings. So to take something quite obvious as our starting point, I will first ask you whether you yourself exist. Or do you perhaps fear that you might be mistaken even about that? Yet you could certainly not be mistaken unless you existed.

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EVODIUS. Yes; do go on.

AUGUSTINE. Well then, since it is obvious that you exist, and this could not be obvious unless you were alive, it is also obvious that you are alive. Do you understand that these two things are absolutely true?

EVODIUS. I understand completely.

AUGUSTINE. Then a third thing is obvious, namely, that you understand.

EVODIUS. Yes.

AUGUSTINE. Which of these three do you think is superior?

EVODIUS. Understanding.

AUGUSTINE. Why do you think so?

EVODIUS. Because there are these three things: existence, life, and understanding. A stone exists, and an animal is alive, but I do not think that a stone is alive or an animal understands. But whatever understands must certainly also exist and be alive. So I do not hesitate to conclude that something in which all

three are present is superior to something that lacks any of them. For whatever is alive also exists, but it does not follow that it also understands; such, I think, is the life of an animal. But from the fact that something exists it does not follow that it is alive and understands; for I can admit that corpses exist, but no one would say that they are alive. And whatever is not alive can certainly not understand.

AUGUSTINE. So we hold that corpses lack two of these characteristics, animals lack one, and human beings lack none.

EVODIUS. Yes.

AUGUSTINE. And we hold that the most valuable of these three is the one that human beings have in addition to the other two, that is, understanding; for whatever understands must also exist and be alive.

EVODIUS. Yes.

AUGUSTINE. Now tell me whether you know that you have the familiar bodily senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch.

EVODIUS. I do.

AUGUSTINE. What do you think pertains to the sense of sight? That is, what do you think we perceive by means of sight?

EVODIUS. All material objects.

AUGUSTINE. But we don't sense hard and soft by sight, do we?

EVODIUS. No.

AUGUSTINE. So what object of perception pertains specifically to the eyes?

EVODIUS. Color.

AUGUSTINE. And to the ears?

EVODIUS. Sound.

AUGUSTINE. And to smell?

EVODIUS. Odor.

AUGUSTINE. And to taste?

EVODIUS. Flavor.

AUGUSTINE. And to touch?

EVODIUS. Hard and soft, rough and smooth, and many such things.

AUGUSTINE. But what about the shapes of material objects—large, small, square, round, and so on? Can't we perceive them both by touch and by sight? So they cannot be attributed exclusively to sight or to touch; they pertain to both.

EVODIUS. I understand that.

AUGUSTINE. Then you also understand that some objects are perceived exclusively by one sense, while others can be perceived by more than one.

EVODIUS. Yes.

AUGUSTINE. But can we by any of our senses determine what belongs to just one sense and what to more than one?

EVODIUS. Not at all; we determine that by a kind of inner sense.

AUGUSTINE. But surely that inner sense is not reason itself, which animals do not have. For it is, I think, by reason that we understand these things and recognize that they are so.

EVODIUS. Actually, I think that by reason we understand that we have a kind of inner sense to which everything is conveyed from those five familiar senses. An animal's sense of sight is one thing; the sense by which it either avoids or pursues what it sees is quite another. Sight is in the eyes; the other sense is in the soul. By it animals either pursue and accept what gives them pleasure or avoid and reject what gives them pain, whether these things are the objects of sight or of hearing or of the other bodily senses. This inner sense is itself neither sight nor hearing nor smell nor taste nor touch; it is some other thing that presides over all of them. Although we understand this sense by means of reason, as I said, we cannot identify it with reason itself, since it is clearly present in beasts.

AUGUSTINE. I agree that there is such a thing, and I do not hesitate to call it "the inner sense." But unless the things that the bodily senses convey to us get beyond the inner sense, we can never attain knowledge. For we know only what we grasp by reason. And we know, for example, that colors cannot be perceived by hearing nor sounds by sight. We do not know this by means of the eyes or ears, or by that inner sense, which even animals have. For we must not think that animals know that the ears cannot perceive light nor the eyes sound, since we come to know that only by rational attention and thought.

EVODIUS. I can't say that I quite see that. What if animals do in fact use that inner sense, which you admit they have, to judge that colors cannot be perceived by hearing nor sound by sight?

AUGUSTINE. Surely you do not think that they can distinguish between the color that is perceived, the sense that exists in the eyes, the inner sense within the soul, and reason, by which each of these is defined and enumerated.

EVODIUS. Not at all.

AUGUSTINE. Could reason thus distinguish between these four things and provide them with definitions unless each of them were in some way conveyed to reason? Color is conveyed to reason through the sense of the eyes; that sense in turn is conveyed through the inner sense that presides over it; and the inner sense is conveyed through itself, at least if nothing interferes.

EVODIUS. I don't see how else it could be.

AUGUSTINE. Do you see that we perceive color by means of the sense of the eyes, but we do not perceive that sense by means of itself? For the sense that you use to see color is not the same sense that you use to see seeing itself.

EVODIUS. Not at all.

AUGUSTINE. Try to make a further distinction. I believe you will not deny that color is one thing and seeing color another; and it is yet another thing to have a sense by which one could see colors if they were present, even though no colors do happen to be present at the moment.

EVODIUS. I distinguish between these things and admit that each is different from the other two.

AUGUSTINE. Which of these three do you see with your eyes? Is it not color?

EVODIUS. It is.

AUGUSTINE. Then tell me how you see the other two—for you could not distinguish between them unless you saw them.

EVODIUS. I don't know how. I know that some such power exists, nothing more.

AUGUSTINE. Then you don't know whether it is reason itself; or that life that we call the "inner sense," which surpasses the senses of the body; or some other thing?

EVODIUS. No.

AUGUSTINE. But you do know that reason alone can define these things, and that reason can do this only for things that are presented to it for consideration.

EVODIUS. Certainly.

AUGUSTINE. So whatever this thing is by which we perceive everything we know, it is an agent of reason. It takes whatever it comes into contact with and presents that to reason so that reason can delimit the things that are perceived and grasp them by knowledge and not merely by sense.

EVODIUS. Yes.

AUGUSTINE. Then what about reason itself, which distinguishes between its agents and the things that they convey, which understands the difference between itself and them, and which affirms that it is itself far more powerful than they are? Surely reason does not grasp itself by anything other than itself, that is, by anything other than reason. How else would you know that you had reason, unless you perceived it by reason?

EVODIUS. Quite right.

AUGUSTINE. Now when we perceive color, we do not by that same sense perceive that we are perceiving. When we hear a sound, we do not hear our sense of hearing. When we smell a rose, we do not also smell our sense of smell. When we taste something, we do not also taste the sense of taste. When we touch something, we cannot also touch the sense of touch. It is therefore obvious that none of the five senses can perceive itself, although all of them can perceive material objects.

EVODIUS. That is obvious.

4. AUGUSTINE. I think it is also obvious that not only does the inner sense perceive what it receives from the five bodily senses, but it also perceives the senses themselves. An animal would not move to pursue or flee from something unless it perceived the fact that it was perceiving, and it cannot perceive that fact by any of the five senses. This perception does not amount to knowledge, since only reason can produce knowledge; but it does suffice to move the animal. Now if this is still unclear, it will help if you consider one specific sense. Take sight as an example. The animal could never open its eyes and look around to find what it wanted to see unless it perceived that it did not see that thing with its eyes closed or stationary. But if it perceives that it does not see when it is not seeing, it must also perceive that it does see when it is seeing, because the same appetite that makes it look around when it does not see makes it keep looking the same way when it does see. This shows that it perceives both.

But it is not so clear whether this life, which perceives that it perceives material objects, also perceives itself—except that everyone who considers the matter will realize that every living thing flees from death. Since death is the opposite of life, it must be the case that life perceives itself, because it flees from its opposite. But if this is not yet clear, disregard it, so that we can proceed to our goal solely on the basis of certain and obvious truths. The following truths are obvious: The bodily senses perceive material objects. No bodily sense can perceive itself. The inner sense, however, perceives material objects through the bodily senses and also perceives the bodily senses themselves. And by reason all of these things, as well as reason itself, become known and are part of knowledge. Don't you think so?

EVODIUS. Yes.

AUGUSTINE. Now then, what about this question we have already spent so much time trying to answer?

5. EVODIUS. As far as I remember, we are now dealing with the first of the three questions that we posed a little while ago to give coherence and order to this discussion; that is, although we must firmly and steadfastly believe that God exists, how can this fact be made manifest?

AUGUSTINE. Your memory serves you well. But I also want you to remember that when I asked you whether you knew that you yourself exist, we found that you knew not only this fact but two others.

EVODIUS. I remember that too.

AUGUSTINE. Which of the three includes everything that the bodily senses perceive? That is, in which category do you think we should place everything that we perceive by means of the eyes or any other bodily organ: in that which merely exists, in that which is also alive, or in that which also understands?

EVODIUS. In that which merely exists.

AUGUSTINE. What about sense itself? To which category does it belong?

EVODIUS. To that which is alive.

AUGUSTINE. Which of these two do you think is better: sense, or the thing that sense perceives?

EVODIUS. Sense, of course.

AUGUSTINE. Why?

EVODIUS. Because something that is alive is better than something that merely exists.

AUGUSTINE. Then what about the inner sense, which, as we found earlier, is lower than reason and is present both in us and in animals? Do you doubt that it is superior to the sense by which we perceive material objects, which is in turn superior to those material objects?

EVODIUS. Not at all.

AUGUSTINE. I want you to tell me why not. You can't very well say that the inner sense belongs to the category of things that understand; it belongs to the category of things that exist and are alive but lack understanding. For the inner sense is present even in animals, which lack understanding. Given that, I ask why you consider the inner sense superior to the sense by which we perceive material objects, since both belong to the category of things that are alive. You said that the sense that perceives material objects is superior to the objects that it perceives, because material objects belong to the category of things that merely exist, whereas sense belongs to the category of things that are also alive; but since the inner sense also belongs to this category, tell me why you think it is better. Perhaps you will say that this is because the inner sense perceives the bodily senses, but I don't think you are going to find any trustworthy rule stating that whatever perceives is better than the thing perceived. Such a rule might force us to say that whatever understands is better than the thing understood, which is false; human beings understand wisdom, but they are not better than wisdom. Therefore, see if you can explain why you thought that the inner sense is superior to the sense by which we perceive material objects.

EVODIUS. I think so because I know that the inner sense is a kind of controller or judge of the bodily sense. If the bodily sense falls short in performing its duty, the inner sense demands that its agent make good on this debt, as we discussed a little while ago. The sense of the eye does not see whether it is seeing or not, and so it cannot judge what it lacks or what is enough. That is the job of the inner sense, which warns even the soul of an animal to open its eyes and make up for what it perceives is missing. And everyone realizes that the judge is superior to the thing judged.

AUGUSTINE. Do you also realize that the bodily sense also judges material objects in a certain way? For it feels pleasure or pain, depending on whether it is

affected gently or harshly by the material object. Just as the inner sense judges what is adequate or inadequate in the sense of the eyes, so the sense of the eyes judges what is adequate or inadequate in colors. In the same way, just as the inner sense judges whether our hearing is sufficiently attentive or not, hearing itself judges whether sounds are pleasant or unpleasant. There's no need to go on to the other senses. I believe you already understand what I am trying to say: just as the inner sense judges the bodily senses when it approves their completeness or demands what is lacking, so the bodily senses judge material objects by accepting what is pleasing and rejecting what is not.

EVODIUS. I understand, and I concede that all of this is quite true.

6. AUGUSTINE. Our next subject is whether reason judges the inner sense. I won't ask whether reason is *better* than the inner sense, since I have no doubt that you think it is. And actually, I don't think we even need to ask whether reason judges the inner sense. Just consider all we know about the things that are below reason: material objects, the bodily senses, and the inner sense. How could we know that one is better than another, and that reason is more excellent than any of them, unless reason itself told us? And reason could not tell us this unless it judged all of these things.

EVODIUS. Clearly.

AUGUSTINE. So a nature that has existence but not life or understanding, like an inanimate body, is inferior to a nature that has both existence and life but not understanding, like the souls of animals; and such a thing is in turn inferior to something that has all three, like the rational mind of a human being. Given that, do you think that you could find anything in us—that is, anything that is part of our human nature—more excellent than understanding? It is clear that we have a body, as well as a sort of life by which the body is animated and nourished; both of these we find in animals. We also have a third thing, like the head or eye of the soul, or however reason and understanding might be more aptly described; and this, animals do not have. So I ask you: can you think of anything in human nature more exalted than reason?

EVODIUS. Nothing at all.

AUGUSTINE. What if we could find something that you were certain not only exists, but is more ex-

cellent than our reason? Would you hesitate to say that this thing, whatever it is, is God?

EVODIUS. Even if I found something better than the best part of my nature, I would not immediately say that it was God. What I call 'God' is not that to which my reason is inferior, but that to which nothing is superior.

AUGUSTINE. You're quite right, for God himself has enabled your reason to think so piously and correctly about him. But if you found nothing above our reason except what is eternal and unchangeable, would you hesitate to call that 'God'? For you know that material objects are changeable. It is obvious that the life by which the body is animated changes from one condition to another. And reason itself is clearly changeable: sometimes it strives for the truth and sometimes it doesn't; sometimes it attains the truth and sometimes it doesn't. If reason—not by any physical organ, not by touch or taste or smell, not by the ears or eyes or any sense inferior to itself, but by itself alone—sees something eternal and unchangeable, then it should confess that it is inferior, and that the eternal and unchangeable thing is its God.

EVODIUS. If we find that to which nothing is superior, I will certainly confess that it is God.

AUGUSTINE. Good. Then it will be enough for me to show that something of this sort exists, which you can admit to be God; or if something yet higher exists, you will concede that *it* is God. Therefore, whether there is something higher or not, it will be manifest that God exists, when I with his help fulfill my promise to prove that there is something higher than reason.

EVODIUS. Then show me your proof.

7. AUGUSTINE. I shall. But first I ask whether my bodily sense is the same as yours, or whether mine and yours are distinct. If they were not distinct, I could not see anything that you didn't see.

EVODIUS. I quite agree. We have the same *sort* of senses, but we each have our own individual sense of sight and hearing and so on. Not only can one person *see* what another does not, but the same is true of hearing and each of the other senses. This clearly shows that my sense is distinct from your sense.

AUGUSTINE. Would you say the same thing about the inner sense?

EVODIUS. Of course. My inner sense perceives my sense; yours perceives your sense. Other people often ask me whether I see what they see, precisely because they do not perceive, as I do, whether I see it or not.

AUGUSTINE. Then what about reason? Doesn't each of us have his own reason? For it sometimes happens that I understand something that you don't understand. And you can't know whether I understand it, whereas I do know that I understand it.

EVODIUS. Clearly each of us possesses a distinct rational mind.

AUGUSTINE. Now each of us has his own sense of sight. But surely you wouldn't say that each of us has a private sun that he alone sees, or personal moons and stars and things of that sort.

EVODIUS. Of course not.

AUGUSTINE. Then many of us can see a single thing at the same time, although each of us sees it with his own individual sense. Thus, although your sense is distinct from my sense, it can happen that what you see is not distinct from what I see, but is a single thing that is present to both of us and is seen by both of us at once.

EVODIUS. That is quite obvious.

AUGUSTINE. We can also both hear the same sound at the same time. Thus, although my sense of hearing is distinct from yours, we do not hear two distinct sounds at the same time, and we do not each hear just part of the sound. Rather, there is one sound that is present as a whole to both of us at the same time.

EVODIUS. That is obvious too.

AUGUSTINE. You will notice that in this respect the other bodily senses are not quite the same as sight and hearing, but they are not totally dissimilar either. You and I can both breathe the same air and perceive its odor, and in the same way we can both taste the same honey, or some other food or drink, and perceive its flavor. Although there is only one object of perception, we both have our own separate and distinct senses. Thus, when we both perceive one odor and one flavor, you do not perceive with my sense nor I with yours. And we do not share one sense between us; I have mine and you have yours, even if we are both perceiving the same odor or flavor. So in this respect taste and smell are like sight and hearing.

But in another respect they are quite different. Even if we smell the same air or taste the same food,

I do not inhale the same part of the air or eat the same part of the food as you. Of the total quantity of air, I breathe in one part that is enough for me, and you breathe in another part that is enough for you. And although we both partake of the same total quantity of food, we cannot both eat all of it, in the way that we can both hear all of the same word or see all of the same form at the same time. In the case of food or drink one part must enter my body and another part must enter yours. Do you understand this somewhat?

EVODIUS. Actually, I agree that this is quite straightforward and certain.

AUGUSTINE. Surely you don't think that the sense of touch is like sight or hearing in this respect. Not only can we both touch one object, but you can touch the very same part that I touched. Thus, by the sense of touch we can both perceive not only the same object, but the same part of the object. We cannot take the same quantity of food and both eat all of it, but this is not true of the sense of touch: you can touch all of what I touched. Thus, we need not confine ourselves to touching separate parts of an object; we can both touch all of it.

EVODIUS. In this respect, I admit, the sense of touch is quite similar to sight and hearing. But I see one difference. We can both see or hear all of something at the same time; but we can only touch different parts of something at the same time, or the same part of something at different times. For if you are touching something, I cannot touch it until you cease to touch it.

AUGUSTINE. A very astute reply. But notice this: there are, as we have seen, some objects of perception that both of us perceive, and some that we perceive individually. But we perceive our own senses individually—I don't perceive yours and you don't perceive mine. Now as for the things that we perceive by our bodily senses—that is, material objects—those that we must perceive individually are precisely those that we take and transform into a part of ourselves. Food and drink are like this: you can't taste any part that I have already tasted. Nurses give young children food that has already been chewed, but the part that has already been tasted and digested by the one who chewed it can in no way be recalled and used as food for the child. When the palate tastes something

pleasant, however small, it claims that thing as an irrevocable part of itself and forces it to conform to the nature of the body. If this were not so, no taste would remain in the mouth after the food had been chewed and spat out.

The same is true of the parts of the air that we inhale through the nose. Doctors teach that we take in nourishment through the nose. But even if you can inhale some of the air that I exhale, you can't inhale the part that nourished me, because it must remain within me. Only I can inhale that nourishment, and I cannot exhale it and give it back for you to breathe.

There are other objects of perception that we perceive without transforming them into parts of our body and thereby destroying them. These are the things that both of us can perceive, either at the same time or at different times, in such a way that both of us perceive the whole object or the same part of the object. Among such things are light, sound, and any material object that we touch but leave intact.

EVODIUS. I understand.

AUGUSTINE. Then it is clear that the things we perceive but don't transform do not belong to the nature of our senses, and so we have them in common, since they do not become our own private property, as it were.

EVODIUS. I quite agree.

AUGUSTINE. By 'our own private property' I mean whatever belongs to us individually, that which is perceived by only one of us and belongs to the individual's own nature. By 'common and public property' I mean whatever can be perceived by everyone without any change or transformation.

EVODIUS. Agreed.

8. AUGUSTINE. Well then, tell me this. Can you think of anything that is common to all who think? I mean something that they all see with their own reason or mind, that is present to all but is not converted to the private use of those to whom it is present, as food and drink are, that remains unchanged and intact whether they see it or not. Or do you perhaps think that nothing like this exists?

EVODIUS. Actually, I see that there are many such things, but it will suffice to mention just one. The order and truth of number is present to all who think, so that those who make calculations try to grasp it by their

own reason and understanding. Some can grasp it more easily than others can, but it offers itself equally to all who are capable of grasping it; unlike food, it is not transformed into a part of the one who perceives it. It is not at fault when someone makes a mistake; it remains true and complete, but the less one sees it, the greater is one's mistake.

AUGUSTINE. Quite right. Your quick reply shows that you are well acquainted with this subject. But suppose that someone told you that numbers are like images of visible things, that they are stamped on the soul, not by their own nature, but by the things that we perceive by the bodily senses. How would you respond? Would you agree?

EVODIUS. Not at all. Even if numbers were perceived by the bodily senses, it would not follow that I could also perceive the rules of addition and subtraction by the bodily senses. It is by the light of the mind that I refute someone who makes a mistake in adding or subtracting. Moreover, when I perceive something with the bodily sense, such as the earth and sky and the other material objects that I perceive in them, I don't know how much longer they are going to exist. But I do know that seven plus three equals ten, not just now, but always; it never has been and never will be the case that seven plus three does not equal ten. I therefore said that this incorruptible truth of number is common to me and all who think.

AUGUSTINE. Your reply is perfectly true and quite certain, so I make no objection. But you will easily see that numbers are not perceived by the bodily senses if you notice that each number is named on the basis of how many times it contains one. For example, if it contains one twice, it is called 'two,' if three times, 'three,' and if ten times, 'ten.' For any number at all, its name will be the number of times that it contains one. But anyone who thinks correctly will surely find that one cannot be perceived by the bodily senses. Anything that is perceived by such a sense is clearly not one but many, for it is a material object and therefore has countless parts. I won't even go into the minute and less complex parts, for any material object, however small, surely has a right and a left, a top and a bottom, a near side and a farther side, ends and a middle. We must admit that these parts are present in any material object, however tiny, and so we must con-

cede that no material object is truly and simply one. And yet we could not enumerate so many parts unless we had some knowledge of what one is. For if I look for one in material objects and know that I have not found it, I must surely know what I was looking for and what I did not find there; indeed, I must know that it cannot be found there, or rather, that it is not there at all. And yet, if I did not know one, I could not distinguish many parts in material objects. So where did I come to know this one that is not a material object? Wherever it was, I did not come to know it through the bodily senses; the only things we know through the bodily senses are material objects, which we have found are not truly and simply one. Moreover, if we do not perceive *one* by the bodily sense, then we do not perceive *any number* by that sense, at least of those numbers that we grasp by the understanding. For every single one of them gets its name from the number of times that it contains one, which is not perceived by the bodily sense. The two halves of any material object together constitute the whole, but each half can in turn be divided in half. Thus, those two parts are in the object, but they are not strictly speaking two. But the number that is called 'two' contains twice that which is strictly speaking one. Thus, its half—that which is strictly speaking one—cannot be further subdivided, because it is simply and truly *one*.

After one comes two, which is two times one; but it does not follow that after two comes two times two. The next number is three, and then comes four, which is two times two. This order extends to all numbers by a fixed and unchangeable law. Thus, the first number after one (which is the first of all numbers) is two, which is two times one. The second number after two (which is the second number) is two times two—since the first number after two is three and the second number is four, which is two times two. The third number after three (which is the third number) is two times three—since the first number after three is four, the second number is five, and the third number is six, which is two times three. And the fourth number after the fourth number is twice that number; for the first number after four (which is the fourth number) is five, the second number is six, the third number is seven, and the fourth number is eight, which is two times four. And in all the rest you will find the same order that we found

in the first two: however far any number is from the beginning, its double is in turn that far after it.

So we see that this order is fixed, secure, and unchangeable for all numbers. But how do we see this? No one perceives all the numbers by any bodily sense, for there are infinitely many of them. So where did we learn that this order extends to all of them? By what image or phantasm do we see so confidently this indisputable truth about number, which extends through infinitely many numbers? We see it by an inner light of which the bodily sense knows nothing.

For those inquirers to whom God has given the ability, whose judgment is not clouded by stubbornness, these and many other such examples suffice to show that the order and truth of numbers has nothing to do with the senses of the body, but that it does exist, complete and immutable, and can be seen in common by everyone who uses reason. Now there are many other things that are present generally and publicly, as it were, to those who use reason, and these things remain inviolate and unchangeable even though they are perceived separately by the mind and reason of each person who perceives them. Nonetheless, I do not object to the fact that the order and truth of number struck you most forcibly when you undertook to answer my question. It is no accident that Scripture associates number with wisdom: "I went around, I and my heart, that I might know and consider and seek after wisdom and number."<sup>1</sup>

9. But then how do you think we ought to regard wisdom itself? Do you think that each human being has his own personal wisdom? Or, on the contrary, is there one single wisdom that is universally present to everyone, so that the more one partakes of this wisdom, the wiser one is?

EVODIUS. I am not yet altogether certain what you mean by 'wisdom,' since I see that people have different views about what counts as wise in speech or action. Those who serve in wars think that they are acting wisely. Those who despise the military and devote their care and labor to farming think more highly of what they do, and call it wise. Those who are clever in thinking up money-making schemes consider

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1. Eccles. 7:25.

themselves wise. Those who neglect or renounce all of this, and everything that is temporal, and devote all of their energy to searching for the truth so that they might come to know themselves and God, judge that their own actions are truly wise. Those who do not wish to give themselves up to the leisure of seeking and contemplating the truth but instead busy themselves with the tedious duties of looking after the interests of human beings, and work to ensure that human affairs are justly regulated and governed, think that they are wise. And then again, those who do both, who spend some of their time in contemplating the truth and some of their time in the tedious duties that they think are owed to human society, regard themselves as the winners in the competition for wisdom. I won't even mention the countless sects, each of which holds that its own adherents are superior to everyone else, and that they alone are wise. Therefore, since we have agreed to answer only on the basis of what we clearly know, and not on the basis of what we merely believe, I cannot answer your question unless, in addition to believing, I know by reason and reflection what wisdom is.

AUGUSTINE. But don't you think that wisdom is nothing other than the truth in which the highest good is discerned and acquired? All the different groups you mentioned seek good and shun evil; what divides them is that each has a different opinion about what is good. So whoever seeks what ought not to be sought is in error, even though he would not seek it unless he thought it was good. On the other hand, those who seek nothing at all, or who seek what they ought to seek, cannot be in error. Therefore, insofar as all human beings seek a happy life, they are not in error; but to the extent that someone strays from the path that leads to happiness—all the while insisting that his only goal is to be happy—to that extent he is in error, for 'error' simply means following something that doesn't take us where we want to go.<sup>2</sup>

Now the more one strays from the right path in life, the less wise one is, and so the further one is from the truth in which the highest good is discerned and ac-

quired. But when one follows and attains the highest good, one becomes happy; and that, as we all agree, is precisely what we want. And so, just as it is obvious that we all want to be happy, it is also obvious that we all want to be wise, since no one can be happy without wisdom. For no one is happy without the highest good, which is discerned and acquired in the truth that we call 'wisdom.' Therefore, just as there is a notion of happiness stamped on our minds even before we are happy—for by means of that notion we know confidently and say without hesitation that we want to be happy—so we have the notion of wisdom stamped on our minds even before we are wise. By means of that notion all of us, if asked whether we want to be wise, answer yes, without the slightest hesitation.

Now that we have agreed about what wisdom is, although perhaps you could not explain it in words (for if your soul could not perceive wisdom at all, you would have no way of knowing both that you will to be wise and that you ought to will this, which I feel sure you won't deny), I want you to tell me whether wisdom, like the order and truth of number, is a single thing that presents itself to all who think; or rather, just as there are as many minds as there are human beings, so that I can see nothing of your mind and you can see nothing of mine, so there are as many wisdoms as there are potentially wise persons.

EVODIUS. If the highest good is one thing for everyone, then the truth in which that good is discerned and acquired must also be one thing that is common to all.

AUGUSTINE. But do you doubt that the highest good, whatever it is, is one thing for all human beings?

EVODIUS. Yes I do, because I see that different people take joy in different things as their highest good.

AUGUSTINE. I only wish that people were as certain about what the highest good is as they are about the fact that human beings cannot be happy unless they attain it. But that is a great question and might require a long discussion, so let's assume that there are as many different highest goods as there are different things that various people seek as their highest good. Surely it does not follow from that assumption that wisdom itself is not one and common to all, simply because the goods that human beings discern and choose in it are many and various. That would be like think-

2. The root meaning of the Latin word *errare* is "to stray from one's path, to lose one's way," but it was commonly extended to include moral and intellectual error.

ing that there must be more than one sun, simply because we perceive many and various things by its light. What in fact happens is that each person uses the will to choose which of these many things to enjoy looking at. One person prefers to look upon the height of a mountain, and rejoices at the sight, while another chooses the flatness of a plain, another the hollow of a valley, another the verdure of a forest, another the pulsing tranquility of the sea, and another uses some or all of these at once to contribute to his pleasure in seeing. And so there are many and various things that human beings see in the light of the sun and choose for their enjoyment, even though the light itself is a single thing in which each person's gaze sees and pursues what he will enjoy. So even supposing that there are many and various goods from which each person chooses what he wants, and that by seeing and pursuing that thing he rightly and truly constitutes it his highest good, it is still possible that the light of wisdom, in which those things can be seen and pursued, is a single thing, common to all the wise.

EVODIUS. I admit that it is *possible*; there's no reason why wisdom can't be a single thing common to all, even if there are many diverse highest goods. But I would like to know whether it is really so. Just because we admit that it's possible, we can't conclude that it is in fact the case.

AUGUSTINE. So, for the time being at least, we hold that wisdom exists; but we don't yet know whether it is a single thing that is common to all, or whether each wise person has his own wisdom, just as he has his own soul and his own mind.

EVODIUS. Exactly.

10. AUGUSTINE. So we are agreed that wisdom exists, or at least that wise people exist, and that all human beings want to be happy. But *where* do we see this truth? For I have no doubt that you do see it, or that it is in fact true. Do you see this truth in the same way that you see your own thoughts, of which I am completely unaware unless you tell me about them? Or can I see it too, just as you understand it, even if I hear nothing about it from you?

EVODIUS. Clearly, you can see it too, even if I don't want you to.

AUGUSTINE. So this one truth, which each of us sees with his own mind, is common to both of us.

EVODIUS. Obviously.

AUGUSTINE. By the same token, I don't think you will deny that wisdom should be diligently sought after, and that this statement is in fact true.

EVODIUS. I am quite sure of that.

AUGUSTINE. Then this truth is a single truth that can be seen in common by all who know it. Nonetheless, each person sees it with his own mind—not with yours or mine or anyone else's—even though the truth that is seen is present in common to everyone who sees it.

EVODIUS. Exactly.

AUGUSTINE. Consider the following truths: one ought to live justly; inferior things should be subjected to superior things; like should be compared with like; everyone should be given what is rightly his. Don't you agree that these are true, and that they are present in common to me and you and all who see them?

EVODIUS. Yes.

AUGUSTINE. And you surely could not deny that the uncorrupted is better than the corrupt, the eternal than the temporal, and the invulnerable than the vulnerable.

EVODIUS. Could anyone?

AUGUSTINE. Can anyone say that this truth is his own private possession, given that it is unchangeably present to be contemplated by all who are able to contemplate it?

EVODIUS. No one could rightly say that it is his own, since it is as much one and common to all as it is true.

AUGUSTINE. Again, who would deny that one should turn one's soul from corruption to incorruption; or in other words, that one should not love corruption but rather incorruption? And who, admitting that this is true, would not also understand that this truth is unchangeable and see that it is present in common to every mind that is capable of perceiving it?

EVODIUS. You're quite right.

AUGUSTINE. And does anyone doubt that a life that cannot be swayed by any adversity from its fixed and upright resolve is better than one that is easily weakened and overthrown by transitory misfortunes?

EVODIUS. Who could doubt that?

AUGUSTINE. Then I won't look for more truths of this sort. It is enough that you too understand and concede that it is most certain that these rules, these

lights of the virtues, are both true and unchangeable, and that they are present, either individually or collectively, to those who are able to see and contemplate them with their own mind and reason. But of course I must now ask whether you think that these truths are a part of wisdom. I'm sure you think that those who have attained wisdom are wise.

EVODIUS. Of course.

AUGUSTINE. Then consider those who live justly. Could they live thus unless they saw which inferior things to subject to which superior things, which like things to join to which, and which things to distribute to their rightful owners?

EVODIUS. No.

AUGUSTINE. And surely you will agree that someone who sees these things sees wisely.

EVODIUS. Yes.

AUGUSTINE. Now consider those who live in accordance with prudence. Do they not choose incorruption and recognize that it is to be preferred to corruption?

EVODIUS. Obviously.

AUGUSTINE. So when they choose the very thing that everyone admits they ought to choose, and turn their souls toward it, can it be denied that they choose wisely?

EVODIUS. I would certainly not deny it.

AUGUSTINE. So when they turn their souls toward that which they have wisely chosen, they are certainly turning them wisely.

EVODIUS. Absolutely.

AUGUSTINE. And those who are not deterred by any fear or punishment from that which they have wisely chosen, and toward which they have wisely turned, are undoubtedly acting wisely.

EVODIUS. Undoubtedly.

AUGUSTINE. Then it is utterly obvious that all of these truths that we called "rules" and "lights of the virtues" are part of wisdom, since the more one follows them and leads one's life by them, the more one lives and acts wisely. And whatever is done wisely cannot rightly be considered separate from wisdom.

EVODIUS. Exactly.

AUGUSTINE. So, just as there are true and unchangeable rules of numbers, whose order and truth

you said are present unchangeably and in common to everyone who sees them, there are also true and unchangeable rules of wisdom. When I asked you about a few of these rules one by one, you replied that they are true and obvious, and you conceded that they are present in common to be contemplated by all who are capable of seeing them.

11. EVODIUS. I am quite certain of that. But I would very much like to know whether wisdom and number are both included in one single class. For as you have pointed out, wisdom and number are associated with each other even in Holy Scripture. Or perhaps one derives from the other or is contained in the other; for example, perhaps number derives from wisdom or is contained in wisdom. I wouldn't dream of saying that wisdom is derived from number or is contained in number. I don't know how that could be, for I have certainly known my share of mathematicians (or whatever you call those who are highly skilled at computation), but I have known very few who are wise—perhaps none at all—and wisdom strikes me as being far nobler than number.

AUGUSTINE. You have touched on a point that often astonishes me as well. For when I contemplate within myself the unchangeable truth of numbers and their lair (so to speak) and inner sanctuary or realm—or whatever else we might call their dwelling-place and home—I am far removed from material objects. I may, perhaps, find something that I can think about, but nothing that I can express in words. So in order to be able to say anything at all, I return in fatigue to familiar things and talk in the customary way about what is right in front of me. The same thing happens to me when I think as carefully and intently as I can about wisdom. So, given the fact that both wisdom and number are contained in that most hidden and certain truth, and that Scripture bears witness that the two are joined together, I very much wonder why most people consider wisdom valuable but have little respect for number. They are of course one and the same thing. Nevertheless, Scripture says of wisdom that "it reaches from end to end mightily and disposes all things sweetly."<sup>3</sup> Perhaps the power that "reaches from

3. Ws 8:1.

end to end mightily” is number, and the power that “disposes all things sweetly” is wisdom in the strict sense, although both powers belong to one and the same wisdom.

Every material object, however mean, has its numbers; but wisdom was granted, not to material objects or even to all souls, but only to rational souls, as if it set up in them a throne from which to dispose all the things, however lowly, to which it gave numbers. But wisdom gave numbers to everything, even to the lowliest and most far-flung things. Thus, since we perceive the numbers that are stamped upon them, we can easily make judgments about material objects as things ordered lower than ourselves. Consequently, we come to think that numbers themselves are also lower than we are, and we hold them in low esteem. But when we begin to look above ourselves again, we find that numbers transcend our minds and remain fixed in the truth itself. And since few can be wise, but even fools can count, people marvel at wisdom but disparage number. But the learned and studious, as they separate themselves more and more from earthly filth, come to see ever more clearly that wisdom and number are united in the truth itself, and they regard both as precious. In comparison with that truth, they consider everything else worthless—not just the silver and gold that human beings covet, but their very selves.

It should not surprise you that people honor wisdom and denigrate numbers, simply because it is easier to count than to be wise. For you see that they consider gold more precious than lamplight—and yet, in comparison with light, gold is a ridiculous trifle. People give greater honor to what is vastly inferior, simply because even a beggar has a lamp to light, while few have gold. I don’t mean to imply that wisdom is inferior to number, for they are the same thing; but one needs an eye that can perceive that fact. Consider this analogy: light and heat are both perceived consubstantially, as it were, in the same fire; they cannot be separated from each other. Yet the heat affects only the things that are nearby, while the light is radiated far and wide. In the same way, the power of understanding that inheres in wisdom warms the things that are closest to it, such as rational souls; whereas things that are further off, such as material objects, are

not touched by the heat of wisdom, but they are flooded with the light of numbers. This matter may still be unclear to you; after all, no visible image can be perfectly analogous to something invisible. Nonetheless, you should notice this one point, which will suffice to answer the question that we set out to consider, and which is obvious even to lowly minds like ours. Even if we cannot be certain whether number is a part of wisdom or is derived from wisdom, or whether wisdom itself is a part of number or is derived from number, or whether both are names for a single thing, it is certainly clear that both are true, and indeed unchangeably true.

12. So you cannot deny the existence of an unchangeable truth that contains everything that is unchangeably true. And you cannot claim that this truth is yours or mine or anyone else’s; it is present and reveals itself in common to all who discern what is unchangeably true, like a light that is public and yet strangely hidden. But if it is present in common to all who reason and understand, who could think that it belongs exclusively to the nature of any one of them? I’m sure you remember what we discussed earlier about the bodily senses. The things that we perceive in common by the sense of the eyes and ears, such as colors and sounds that both of us see or hear, do not belong to the nature of our eyes or ears; rather, they are present in common for both of us to perceive. So you would never say that the things that you and I both perceive, each with his own mind, belong to the nature of my mind or of yours. When two people see the same thing with their eyes, you cannot say that they are seeing the eyes of one or the other of them, but some third thing at which both of them are looking.

EVODIUS. That is quite obviously true.

AUGUSTINE. Well then, what do you think of this truth we have been discussing for so long, in which we see so many things? Is it more excellent than our minds, or equal to them, or even inferior to them? If it were inferior, we would make judgments *about* it, not *in accordance with* it, just as we make judgments about material objects because they are below us. We often say, not just that they *are* a certain way, but that they *ought to be* that way. The same is true of our souls: we often know, not merely that they *are* a certain way,

but that they *ought to be* that way. We make such judgments about material objects when we say that something is not as white as it ought to be, or not as square, and so on. But we say that a soul is less capable than it ought to be, or less gentle, or less forceful, depending on our own character. We make these judgments *in accordance with* the inner rules of truth, which we perceive in common; but no one makes judgments *about* those rules. When someone says that eternal things are better than temporal things, or that seven plus three equals ten, no one says that it ought to be so. We simply recognize that it is so; we are like explorers who rejoice in what they have discovered, not like inspectors who have to put things right.

Furthermore, if this truth were equal to our minds, it too would be changeable. For our minds see the truth better at some times than at others, which shows that they are indeed changeable. But the truth makes no progress when we see it better and suffers no setback when we see it less. It remains whole and undefiled, giving the joy of its light to those who turn toward it but inflicting blindness on those who turn away. Why, we even make judgments about our own minds in accordance with that truth, while we can in no way make judgments about it. We say that a mind does not understand as much as it ought to, or that it understands just as much as it ought to. And the more a mind can be turned toward the unchangeable truth and cleave to it, the more it ought to understand.

Therefore, since the truth is neither inferior nor equal to our minds, we can conclude that it is superior to them and more excellent than they are.

13. But I had promised, if you recall, that I would prove that there is something more sublime than our mind and reason. Here it is: the truth itself. Embrace it, if you can; enjoy it; “delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.”<sup>4</sup> What more can you desire than happiness? And what greater happiness can there be than to enjoy the unshakable, unchangeable, and most excellent truth?

People cry out that they are happy when they passionately embrace the beautiful bodies of their spouses, and even of prostitutes; and shall we doubt that we are

happy in embracing the truth? People cry out that they are happy when, with throats parched by the heat, they come upon a wholesome and abundant spring, or when they are starving and find an elaborate feast; and shall we deny that we are happy when our thirst is quenched and our hunger appeased by the truth itself? We often hear voices crying out that they are happy if they lie among roses or other flowers, or enjoy the incomparable scent of the finest perfumes; what is more fragrant, more delightful, than the gentle breath of truth? And shall we doubt that we are happy when it breathes upon us? Many find their happiness in the music of voices and strings and flutes. When they are without it, they think they are miserable; and when they have it, they are in raptures. So when the silent eloquence of truth flows over us without the clamor of voices, shall we look for some other happiness, and not enjoy the one that is so secure and so near at hand? People take pleasure in the cheerfulness and brightness of light—in the glitter of gold and silver, in the brilliance of gems, and in the radiance of colors and of that very light that belongs to our eyes, whether in earthly fires or in the stars or the sun or the moon. As long as no poverty or violence deprives them of this joy, they think that they are happy; they want to live forever to enjoy such a happiness. And shall we fear to find our happiness in the light of truth?

No! Rather, since the highest good is known and acquired in the truth, and that truth is wisdom, let us enjoy to the full the highest good, which we see and acquire in that truth. For those who enjoy the highest good are happy indeed. This truth shows forth all good things that are true, holding them out to be grasped by whoever has understanding and chooses one or many of them for his enjoyment. Now think for a moment of those who choose what pleases them in the light of the sun and take joy in gazing upon it. If only their eyes were livelier and sound and exceptionally strong, they would like nothing better than to look directly upon the sun, which sheds its light even on the inferior things that weaker eyes delight in. It is just the same with a strong and lively mind. Once it has contemplated many true and unchangeable things with the sure eye of reason, it turns to the truth itself, by which all those true things are made known. It forgets

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4. Ps. 37:4

those other things and cleaves to the truth, in which it enjoys them all at once. For whatever is delightful in the other true things is especially delightful in the truth itself.

This is our freedom, when we are subject to the truth; and the truth is God himself, who frees us from death, that is, from the state of sin. For that truth, speaking as a human being to those who believe in him, says, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."<sup>5</sup> For the soul enjoys nothing with freedom unless it enjoys it securely.

14. Now no one is secure in enjoying goods that can be lost against his will. But no one can lose truth and wisdom against his will, for no one can be separated from the place where they are. What we called separation from truth and wisdom is really just a perverse will that loves inferior things, and no one wills something unwillingly. We can all enjoy it equally and in common; there is ample room, and it lacks for nothing. It welcomes all of its lovers without envy; it belongs to them all but is faithful to each. No one says to another, "Step back so that I too can get close; let go of it so that I too can embrace it." They all cleave to it; they all touch it. No one tears off a piece as his own food; you drink nothing from it that I cannot also drink. For what you gain from that communion does not become your own private property; it remains intact for me. When you breathe it in, I need not wait for you to give it back so that I can breathe it too. No part of it ever becomes the private property of any one person; it is always wholly present to everyone.

Therefore, the things that we touch or taste or smell are less similar to this truth than are the things that we hear and see. For every word that is heard is heard simultaneously and in its entirety by everyone who hears it, and any form that is seen by the eyes is seen equally by every eye that sees it. But these things bear only a very distant resemblance to the truth. For no sound exists all at once; every sound is produced in time and is distended in time, and one part of it is heard after another. And every visible form is ex-

tended in place and does not exist as a whole in any one place.

Moreover, any of these things can surely be taken away from us against our will, and there are many obstacles that keep us from enjoying them fully. For example, even if someone could sing a beautiful song that never came to an end, and those who were keen on it came eagerly to hear it, they would crowd together and fight for the places nearest the singer. And even then, they could not hold on forever to what they heard; the sounds would reach them and then vanish. Even if I wanted to look at the sun and could do so with an unflinching eye, it would desert me at sunset or when it was hidden by a cloud; and many other things would interfere with my pleasure in seeing the sun, and so I would lose it against my will. Besides, even supposing that I could always see a brilliant light or hear a beautiful sound, what would that profit me? I would have that in common with beasts.

But to the will that steadfastly desires to enjoy it, the beauty of truth and wisdom is not obscured by the crowds of eager listeners. It is not used up in the course of time; it does not move from place to place. Night does not cover it, and no shadow hides it. The bodily senses do not perceive it. It is near to those in all the world who turn themselves toward it and love it. It is eternally present with them all. It is not in any place, but it is present everywhere. It warns outwardly and teaches inwardly. It changes for the better all those who see it, and no one changes it for the worse. No one judges it, but apart from it no one judges rightly. And so it is clear beyond any doubt that this one truth, by which people become wise, and which makes them judges, not of it, but of other things, is better than our minds.

15. Now you had conceded that if I proved the existence of something higher than our minds, you would admit that it was God, as long as there was nothing higher still. I accepted this concession, and said that it would be enough if I proved that there is something higher than our minds. For if there is something more excellent than the truth, then that is God; if not, the truth itself is God. So in either case you cannot deny that God exists, and that was the very question that we had agreed to discuss. Perhaps it occurs to you that,

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5. John 8:31–32.

according to the teaching of Christ that we have accepted in faith, Wisdom has a Father.<sup>6</sup> But remember another thing that we have accepted in faith: the Wisdom that is begotten of the eternal Father is equal to him. That is not a matter for dispute right now; we must hold it with unshaken faith. For there is indeed a God, and he exists truly and in the highest degree. No longer is this a truth that we merely hold with unhesitating faith; we have achieved an unerring, although extremely superficial, form of knowledge. This is enough to enable us to explain the other things that relate to our question, unless you have some objection to make.

EVODIUS. I am so overwhelmed with joy that I cannot express it in words. I accept what you say; indeed, I cry out that it is most certain. But I cry out inwardly, hoping to be heard by the truth itself and to cleave to it. For I recognize that it is not merely one good among others; it is the highest good, the good that makes us happy.

AUGUSTINE. You do well to feel such joy—I too am rejoicing greatly. But I ask you, are we already happy and wise? Or are we merely on our way?

EVODIUS. I think we are merely on our way.

AUGUSTINE. Then how do you understand these certain truths that make you cry out for joy? And how do you know that they belong to wisdom? Can a fool know wisdom?

EVODIUS. Not as long as he remains a fool.

AUGUSTINE. So either you are wise, or you do not yet know wisdom.

EVODIUS. I'm not yet wise, but I wouldn't say that I am a fool either, since I do know wisdom. For I can't deny that the things I know are certain or that they belong to wisdom.

AUGUSTINE. But Evodius, wouldn't you agree that someone who is not just is unjust, and someone who is not prudent is imprudent, and someone who is not temperate is intemperate? Or is there some room for doubt on these matters?

EVODIUS. I agree that when someone is not just he is unjust; and I would say the same thing about prudence and temperance.

6. Augustine is alluding to the common practice of referring to God the Son as "Wisdom." Cf. 1 Cor. 1:24: "Christ the Power of God and the Wisdom of God."

AUGUSTINE. So when someone is not wise, isn't he a fool?<sup>7</sup>

EVODIUS. Yes, I agree with that too. When someone is not wise he is a fool.

AUGUSTINE. Well then, which are you?

EVODIUS. Call me whichever you like. I wouldn't dream of saying that I am wise, so given what I have just agreed to, I see that I must admit to being a fool.

AUGUSTINE. Then a fool knows wisdom. For as we said before, you could not be certain that you willed to be wise, and that you ought to do so, unless a notion of wisdom was present in your mind. The same is true of the things that you said in response to each of my questions, things that belong to wisdom itself and that you rejoiced to understand.

EVODIUS. Exactly.

16. AUGUSTINE. What then are we doing when we diligently strive to be wise? Do we not seek, with as much energy as we can command, to gather our whole soul somehow to that which we attain by the mind, to station ourselves and become firmly entrenched there, so that we may no longer rejoice in our own private goods, which are bound up with ephemeral things, but instead cast aside all attachments to times and places and apprehend that which is always one and the same? For just as the soul is the whole life of the body, so God is the happy life of the soul. While we are striving thus—as long as we do so wholeheartedly—we are on our way. We have been allowed to rejoice in these true and certain goods, even though for now they are like lightning flashes on this dark road. Isn't it written of Wisdom that she does this for her lovers when they come to her and seek her? For it is said, "She graciously reveals herself to them along the way, and in all of providence she runs to meet them."<sup>8</sup> Wherever you turn, she speaks to you in the traces that she leaves in her works. When you sink back down into external things, she uses the forms of those very things to call you back inside, so that you can see that whatever pleases you in material objects and entices

7. In Latin, the word for 'wise' (*sapiens*) is related to the word for 'fool' (*insipiens*) just as 'prudent' is to 'imprudent,' 'temperate' to 'intemperate,' and 'just' to 'unjust.'

8. Ws 6:16.

you through the bodily senses has number. Thus you will ask where that number comes from; returning within yourself, you will understand that you could neither approve nor disapprove of anything you perceive through the bodily senses unless you had within yourself certain laws of beauty to which you refer every beautiful thing that you see outside yourself.

Consider the heavens and the earth and the sea and everything in them that shines from on high or crawls here below, everything that flies or swims. They have forms because they have numbers; take away their form and number and they will be nothing. So they derive their being from the same source as number, for they have being only insofar as they have number.

Craftsmen who shape all kinds of physical forms use the numbers that they have in their craft to fashion their works. They put their hands and their tools to work until the object, which is being fashioned externally in accordance with the light of the mind within, is made as perfect as possible. The senses relay the object to the inner judge, which beholds the numbers above it, and it is pleased.

Next, ask what moves the craftsman's hands; it is number, for they too are moved in accordance with number. Now take away the work from his hands and the design from his mind, and imagine that he is moving his body for the sake of pleasure—you will call that "dancing." Ask what it is about dancing that gives pleasure: number will reply, "It is I."

Now consider the beauty of a material object at rest; its numbers remain in place. Consider the beauty of a material object in motion: its numbers vary through time. Enter into the craft from which these things proceed, and look in it for time and place: it exists at no time and in no place, for number dwells in it; its realm is not confined to space, nor is its age measured in days. When those who want to become craftsmen set themselves to learn the craft, they move their bodies in time and space, but their minds only in time; that is, they become more skilled with the passage of time.

Now pass beyond the mind of the craftsman to see eternal number. Wisdom itself will shine upon you from its inner throne and from the secret dwelling-place of truth. And if its brilliance overwhelms your weak sight, turn the eye of your mind back to the road

on which wisdom revealed itself to you graciously. But remember that you have merely put off a vision that you will seek again when you are stronger and healthier.

O wisdom, the sweetest light of a purified mind! Woe to those who abandon you as their guide and ramble about where you have left your traces, who love the things in which you speak to us instead of loving you, and forget what you are telling us. For you do not cease to tell us what and how great you are, and you speak to us in the beauty of every created thing. Even a craftsman somehow speaks in the very beauty of his work to the one who sees it, bidding him not to devote all his attention to the appearance of the material object that has been produced, but to look beyond it and recall with affection the one who produced it. But those who love what you make instead of loving you are like people who hear someone speaking wisely and eloquently and listen keenly to the charm of his voice and the construction of his words, while ignoring the most important thing: the meaning that his words signified.

Woe to those who turn away from your light and gladly embrace a darkness of their own. They turn their backs on you and are bewitched by the works of the flesh, which are like their own shadows; and yet even then, the things that delight them have something of the radiance of your light. But when someone loves a shadow, the eye of the soul grows weaker and more inadequate to look upon you. So he wanders in darkness more and more, and gladly pursues whatever comes easiest to him in his weakened state. Soon he is unable to see what exists in the highest degree. He thinks it is evil when someone cheats him when he is off his guard, or defrauds him when he is in want, or takes him captive and tortures him. But he deservedly suffers these things because he has turned away from wisdom, and what is just cannot be evil.

Whatever changeable thing you may look at, you could not grasp it at all, either by the sense of the body or by the contemplation of the mind, unless it had some form composed of numbers, without which it would sink into nothing. Therefore, do not doubt that there is an eternal and unchangeable form that sees to it that these changeable things do not perish, but pass through time in measured motions and a distinct variety of forms, like the verses of a song. This eternal form has no bounds; although it is diffused

everywhere, it is not extended in place, and it does not change in time. But through it all changeable things can be formed, and thus they complete and carry out the numbers of times and places in the way appropriate to things of their class.

17. For every changeable thing is necessarily also formable. (Since we call something that can be changed “changeable,” I shall call whatever can be formed “formable.”) But nothing can form itself, since a thing can’t give what it doesn’t have. So if something is to have a form, it must be formed by something else. If a thing already has some form, it has no need to receive what it already has; but if it lacks that form, it cannot receive from itself what it does not have. Therefore, as we said, nothing can form itself. And what more is there for us to say about the changeableness of both body and soul? Enough has already been said. And so it follows that both body and soul are formed by an unchangeable form that abides for ever.

To this form it has been said, “You will change them, and they shall be changed; but you are always the same, and your years will not fail.”<sup>9</sup> By “years without fail” the prophet means “eternity.” It is also said of this form that “abiding in himself he makes all things new.”<sup>10</sup> From this we understand that everything is governed by his providence. For if everything that exists would be nothing without form, then that unchangeable form—through which all changeable things subsist, so that they complete and carry out the numbers of their forms—is itself the providence that governs them. For they would not exist if it did not exist. Therefore, whoever has contemplated the whole creation and considers it carefully, if he follows the way that leads to wisdom, will indeed see that wisdom reveals itself graciously to him along the way and that in all of providence it runs to meet him. And as the joy of his burning desire to follow that way grows stronger, the very wisdom that he so ardently longs to achieve will make his way more beautiful.

Now if you can manage to find some sort of creature beyond what has existence but not life, and what has existence and life but not understanding, and what

has existence, life, and understanding, then you may dare to say that there is some good thing that is not from God. For these three classes may be designated by two words, ‘matter’ and ‘life,’ since both that which has life but not understanding, such as the lower animals, and that which has understanding, like human beings, can quite properly be called ‘life.’ But these two things, considered as creatures—for the word ‘life’ is also applied to the Creator himself, and his life is life in the highest degree—these two creatures, matter and life, are formable, as our previous statements showed. And since if they lost their form altogether they would fall into nothingness, it is quite clear that they subsist from that form that is always the same. Therefore, there can be no good thing, however great or small, that is not from God. For what created things could be greater than a life that understands or less than matter? However much they may lack form, and however great may be their propensity not to exist, nonetheless some form remains in them so that they do exist in some way. And whatever form remains in a deficient thing comes from the form that knows no deficiency and does not allow the motions of growing or decaying things to transgress the laws of their own numbers. Therefore, whatever is found to be praiseworthy in nature, whether it is judged worthy of small praise or great, should be referred to the ineffable and most excellent praise of their maker. Or do you have some objection to make?

18. EVODIUS. I confess that I am quite convinced that this is the way to prove that God exists—as well as it can be proven in this life among people like us. And I am also convinced that all good things come from God, since everything that exists—whether that which has understanding, life, and existence, or that which has only life and existence, or that which has existence alone—is from God. Now let’s take a look at the third question and see whether it can be resolved: should free will be included among those good things? Once that has been shown, I will concede without hesitation that God gave it to us, and that he was right to do so.

AUGUSTINE. You have done a good job of remembering what we set out to do, and you have most astutely realized that the second question has now been answered. But you ought to have seen that the third question too has already been answered. You had

9. Ps. 102:26–27.

10. Ws 7:27.

said that it seemed that God should not have given us free choice of the will, because whoever sins does so by free choice. I said in reply that no one can act rightly except by that same free choice of the will, and I affirmed that God gave us free choice in order to enable us to act rightly. You replied that free will should have been given to us in the same way that justice is given; no one can use justice wrongly. That reply of yours drove us into a roundabout path of discussion; along the way we showed that there is nothing good, however great or small, that is not from God. But that fact could not be shown clearly enough until we had first challenged the irreligious stupidity of the fool who “said in his heart, “There is no God.””<sup>11</sup> by attempting to find some evident truth to the contrary, going as far as our reason can take us in such an important matter, with God helping us along this precarious path. But these two facts—I mean that God exists and that every good thing is from him—which of course we believed quite confidently even before this discussion, have now been so thoroughly considered that this third fact seems altogether obvious: free will should indeed be counted as a good thing.

For earlier in our discussion it had become clear, and we had agreed, that the nature of the body is at a lower level than the nature of the soul, and so the soul is a greater good than the body. But even when we find good things in the body that we can use wrongly, we do not say that they ought not to have been given to the body, for we admit that they are in fact good. So why should it be surprising that there are also good things in the soul that we can use wrongly, but which, since they are in fact good, can only have been given by him from whom all good things come?

Consider what a great good a body is missing if it has no hands. And yet people use their hands wrongly in committing violent or shameful acts. If you see someone who has no feet, you admit that his physical well-being is impaired by the absence of so great a good, and yet you would not deny that someone who uses his feet to harm someone else or to disgrace himself is using them wrongly. By our eyes we see light and we distinguish the forms of material objects. They are

the most beautiful thing in our bodies, so they were put into the place of greatest dignity; and we use them to preserve our safety and to secure many other good things in life. Nonetheless, many people use their eyes to do many evil things and press them into the service of inordinate desire; and yet you realize what a great good is missing in a face that has no eyes. But when they are present, who gave them, if not God, the generous giver of all good things? So just as you approve of these good things in the body and praise the one who gave them, disregarding those who use them wrongly, you should admit that free will, without which no one can live rightly, is a good and divine gift. You should condemn those who misuse this good rather than saying that he who gave it should not have given it.

EVODIUS. But first I would like for you to prove that free will is a good thing, and then I will concede that God gave it to us, since I admit that all good things come from God.

AUGUSTINE. But didn't I just go to a great deal of trouble to prove that in our earlier discussion, when you admitted that every species and form of every material object subsists from the highest form of all things, that is, from truth, and when you conceded that they are good? The truth itself tells us in the gospel that the very hairs of our head are numbered.<sup>12</sup> Have you forgotten what we said about the supremacy of number, and its power reaching from end to end? What perversity, then, to number the hairs of our head among the good things, though of course among the least and most trivial goods, and to attribute them to God, the Creator of all good things—for both the greatest and the least goods come from him from whom all good things come—and yet to have doubts about free will, when even those who lead the worst lives admit that no one can live rightly without it! Tell me now, which is better: something without which we *can* live rightly, or something without which we *cannot* live rightly?

EVODIUS. Please, stop; I am ashamed of my blindness. Who could doubt that something without which no one lives rightly is far superior?

11. Pss. 14:1; 53:1.

12. Cf. Matt. 10:30.

AUGUSTINE. Would you deny that a one-eyed man can live rightly?

EVODIUS. That would be crazy.

AUGUSTINE. But you admit that an eye is something good in the body, even though losing it does not interfere with living rightly. So don't you think that free will is a good, since no one can live rightly without it? Look at justice, which no one uses wrongly. Justice, and indeed all the virtues of the soul, are counted among the highest goods that are in human beings, because they constitute an upright and worthy life. For no one uses prudence or fortitude or temperance wrongly; right reason, without which they would not even be virtues, prevails in all of them, just as it does in justice, which you mentioned. And no one can use right reason wrongly.

19. Therefore, these virtues are great goods. But you must remember that even the lowest goods can exist only from him from whom all good things come, that is, from God. For that was the conclusion of our previous discussion, which you so gladly assented to many times. Thus, the virtues, by which one lives rightly, are great goods; the beauty of various material objects, without which one can live rightly, are the lowest goods; and the powers of the soul, without which one cannot live rightly, are intermediate goods. No one uses the virtues wrongly, but the other goods, both the lowest and the intermediate, can be used either rightly or wrongly. The virtues cannot be used wrongly precisely because it is their function to make the right use of things that can also be used wrongly, and no one uses something wrongly by using it rightly. So the abundant generosity of the goodness of God has bestowed not only the great goods, but also the lowest and intermediate goods. His goodness deserves more praise for the great goods than for the intermediate goods, and more for the intermediate goods than for the lowest goods; but it deserves more praise for creating all of them than it would deserve for creating only some of them.

EVODIUS. I agree. But there is one thing that concerns me. We see that it is free will that uses other things either rightly or wrongly. So how can free will itself be included among the things that we use?

AUGUSTINE. In the same way that we know by reason everything that we know, and yet reason itself is in-

cluded among the things that we know by reason. Or have you forgotten that when we were asking what we know by reason, you admitted that we know reason itself by means of reason? So don't be surprised that, even though we use other things by free will, we also use free will itself by means of free will, so that the will that uses other things also uses itself, just as the reason that knows other things also knows itself. Similarly, memory not only grasps everything else that we remember, but also somehow retains itself in us, since we do not forget that we have a memory. It remembers not only other things but also itself; or rather, through memory we remember not only other things, but also memory itself.

Therefore, when the will, which is an intermediate good, cleaves to the unchangeable good that is common, not private—namely, the truth, of which we have said much, but nothing adequate—then one has a happy life. And the happy life, that is, the disposition of a soul that cleaves to the unchangeable good, is the proper and principal good for a human being. It contains all the virtues, which no one can use wrongly. Now the virtues, although they are great and indeed the foremost things in human beings, are not sufficiently common, since they belong exclusively to the individual human being who possesses them. But truth and wisdom are common to all, and all who are wise and happy become so by cleaving to truth and wisdom. No one becomes happy by someone else's happiness; even if you pattern yourself after someone else in order to become happy, your desire is to attain happiness from the same source as the other person, that is, from the unchangeable truth that is common to you both. No one becomes prudent by someone else's prudence, or resolute by someone else's fortitude, or temperate by someone else's temperance, or just by someone else's justice. Instead, you regulate your soul by those unchangeable rules and lights of the virtues that dwell incorruptibly in the common truth and wisdom, just as the one whose virtue you set out to imitate regulated his soul and fixed it upon those rules.

Therefore, when the will cleaves to the common and unchangeable good, it attains the great and foremost goods for human beings, even though the will itself is only an intermediate good. But when the will

turns away from the unchangeable and common good toward its own private good, or toward external or inferior things, it sins. It turns toward its own private good when it wants to be under its own control; it turns toward external things when it is keen on things that belong to others or have nothing to do with itself; it turns toward inferior things when it takes delight in physical pleasure. In this way one becomes proud, meddling, and lustful; one is caught up into a life that, by comparison with the higher life, is death. But even that life is governed by divine providence, which places all things in their proper order and gives everyone what he deserves.

Hence, the goods that are pursued by sinners are in no way evil things, and neither is free will itself, which we found is to be counted among the intermediate goods. What is evil is the turning of the will away from the unchangeable good and toward changeable goods. And since this turning is not coerced, but voluntary, it is justly and deservedly punished with misery.

20. But perhaps you are going to ask what is the source of this movement by which the will turns away from the unchangeable good toward a changeable good. This movement is certainly evil, even though free will itself is to be counted among good things, since no one can live rightly without it. For if that movement, that turning away from the Lord God, is undoubtedly sin, surely we cannot say that God is the cause of sin. So that movement is not from God. But then where does it come from? If I told you that I don't know, you might be disappointed; but that would be the truth. For one cannot know that which is nothing.

You must simply hold with unshaken faith that every good thing that you perceive or understand or in any way know is from God. For any nature you come across is from God. So if you see anything at all that has measure, number, and order, do not hesitate to attribute it to God as craftsman. If you take away all measure, number, and order, there is absolutely nothing left. Even if the rudiments of a form remain, in which you find neither measure nor number nor order—since wherever those things are there is a complete form—you must take that away too, for it seems to be like the material on which the craftsman works. For if the completion of form is a good, then the rudiments of a form are themselves not without goodness. So if

you take away everything that is good, you will have absolutely nothing left. But every good thing comes from God, so there is no nature that does not come from God. On the other hand, every defect comes from nothing, and that movement of turning away, which we admit is sin, is a defective movement. So you see where that movement comes from; you may be sure that it does not come from God.

But since that movement is voluntary, it has been placed under our control. If you fear it, do not will it; and if you do not will it, it will not exist. What greater security could there be than to have a life in which nothing can happen to you that you do not will? But since we cannot pick ourselves up voluntarily as we fell voluntarily, let us hold with confident faith the right hand of God—that is, our Lord Jesus Christ—which has been held out to us from on high. Let us await him with resolute hope and desire him with ardent charity. But if you think that we need to discuss the origin of sin more carefully, we must postpone that for another discussion.

EVODIUS. I will bow to your will and postpone this question, for I don't think that we have investigated it thoroughly enough yet.

### Book 3

1. EVODIUS. It has been demonstrated to my satisfaction that free will is to be numbered among good things, and indeed not among the least of them, and therefore that it was given to us by God, who acted rightly in giving it. So now, if you think that this is a good time, I would like you to explain the source of the movement by which the will turns away from the common and unchangeable good toward its own good, or the good of others, or lower goods, all of which are changeable.

AUGUSTINE. Why do we need to know that?

EVODIUS. Because if the will was given to us in such a way that it had this movement naturally, then it turned to changeable goods by necessity, and there is no blame involved when nature and necessity determine an action.

AUGUSTINE. Does this movement please you or displease you?

EVODIUS. It displeases me.

AUGUSTINE. So you find fault with it.

EVODIUS. Of course.

AUGUSTINE. Then you find fault with a blameless movement of the soul.

EVODIUS. No, it's just that I don't know whether there is any blame involved when the soul deserts the unchangeable good and turns toward changeable goods.

AUGUSTINE. Then you find fault with what you don't know.

EVODIUS. Don't quibble over words. In saying "I don't know whether there is any blame involved," I meant it to be understood that there undoubtedly is blame involved. The "I don't know" implied that it was ridiculous to have doubts about such an obvious fact.

AUGUSTINE. Then pay close attention to this most certain truth, which has caused you to forget so quickly what you just said. If that movement existed by nature or necessity, it could in no way be blameworthy. But you are so firmly convinced that this movement is indeed blameworthy that you think it would be ridiculous to entertain doubts about something so certain. Why then did you affirm, or at least tentatively assert, something that now seems to you clearly false? For this is what you said: "If the will was given to us in such a way that it had this movement naturally, then it turned to changeable goods by necessity, and there is no blame involved when nature and necessity determine an action." Since you are sure that this movement was blameworthy, you should have been quite sure that the will was not given to us in such a way.

EVODIUS. I said that this movement was blame-worthy and that therefore it displeases me. And I am surely right to find fault with it. But I deny that a soul ought to be blamed when this movement pulls it away from the unchangeable good toward changeable goods, if this movement is so much a part of its nature that it is moved by necessity.

AUGUSTINE. You admit that this movement certainly deserves blame; but whose movement is it?

EVODIUS. I see that the movement is in the soul, but I don't know whose it is.

AUGUSTINE. Surely you don't deny that the soul is moved by this movement.

EVODIUS. No.

AUGUSTINE. Do you deny that a movement by which a stone is moved is a movement of the stone? I'm not talking about a movement that is caused by us or some other force, as when it is thrown into the air, but the movement that occurs when it falls to the earth by its own weight.

EVODIUS. I don't deny that this movement, by which the stone seeks the lowest place, is a movement of the stone. But it is a natural movement. If that's the sort of movement the soul has, then the soul's movement is also natural. And if it is moved naturally, it cannot justly be blamed; even if it is moved toward something evil, it is compelled by its own nature. But since we don't doubt that this movement is blame-worthy, we must absolutely deny that it is natural, and so it is not similar to the natural movement of a stone.

AUGUSTINE. Did we accomplish anything in our first two discussions?

EVODIUS. Of course we did.

AUGUSTINE. I'm sure you recall that in Book One we agreed that nothing can make the mind a slave to inordinate desire except its own will. For the will cannot be forced into such iniquity by anything superior or equal to it, since that would be unjust; or by anything inferior to it, since that is impossible. Only one possibility remains: the movement by which the will turns from enjoying the Creator to enjoying his creatures belongs to the will itself. So if that movement deserves blame (and you said it was ridiculous to entertain doubts on that score), then it is not natural, but voluntary.

This movement of the will is similar to the downward movement of a stone in that it belongs to the will just as that downward movement belongs to the stone. But the two movements are dissimilar in this respect: the stone has no power to check its downward movement, but the soul is not moved to abandon higher things and love inferior things unless it wills to do so. And so the movement of the stone is natural, but the movement of the soul is voluntary. If someone were to say that a stone is sinning because its weight carries it downward, I would not merely say that he was more senseless than the stone itself; I would consider him completely insane. But we accuse a soul of sin when we are convinced that it has abandoned higher things

and chosen to enjoy inferior things. Now we admit that this movement belongs to the will alone, and that it is voluntary and therefore blameworthy; and the only useful teaching on this topic is that which condemns and checks this movement and thus serves to rescue our wills from their fall into temporal goods and turn them toward the enjoyment of the eternal good. Therefore, what need is there to ask about the source of the movement by which the will turns away from the unchangeable good toward changeable good?

EVODIUS. I see that what you are saying is true, and in a way I understand it. There is nothing I feel so firmly and so intimately as that I have a will by which I am moved to enjoy something. If the will by which I choose or refuse things is not mine, then I don't know what I can call mine. So if I use my will to do something evil, whom can I hold responsible but myself? For a good God made me, and I can do nothing good except through my will; therefore, it is quite clear that the will was given to me by a good God so that I might do good. If the movement of the will by which it turns this way or that were not voluntary and under its own control, a person would not deserve praise for turning to higher things or blame for turning to lower things, as if swinging on the hinge of the will. Furthermore, there would be no point in admonishing people to forget about lower things and strive for what is eternal, so that they might refuse to live badly but instead will to live rightly. And anyone who does not think that we ought to admonish people in this way deserves to be banished from the human race.

2. Since these things are true, I very much wonder how God can have foreknowledge of everything in the future, and yet we do not sin by necessity. It would be an irreligious and completely insane attack on God's foreknowledge to say that something could happen otherwise than as God foreknew. So suppose that God foreknew that the first human being was going to sin. Anyone who admits, as I do, that God foreknows everything in the future will have to grant me that. Now I won't say that God would not have made him—for God made him good, and no sin of his can harm God, who not only made him good but showed His own goodness by creating him, as He also shows His justice by punishing him and His mercy by redeeming him—but I will say this: since God foreknew that he was

going to sin, his sin necessarily had to happen. How, then, is the will free when such inescapable necessity is found in it?

AUGUSTINE. You have knocked powerfully on the door of God's mercy; may it be present and open the door to those who knock. Nevertheless, I think the only reason that most people are tormented by this question is that they do not ask it piously; they are more eager to excuse than to confess their sins. Some people gladly believe that there is no divine providence in charge of human affairs. They put their bodies and their souls at the mercy of chance and give themselves up to be beaten and mangled by inordinate desires. They disbelieve divine judgments and evade human judgments, thinking that fortune will defend them from those who accuse them. They depict this "fortune" as blind, implying either that they are better than fortune, by which they think they are ruled, or that they themselves suffer from the same blindness. It is perfectly reasonable to admit that such people do everything by chance, since in whatever they do, they fall.<sup>13</sup> But we said enough in Book Two to combat this opinion, which is full of the most foolish and insane error.

Others, however, are not impertinent enough to deny that the providence of God rules over human life; but they prefer the wicked error of believing that it is weak, or unjust, or evil, rather than confessing their sins with humble supplication. If only they would let themselves be convinced that, when they think of what is best and most just and most powerful, the goodness and justice and power of God are far greater and far higher than anything they can conceive; if only they would consider themselves and understand that they would owe thanks to God even if he had willed to make them lower than they are. Then the very bone and marrow of their conscience would cry out, "I said, 'O Lord, have mercy upon me; heal my soul, for I have sinned against you.'"<sup>14</sup> Thus they would be led in the secure paths of divine mercy along the road to wisdom, not becoming conceited when they made new

13. The Latin word for 'chance' (*casus*) is derived from the verb 'to fall' (*cado*).

14. Ps. 41:4.

discoveries or disheartened when they failed to do so. Their new knowledge would simply prepare them to see more, and their ignorance would make them more patient in seeking the truth. Of course I'm sure that you already believe this. But you will see how easily I can answer your difficult question once I have answered a few preliminary questions.

3. Surely this is the problem that is disturbing and puzzling you. How is it that these two propositions are not contradictory and inconsistent: (1) God has foreknowledge of everything in the future; and (2) we sin by the will, not by necessity? For, you say, if God foreknows that someone is going to sin, then it is necessary that he sin. But if it is necessary, the will has no choice about whether to sin; there is an inescapable and fixed necessity. And so you fear that this argument forces us into one of two positions: either we draw the heretical conclusion that God does not foreknow everything in the future; or, if we cannot accept this conclusion, we must admit that sin happens by necessity and not by will. Isn't that what is bothering you?

EVODIUS. That's it exactly.

AUGUSTINE. So you think that anything that God foreknows happens by necessity and not by will.

EVODIUS. Precisely.

AUGUSTINE. Now pay close attention. Look inside yourself for a little while, and tell me, if you can, what sort of will you are going to have tomorrow: a will to do right or a will to sin?

EVODIUS. I don't know.

AUGUSTINE. Do you think that God doesn't know either?

EVODIUS. Not at all—God certainly does know.

AUGUSTINE. Well then, if God knows what you are going to will tomorrow, and foresees the future wills of every human being, both those who exist now and those who will exist in the future, he surely foresees how he is going to treat the just and the irreligious.

EVODIUS. Clearly, if I say that God foreknows all of my actions, I can much more confidently say that he foreknows his own actions and foresees with absolute certainty what he is going to do.

AUGUSTINE. Then aren't you worried that someone might object that God himself will act out of necessity rather than by his will in everything that he is

going to do? After all, you said that whatever God foreknows happens by necessity, not by will.

EVODIUS. When I said that, I was thinking only of what happens in his creation and not of what happens within himself. For those things do not come into being; they are eternal.

AUGUSTINE. So God does nothing in his creation.

EVODIUS. He has already established, once for all, the ways in which the universe that he created is to be governed; he does not administer anything by a new act of will.

AUGUSTINE. Doesn't he make anyone happy?

EVODIUS. Of course he does.

AUGUSTINE. And he does this when that person is made happy.

EVODIUS. Right.

AUGUSTINE. Then suppose, for example, that you are going to be happy a year from now. That means that a year from now God is going to make you happy.

EVODIUS. That's right too.

AUGUSTINE. And God knows today what he is going to do a year from now.

EVODIUS. He has always foreknown this, so I admit that he foreknows it now, if indeed it is really going to happen.

AUGUSTINE. Then surely you are not God's creature, or else your happiness does not take place in you.

EVODIUS. But I am God's creature, and my happiness does take place in me.

AUGUSTINE. Then the happiness that God gives you takes place by necessity and not by will.

EVODIUS. His will is my necessity.

AUGUSTINE. And so you will be happy against your will.

EVODIUS. If I had the power to be happy I would be happy right now. Even now I will to be happy, but I'm not, since it is God who makes me happy. I cannot do it for myself.

AUGUSTINE. How clearly the truth speaks through you! You could not help thinking that the only thing that is within our power is that which we do when we will it. Therefore, nothing is so much within our power as the will itself, for it is near at hand the very moment that we will. So we can rightly say, "We grow old by necessity, not by will"; or "We become feeble by ne-

cessity, not by will”; or “We die by necessity, not by will,” and other such things. But who would be crazy enough to say “We do not will by the will”? Therefore, although God foreknows what we are going to will in the future, it does not follow that we do not will by the will.

When you said that you cannot make yourself happy, you said it as if I had denied it. Not at all; I am merely saying that when you do become happy, it will be in accordance with your will, not against your will. Simply because God foreknows your future happiness—and nothing can happen except as God foreknows it, since otherwise it would not be foreknowledge—it does not follow that you will be happy against your will. That would be completely absurd and far from the truth. So God’s foreknowledge, which is certain even today of your future happiness, does not take away your will for happiness once you have begun to be happy; and in the same way, your blameworthy will (if indeed you are going to have such a will) does not cease to be a will simply because God foreknows that you are going to have it.

Just notice how imperceptive someone would have to be to argue thus: “If God has foreknown my future will, it is necessary that I will what he has foreknown, since nothing can happen otherwise than as he has foreknown it. But if it is necessary, then one must concede that I will it by necessity and not by will.” What extraordinary foolishness! If God foreknew a future will that turned out not to be a will at all, things would indeed happen otherwise than as God foreknew them. And I will overlook this objector’s equally monstrous statement that “it is necessary that I will,” for by assuming necessity he tries to abolish will. For if his willing is necessary, how does he will, since there is no will?

Suppose he expressed it in another way and said that, since his willing is necessary, his will is not in his own power. This would run up against the same problem that you had when I asked whether you were going to be happy against your will. You replied that you would already be happy if you had the power; you said that you have the will but not the power. I answered that the truth had spoken through you. For we can deny that something is in our power only if it is not

present even when we will it; but if we will, and yet the will remains absent, then we are not really willing at all. Now if it is impossible for us not to will when we are willing, then the will is present to those who will; and if something is present when we will it, then it is in our power. So our will would not be a will if it were not in our power. And since it is in our power, we are free with respect to it. But we are not free with respect to anything that we do not have in our power, and anything that we have cannot be nothing.

Thus, we believe both that God has foreknowledge of everything in the future and that nonetheless we will whatever we will. Since God foreknows our will, the very will that he foreknows will be what comes about. Therefore, it will be a will, since it is a will that he foreknows. And it could not be a will unless it were in our power. Therefore, he also foreknows this power. It follows, then, that his foreknowledge does not take away my power; in fact, it is all the more certain that I will have that power, since he whose foreknowledge never errs foreknows that I will have it.

EVODIUS. I agree now that it is necessary that whatever God has foreknown will happen, and that he foreknows our sins in such a way that our wills remain free and are within our power.

4. AUGUSTINE. Then what is troubling you? Have you perhaps forgotten the results of our first discussion? Will you deny that nothing at all, whether superior, equal, or inferior, can coerce the will, and that we sin by our own wills?

EVODIUS. I certainly wouldn’t dream of denying any of those things. But still, I must admit that I can’t quite see how God’s foreknowledge of our sins can be consistent with our free choice in sinning. For we must admit that God is just, and that he has foreknowledge. But I would like to know how it can be just to punish sins that happen necessarily, or how things that God foreknows do not happen necessarily, or how whatever happens necessarily in creation should not be attributed to the Creator.

AUGUSTINE. Why do you think that our free choice is inconsistent with God’s foreknowledge? Because it’s foreknowledge, or because it’s God’s foreknowledge?

EVODIUS. Because it’s God’s foreknowledge.

AUGUSTINE. If you knew that someone was going to sin, he wouldn't sin necessarily, would he?

EVODIUS. Indeed he would. Unless I foreknew something with certainty, it wouldn't be foreknowledge at all.

AUGUSTINE. Then it's not God's foreknowledge that makes his sin necessary, but any foreknowledge, since if something is not foreknown with certainty, it is not foreknown at all.

EVODIUS. I agree. But where are you headed with this?

AUGUSTINE. Unless I am mistaken, you do not force someone to sin just because you foreknow that he is going to sin. Nor does your foreknowledge force him to sin, even if he is undoubtedly going to sin—since otherwise you would not have genuine foreknowledge. So if your foreknowledge is consistent with his freedom in sinning, so that you foreknow what someone else is going to do by his own will, then God forces no one to sin, even though he foresees those who are going to sin by their own will.

Why then can't our just God punish those things that his foreknowledge does not force to happen? Just as your memory does not force the past to have happened, God's foreknowledge does not force the future to happen. And just as you remember some things that you have done but did not do everything that you remember, God foreknows everything that he causes but does not cause everything that he foreknows. Of such things he is not the evil cause, but the just avenger. Therefore, you must understand that God justly punishes the sins that he foreknows but does not cause. If the fact that God foresees their sins means that he should not punish sinners, then he should also not reward those who act rightly, for he also foresees their righteous actions. Let us rather confess that nothing in the future is hidden from God's foreknowledge, and that no sin is left unpunished by his justice, for sin is committed by the will, not coerced by God's foreknowledge.

5. As for your third question, about how the Creator can escape blame for whatever happens necessarily in his creation, it will not easily overcome that rule of piety that we ought to bear in mind, namely, that we owe thanks to our Creator. His most abundant goodness would be most justly praised even if he had created us

at a lower level of creation. For even though our souls are decayed with sin, they are better and more sublime than they would be if they were transformed into visible light. And you see that even souls that are addicted to the bodily senses give God great praise for the grandeur of light. Therefore, don't let the fact that sinful souls are condemned lead you to say in your heart that it would be better if they did not exist. For they are condemned only in comparison with what they would have been if they had refused to sin. Nonetheless, God their Creator deserves the most noble praise that human beings can offer him, not only because he places them in a just order when they sin, but also because he created them in such a way that even the filth of sin could in no way make them inferior to corporeal light, for which he is nonetheless praised.

So you should not say that it would be better if sinful souls had never existed. But I must also warn you not to say that they ought to have been created differently. Whatever might rightly occur to you as being better, you may be sure that God, as the Creator of all good things, has made that too. When you think that something better should have been made, it is not right reason, but grudging weakness, to will that nothing lower had been made, as if you looked upon the heavens and wished that the earth had not been made. Such a wish is utterly unjust.

If you saw that the earth had been made but not the heavens, then you would have a legitimate complaint, for you could say that the earth ought to have been made like the heavens that you can imagine. But since you see that the pattern to which you wanted the earth to conform has indeed been made (but it is called 'the heavens' and not 'the earth'), I'm sure that you would not begrudge the fact that the inferior thing has also been made, and that the earth exists, since you are not deprived of the better thing. And there is so great a variety of parts in the earth that we cannot conceive of any earthly form that God has not created. By intermediate steps one passes gradually from the most fertile and pleasant land to the briniest and most barren, so that you would not dream of disparaging any of them except in comparison with a better. Thus you ascend through every degree of praise, so that even when you come to the very best land, you would not want it to exist without the others. And how great a distance

there is between the whole earth and the heavens! For between the two is interposed the watery and airy nature. From these four elements come a variety of forms and species too numerous for us to count, although God has numbered them all.

Therefore, it is possible for something to exist in the universe that you do not conceive with your reason, but it is not possible for something that you conceive by right reason not to exist. For you cannot conceive anything better in creation that has slipped the mind of the Creator. Indeed, the human soul is naturally connected with the divine reasons on which it depends. When it says "It would be better to make this than that," if what it says is true, and it sees what it is saying, then it sees that truth in the reasons to which it is connected. If, therefore, it knows by right reason that God ought to have made something, let it believe that God has in fact done so, even if it does not see the thing among those that God has made.

For example, suppose we could not see the heavens. Nonetheless, if right reason showed that some such thing ought to have been made, it would be right for us to believe that it was made, even if we did not see it with our own eyes. For if we see by thought that something ought to have been made, we see it only in those reasons by which all things were made. But no truthful thinking can enable someone to see what is not in those reasons, for whatever is not there is not true.

Many people go astray when they have seen better things with their mind because in searching for it with their eyes they look in the wrong places. They are like someone who understands perfect roundness and is angry because he does not find it in a nut, if that is the only round object that he sees. In the same way, some people see by the truest reason that a creature is better if it is so firmly dedicated to God that it will never sin, even though it has free will. Then, when they look upon the sins of human beings, they do not use their sorrow over sin to stop people from sinning; they bemoan the fact that human beings were created in the first place. "He ought to have made us," they say, "so that we would always enjoy his unchangeable truth, so that we would never will to sin." Let them not moan and complain! God, who gave them the power to will, did not force them to sin; and there are angels who never have sinned and never will sin.

Therefore, if you take delight in a creature whose will is so perfectly steadfast that he does not sin, it is by right reason that you prefer this creature to one that sins. And just as you give it a higher rank in your thinking, the Creator gave it a higher rank in his ordering. So be sure that such a creature exists in the higher places and in the splendor of the heavens, since if the Creator manifested his goodness in creating something that he foresaw would sin, he certainly manifested his goodness in creating something that he foreknew would not sin.

That sublime creature has perpetual happiness in the perpetual enjoyment of its Creator, a happiness that it deserves because it perpetually wills to retain justice. Next, there is a proper place even for the sinful nature that by its sins has lost happiness but not thrown away the power to recover happiness. This nature is in turn higher than one that perpetually wills to sin. It occupies a sort of intermediate position between those that persist in willing justice and those that persist in willing to sin. It receives its greatness from the lowliness of repentance.

But God, in the bounty of his goodness, did not shrink from creating even that creature who he foreknew would not merely sin, but would persist in willing to sin. For a runaway horse is better than a stone that stays in the right place only because it has no movement or perception of its own; and in the same way, a creature that sins by free will is more excellent than one that does not sin only because it has no free will. I would praise wine as a thing good of its kind, but condemn a person who got drunk on that wine. And yet I would prefer that person, condemned and drunk, to the wine that I praised, on which he got drunk. In the same way, the material creation is rightly praised on its own level, but those who turn away from the perception of the truth by immoderately using the material creation deserve condemnation. And yet even those perverse and drunken people who are ruined by this greed are to be preferred to the material creation, praiseworthy though it is in its own order, not because of the merit of their sins, but because of the dignity of their nature.

Therefore, any soul is better than any material object. Now no sinful soul, however far it may fall, is ever changed into a material object; it never ceases to be a

soul. Therefore, no soul ceases to be better than a material object. Consequently, the lowest soul is still better than light, which is the foremost among material objects. It may be that the body in which a certain soul exists is inferior to some other body, but the soul itself can in no way be inferior to a body.

Why, then, should we not praise God with unspeakable praise, simply because when he made those souls who would persevere in the laws of justice, he made others who he foresaw would sin, even some who would persevere in sin? For even such souls are better than souls that cannot sin because they lack reason and the free choice of the will. And these souls are in turn better than the brilliance of any material object, however splendid, which some people mistakenly worship instead of the Most High God. In the order of material creation, from the heavenly choirs to the number of the hairs of our heads, the beauty of good things at every level is so perfectly harmonious that only the most ignorant could say, “What is this? Why is this?”—for all things were created in their proper order. How much more ignorant, then, to say this of a soul whose glory, however dimmed and tarnished it might become, far exceeds the dignity of any material object!

Reason judges in one way, custom in another. Reason judges by the light of truth, so that by right judgment it subjects lesser things to greater. Custom is often swayed by agreeable habits, so that it esteems as greater what truth reveals as lower. Reason accords the heavenly bodies far greater honor than earthly bodies. And yet who among carnal human beings would not much rather have many stars gone from the heavens than one sapling missing from his field or one cow from his pasture? Children would rather see a man die (unless it is someone they love) than their pet bird, especially if the man frightens them and the bird is beau-

tiful and can sing; but adults utterly despise their judgments, or at least wait patiently until they can be corrected. In the same way, there are those who praise God for his lesser creatures, which are better suited to their carnal senses. But when it comes to his superior and better creatures, some of these people praise him less or not at all; some even try to find fault with them or change them; and some do not believe that God created them. But those who have advanced along the road to wisdom regard such people as ignorant judges of things. Until they can correct the ignorant, they learn to bear with them patiently; but if they cannot correct them, they utterly repudiate their judgments. 6. Since this is the case, it is quite wrong to think that the sins of the creature should be attributed to the Creator, even though it is necessary that whatever he foreknows will happen. So much so, that when you said you could find no way to avoid attributing to him everything in his creation that happens necessarily, I on the other hand could find no way—nor can any way be found, for I am convinced that there is no way—to attribute to him anything in his creation that happens necessarily by the will of sinners.

Someone might say, “I would rather not exist at all than be unhappy.” I would reply, “You’re lying. You’re unhappy now, and the only reason you don’t want to die is to go on existing. You don’t want to be unhappy, but you do want to exist. Give thanks, therefore, for what you are willingly, so that what you are against your will might be taken away; for you willingly exist, but you are unhappy against your will. If you are ungrateful for what you will to be, you are justly compelled to be what you do not will. So I praise the goodness of your Creator, for even though you are ungrateful you have what you will; and I praise the justice of your Lawgiver, for because you are ungrateful you suffer what you do not will.”

### 3. Reconsiderations

#### Book 1, Chapter 9

1. While we were still waiting in Rome, we decided to discuss the origin of evil. We carried on the discussion in such a way that reason would raise the things that we already believed on divine authority to the level of understanding, to the extent that we could do so with God's help. And since, after careful discussion, we agreed that the sole origin of evil is the free choice of the will, the three books that grew out of that discussion were entitled *On Free Choice*. I finished Books Two and Three, as well as I could at the time, after I had been ordained a priest at Hippo Regius.

2. So many things were discussed in these books that quite a few issues arose that I could not elucidate, or that would have required an extended discussion. Whenever a question admitted of more than one solution, and we could not determine which of these was closest to the truth, we postponed the question with the understanding that, whatever might turn out to be the truth, we could believe, or even prove, that God ought to be praised.

We took up this discussion in order to refute those who deny that the origin of evil lies in the free choice of the will and therefore contend that we should blame evil on God, the Creator of all natures. In keeping with this perverse error, these men, the Manichees, wish to assert the existence of an unchangeable principle of evil coeternal with God. Since this was the debate we had in mind, there was no discussion in these books of the grace of God, by which he so predestines his chosen people that he himself prepares the wills of those who are already using their free choice. Consequently, wherever the subject of grace arose, it was mentioned only in passing and not given the careful treatment that would have

been appropriate if it had been the principal topic of discussion. For it is one thing to search for the origin of evil and quite another to ask how we can be restored to our original innocence or press on toward a greater good.

3. Therefore, these new Pelagian heretics—who claim that the choice of the will is so free that they leave no room for God's grace, which they claim is given in accordance with our merits—should not congratulate themselves as if I had been pleading their cause, simply because I said many things in support of free choice that were necessary to the aim of our discussion.

Indeed, I said in Book One: "Evil deeds are punished by the justice of God." And I added, "They would not be punished justly if they were not performed voluntarily."

Again, in showing that a good will is so great a good that it is rightly preferred to all physical and external goods, I said, "Then I believe you realize that it is up to our will whether we enjoy or lack such a great and true good. For what is so much in the power of the will as the will itself?"

And in another place I said, "Then why should we hesitate to affirm that, even if we have never been wise, it is by the will that we lead and deserve a praiseworthy and happy life, or a contemptible and unhappy one?"

And again in another place I said, "From this it follows that all who will to live upright and honorable lives, if they will this more than they will transitory things, attain such a great good so easily that they have it by the very act of willing to have it."

And again elsewhere I said, "For the eternal law (to which it is time for us to return) has established with unshakable firmness that the will is rewarded with happiness or punished with unhappiness depending on its merit."

And in another place I said, "We have determined that the choice to follow and embrace one or the other lies with the will."

In Book Two I said: "For human beings as such are good things, since they can live rightly if they so will."

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From Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will*, tr. Thomas Williams (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1994). Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

And in another place I said “. . . no one can act rightly except by that same free choice.”

In Book Three I said, “Now we admit that this movement [sin] belongs to the will alone, and that it is voluntary and therefore blameworthy; and the only useful teaching on this topic is that which condemns and checks this movement and thus serves to rescue our wills from their fall into temporal goods and turn them toward the enjoyment of the eternal good. Therefore, what need is there to ask about the source of the movement by which the will turns away from the unchangeable good toward changeable good?”

And in another place I said, “How clearly the truth speaks through you! You could not help thinking that the only thing that is within our power is that which we do when we will it. Therefore, nothing is so much within our power as the will itself, for it is near at hand the very moment that we will.”

Again, in another place I said, “For if you are praised for seeing what you ought to do, although you can see it only in God, who is the unchangeable Truth, how much more should God be praised! For it was God who decreed what you ought to will, who gave you the power to will it, and who did not permit your unwillingness to go unpunished.” And then I added, “Now if everyone owes what he has received, and human beings were made in such a way that they necessarily sinned, then they ought to sin. Therefore, when they sin, they are doing what they ought to do. But if it is wicked to say such a thing, then no one is compelled to sin, whether by his own nature or by someone else’s.”

And furthermore I said, “And besides, what could be the cause of the will before the will itself? Either it is the will itself, in which case the root of all evils is still the will, or else it is not the will, in which case there is no sin. So either the will is the first cause of sin, or no sin is the first cause of sin. And you cannot rightly assign responsibility for a sin to anyone but the sinner; therefore, you cannot rightly assign responsibility except to someone who wills it.”

And a little further on I said, “For who sins by doing what he cannot guard against? But there is sin, so it is possible to guard against it.” Pelagius made use of this statement in some book of his; when I responded to his book I decided to call my own book *On Nature and Grace*.

4. In these and similar passages I did not mention the grace of God, which was not then under discussion. Consequently, the Pelagians think, or could think, that I held their view. Far from it. As I emphasized in these passages, it is indeed by the will that we sin or live rightly. But unless the will is liberated by grace from its bondage to sin and is helped to overcome its vices, mortals cannot lead pious and righteous lives. And unless the divine grace by which the will is freed preceded the act of the will, it would not be grace at all. It would be given in accordance with the will’s merits, whereas grace is given freely. I have dealt satisfactorily with these questions in other works, refuting these upstart heretics who are the enemies of grace. But even in *On Free Choice of the Will*, which was not aimed at the Pelagians (who did not yet exist) but at the Manichees, I was not completely silent on the subject of grace, which the Pelagians in their abominable impiety are trying to take away altogether.

Indeed, I said in Book Two, “But you must remember that even the lowest goods can exist only from him from whom all good things come, that is, from God.” And a little further on I said, “Thus, the virtues, by which one lives rightly, are great goods; the beauty of various material objects, without which one can live rightly, are the lowest goods; and the powers of the soul, without which one cannot live rightly, are intermediate goods. No one uses the virtues wrongly, but the other goods, both the lowest and the intermediate, can be used either rightly or wrongly. The virtues cannot be used wrongly precisely because it is their function to make the right use of things that can also be used wrongly, and no one uses something wrongly by using it rightly. So the abundant generosity of the goodness of God has bestowed not only the great goods, but also the lowest and intermediate goods. His goodness deserves more praise for the great goods than for the intermediate goods, and more for the intermediate goods than for the lowest goods; but it deserves more praise for creating all of them than it would deserve for creating only some of them.”

And in another place I said, “You must simply hold with unshaken faith that every good thing that you perceive or understand or in any way know is from God.”

And again in another place I said, “But since we cannot pick ourselves up voluntarily as we fell volun-

tarily, let us hold with confident faith the right hand of God—that is, our Lord Jesus Christ—which has been held out to us from on high.”

5. And in Book Three, in making the statement that, as I have already mentioned, Pelagius himself quoted from my works (“For who sins by doing what he cannot guard against? But there is sin, so it is possible to guard against it.”), I immediately went on to say, “Nonetheless, even some acts committed out of ignorance are condemned and judged to be worthy of correction, as we read in Scripture. Saint Paul says, ‘I obtained your mercy, since I acted in ignorance.’ The Psalmist says, ‘Remember not the sins of my youth and of my ignorance.’ Even things done by necessity are to be condemned, as when someone wants to act rightly but cannot. That is what the following passages mean. . . . ‘To will the good is present to me, but I find no way to do it.’ ‘The flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh; for they war against each other, so that you do not do what you will.’ All of these troubles have come upon human beings from the sentence of death, for if they were the result of our nature and not of our penalty, they would not be sins. If we were made to act this way naturally, so that we could do no better, we would merely be acting as we ought. If human beings were good, they would be otherwise. But as it is, they are not good, and it is not in their power to be good, either because they do not see how they ought to be, or because they lack the power to be what they see they ought to be. Who could doubt that this is a penalty? But every just penalty is a penalty for sin, and so it is called ‘punishment.’ On the other hand, if this penalty (since no one doubts that it is in fact a penalty) is unjust, it is imposed by the unjust domination of some human being. But since it would be foolish to doubt the omnipotence and justice of God, this penalty is just, and it is imposed because of sin. No unjust man could secretly usurp God’s dominion (as if God were unaware of what was happening) or wrest them away against his will (as if God were so weak that he could be overcome by fear or force) so as to torture them with an unjust penalty. Therefore, the only remaining possibility is that this just penalty is a consequence of the damnation of human beings.”

And again in another place I say, “But to accept falsehoods as truths, thus erring unwillingly; to strug-

gle against the pain of carnal bondage and not be able to refrain from acts of inordinate desire: these do not belong to the nature that human beings were created with; they are the penalty of a condemned prisoner. But when we speak of free will to act rightly, we mean the will with which human beings were created.”

6. Thus, long before the Pelagian heresy had arisen, I argued just as if I were combatting the Pelagians. For when it is said that all good things—the great, the intermediate, and the lowest goods—come from God, free choice of the will is among the intermediate goods, because it can be used either rightly or wrongly, but we cannot live rightly without it. The right use of free choice is virtue, which is found among the great goods, which no one can use wrongly. And since, as I have said, all good things—the great, the intermediate, and the lowest goods—are from God, it follows that the right use of our free will, which is virtue and is included among the great goods, is also from God.

Then I said that the grace of God frees us from the misery that was justly imposed upon sinners. For human beings cannot pick themselves up voluntarily—that is, by their own free choice—as they fell voluntarily. To the misery imposed by this just condemnation belong ignorance and difficulty, which afflict all human beings from the very outset of their lives. And no one is freed from that evil except by the grace of God. The Pelagians deny that this misery derives from a just condemnation, for they disbelieve in original sin. But as I argued in Book Three, even if ignorance and difficulty belonged to the nature with which human beings were originally created, God would still deserve praise and not blame.

This discussion was directed against the Manichees, who do not accept the Old Testament, where the story of the original sin is told. And they have the reprehensible impudence to claim that whatever they read on that subject in the letters of the apostles was inserted later by those who corrupted the text of Scripture, and was not written by the apostles at all. In arguing against the Pelagians, on the other hand, we must defend our views from the Old as well as the New Testament, since they claim to accept both.

This book begins: “Please tell me: isn’t God the cause of evil?”

## 4. On the Trinity

### Book 15

First of all, that knowledge around which our thought is truly formed when we say what we know, what kind and how much [of it] can arise in a man, however expert and learned [he is]? For, apart from the things that come into the mind from the bodily senses, among which so many are otherwise than they seem that one who is overly impressed by their illusoriness [*verisimilitudine*] seems to himself to be healthy, although he is insane—hence the Academic philosophy has so prevailed that, doubting about all things, it would rave even more pitifully—apart from these things that come into the mind from the bodily senses, what remains of the things that we know, as we know that we are alive?

On that point we are absolutely without fear that perhaps we are deceived by some illusion. For it is certain that even he who is deceived is alive. Neither is this included among those objects of sight that strike [us] from outside so that the eye is deceived about it, just as it is deceived when the oar seems broken in the water, and a tower [seems] to move to those sailing past, and six hundred other things that are otherwise than they seem. For this one is not perceived with the eye of the flesh.

It is an intimate knowledge by which we know we are alive, where even the Academic cannot say, “Maybe you are asleep and do not know it, and you see in your dreams.” Certainly, who does not know that the things seen by those who are dreaming are exactly like the things seen by those awake? But he who is certain about knowing he is alive does not say thereby “I know I am awake” but “I know that I am alive.” Therefore, whether he is sleeping or awake, he is alive. Neither can he be deceived by dreams in that knowledge, because both sleeping and seeing in dreams belong to the living.

Nor can the Academic say in opposition to this knowledge, “Maybe you are mad and do not know it.” For the things that appear to the mad are also exactly like those that appear to the sane. But he who is mad is alive. Nor does he say against the Academics “I know I am not mad” but “I know I am alive.”

Therefore, he who says he knows he is alive is neither deceived nor lying. And so, let a thousand kinds of deceptive visions be set before one who says “I know I am alive.” He will fear none of them as long as even he who is deceived is alive.

But if only things like these pertain to human knowledge, they are pretty few—unless in each kind they are so multiplied that they are not only not few, but in fact are found to stretch to infinity. For he who says “I know I am alive” says he knows one thing. Then if he says “I know I know I am alive,” there are two. But now the fact that he knows these two things is a third bit of knowledge. [And] in this way he can add both a fourth and a fifth—and countless many, if he is up to it. But because one cannot exhaust [*comprehendere*] an uncountably large number by adding units, or say [something] countless times, this very fact he comprehends, and says both that it is true and that it is so uncountable that he cannot exhaust the infinite number of its expression [*verbi eius*] and say it.<sup>1</sup>

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1. This last sentence trades on the word ‘*comprehendere*.’ The basic meaning is “to grasp completely,” to “get your hand completely around” something. In an epistemological sense, to “comprehend” something is to know it exhaustively. Augustine also uses the word here in another sense, where to “comprehend” a process is to “get completely around it,” that is, to *finish* the process. So too, to “comprehend” a number is to “get completely around it,” that is, to be able to count up to it and beyond. The point of the sentence then is that, although one can in principle reiterate “I know that *p*,” “I know that I know that *p*,” etc., to infinity, nevertheless one cannot actually utter an infinitely long sentence after that pattern, or even actually count up to and beyond the number of reiterations such an infinitely long sentence would have. Yet I

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This can also be observed for a will that is certain. Who is there for whom it is not impudent to reply “Maybe you are deceived” when he says “I want to be happy”? And if he says “I know that I want this, and I know that I know this,” he can now add to these two a third item, that he knows these two, and a fourth, that he knows he knows these two, and proceed in this way to an infinite number.

Again, if someone says “I do not want to make a mistake,” [then] whether he makes a mistake or does not make a mistake, will it not nevertheless be true that he does not *want* to make a mistake? Who is there for whom it would not be most impudent to say to such a one “Maybe you are deceived”? For certainly, whenever he is deceived, nevertheless he is not deceived about not *wanting* to be deceived. And if he says that he knows this, he adds as much as he wants to the number of things known, and observes that the number is infinite. For he who says “I do not want to be deceived, and I know I do not want that, and I know I know that” can indicate this infinite number, although not by its full expression.

Other things are found too that work against the Academics, who maintain that nothing is known by man. But we must put a stop to this, especially since we have not taken up that task in the present work. There are three books of ours,<sup>2</sup> written right after our conversion. Surely none of the many arguments that

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*can* “comprehend” (in the epistemological sense) that very fact and say that there is this truth that I cannot ever get to the end of saying.

2. That is, *Against the Academics*.

are made up by [the Academics] against the perception of truth will influence anyone who is able and wants to read these [books], and understands them when he has read them.

For while there are two kinds of things that are known, one [consisting] of those the mind perceives through bodily sense and the other of those [it perceives] through itself, these philosophers have chattered on a great deal against the senses of the body, but they have never been able to call into doubt the mind’s most steadfast perceptions, [which] it gets through itself, of true things—for example, “I know I am alive,” as I said.

But far be it from us that we should doubt the things we have learned through the bodily senses. For through them we have learned about heaven and earth and the things in them that are known to us, insofar as he who made both us and them wanted [them] to become known to us. Far be it from us too that we should deny that we know what we have learned through the testimony of others. Apart from them, we do not know there is an ocean; we do not know there are the lands and cities that famous reports describe for us; we do not know that the men and their deeds existed that we learn about by reading history; we do not know the things that are reported every day from whatever quarter and are confirmed by indications that are consistent and in agreement [with one another]; finally, we do not know in what places or from what people we arose. For all these things we believe on the testimony of others.

If it is quite absurd to say all that, [then] it must be confessed that not only the senses of our own bodies, but those of other people’s bodies too, add to our knowledge.

## 5. Confessions

### Book 2

4.9. Certainly, O Lord, your law punishes theft; and it is a law written upon human hearts, a law that not even iniquity itself erases. After all, what thief will tolerate another thief? Even a rich thief will not put up with someone who steals out of need. And yet I willed to steal, and I carried out the theft, driven by no need—except that I was bereft of justice—which I loathed—and crammed full of iniquity. For I stole something of which I already had plenty, and much better than what I stole. Nor did I want to enjoy the thing that I desired to steal; what I wanted to enjoy was the theft itself, the sin.

There was a pear tree near our orchard, laden with fruit that was not enticing in either appearance or taste. One wretched night—it was our unhealthy custom to keep up our games in the streets well into the night, and we had done so then—a band of altogether worthless young men set out to shake that tree and run off with its fruit. We took away an enormous haul, not for our own food but to throw to the pigs. Perhaps we ate something, but even if we did, it was for the fun of doing what was not allowed that we took the pears. Behold my heart, O God; behold my heart, on which you had mercy in the depths of that abyss. Behold, let my heart tell you now what it was seeking there: seeking in such a way that I would be wicked for no reason, so that there would be no cause for my wickedness but wickedness itself. It was foul, this wickedness, and yet I loved it. I loved perishing. I loved my own falling away: I did not love the thing into which I fell, but the fall itself. In my very soul I was vile, and I leapt down from your firmament into destruction, not striving for something disgraceful, but seeking disgrace.

5.10. Truly there is a loveliness in beautiful bodies, in gold and silver and all the rest; in fleshly touch there

is great power in harmony; and each of the other senses has a bodily quality accommodated to it. Honor in this age and the power to command and subdue have their splendor; from them arises the eagerness to exact vengeance. And yet in striving after all these things we must not depart from you, O Lord, or stray from your law. The life that we live here has an attractiveness all its own because of the due measure of its beauty and its fitting relation to all these things that are the lowest of beautiful objects. Human friendship, too, is sweet in its precious bond because it makes many souls one. On account of all these things, and others like them, we make room for sin: because of our ungoverned inclination toward these things—for though they are goods, they are the lowest goods—we abandon the better and the highest goods; we abandon you, O Lord, and your truth and your law. For even those lowest things have their delights, but not like my God, who created all things; for the just delight in God, and he is the delight of those who are upright in heart.

5.11. When a question arises about the cause of some criminal act's being done, people do not typically accept any explanation until it appears that there was a desire to attain, or a fear of losing, one of those goods that we have called the lowest goods. These are beautiful and becoming, though they are abject and contemptible in comparison with superior and beatific goods. Someone has committed murder. Why did he do it? He loved his victim's wife or estate, or he wanted to steal enough to live on, or he was afraid of losing something to his victim, or he was burning to revenge himself on someone who had injured him. Surely no one has ever committed murder simply because he delighted in murder itself! Who would believe such a thing? Even for that savage and most cruel man of whom it was said that he was wicked and cruel for no reason, a cause is nonetheless stated: "lest through idleness," it says, "his hand or spirit should become useless." And ask again: "Why did he do this?" It was so that once he seized the city through the practice of his crimes, he might obtain honors, powers, and riches, and he would be free from the law and "from

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the burden of the poverty of his estate—and his own consciousness of the guilt of his crimes.” So not even Catiline loved his crimes; he loved something else that was the cause of his committing those crimes.

6.12. What I did I—wretch that I was—love in you, my theft, my crime by night in my sixteenth year? You were not beautiful, for you were a theft. Or are you indeed anything at all, so that I might speak to you? Those pears that we stole were beautiful, for they were created by you, O most beautiful of all, Creator of all, good God, God my supreme good and my true good. Those pears were beautiful, but they were not what my wretched soul lusted after. After all, I had plenty of better pears; I picked those merely in order to steal. The pears that I had plucked I threw away. The only thing I tasted from them was iniquity; enjoying that was what made me happy. For even if something from those pears did enter my mouth, it was the crime that gave it savor. And now, O Lord my God, I am asking what delighted me in that theft, and behold! there is no beauty there. I do not merely mean such beauty as is found in equity and practical wisdom, or in the human mind and memory and the senses and the life of the body; not even as the stars are beautiful and adorn their proper places, as the earth and the sea are beautiful, teeming with new lives that are born to take the place of things that are passing away—it lacked even the abortive and shadowy beauty of deceptive vices.

6.13. For pride mimics loftiness, when in fact you are the one God, Most High above all things. What does ambition seek but honors and glory, when in fact you are the one who is to be honored before all things and are glorious unto eternity? The cruelty of the powerful is meant to inspire fear, but who is to be feared except the one God? And in what respect can his power be curtailed or lessened, when or where or how or by whom? The enticements of the lustful are meant to arouse love, but nothing is more enticing than your charity, and no love is more wholesome than the love of your Truth, which surpasses all things in beauty and splendor. Curiosity makes a show of zeal for knowledge, when in fact it is you who supremely know all things. Even ignorance and stupidity are concealed under the name of simplicity and harmlessness. For nothing simpler than you can be found; and what is more harmless than you, since it is their own works

that are the enemies of the wicked? Idleness desires rest, but what rest is there apart from the Lord? Luxury would like to be called repletion and wealth, but you are fullness and the never-failing abundance of incorruptible sweetness. Extravagance masquerades as generosity, but you are the supremely bountiful giver of all good things. Avarice wants to possess many things, but you possess everything. Envy struggles for preeminence. What is more preeminent than you? Anger seeks vengeance. Who exacts vengeance more justly than you? Fear shrinks from unexpected and sudden threats to things it loves, while it takes precautions to keep them secure. For what is unexpected to you? What is sudden? Or who will separate you from what you love? Or where, except in you, is unfaltering security? Sadness pines for things it has lost, things that cupidity had delighted in. It would wish to lose nothing, as nothing can be taken away from you.

6.14. Thus the soul commits fornication when it turns away from you and seeks outside you those things that it cannot find pure and unadulterated unless it returns to you. All those who place themselves far from you and exalt themselves against you are perversely imitating you. But even in this way, by imitating you they declare that you are the Creator of all of nature, and so there is nowhere they can flee from you altogether. What, then, did I love in that theft of mine, and in what way was I viciously, perversely, imitating my Lord? Did it please me to act against your law, at least by deceit—since I could not do so by force—and thus mimic the curtailed freedom of a prisoner by getting away with doing what was not permitted, in a shadowy likeness of omnipotence? Look at that slave, fleeing his master and chasing after a shadow. What rotteness! What a monstrous life, and what an abyss of death! Could he do, freely, what was not permitted, for no other reason than that it was not permitted?

7.15. What shall I offer to the Lord in thanksgiving for recalling these things to my memory in such a way that my soul is not made fearful thereby? I will love you, Lord, and give thanks to you and confess your name, because you have forgiven me for such wicked and abominable deeds. I owe it to your grace and to your mercy that you have melted my sins like ice. To your grace I owe also whatever evil things I did not do: for what was I not capable of doing, I who loved even

theft for no reason at all? And I acknowledge I have been forgiven for all these things, both those I did of my own accord and those I refrained from doing because you were guiding me. Who among human beings, seeing how feeble they are, would dare to ascribe their chastity or innocence to their own powers and so love you less, as though they had less need of your mercy, by which you forgive the sins of those who turn to you? As for those who have been called by you and have followed your voice and have avoided the things they have read about me, the things that I have recorded and acknowledged about myself, let them not mock me because I have been healed by the same physician who was present with them so that they did not fall ill—or rather, so that they were less gravely ill. And let them therefore love you as much—no, let them love you even more—because they see that he who has rescued me from the great infirmities of my sins has kept them from being ensnared by such great infirmities of sin.

8.16. What fruit had I then, wretch that I was, in these things that I now blush to recall, and especially in that theft in which I loved the theft itself, and nothing else, when indeed the theft was nothing and I was all the more wretched on account of it? And yet I would not have done it by myself—this is how I remember my state of mind—I would certainly not have done it by myself. So I also loved the companionship of those with whom I did it. So is it true after all that I loved nothing other than the theft? To be sure, I loved nothing else, since that companionship too is nothing. What is it, really? (Who is it that teaches me, but the one who enlightens my heart and pierces its shadows?) What is it? I am impelled to ask this question and discuss it and ponder it, because if I had loved the fruit that I stole and wanted to enjoy it, I could have done that even if I had been by myself; if I had been after only the thrill of committing the evil act, I would not have inflamed the itch of my cupidity by rubbing up against souls who shared my guilt. But since there was

no pleasure for me in the pears themselves, the pleasure was in the crime itself, and it was my companionship with fellow-sinners that created this pleasure.

9.17. What was that disposition of mind? It was most assuredly very base, and plainly so; and woe is me, that I had it. But what was it? Who understands sins? It was a joke; our hearts were tickled that we were deceiving people who did not expect us to do such things and fervently wanted us not to. Why, then, did it please me that I was not doing it by myself? Is it that no one is easily moved to laughter when alone? Not easily, perhaps, but still, a laugh will sometimes get the better of people when they are quite alone and no one else is around, if something quite ridiculous strikes their senses or their mind. But I would not have done it by myself. I would certainly not have done it by myself. Behold before you, my God, this living recollection of my soul. If I had been by myself, I would not have done that theft in which what pleased me was not what I stole, but that I stole; it would not have pleased me to do it alone, and I wouldn't have done it. O you too unfriendly friendship, unsearchable seduction of the mind! Out of playing and joking came a passion to do harm and a desire to damage someone else without any gain for myself, without any lust for revenge! But when someone says, "Let's go, let's do it," we are ashamed not to be shameless.

10.18. Who will unloose this most twisted, this most tangled intricacy? It is foul: I shrink from considering it; I do not want to look upon it. I want to look upon you, beautiful and seemly justice and innocence, with honorable eyes and with a desire that is always satisfied but never sated. In your presence there is rest indeed, and a life that knows no disturbance. Those who enter into you enter into the joy of their Lord; they will not be afraid, and all will be supremely well with them as they dwell in the one who is supremely good. I deserted you and wandered away, my God, very much astray from your steadfastness in my youth; and I became for myself a land of destitution.

## 6. Confessions

### Book 7

9.13. And first, because it was your will to show me how you resist the proud but give grace to the humble, and how great is your mercy, which you have shown to human beings by the way of humility, in that your Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, you obtained for me, through a certain fellow who was puffed up with the most monstrous arrogance, certain books of the Platonists translated from Greek into Latin. And in them I read—not indeed in these words, but exactly the same teaching, presented persuasively with many arguments of many different kinds—that “in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him nothing was made. What was made is, in him, life;<sup>1</sup> and the life was the light of human beings. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not engulfed it.” I read also that the human soul, although it “bears witness to the light, is nevertheless not itself that light”; rather, God the Word is “the true light that enlightens every human being who comes into this world.” I read also that “he was in the world, and the world was made through him, and the world did not recognize him.” But that “he came to his own things, and his own people did not receive him; but to as many as received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God”: those things I did not read in them.

9.14. I likewise read in those books that God the Word “was born, not of blood, nor of the will of a man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God.” But that “the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us”: that I did not read in them. And indeed I discovered in those

writings, stated in many and various ways, that the Son was in the form of the Father but “did not regard equality with God as robbery,” since he is by nature the very same as God. But that “he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave; and being made into the likeness of human beings and found in human form, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross; therefore God has raised him from the dead and given him a name that is above every name, so that in the name of Jesus every knee will bend, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”: those books did not contain these things. One finds in them that before all times and beyond all times your only-begotten Son, who is coeternal with you, abides unchangeably, and that from his fullness souls receive blessedness, and that by sharing in the wisdom that abides in him souls are renewed so that they become wise. But one does not find that within time “he died for the ungodly,” and that “you did not spare your only Son, but gave him up for us all.” For “you have hidden these things from the wise and revealed them to little children,” so that “those who labor and are burdened will come to him, and he will refresh them; for he is meek and humble of heart.” And he will guide the meek in judgment and teach the gentle his ways, looking upon our humility and our labor and forgiving all our sins. But as for those who are lofty, as though placed on the pedestal of a more sublime teaching, and so do not hear him saying “Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls,” even if they know God, “they do not glorify him as God or give him thanks; but their thoughts become barren and their foolish hearts are darkened. Though they profess themselves wise, they have become fools.”

9.15. And for this reason I also read in those books that they exchanged the glory of your incorruption for idols and various phantoms, for the likeness of an image of corruptible human beings and birds and four-footed creatures and serpents, that Egyptian food for

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Translated for this volume by Thomas Williams from the edition of James J. O'Donnell, *Augustine: Confessions*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

1. For this punctuation of John 1:4, see Augustine's *Tractates on the Gospel of John* tr. 1.17.

the sake of which Esau gave up his rights as firstborn. For the hearts of your firstborn people were turned back to Egypt, and they worshiped the head of a four-footed beast instead of you. They bowed your image—their souls—before the image of a calf that eats hay. These things I found there, but I did not partake of them. For it pleased you, Lord, to remove from Jacob the reproach of his inferiority, so that the elder would serve the younger; and you called the nations into your inheritance. And I had come to you from the nations; I had devoted myself to the gold that your people had, by your will, carried off from the land of Egypt—for that gold was yours, no matter where it was. And through your Apostle you said to the Athenians that in you we live and move and have our being, as some of their authorities had said. Those books were indeed from there. But I did not devote myself to the idols of the Egyptians, which they served with your gold, they who transformed the truth of God into a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator.

10.16. Admonished by these books to return to myself, I entered into my inmost self with you as my guide; and I was able to do this because you had become my helper. I entered, and by some sort of eye of my soul I saw—above that eye of my soul, above my mind—unchangeable Light. It was not the light that is common and visible to all flesh; nor was it a light of the same sort, only nobler, as if the common light had grown clearer and brighter and become so great that it filled all things. No, the Light was not that; it was something altogether different from all these things. And it was not above my mind in the way that oil is over water or the sky is above the earth; it was superior, for that Light made me, and I was inferior, for I was made by it. One who knows the Truth knows this Light, and one who knows this Light knows eternity. Love knows this Light. O eternal Truth and true Love and beloved Eternity, you are my God; I sigh for you day and night! And when I first came to know you, you lifted me up so that I could see that what I saw has being, but that I who saw it did not yet have being. And you repelled the weakness of my gaze, beaming upon me with great force, and I trembled with love and with terror. I found that I was far away from you in a land of unlikeness, as though I heard your voice from on high: “I am food for those who are full-grown; grow,

and you will feed on me. And you will not change me into you, as you change the food of your flesh, but instead you will be changed into me.” And I recognized that you have chastened human beings because of their sin and caused my soul to melt away like a spider’s web; and I said, “Then is truth nothing, because it is not spread out across any finite or infinite expanse of places?” And you called from afar, “No indeed; truly, I am who I am.” And I heard, as one hears in the heart; and I no longer had any room to doubt. I would more easily have doubted that I was alive than I could have doubted the existence of the Truth that is perceived through the things that have been made.

11.17. I examined the other things that are below you, and I saw that they neither wholly have being nor wholly lack being: they do indeed have being because they exist from you; but they lack being, because they are not what you are. For what truly has being is what abides unchangeably. My good, however, is to cleave to God, because if I do not abide in him, he cannot abide in me. But he, abiding in himself, makes all things new; and he is my Lord, because he has no need of the goods that are mine.

12.18. And it was made plain to me that things that are corrupted are good. For they could not be corrupted if they were the highest goods, but neither could they be corrupted if they were not good at all. If they were the highest goods, they would be incorruptible; but if they were not good at all, there would be nothing in them to be corrupted. Corruption, after all, harms something; and unless it diminished some good, it would not do harm. So either corruption harms nothing, which is impossible, or else—what is most certainly the case—everything that is corrupted is deprived of some good. Now if something is deprived of *all* good, it will not exist at all. For if it still exists and can no longer be corrupted, it will be better, because it will persist incorruptibly: and what could be more monstrous than to say that something that has lost all good has become better? Therefore, if something is deprived of all good, it will not exist at all. So as long as things exist, they are good. Therefore, all things that have being are good, and that evil whose origin I was inquiring about is not a substance. For if it were a substance, it would be good, since it would be either an incorruptible substance, and thus of course a great

good, or a corruptible substance, which would not be corruptible unless it were good. And so I saw, and it was made plain to me, that you made all things good and that there are no substances that you did not make. And it is because you did not make all things equal that all things exist: for individually they are good, and taken together they are very good, because our God made all things very good.

13.19. For you evil does not exist at all—and not only for you, but for your whole creation, since there is nothing outside it that breaks in and corrupts the order that you have imposed upon it. To be sure, certain parts of it are regarded as bad because they do not fit harmoniously with other parts; but even they fit with still other parts and thus are good, and they are also good in themselves. And all these things that do not fit harmoniously with each other are well-suited to the inferior portion of things, which we call earth, which has a cloudy and windy sky suited to it. Far be it from me to say, “These things ought not to be”: for even if I could see nothing but them and indeed longed for better things, I would still owe you thanks for these things by themselves. For the things of the earth—dragons and all the deeps, fire and hail, snow and ice, the stormy winds that do your word, mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars, beasts and all cattle, reptiles and winged birds—reveal that you are worthy of praise. Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all judges of the earth, young men and maidens, old and young together: let them praise your name. Let them also praise you from the heavens; let them praise you, our Lord. All your angels in the heights, all your powers, the sun and moon, all the stars and the light, the heaven of heavens and the waters that are above the heavens: let them praise your name. I no longer desired better things, because I held all things in my thought; and with a sounder judgment I regarded the higher things as being of course better than the lower, but all things together as being better than the higher things by themselves.

14.20. There is no soundness in those who are displeased by any creature of yours, just as there was no soundness in me when I was displeased with many things that you made. And because my soul did not have the effrontery to be displeased with my God, it

did not want anything that displeased it to be yours. And from that starting-point it had proceeded to the view that there are two substances; but it did not find rest there, and it gave voice to opinions that were not really its own. And returning from there it had made for itself a god extended through the infinite expanse of all places; and it thought that this god was you. It set up this god in its heart and again became a temple for its own idol, an abomination before you. Yet afterwards you laid my head upon your lap, though I did not know it, and you closed my eyes so that I would not look upon worthlessness. For a little while I rested from myself, and my frenzy was lulled to sleep; and I woke up and saw that you are infinite, but in a different way. And that vision did not derive from the flesh.

15.21. And I turned my attention to other things, and I saw that they owe their existence to you, and that all finite things exist in you, though in a different way. They do not exist in you as though in a place, but in the sense that you hold all things in your hand, the Truth, and they are all true insofar as they have being. Nor is falsity anything, except when one thinks that something is what it is not. I saw also that all things fit harmoniously not only with their places but also with their times, and that you, who alone are eternal, did not begin to act after countless intervals of times; for all intervals of times, those that have passed away and those that will pass away, would neither go away nor come to be apart from your acting and abiding.

16.22. I had learned by experience that it is no surprise when bread that tastes sweet to a healthy palate is repugnant to one that is unhealthy, and when light that is pleasant to untainted eyes is hateful to eyes that are diseased. Even your righteousness displeases the wicked, let alone vipers and worms, which you created good and well-suited to the lower parts of your creation—to which the wicked themselves are well-suited, the more unlike you they are; but they are well-suited for the higher parts, the more they become like you. And I asked what wickedness was, and what I found was not a substance, but rather the perversity of a will that is turned away from the supreme substance—from you, O God—a will that casts away what lies within itself and is swollen with what is found outside.

## 7. Confessions

### Book 11

3.5. I would like to hear and understand how in the beginning you made heaven and earth. Moses wrote these words. He wrote them and departed; he passed over from here, from you to you, and he is not now before me. If he were, I could get hold of him and ask him and implore him, for your sake, to explain them to me. And I would open my ears to the sounds that would emerge from his mouth. If he spoke in Hebrew, he would strike against my sense in vain, and nothing of what he said would touch my mind; but if he spoke in Latin, I would know what he was saying. But from what source would I know whether it was true? And if I did know this, I would surely not know it from him, would I? No, indeed: the inward truth, within me in the dwelling-place of my thought, would say to me—not in Hebrew or Greek or Latin or any barbarous language, without any organ of mouth or tongue, without any rattling of syllables—“What he says is true.” And I with certainty and confidence would immediately say to him, “What you say is true.” So, since I cannot question Moses, I ask you, God; it was by being filled with you, who are Truth, that Moses said true things. I ask you, God: have mercy on my sins, and as you empowered your servant to say these things, empower me to understand them.

4.6. Consider: heaven and earth exist. They cry out that they were made, for they undergo change and variation. By contrast, if anything was not made and yet exists, there is nothing in it that was not in it before—which is what it is to undergo change and variation. They also cry out that they did not make themselves: “We exist because we were made. So before we existed, we were not anything, so as to be able to make ourselves.” And it is by their manifest character that they say these things. Therefore, you, O Lord,

made them: you who are beautiful (for they are beautiful), who are good (for they are good), who have being (for they have being). And they are not as beautiful or as good as you, their Creator, nor do they have being as you have being; in comparison with you they have neither goodness nor beauty nor being. We know these things, thanks to you; and our knowledge, in comparison with yours, is but ignorance.

5.7. But how did you make heaven and earth? What was the mechanism by which you carried out so great a work of yours? A human craftsman decides to shape a material thing, and the soul that makes this decision has the power, somehow, to impose on that material thing a form that it perceives within itself by its inward eye. But this is not how you form material things—and indeed how would a human craftsman have the power to do this, except because you made his mind? Further, he imposes a form on something that already exists and has being, such as earth or stone or wood or gold or something of that sort. And how would any of those things exist unless you had established them? You made the craftsman’s body. You made the soul that commands his bodily members. You made the matter out of which he makes something. You made the talent by which he grasps his art and sees within himself what he will make outside himself. You made the bodily sense by which he translates his work from mind into matter and then reports back to the mind what he has made, so that he may take counsel with the truth that presides within him to see whether the work has been well made.

All these things praise you, the Creator of them all. But how did you make them? How, God, did you make heaven and earth? It was not *in* heaven and earth that you made heaven and earth; nor was it in the air or in the waters, for they too belong to heaven and earth. Nor you did you make the whole world in the whole world, since before it was made, there was no place in which it could be made so that it might exist. Nor did you hold in your hand something from which you would make heaven and earth, for where would this thing have come from—this thing that you did

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not make—from which you would make something? What, indeed, exists at all, except because you exist? Therefore, you spoke and they were made; and in your word you made them.

6.8. But how did you speak? Was it in the same way in which a voice came from the cloud, saying, “This is my beloved Son”? That voice went forth and was completed; it had a beginning and an ending. Its syllables sounded and passed away: the second after the first, the third after the second, and the rest in order, until the last syllable sounded after all the rest, and after the last was silence. From this it is clear and evident that the movement of a creature pronounced that voice; it was a temporal thing serving your eternal will. These words of yours, made in accordance with time, were conveyed by the outward ear to the understanding mind whose inward ear is attuned to your eternal Word. Then the mind compared these words that sounded in time with your eternal Word in his silence, and it said, “They are far different. They are far different. These temporal words are far beneath me; nor do they really have being, since they flee and pass away. But the Word of my God is above me, and he abides for ever.” So if it was by words that sounded and then passed away that you spoke, so that heaven and earth might be made, and in that way you made heaven and earth, then there was already some bodily creature before you made heaven and earth, and by the temporal movements of that creature your utterance was extended through time. But there was no body before heaven and earth—or if there was, you had certainly made it without any transitory speech, so that from it you would make the transitory speech by which you would say, “Let heaven and earth be made.” For whatever that might have been, by which such a speech would be made, it would not have existed at all unless you had made it. By what word, then, did you make the body by which those words would be made?

7.9. And so you call us into understanding the Word, God with you, O God: the Word who is uttered eternally and by whom all things are uttered eternally. It is not that one word is completed and then another word is spoken, so that all things may be uttered; all are uttered at once and eternally. Otherwise there would already be time and change, not true eternity and true immortality. I know this, my God, and I give

you thanks. I know this and I confess to you, Lord; and everyone who is thankful for assured truth joins me in knowing it and in blessing you. We know this, Lord; we know this because insofar as anything is not what it once was, and is what it once was not, it passes away and comes to be. Therefore, nothing of your Word gives place to another or follows another, since he is truly immortal and eternal. And so it is by the Word, coeternal with you, that you all at once and eternally utter all the things that you utter; and it is by him that whatever you speak into existence is made. You make these things precisely by speaking them, and yet the things that you make by speaking are not made all at once, and they are not made to be eternal.

8.10. Why is this, I ask you, O Lord my God? I do see it, in a way, but I do not know how to express it, unless it is because all that begins to be and ceases to be begins and ceases at the right time as it is known in the eternal reason where nothing either begins or ceases. This is your eternal Word, who is also the beginning, because he speaks to us. In this way he speaks to us in the Gospel through the flesh; he proclaimed it outwardly to human ears so that the word might be believed and sought within and found in that eternal truth where the good Teacher, the only Teacher, teaches all his students. In that eternal truth, O Lord, I hear your voice, the voice of one who is speaking to me. For anyone who teaches us speaks to us, whereas one who does not teach us does not speak to us, even if he does speak. And indeed what teaches us, besides unwavering Truth? For even when we are admonished by a changeable creature, we are led to unwavering Truth; that is where we truly learn when we stand and listen to him and exult with joy because of the bridegroom’s voice, giving ourselves back to him from whom we have our being. And this is why he is the Beginning: for if he did not abide when we went astray, there would be nowhere for us to return. Now when we return from error, it is of course by knowing that we return; and in order that we might know, he teaches us, because he is the Beginning and speaks to us.

9.11. In this Beginning, God, you made heaven and earth in your Word, your Son, your Power, your Wisdom, uttering them in a wondrous way, and in a wondrous way making them. Who can grasp this?

Who can set it forth in words? What is this that shines through me and buffets my heart without injury? I shudder and I am alight: I shudder insofar as I am unlike him; I am alight insofar as I am like him. It is Wisdom, Wisdom itself that shines through me and pierces the clouds that surround me. But when I fall away from Wisdom because of that gloom and the burden of my punishments, the clouds envelop me again. For in my neediness my strength has wasted away, so that I cannot support my good until you, Lord, who have forgiven all my sins, also heal all my infirmities; for you will also redeem my life from corruption and crown me with mercy and loving-kindness; and you will satisfy my desire with good things, since my youth will be renewed like an eagle's. For in hope we have been saved, and through patience we look for your promises. Let those who are able hear you speaking within. I will cry out confidently in words that you have provided: "How magnificent are your works, O Lord; in Wisdom you have made them all." And that Wisdom is the Beginning, and in that Beginning you made heaven and earth.

10.12. Those who say to us, "What was God doing before he made heaven and earth?" are undoubtedly full of their old carnal nature. "For if he was idle," they say, "and was not doing anything, why did he not always stay that way from then on, just as up to that point he had always refrained from action? After all, if some new motion and new will arose in God, so that he created something he had never created before, how will that be a true eternity in which a will comes into being that once did not exist? For God's will is not a creature; it is before any creature, since nothing would be created unless the Creator's will came first. Therefore, God's will belongs to his very substance. And if something came into being in God's substance that had not existed before, his substance cannot with truth be called eternal. Yet if God's will that creation should exist is eternal, why is creation not also eternal?"

11.13. Those who say these things do not yet understand you, O Wisdom of God, Light of Minds; they do not yet understand how those things are made that are made by you and in you. Such people strive to be wise concerning what is eternal, but their heart is still flitting about in past and future movements of things and is still deceived. Who will catch hold of their heart

and pin it down so that it will be still for just a little while and seize, for just a little while, the glory of an eternity that remains ever steadfast and set it beside times that never remain steadfast and see that eternity is in no way comparable to them? Then their heart would see that a time can become long only through many movements that pass away and cannot be stretched out all at once, but that in eternity nothing passes away, but the whole is present—whereas no time is present as a whole. And their heart would see that everything past is thrust back from the future and everything future follows upon the past, and everything past and future is created and set in motion by that which is always present. Who will catch hold of the human heart so that it will be still and see how eternity, which stands still and so has neither past nor future, decrees both future and past times? Does my hand have the strength to do this? Does the hand of my mouth accomplish so great a deed by the power of its speech?

12.14. Look, I shall answer the one who asks, "What was God doing before he made heaven and earth?" I do not give the answer that one fellow is reported to have given, making a joke to evade the force of the question: "He was preparing hell for people who pry into deep matters." Ridiculing a question is quite different from seeing the answer, so that is not how I will respond. I would much more willingly say "I don't know" when I don't know than offer a response that mocks someone who has asked about deep matters and wins me praise for a false answer. Rather, I say that you, our God, are the Creator of every creature; and if by "heaven and earth" is meant every creature, then I confidently say, "Before God made heaven and earth, he was not making or doing anything." After all, if he was making something, what would he have been making other than some creature? If only I knew everything that I desire to know for my own benefit with as much clarity as I know that no creature was made before any creature was made!

13.15. But if some flighty mind wanders through images of times gone by and marvels that you, Almighty and All-creating and All-sustaining God, Maker of heaven and earth, should have refrained for countless ages from so great a work until at last you carried it out, he needs to wake up and pay attention, because he is

marveling at falsehoods. How could countless ages pass that you had not made? For you are the author and creator of all the ages. And what were these times that you had not created? How could they have passed if they never existed? Since, therefore, all times are your work, what sense does it make to say that you refrained from any work if in fact there was some time before you made heaven and earth? That time itself was something you had made; times could not pass before you made times. But if there was no time before you made heaven and earth, what sense is there in asking what you were doing then? There was no “then,” for there was no time.

13.16. It is not in time that you precede time, since otherwise you would not precede all times. No, it is by the loftiness of ever-present eternity that you precede all past things, and you surpass all future things because they are future, and once they have come, they will be past. But you are the selfsame, and your years will not fail. Your years do not come and go. Our years come and go, so that they all may come; your years stand all at once because they stand still, and those that go do not give way to those that come, for your years do not pass away. Our years will be completed only when they will all no longer exist. Your years are one day, and your day is not day-after-day but today, because your today does not give way to any tomorrow or follow after any yesterday. Your today is eternity. And so it was one coeternal with yourself whom you begot, to whom you said, “Today have I begotten you.” You made all times, and before all times, you are. Nor was there any time at which there was no time.

14.17. Therefore, there was no time at which you had not made anything, since you made time itself. And no times are coeternal with you, since you persist, whereas they would not be times if they persisted. What, after all, is time? Is there any short and simple answer to that question? Can anyone even wrap his mind around time so as to express it in words? Is there anything we talk about more familiarly, more knowingly, than time? And surely we understand it when we talk about it; we even understand it when we hear someone else talking about it. So what is time? If no one asks me, I know; if I want to explain it to someone who asks me, I do not know. Yet I say with confidence

that I know that if nothing passed away, there would be no past time, and that if nothing were approaching, there would be no future time, and that if nothing existed, there would be no present time. So how do those two times, the past and the future, exist when the past no longer exists and the future does not yet exist? Yet if the present were always present and did not flow away into the past, it would no longer be time, but eternity. So if, in order to be time, the present comes into being precisely by flowing into the past, how can we say that the present exists, given that it exists only because it will not exist? In other words, if time did not tend toward non-existence, we could not truly say that it exists at all.

15.18. And yet we speak of “a long time” and “a short time,” and we say this only of the past or the future. For example, we call a hundred years ago a long time in the past and a hundred years from now a long time in the future; but we call, say, ten days ago a short time in the past and ten days from now a short time in the future. But how is something that does not exist either long or short? The past, after all, no longer exists, and the future does not yet exist. So let us not say, “It is long,” but instead let us say of the past, “It was long,” and of the future, “It will be long.” Even so, my Lord and my Light, won’t your truth scoff at human beings? This past time that was long: was it long when it was already past or when it was still present? It could be long only when it existed so that it could be long. But once it was past, it did not exist any more; hence, it also could not be long, since it was not anything at all. Therefore, let us not say, “The past time was long,” we will not even be able to find the thing that was long—by the very fact that it is past, it does not exist—but instead let us say, “That present time was long,” since when it was present, it was long. For at that point it had not yet passed away into non-existence, and therefore there was something that could be long; after it had become past, however, that which ceased to be also, at that very same time, ceased to be long.

15.19. Let us see, then, O human soul, whether a present time can be long—for you have been given the power to perceive duration and to measure it. What answer will you give me? Are one hundred present years a long time? Examine first whether one hundred years can *be* present. If the first of those years is

in progress, then it is present, but the other ninety-nine are future and therefore do not yet exist. If, however, the second year is in progress, then one year is already past, another year is present, and the rest are future. And so it is if we assume that any one of the years in the middle of the hundred is present: there will be past years before it and future years after it. Accordingly, one hundred years cannot be present.

Now examine whether that one year, at any rate, can be present as it is in progress. If its first month is in progress, the other months are future. If the second month is underway, the first month has already passed and the remaining months do not yet exist. So not even the whole year that is in progress is present. And if the whole is not present, the year is not present. For that matter, not even the month that is in progress is present, but only one day. If the first day of the month is present, the rest are future; if the last, the rest are past; if one in the middle, it is between past days and future days.

15.20. Look! The present time, which we found to be the only time that can be called “long,” has shrunk to the size of barely one day. But let us break up even that: for not even one whole day is present. It comprises twenty-four hours of day and night. The first of these hours has other hours future to it, the last has others past, and any of the hours in between has some past hours before it and some future hours after it. And that one hour passes by in small, fleeting pieces. Any part of it that has flown away is past, and any part that remains is future. If any part of time can be conceived that cannot be further divided into even the tiniest parts of moments, that alone is what should be called “present.” Yet that present flies away into the past with such speed that it cannot be extended by even the slightest amount. For if it is extended, it is divided into past and future; but the present has no duration.

Where, then, is a time that we can call “long”? Is it in the future? Then we do not in fact say, “It is long,” because the thing that would be long does not yet exist; but instead we say, “It will be long.” So when will it exist? If even then it is still future, it will not be long, because the thing that would be long does not yet exist. Suppose instead that it will be long when, out of the future that does not yet exist, it begins to exist and becomes present and thus exists so that it can be long.

In that case, the present time cries out, in the words already spoken, that it cannot be long.

16.21. And yet, Lord, we experience intervals of time and compare them with each other. We say that some are longer, others shorter. We even measure how much longer or shorter one time is than another; we determine that one is twice as long or three times as long as another, or that two are equally long. But when we measure times by experiencing them, we are measuring things that are passing away. And who can measure past things, which no longer exist, or future things, which do not yet exist? Surely no one will be so brazen as to say that what does not exist can be measured. So while time is passing, it can be experienced and measured; but once it has passed, it cannot, because it does not exist.

17.22. I am inquiring, Father, not making assertions. My God, guide me and govern me. We learned as children, and we have taught children, that there are three times: past, present, and future. Will someone tell me that this is not so: that there are not three times, but only one, the present, because the other two do not exist? Or do they perhaps exist after all, but time comes forth from some secret place when the future becomes present and recedes into some secret place when the present becomes past? Where did those who prophesied future events see them, if future things do not yet exist? After all, what does not yet exist cannot be seen. And those who tell stories of the past would certainly not be telling the truth if they did not perceive those past things in their mind; and if no past things existed, they could not in any way be perceived. It follows, then, that both future and past things exist.

18.23. Permit me to inquire further, O Lord, my hope; do not let my attention be distracted. If indeed future and past things exist, I want to know where they are. If I do not yet have the strength to know where they are, I do at least know that wherever they are, they are not future or past there, but present. For if they are future there, they do not yet exist there; and if they are past there, they no longer exist there. So wherever they are, whatever they are, they must be present. Yet when a true story is told about past things, it is not the things themselves that are brought forth out of memory—for the things themselves have passed away—but words conceived from images of the things. These images

are like imprints that the things themselves, as they were passing away, stamped on the soul through the senses. My boyhood, for example, which no longer exists, is in past time, which no longer exists. But when I recall it and tell stories about it, I see an image of it in the present time, since it still exists in my memory. Whether there is a similar explanation for foretellings of the future—that already-existing images of things that do not yet exist are made present—I must confess, my God, I do not know. This much I do know: we often deliberate about our future actions, and that deliberation is present, although the action that we are deliberating about does not yet exist, because it is future. Once we undertake the action that we were deliberating about and begin to do it, the action will exist, because then it will be present, not future.

18.24. Whatever else is true of the mysterious presentiment of things yet to come, it is not possible for something to be seen that does not exist. Further, what already exists is present, not future. So when we say that future things are seen, it is not the things themselves that are seen—for they do not yet exist; they are in the future—but perhaps their causes or signs, which do already exist. So the things conceived by the mind, on the basis of which future things are predicted, are present to those who see them, rather than future. Again, these conceptions already exist, and those who foretell future things look upon these present conceptions within themselves.

There is such a great multitude of these things, but just one can serve me as an example. I see the dawn and I foretell that the sun is going to rise. What I see is present; what I foretell is future. The *sun* is not future—it already exists—but its rising, which does not yet exist, is future. Still, I would not be able to predict the sunrise unless I were imagining it in my mind, in the way that I am doing now as I speak. Now the dawn that I see in the sky is not the sunrise, although it does precede the sunrise; nor is that image in my mind the sunrise. Perceiving these two present things is what allows me to speak beforehand of the future thing. So future things do not yet exist; and if they do not exist yet, they do not exist; and if they do not exist, they cannot in any way be seen, though they can be predicted on the basis of present things that already exist and are seen.

19.25. And you, Sovereign of your creation, how do you teach souls those things that are future? Certainly you have taught your prophets. How do you, to whom nothing is future, teach future things? Or do you instead teach present things concerning future things? For what does not exist cannot even be taught. The way in which you do this is beyond my ken; it is too much for me. In my own strength I cannot attain to it. But in the strength that comes from you, sweet Light of my hidden eyes, I will be able to attain to it, when you have granted me your help.

20.26. It is now clear and evident that neither future things nor past things exist. Nor is it strictly correct to say, “There are three times: past, present, and future.” Instead, it would perhaps be correct to say, “There are three times: the present of things past, the present of things present, and the present of things future.” These are certainly three things in the soul (and I do not see them anywhere else): the present of things past is memory, the present of things present is attention, and the present of things future is expectation. If we are allowed to use such language, I see three times, and I acknowledge that they are three. And go ahead and say, “There are three times: past, present, and future,” as ordinary language inaptly puts it; go ahead and say that. I do not mind; I do not object or find fault, provided that one understands what is being said, and that neither the future nor the past now exists. There are few things that our ordinary language expresses correctly, and many things that it does not; but we know what we mean.

21.27. I said a bit earlier that we measure passing times, so that we can say this time is twice as long as that one, or this time is exactly as long as that one, and whatever else we can say by way of measuring the parts of time. So, as I was saying, we measure passing times; and if anyone asks me, “How do you know this?” I will answer, “I know because we measure them, and we cannot measure what does not exist, and past and future things do not exist.” But how do we measure present time, which has no duration? It must be measured as it passes, since once it has passed, it is not measured—for then there is no longer anything there to be measured. But when it is measured, where does it come from, by what path does it go, and to where does it pass? There are no answers but these: it comes from

the future, goes through the present, and passes into the past. So it comes from what does not yet exist, goes through what has no duration, and passes into what no longer exists. Yet our measurements of time are always in terms of some duration. We say that a time is one unit long, or that one time is twice as long or three times as long or equally long as another; and all such statements, and others like them, are in terms of some duration. So in what duration do we measure passing time? In the future, from which it comes? We do not measure what does not yet exist. In the present, through which it goes? We do not measure what has no duration. In the past, into which it passes? We do not measure what no longer exists.

22.28. My mind is on fire to solve this most perplexing mystery. O Lord my God, good Father, I implore you in the name of Christ: do not hide these things, so familiar and yet so secret, from my longing; let me break through to them until they begin to shine by the light of your mercy, O Lord. From whom shall I earnestly seek answers to these questions? To whom shall I more profitably confess my ignorance than to you? For you are not displeased by the raging fire of my zeal to understand your Scriptures. Grant what I love—for I do love it, and even that love is your gift. Grant it, Father, who truly know how to give good gifts to your children; grant it, because I have set out to understand these things but the labor is too great for me, until you open a path. I implore you in the name of Christ, in the name of him who is the Holy of Holies, let no one hinder me. I have believed, and therefore I speak. This is my hope, and for this I live, that I might gaze upon the delight of the Lord. Behold, you have made my days old; and they pass away, I know not how. We speak of time and time, of times and times: “How long ago did he say that?” and “How long ago did he do that?” and “For how long a time have I not seen that?” and “This syllable takes twice the time of that short, simple syllable.” We say these things and hear them; we are understood and we understand. They are utterly obvious, utterly familiar—and yet they are desperately obscure, a fresh discovery.

23.29. A certain learned person once said to me that the movements of the sun and moon and stars are times, but I did not agree. Why not rather say that the movements of *all* bodies are times? If the heavenly lights stood still but a potter’s wheel moved, would there not be time by which we would measure its rev-

olutions and say that they were of equal periods—or, if the wheel moved at an unsteady speed, that some revolutions took less time and others more? And as we said these things, would not we ourselves be speaking in time? Would not some syllables in our speech be short and others long—and that only because the longer syllables sounded for a longer time and the shorter syllables for a shorter time? God, grant human beings the power to see in small things the common principles of things both small and great. Stars and heavenly lights are for signs and times and days and years. That is certainly true. But I would not say that the rotation of that little wooden wheel is a day; and that learned man should not say that if the heavenly bodies stood still, there would be no time.

23.30. I desire to know the power and nature of the time by which we measure the movements of bodies and say that (for example) this movement takes twice as long as that one. Here is my question: ‘day’ is used not only for the period in which the sun is over the earth—this is the sense in which day is distinguished from night—but also for the whole of its circuit from east to east. In this latter sense we say “So-and-so many days have passed” (the number of days here includes nights as well; the periods of night are not regarded as extra). So since a day is completed along with the movement and circuit of the sun from east to east, I ask whether a day is this motion itself, or instead the amount of time that elapses while that motion takes place, or both. If the motion itself were a day, then even if the sun completed its course in an interval of time equal to one hour, that would be a day. If a day is the amount of time, then if the interval between one sunrise and the next were as short as one hour, that would not constitute a day; the sun would have to complete twenty-four revolutions for one day to pass. If both the motion and the amount of time are a day, then it would not be called a day if the sun completed its revolution in the space of one hour; nor would it be called a day if the sun stood still but the amount of time passed in which the sun ordinarily makes its circuit from one morning to the next.

And so I will not ask now what it is that is called a day. Instead I will ask this: what is the time by which we measure the sun’s circuit, so that if it were completed in the span of time in which twelve hours elapse, we would say that it was completed in half the

time it ordinarily takes; and, comparing the two times, we would say that one is a single period and the other double, even if the sun completed its circuit from sunrise to sunrise sometimes in the single period and sometimes in the double? So let no one say to me that times are the movements of the heavenly bodies. For once, in answer to someone's prayer, the sun stood still so that a battle might be fought to victory; the sun stood still, but time passed. Indeed, the fighting was carried out and completed over a span of time that was sufficient for it. I see, therefore, that time is a kind of distention. But do I see this, or do I merely think I see it? You, Light and Truth, will show me.

24.31. Do you command me to agree when someone says that time is the movement of a body? You do not. For I hear that no body moves except in time; you say this. But I do not hear that the movement of a body is itself time; you do not say that. For when a body is moved, I measure in time how long its movement takes, from when it begins to move until it stops. If I did not see when it began to move, and it continues to move and I do not see when it stops, I cannot measure—except perhaps from when I begin to see it until I stop paying attention. If I watch it for a good while, I can report only that it was a long time, but not how long, since when we say how long something lasts, we do so by means of a comparison: for example, “This is as long as that” or “This is twice as long as that” or something of that sort. But if we can mark off the spans of the places from which and to which a moving body goes—or its parts, if it is moved as on a lathe—we can say how long a time it takes for that body (or its parts) to move from this place to that. And so the body's movement and that by which we measure it are two distinct things. That being so, does anyone not realize which of these two is more properly called “time”? If a body sometimes moves and sometimes is at rest, we measure not only its motion but also its rest in time. We say “It was at rest as long as it was in motion” or “It was at rest twice as long, or three times as long, as it was in motion” or whatever else our measurement might be, whether we have determined it exactly or merely estimated (“more or less,” as we say).

25.32. I confess to you, Lord, that even now I do not know what time is. And again I confess to you, Lord, that I know I am saying these things in time, and that I have already been speaking for a long while

about time, and that this long while is long only as a period of time. How, then, do I know all this when I do not know what time is? Do I perhaps not know how to express what I do know? Woe is me: I do not even know what it is I do not know! Behold, my God, before you I do not lie. As I am speaking, so is my heart. You, O Lord, will light my lamp; my God, you will make my darkness bright.

26.33. Does not my soul confess to you in a true confession that I measure times? So I measure, my God, and I do not know what it is I am measuring. By time I measure the movement of a body. Do I not likewise measure time itself? Could I, in fact, measure the movement of a body—how long it is, and how long it takes in going from here to there—without measuring the time in which it moves? How, then, do I measure that time itself? Do we measure a longer time by a shorter time in the way that we measure the length of a crossbeam by a yardstick? That would seem to be how we measure the length of a long syllable by that of a short syllable and say that the former is double the latter. It is how we measure the length of poems by the length of their lines, and the length of lines by the length of their feet, and the length of feet by the length of their syllables, and the length of long syllables by the length of short syllables: not in pages (that is a way for us to measure places, not times), but as the sounds pass by in being pronounced. And we say, “The poem is long because it contains so many lines; the lines are long because they consist of so many feet; the feet are long because they stretch out for so many syllables; the syllable is long because it is double a short syllable.” But even this does not establish a reliable measure of time, because a shorter line, if recited very deliberately, might sound for a greater length of time than a longer line spoken hastily. And the same goes for poems, feet, and syllables. Hence it appears to me that time is nothing other than distention—but a distention of *what* I do not know. I should be surprised if it were not a distention of the mind itself. I implore you, God: what, then, am I measuring when I say, indefinitely, “This time is longer than that one,” or even, definitely, “This time is twice as long as that”? I am measuring time—so much I know. But I am not measuring the future, which does not yet exist; I am not measuring the present, which is not extended for any duration; I am not measuring the past, because it no

longer exists. What, then, am I measuring? Not *past* times, but *passing* times? So I said earlier.

27.34. Be still, my mind; be vigorous in your attention. God is our helper; it is he who has made us, and not we ourselves. Give your attention where the truth is beginning to dawn. A bodily voice, let us say, begins to sound; it sounds and keeps sounding. Then it stops. Now there is silence, and the voice is past and is no longer a voice. Before it sounded, it was future; and it could not be measured, because it did not yet exist. And it cannot be measured now, because it no longer exists. So it could be measured while it was sounding, because that was when a voice existed that could be measured. But even then it was not standing still; it was moving and passing away. Or was that all the more reason it *could* be measured? For in passing away it was extended through some span of time that could be measured, since the present has no duration.

So let us assume that it could be measured then, and imagine another voice. It begins to sound and keeps sounding uniformly and without interruption. Let us measure it while it is sounding. After all, once it has stopped sounding, it will already be past and there will be nothing to measure. Let us measure it with precision and say how great it is. But it is still sounding, and it can be measured only from its beginning, when it starts to sound, to its end, when it stops. (What we measure is, of course, the interval between a beginning and an end.) So a voice that is not yet finished cannot be measured so that one can say how long or short it is, or that it is equal to another, or that in relation to another it is single or double or anything else. But once it has been completed, it will no longer exist. How, then, will anyone be able to measure it? And yet we do measure times: but not those that do not yet exist, nor those that no longer exist, nor those that are not extended for any duration, nor those that have no ending-point. It follows that we do not measure future times, or past times, or present times, or passing times. And yet we do measure times.

27.35. *Deus Creator omnium*:<sup>1</sup> This eight-syllable line alternates between short and long syllables. The

four short syllables (the first, third, fifth, and seventh) are single in comparison with the four long syllables (the second, fourth, sixth, and eighth). Each long syllable takes twice as much time as each short syllable. I recite the line and report this; and it is true, so far as I experience it with clear perception. So far as my perception is clear, I measure the long syllable by the short one and perceive that it is exactly twice as long. But since one sounds after the other—the short one first, and then the long—how will I retain the short one and set it against the long one to measure it so that I find the long one to be exactly twice as long? For the long syllable does not begin to sound until the short one stops sounding. Do I measure the long syllable when it is still present? Surely not, since I do not measure it until it is complete. But once it is complete, it is in the past: so then what am I measuring? Where is the short syllable by which I measure it? And where is the long syllable that I measure? Both have sounded. They have fled and passed away. They no longer exist. But I do measure, and I answer with all the confidence that one can repose in finely-honed perception, that the short syllable is single and the long one double, in terms of the time they take. I cannot do this unless they have passed away and are complete. So I am not measuring the syllables themselves, which no longer exist; I measure something in my memory that stays imprinted there.

27.36. It is in you, my soul, that I measure times. Do not hinder me—that is, do not let the tumult of your impressions hinder you. In you, I say, I measure times. I measure the impression that passing things make on you, an impression that remains after the things have passed away. I measure the impression, which is present, not the things that made the impression by passing away. It is the impression that I measure when I measure times. So either these impressions are times, or else I do not measure times. And when we measure a silence and say that this silence lasted for just as long a time as that voice, do we not distend our thought to measure the voice as if it were sounding, so that we can report something about the duration of the silences within a span of time? With voice and lips stilled, in our thought we run through poems and lines and any discourse and any measurements of motion; and we report on their duration and relative lengths just as we would if we said them aloud. Suppose someone wanted to

1. “O God, Creator of all,” the opening line of a hymn for evening composed by Saint Ambrose, who baptized Augustine.

make a rather long sound, and he settled beforehand how long it was going to be. He has of course thought through that span of time in silence, and commending it to his memory, he begins to make the sound, which sounds until it is brought to the ending-point that he had in view. Or rather, it has sounded and will sound: for whatever part of it is already finished has sounded, whereas whatever remains will sound. And thus the sound is being completed as long as present intention propels the future into the past; as the part of the sound that is future shrinks, its past grows, until its future is completely used up and the whole sound is past.

28.37. But how does the future, which does not yet exist, shrink or get used up? How does the past, which no longer exists, grow? It can only be because these three exist in the mind, which accomplishes this. For the mind looks ahead, it attends, and it remembers, so that what it looks ahead to passes through what it attends to and into what it remembers. Who, then, denies that future things do not yet exist? But even so, in the mind there is already an expectation of future things. And who denies that past things no longer exist? But even so, in the mind there is still a memory of past things. And who denies that the present time lacks duration, since it passes away in an instant? But even

so, attention endures; and that which will be passes through attention on its way to being no more. So future time, which does not exist, is not long; a long future is a long expectation of the future. And past time, which does not exist, is not long; a long past is a long memory of the past.

28.38. I am about to recite a song that I know. Before I begin, my expectation is stretched out through the whole song. But once I have begun, my memory too is stretched out, over as much as I have gathered from my expectation and stored in the past. And the life of this action of mine is distended into memory because of what I have already recited and into expectation because of what I am going to recite. But my attention is present and exists now, and what was future passes through my attention so that it becomes past. As more and more of the action is completed, expectation grows shorter and memory longer, until all of the expectation is used up and the whole, completed action has passed into memory. And what is true of the whole song is true of each of its verses and of every one of its syllables. It is true of a longer action, of which perhaps the song is a small part. It is true of a whole human life, whose parts are all of a person's actions. It is true of the whole age of the sons of men, whose parts are all human lives.

## 8. The City of God

### Book 19

3. *Which of the Three Sects that Seek the Supreme Good of Man Does Varro, Following the Doctrine of the Old Academy (on the Authority of Antiochus), Define as Worthy of Choice?*

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Which, then, of these three is true and to be pursued he sets out to prove in the following manner. First, since philosophy seeks the supreme good not of a tree, or of a beast, or of God, but of man, he thinks that we must put the question what man himself is. He concludes that in man's nature there are two things, body and soul; and of these two he has no doubt at all that the soul is the better and by far more excellent. But is the soul alone the man, and is the body to him as the horse to the horseman? For the horseman is not a man and a horse, but only a man, and is called a horseman because he bears a certain relation in respect to a horse. Or is the body alone the man, bearing some re-

lation to the soul, like that of the cup to the drink? For it is not the cup and the drink that it contains which are together called the cup, but the cup alone; yet it is so called because it is designed to hold the drink. Or again is it neither the soul alone nor the body alone but both together that constitute the man, of whom the soul and the body are each a part, while the whole man consists of both, as we call two horses yoked together a pair, though we do not call either the near or the off horse, however related to the other, a pair, but only call both together a pair?

Of these three possibilities, Varro chose the third, that man is neither soul alone nor body alone but soul and body together. Therefore, he says, the supreme good of man by which he becomes happy consists in the combination of the goods of each kind of thing, namely, soul and body. And he holds accordingly that the primary wants of nature are to be sought for their own sake, and so also virtue, which is implanted by instruction, as being the art of living, which is most outstanding among the goods of the soul. Wherefore this virtue, or art of conducting life, when she has taken over the primary wants of nature, which were there apart from virtue,—nay, were there even when they lacked any instruction whatever,—seeks to satisfy all of them for her own sake and at the same time seeks her own development. She makes use of them and of herself at the same time to the end that she may delight in and enjoy all of them. Her enjoyment may be greater or less as these elements are severally more or less important; still they are all a source of joy, though she may, if that is a necessary condition, slight some elements as less important, in order to win or preserve the more important.

Now of all goods, whether of soul or of body, virtue prefers none at all to herself. For virtue makes good use both of herself and of all the other goods that go to make man happy; but where she is lacking, however many goods a man has, they do him no good, and so must not be called his “goods”; since he uses them ill, they cannot be useful to him. Here, then, is the sort of human life that is termed happy, a life that enjoys virtue and the other goods of soul and body without which virtue cannot exist; a life is called happier, if it enjoys one or more of the goods that virtue can lack and still exist; and happiest, if it enjoys absolutely all

goods, so that it lacks not one of the goods either of soul or of body. For life is not identical with virtue, since not every life, but only a wisely conducted life, is virtue; in fact, there can be life of a sort without any virtue, though there can be no virtue without some life. I might say as much of memory and reason and any other such human faculties; these exist before instruction, but without them there can be no instruction, and therefore no virtue, since virtue is in any case imparted by instruction. But swiftness in running, and physical beauty and victories won by unusual strength and the like, can exist without virtue, as virtue without them; yet they are goods, and according to these philosophers, even these are sought by virtue herself for their own sake, and are used and enjoyed by her in her own becoming way.

This happy life, they say, is also social, and loves the good of friends itself for its own sake as being its own good, and wishes for them for their own sakes what it wishes for itself, whether by friends we mean housemates, such as wife or children and others of the household, or neighbours with houses in the same locality, such as fellow citizens of a city, or men anywhere in the whole world, such as nations with whom we are joined by human society, or denizens even of the universe, which is designated by the term heaven and earth, such as those whom they call gods and like to think of as friends of the wise man, whom we more familiarly call angels. About the supreme good and its opposite the supreme evil they deny that there is any room for doubt, and this, they assert, distinguishes them from the New Academy; and they are not at all interested whether any one who practises philosophy, accepting those ends which they deem to be true, wears the Cynic dress and eats the Cynic food or some other. Finally, of those three kinds of life, the inactive, the active and the composite, they state that they prefer the third. That the Old Academy held and taught these doctrines Varro asserts on the authority of Antiochus, Cicero’s master and his own, although Cicero would have it that on a good many points he appeared to be a Stoic rather than an Old Academic. But what does that matter to us, who ought rather to base our judgement on the bare facts than to set store on knowing what opinion each man held about them?

4. *What View the Christians Hold About the Supreme Good and the Supreme Evil, as Against the Philosophers Who Have Maintained that for Them the Supreme Good Is in Themselves.*

If, then, we are asked what the City of God replies when asked about these several matters, and first what its opinion is about the ultimate good and the ultimate evil, it will reply that the ultimate good is eternal life, and that the ultimate evil is eternal death, and that in order to obtain the one and escape the other we must live rightly. Wherefore it is written: "The just man lives by faith." For neither do we see as yet our good, and therefore must seek it by believing, nor is it in our power of ourselves to live rightly unless he who has given us faith to believe that we must seek help from him shall help us, as we believe in and pray to him. But those who have supposed that the ultimate good and evil are to be found in the present life, placing the ultimate good either in the body or in the soul or in both, or, to speak more explicitly, either in pleasure or in virtue or in both, in repose or in virtue or in both, in pleasure combined with repose or in virtue or in both, in the primary wants of nature or in virtue or in both, all these persons have sought, with a surprising vanity, to be happy in this life and to get happiness by their own efforts. Truth laughed at these men through the words of the prophet: "The Lord knows the thoughts of men," or, as the apostle Paul has set forth this passage: "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain."

For who, no matter how great his torrent of eloquence, can avail to enumerate the miseries of this life? Cicero lamented them, as best he could, in the *Consolation* on the death of his daughter; but how inadequate was his best! For when, where, how can the so-called primary wants of nature be on such a good footing in this life that they are not tossed about at the mercy of blind accidents? Why, what pain is there, the opposite of pleasure, what turbulence is there, the opposite of repose, that may not assail the wise man's frame? Surely the amputation or weakening of a man's limbs forces his freedom from physical defects to capitulate, ugliness his beauty, illness his health, weariness his strength, sleepiness or sluggishness his agility; now, which of these may not invade the flesh of the

wise man? Fitting and harmonious attitudes and movements of the body are also reckoned among the primary wants of nature; but what if some disease makes the limbs quake and tremble? What if a man's spine be so bent that he puts his hands on the ground, which makes of him a quadruped, so to speak? Will not this ruin all beauty and grace whether of bodily pose or of movement?

What of the so-called primary goods of the mind itself, of which the two that are rated first, as means to the grasping and observing of truth, are sensation and intelligence? But how much sensation remains, and of what value, if a man becomes deaf and blind, to say nothing of other defects? And whither will reason and intelligence withdraw, where will they slumber, if a man is crazed by some disease? When the insane say or do many absurd things that are for the most part alien to their own aims and characters, — nay, even opposed to their good aims and characters, — whether we use our imaginations or have them before our eyes, if we reflect on their case as it deserves, we can scarce hold back our tears, or it may be even that we cannot. What shall I say of those who are afflicted by attacks of demons? In what hidden or submerged places do their intellects lurk, when the evil spirit is using their souls and bodies according to its own will? And who is quite sure that this evil cannot befall the wise man in this life? Then what sort of observation of truth is there in this flesh, or how great is it, when, as we read in the truthful book of Wisdom: "The corruptible body weighs down the soul, and the earthly frame lies heavy on a mind that ponders many things"? Furthermore, drive or impulse to act, — if either is the correct Latin word for what the Greeks call *hormē*, for that, too, is included among the primary goods of nature, — is not impulse also responsible for those pitiable movements and acts of the insane that shock us, when sensation is distraught and reason is asleep?

Finally, as to virtue itself, which is not among the primary wants of nature, since it is a later addition ushered in by instruction, although it claims the highest place among human goods, what is its activity here but perpetual war with vices, not external vices but internal, not alien but clearly our very own, a war waged especially by that virtue called in Greek *sōphrosynē* and in Latin temperance, which bridles the lusts of the

flesh lest they win the consent of the mind and drag it into crimes of every sort? For it is not the case that there is no vice when, as the Apostle says: “The flesh lusts against the spirit.” For to this vice there is an opposing virtue, when, as the same Apostle says: “The spirit lusts against the flesh. These two,” he says, “are opposed one to the other, so that you do not what you would.” But what is it that we would do, when we wish to be made perfect by the ultimate good, unless it be that the flesh should not lust against the spirit, and that there should be in us no such vice for the spirit to lust against it? But since we cannot bring that to pass in the present life, however much we may desire it, we can at least with God’s help so act that we do not yield to the lust of the flesh against the spirit by failure of the spirit, and we are not dragged with our own consent to the perpetration of sin. Far be it from us, then, so long as we are engaged in this internal war, to hold it true that we have already attained to that happiness which is the goal that we would gain by victory. And who is so wise that he has no battle at all to wage against his lusts?

What of that virtue which is called prudence? Does she not devote all her vigilance to the discrimination of good and evil, so that in pursuing the one and shunning the other no error may creep in? Thus she bears witness herself that we are among evils, that is, that evils are in us; for she teaches us herself that it is an evil to yield to a lust for sin, and a good not to yield to a lust for sin. But that evil to which prudence teaches and temperance causes us not to yield, is neither by prudence nor by temperance banished from this life. What of justice, whose function it is to assign to each man his due, whereby there is located in man himself a certain right order of nature, so that soul is subordinated to God, and flesh to soul, and therefore both soul and flesh to God? Does not justice thereby demonstrate that she is still labouring in her task rather than resting already at the goal of her labours? For the less the soul keeps God clearly in mind in all its activity, the less it is subordinate to God; and the more the flesh lusts against the spirit, the less it is subordinate to the soul. So long, then, as we have in us this weakness, this sickness, this torpor, how shall we dare say that we are already saved, and if not saved, how already blest with that ultimate bliss? Then truly

that virtue called fortitude, though combined with however great wisdom, bears witness most convincingly to human ills, for they are what she is required to endure with patience.

Now I am amazed that the Stoic philosophers have the face to argue that these ills are no ills, though they admit that, if they should be so great that the wise man cannot or ought not to endure them, he is compelled to inflict death on himself and depart from this life. But such is the stupid pride of these men who suppose that the supreme good is to be found in this life, and that they can be the agents of their own happiness, that their wise man,—I mean the man whom they describe as such with astounding inanity,—whom, even if he be blinded and grow deaf and dumb, lose the use of his limbs, be tortured with pain, and visited by every other evil of the sort that tongue can utter or fancy conceive, whereby he is driven to inflict death on himself, they do not scruple to call happy. What a happy life, that seeks the help of death to end it! If it be happy, let a man stay in it. How can those things not be evil that vanquish the good that is fortitude, and compel it not only to give way to them but so to rave that it calls the same life happy from which it advises us to escape? Who is so blind as not to perceive that, if it were happy, it would not be a life to escape from? Why, the word “escape” is an unconcealed admission of weakness in their argument! What ground have they now to keep them, with stiff-necked pride broken, from admitting that it is even a wretched life? Was it not through lack of fortitude, rather than through fortitude, that the famous Cato took his life? For he would not have done it, had he not lacked the fortitude to bear the victory of Caesar. Where, then, is his fortitude? It yielded, it succumbed, it was so far vanquished that he gave up, forsook, escaped from this happy life. Or was it no longer happy? Then it was wretched. How, then, were those not evils that made life wretched and a thing to be escaped from?

And therefore those who admitted that these are evils, as did the Peripatetics and the Old Academics, the sect that Varro defends, speak in a more tolerable manner; but they, too, are sponsors of a surprising error, in that they maintain that amid these evils, even if they be so grave that he who suffers them is obliged to escape by seeking his own death, life is nevertheless

happy. "Among evils," says Varro, "are pains and anguish of body, and their evil is the greater in proportion to their severity; and to avoid them one should escape from this life." What life, pray? "This life," he says, "that is beset by so great evils." So it is definitely happy, then, amid those very evils because of which you say that one must escape from it? Or do you call it happy because you have freedom to escape from these evils by death? What, then, if by some divine judgement you were held among them and were not permitted either to die or ever to be free of them? Then, no doubt, at any rate, you would say that such a life is wretched. So it is not unwretched merely because it is soon abandoned, inasmuch as, if it were everlasting, even you yourself would pronounce it to be wretched. And so it ought not to be judged free from all wretchedness because the wretchedness is brief; or, still more absurdly, because the wretchedness is brief, on that account be even called a state of bliss.

Mighty is the power in these evils that compel a man, and according to these philosophers compel even a wise man, to deprive himself of his own existence as a man; although they say, and say truly, that the first and greatest commandment of nature is that a man should be brought into harmony with himself and therefore instinctively avoid death, and that he be his own friend in such wise as to be vigorously determined and eager to keep the breath of life and to live on in this union of body and soul. Mighty is the power in these evils that overcome the natural feeling we hear of, by whose working we use every means and bend all our strength and all our endeavours to avoid death, and so completely defeat nature that what was avoided is now longed for, pursued, and, if it may not arrive from some other quarter, inflicted on a man by himself. Mighty is the power in these evils that make fortitude a homicide, if indeed she should still be called fortitude who is overcome by these evils so completely that she not only cannot by her endurance safeguard the man whom, as virtue, she has undertaken to govern and protect but is herself compelled to go to the length of killing him. The wise man ought, to be sure, to endure even death with firmness, but death that befalls him from an external source. If, then, he is compelled, according to these philosophers, to inflict it on

himself, surely they must admit not only that those are evils but that they are in fact intolerable evils that compel him to perpetrate this crime.

The life, then, that is oppressed by the weight of such great and grievous evils or exposed to the chance of them would by no means be termed happy if the men who use that term,—men who, when they are defeated by the increasing pressure of their ills, in the act of inflicting death upon themselves, surrender to misfortune,—would with equal condescension, when they are defeated by sound logic in the attempt to discover a happy life, surrender to the truth, instead of supposing that the enjoyment of the supreme good is a goal to be attained in the mortal state of which they speak. For our very virtues, which are surely the best and most useful attributes of a man, bear trustworthy witness to life's miseries so much the more, the more strongly they support us against life's dangers, toils and sorrows. For if our virtues are genuine,—and genuine virtues can exist only in those who are endowed with true piety,—they do not lay claim to such powers as to say that men in whom they reside will suffer no miseries (for true virtues are not so fraudulent in their claims); but they do say that our human life, though it is compelled by all the great evils of this age to be wretched, is happy in the expectation of a future life in so far as it enjoys the expectation of salvation too. For how can a life be happy, if it has no salvation yet? So the apostle Paul, speaking not of men who lacked prudence, patience, temperance and justice, but of men who lived in accordance with true piety, and whose virtues were therefore genuine, says: "Now we are saved by hope. But hope that is seen is not hope. For how should a man hope for what he sees? But if we hope for that which we do not see, then we look forward with endurance." As, therefore, we are saved by hope, so it is by hope that we have been made happy; and as we have no hold on a present salvation, but look for salvation in the future, so we look forward to happiness, and a happiness to be won "by endurance." For we are among evils, which we ought patiently to endure until we arrive among those goods where nothing will be lacking to provide us ineffable delight, nor will there now be anything that we are obliged to endure. Such is the salvation which in the life to come will itself be also the ultimate bliss. But

those philosophers, not believing in this blessedness because they do not see it, strive to manufacture for themselves in this life an utterly counterfeit happiness by drawing on a virtue whose fraudulence matches its arrogance.

*5. About Social Life, Which, Though Very Greatly to Be Desired, Is Often Upset by Many Distresses.*

But in that they believe that the life of the wise man must be social, we approve much more fully. For how could the City of God, about which we are already engaged in writing the nineteenth book, begin at the start or progress in its course or reach its appointed goal, if the life of the saints were not social? But who could reckon up the number and the magnitude of the woes with which human society overflows amid the worries of this our mortal state? Who could be equal to the task of assessing them? Let them give ear to a man in one of their own comedies, who says what every man concurs in: “I have taken a wife; what misery I have known therewith! Children were born; another responsibility.” What of the ills that love breeds, as enumerated by that same Terence: “Slights, suspicions, enmities, war, then peace again”? Have they not everywhere made up the tale of human events? Do they not usually occur even when friends are united in a noble love? The history of man is in every cranny infested with them; in this list we count the slights, suspicions, enmities and war, as certainly evil; while peace is but a doubtful good, since we do not know the hearts of those with whom we choose to be at peace, and even if we could know them today, in any case we know not what they may be like tomorrow. Who, moreover, are wont to be more friendly, or at least ought to be, than those who dwell together in the same home? And yet who is free from doubt in such relations, seeing that from the hidden treachery of such persons great woes have often arisen, — woes the more bitter, as the peace was sweeter that was counted real when it was most cleverly feigned?

That is why the words of Cicero so touch all men’s hearts that we lament perforce: “No ambushed foes are harder to detect than those who mask their aim with a counterfeit loyalty or under the guise of some

close tie. For against an open adversary you would be on your guard, and so easily escape him; but this hidden evil, being internal and domestic, not only arises but even crushes you before you have a chance to observe and investigate it.” That is why the divine word has also been spoken: “A man’s foes are even those of his own household,” words that are heard with great sorrow of heart. For even if any man is strong enough to bear them with equanimity, or alert enough to guard with prudent foresight against the designs of a pretended friend, nevertheless, if he is himself a good man, he must needs feel grievous pain when he finds by experience that they are utterly base, whether they were always evil and feigned goodness or whether they underwent a change from goodwill to the evil mind that he finds in them. If, then, the home, our common refuge amid the ills of this human life, is not safe, what of the city? The larger it is, the more does its forum teem with lawsuits both civil and criminal, even though its calm be not disturbed by the turbulence, or more often the bloodshed, of sedition and civil wars. Cities are indeed free at times from such events, but never from the threat of them.

*6. About the Error of Human Judgement, When the Truth Is Hidden.*

What of those judgements pronounced by men on their fellow men, which are indispensable in cities however deep the peace that reigns in them? How sad, how lamentable we find them, since those who pronounce them cannot look into the consciences of those whom they judge. Therefore they are often compelled to seek the truth by torturing innocent witnesses though the case does not concern them. What shall I say of torture inflicted on the accused man himself? The question is whether he is guilty; yet he is tortured even if he is innocent, and for a doubtful crime he suffers a punishment that is not doubtful at all, not because it is discovered that he committed it but because it is not known that he did not commit it. Thus the ignorance of the judge generally results in the calamity of the innocent. And what is still more intolerable, and still more to be deplored and, were it possible, purged by floods of tears, is that the judge, in the act of torturing the accused for the express purpose of

avoiding the unwitting execution of an innocent man, through pitiable ignorance puts to death, both tortured and innocent, the very man whom he has tortured in order not to execute him if innocent.

For if he has chosen, applying the wisdom of the philosophers mentioned above, to escape from this life rather than endure those torments any longer, he pleads guilty to a crime that he did not commit. And after he has been condemned and put to death, the judge still does not know whether it was a guilty or an innocent man whom he put to death and whom he tortured that he might not unwittingly execute an innocent man; so he has both tortured an innocent man in order to learn the truth and put him to death without learning it. Since there are such dark places in political life, will a wise judge sit on the bench, or will he not dare to do so? Clearly he will; for the claim of society constrains and draws him until he consents to serve; for to desert his duty to society he counts abominable.

For he does not think it abominable that innocent witnesses are tortured in other men's cases; or that the accused are often overcome by the pain of torture and so make false confessions and are punished, though innocent; or that, although not condemned to death, they often die under torture or as a consequence of torture; or that the accusers, perhaps moved by a desire to benefit society by seeing that crimes do not go unpunished, are themselves condemned by an ignorant judge, if both the evidence of witnesses is false and the defendant with fierce resistance to torture makes no admission of guilt, so that they have no way to prove the truth of their allegations, although those allegations are true. These many great evils he does not count as sins; for the wise judge does not commit them because of any will to do harm but because his action is determined by his ignorance, being also, however, determined by the binding claim of society that requires him to sit in judgement. Here, then, is a clear proof of man's miserable lot, of which I speak, even though we may not accuse the judge of evil intent. But if by ignorance and by office he is constrained to torture and punish the innocent, is it not enough that we acquit him of guilt? Must he be happy as well? How much more creditable is it for his powers of reflection and for his worth as a human being when he acknowledges our pitiable condition in that our acts are

determined in spite of us, and loathes his own part in it, sending up, if he is wise as a religious man, a cry to God: "From my necessities deliver thou me!"

*7. About the Diversity of Languages by Which Human Society Is Divided; and About the Misery of Wars, Even of Those Called Just.*

After the state or city comes the world, to which they assign the third level of human society; they begin with the household, then progressively arrive at the city, and then at the world. And this, like a confluence of waters, is the fuller of dangers as it is the larger. In the first place, the diversity of languages separates one man from another. For if two men, each ignorant of the other's language, meet and are compelled by some necessity not to pass on but to remain together, then it is easier for dumb animals, even of different kinds, to associate together than for them, though both are human beings. For where they cannot communicate their views to one another, merely because they speak different languages, so little good does it do them to be alike by endowment of nature, so far as social unity is concerned, that a man would rather have his dog for company than a foreigner. But the imperial city has taken pains to impose on conquered peoples, as a bond of peace, not only her yoke but her language, so that there has been far from a lack, but rather a superfluity, of interpreters. True; but at what a cost has this unity been achieved, all those great wars, all that human slaughter and bloodshed!

These wars are past; yet the miseries of these evils are not ended. For though foreign foes have not been, and are not, lacking, against whom wars have always been waged and are being waged, nevertheless the very extent of the empire has begotten wars of a worse kind; I mean social and civil wars, by which the human race is more wretchedly shaken, whether while they are actually being waged for the sake of calm at last or while they are a source of fear lest a new storm arise. If it were to attempt to do verbal justice to the many and manifold disasters, to the hard and harsh necessities, though I could not possibly deal with them adequately, where would my long-drawn argument end? But the wise man, they say, will wage just wars. As if he would not all the more, if he remembers his

humanity, deplore his being compelled to engage in just wars; for if they were not just, he would not have to wage them, and so a wise man would have no wars. For it is the injustice of the opposing side that imposes on the wise man the necessity of waging just wars; and this injustice, even if no necessity of waging war were to arise from it, must still be deplored by a human being, since human beings perpetrate it. Let every man, then, reflect with sorrow upon all these great evils, so horrible and so cruel, and confess his misery. But if any man has no sorrow in his heart either when he suffers himself or when he imagines such suffering, his case is certainly far more miserable, for he thinks himself happy precisely because he has lost all human feeling to boot.

*8. That the Friendship of Good Men Cannot Be Free from Anxiety, So Long as It Is Necessary to Worry About the Dangers of this Life.*

If we escape from a kind of ignorance, akin to madness, that often befalls men in the wretched condition of this life, and that leads them to mistake a foe for a friend or a friend for a foe, what consolation have we in this human society, full of mistakes and distresses, save the unfeigned faith and mutual affection of true and good friends? But the more friends we have, and the more widely scattered they are, the further and more widely spread are our fears lest some evil may befall them among the accumulated evils of this age. For we are anxious not only for fear lest they may be afflicted by hunger, warfare, disease, captivity and the unimaginable sufferings of slavery, but also with far more bitter fear lest friendship be changed into perfidy, malice and villainy. And when these contingencies do occur, more frequently as our friends are the more numerous, and the tidings come to our knowledge, who, save the man who experiences them, can conceive of the pain that consumes our hearts? Indeed, we would rather hear that they were dead, although this, too, we could not hear without sorrow.

For if their lives delighted us with the comforts of friendship, how could it be that their death should bring us no sadness? He who would forbid such sadness must forbid, if he can, all friendly conversation, must interdict or intercept all friendly affection, must

break with harsh brutality the bonds of all human relationships, or else lay down the law that they must be so indulged that no pleasure may be derived from them. But if this is utterly impossible, how can it be that a man's death shall not be bitter to us if his life be sweet to us? For hence it is that the sorrow of a heart not devoid of human feeling is like some wound or sore for whose healing we use as salve our kindly messages of comfort. Nor must it be supposed that there is nothing to be healed merely because healing is the easier and the more rapid the finer a man's spirit is. Since, then, the life of mortals is afflicted now more gently, again more harshly, by the death of those very dear to us, and especially of those whose performance of public duties is needful for human society, nevertheless we would rather hear of or behold the death of those whom we love than perceive that they have fallen from faith or virtue, that is, that the soul itself has suffered death. The earth is full of this vast store of evils; wherefore it is written: "Is man's life on earth anything but temptation?" And therefore the Lord himself says: "Woe to the world because of offences"; and again: "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." The result is that we feel thankful at the death of good men among our friends, and that, though their death brings sorrow, it is the more surely mitigated in that they have been spared those evils by which in this life even good men are crushed or contaminated or at least are in danger of either fate.

*9. About the Friendship of the Holy Angels, Which Cannot Be Manifest to Man in this Life Because of the Deceitfulness of the Demons into Whose Power Have Fallen Those Who Judged It Proper to Worship Many Gods.*

On the other hand, the society of the holy angels, which those philosophers who held that the gods are our friends placed at a fourth level as it were (passing from the earth to the universe in order thereby in a way to embrace heaven itself), we have no fear lest such friends bring us grief by their death or deterioration. But because they do not mingle with us with the familiarity of men (which in itself is also one of the distresses of this life), and because, as we read, Satan sometimes takes the form of an angel of light in order

to tempt men who are in need of the discipline so provided, or deserve to be deceived, there is great need of God's mercy lest some one, when he thinks that he enjoys the friendship of good angels, be enjoying the feigned friendship of evil demons and suffering from their enmity, which is the more harmful the more shrewd and deceitful they are. Indeed, who is in need of this mercy of God if not men in their great misery, which is so weighed down by ignorance as easily to be deceived by such masquerades? And indeed it is most certain that those philosophers in the sacrilegious city who said that the gods were their friends have fallen into the company of the malignant demons to whom that city itself is altogether subject and with whom it will suffer everlasting punishment. The truth is sufficiently revealed by those beings who are worshipped by them, in the sacred, or rather sacrilegious, rites, and in the most filthy shows in which their crimes are celebrated; it is those same demons on whose authority and demand the worshippers supposed that shows so full of such vile indecencies were required as propitiation.

10. *What Reward Is Begotten for the Saints of Their Victory over the Temptation of this Life.*

But not even the saints and the faithful worshippers of the one true and most high God are safe from the deceptions and the manifold temptations of the demons. For in this region of weakness and in these evil days such anxiety is also not without its uses in causing them to seek with a keener longing that place of safety where peace is most complete and assured. For there the gifts of nature, bestowed on our nature by the Creator of all natures, shall be not only good but everlasting, not only as regards the spirit, which is healed by wisdom, but also as regards the body, which will be restored by resurrection. There the virtues shall not struggle against any vice or evil whatsoever, but shall hold in possession the reward of victory, an eternal peace that no adversary can disquiet. For this indeed is the final blessedness, the end of perfect attainment that knows no devouring end. Here, to be sure, we are called blessed when we have peace, however small may be the portion which we can possess here in a good life; but this blessedness, when compared to that

final blessedness, is found to be downright misery. So when we mortals have such peace as we can enjoy in this mortal estate, if we live rightly, virtue makes the right use of its good things; but when we have it not, virtue makes good use even of the ills from which men suffer. But true virtue is this: to subordinate all the good things that it makes use of, and all that it does in making good use of good and evil things, and also itself, to that end where our peace shall be so excellent and so great that it cannot be improved or increased.

11. *About the Blessedness of the Everlasting Peace in Which the Saints Find Their End or True Perfection.*

We might say, therefore, of peace, as we have said of the eternal life, that it is the end of all our good, especially since the sacred psalmist says of the City of God, about which our laborious work is written: "Praise the Lord, Jerusalem, praise thy God, O Zion; for he has strengthened the bars of thy gates; he has blessed thy children within thee; he has made thy borders peace." For when the bars of her gates are strengthened, then none shall go in or come out of her; so we must understand that her borders are that peace whose finality it is our purpose to demonstrate. For even the mystic name of the city itself, Jerusalem, as we have said before, means "vision of peace." But since the word "peace" is often applied to the story of our mortal days, where certainly there is no eternal life, we have preferred to call the end of this city, that in which shall be found its supreme good, eternal life rather than peace. And about this end the Apostle says: "But now, being freed from sin, and become servants to God, you have your fruit unto holiness, and the end life everlasting." But, on the other hand, because the life of the wicked may also be held to be eternal life by those who are not familiar with the holy scriptures, either with an eye to the immortality of the soul that is also taught by certain philosophers, or with an eye to our own belief in the endless punishment of the wicked, who surely cannot be tormented forever if they are not also to live forever, it behooves us to say, in order that all may understand our meaning more easily, that the end of this city, whereby it will possess its supreme good, may be put either way, as peace in

everlasting life or as everlasting life in peace. For so great a good is peace that even where earthly and mortal affairs are in question no other word is heard with more pleasure, nothing else is desired with greater longing, and finally nothing better can be found. So if we choose to speak about it at a little greater length, we shall not be tedious to our readers, I think, both because our theme is the end of this city and because of the very sweetness of peace, which is dear to all.

*12. That Even the Fierceness of Those at War and All the Restless Drives of Men Have in Them a Yearning to Attain the End of Peace, a Good that Is Sought by Every Creature.*

Whoever reviews at all, with me, the pattern of human affairs and our common nature observes that just as there is no man who does not wish joy, so there is no man who does not wish peace. For even they who choose warfare desire nothing but victory; it follows that they desire by waging war to arrive at a glorious peace. For what else is victory but the conquest of the other party to the fight? And when this is achieved, there will be peace. Wars also, then, are waged in a struggle for peace, even by those who seek a field of training for prowess in war, whether in command or in personal combat. It follows that peace is the desired end of war. For every man even in the act of waging war is in quest of peace, but no one is in quest of war when he makes peace. For even those who prefer that a state of peace should be upset do so not because they hate peace but because they desire a different state of peace that will meet their wishes. Therefore they do not desire that there shall be no peace, but only that the peace shall be such as they choose. And supposing even that they have separated themselves from other men by sedition, they cannot effect their design without maintaining some sort of peace with their confederates and fellow conspirators. Why, even robbers, in order the more violently and the more safely to attack the peace of other men, choose to maintain peace with their comrades.

Why, even though one man may be so preeminent in strength and so cautious in letting no one know his secrets that he trusts no partner, but lies in wait and triumphs alone, taking his booty after overcoming and

slaying such as he can, yet he keeps up some shadow of peace with those whom he cannot kill and from whom he wishes to conceal his deeds. And in his own home he surely strives to be at peace with his wife and children and any other members of the household, since there is no doubt that he is pleased when they are at his beck and call; for if they disobey, he is angry, he rebukes and punishes, and if need be he secures even by cruelty the peace of his home, which, he judges, cannot exist unless all the other members of the same domestic society are subject to one chief; and this chief, in his own home, is himself. So if he were offered the servitude of many, whether of a city or of a nation, on the same terms that he had imposed on his own household, he would no longer keep himself concealed out of sight like a brigand, but would lift his royal head before men's eyes, though the same covetousness and malice were still in him. Thus all men desire to have peace with their own associates, when they wish them to live as they decree. For even those against whom they wage war they wish, if they can, to make their own, and to impose on them after their subjection the laws of their own peace.

But let us imagine a man such as epic and mythical poetry describe, one so unsociable and wild that they have perhaps preferred to call him a semi-man rather than a man. Although, then, his kingdom was the solitude of a dismal cave, and although he himself was so exceedingly bad that his name derived from it (the Greek for "bad" is *kakos*, and Cacus was his name); although he had no wife to exchange fond words with him, no little children to play with, none to command when they were somewhat bigger, no friends to give him the enjoyment of conversation, not even his father Vulcan (whose happiness he much surpassed merely because he begot no monster like himself); although he gave to none, but took what he chose from any one he chose whenever he could; nevertheless in the very solitude of his cave, "the floor of which was always reeking with fresh carnage," as the poet says, all that he desired was peace unmolested by any, a peace whose calm was untroubled by any man's violence or the fear of it. In a word, he longed to be at peace with his own body; and so far as he succeeded in this, all was well with him. His limbs obeyed his commands; and in order to pacify with all possible speed his mortal nature when it re-

belled against him through its impoverishment, and incited hunger to wage a civil war that aimed to sever and eject his soul from his body, he ravished, slew, and devoured. And yet, cruel and savage though he was, he was providing by his cruelty and savagery for the peace of his life and safety; so if he had been willing to keep the peace with other men as he was content to keep it in his cave and with himself, he would not be called bad or a monster or a semi-man. Or if the ugliness of his body and his belching of murky flames frightened off human companions, perhaps it was not through lust for harm but through the need of keeping alive that he was fierce. But it may be that he never existed, or more likely, that he was not such as he is described with poetic fancy; for Hercules would be underpraised if Cacus were not too much abused. So the existence of such a man, or rather semi-man, as I have said, like many fictions of the poets, is not credited.

For even the most savage beasts, from whom he derived a part of his savagery (for he was in fact called half-wild), preserve their species by a sort of peace: by begetting, bearing, suckling and rearing their young, although most of them are not gregarious, but solitary; not like sheep, deer, doves, starlings and bees, but like lions, wolves, foxes, eagles and owls. What tigress does not softly purr over her cubs and subdue her fierceness as she caresses them? What kite, however solitary in circling over his prey, does not join a mate, build a nest, hatch the eggs, rear the young birds and maintain with the mother of his family as peaceful a domestic society as possible? How much more is a man by the laws of his nature, so to speak, to enter upon a fellowship with all his fellow men, and to maintain peace with them, so far as he can, since even wicked men wage war to protect the peace of their own fellows, and would make men their own, if they could, so that all men and all things might serve one master. And how could that be, unless they accepted his peace either through love or through fear? So pride is a perverse imitation of God. For it abhors a society of peers under God, but seeks to impose its own rule, instead of his, on society. In other words, it abhors the just peace of God, and loves its own unjust peace; but peace, of some kind or other, it cannot help loving. For no creature's vice is so completely at odds with nature that it destroys the very last traces of nature.

He, then, who knows enough to prefer right to wrong and the orderly to the perverse, sees that the peace of the unjust, compared with that of the just, does not deserve the name of peace at all. Yet even the perverted must be in, or in dependence upon, or in accord with a part of the whole order of things in which it rests or of which it is made; otherwise it could not exist at all. Just as if a man were to hang with his head downwards, this position of body and limbs is certainly perverted, because the normal attitude of nature is turned topsy-turvy. This perverted position disturbs the peace of the flesh, and is therefore painful; yet the spirit is at peace with its body, and labours for its preservation, and that is why there is one that suffers. But if it is banished from the body by its pains, then so long as the framework of the limbs remains, there is still a sort of peace among them, and that is why there is still some one to hang there. And because the earthly body presses earthwards, and pulls against the bond by which it is suspended, it tends toward its proper peace, and by the plea of its weight, so to speak, demands a place of rest; and now, though lifeless and without sensation, it does not depart from the peace natural to its rank, whether while possessed of it or while tending toward it. For if preservative and treatment are applied to prevent the form of the corpse from dissolution and disintegration, a sort of peace still unites the several parts, and keeps the whole mass attached to its fitting and therefore its peaceable place in the earth.

But if no treatment for embalming is given, and nature is left to take its course, for a time the body is jarred by warring exhalations, offensive to our senses (for that is what we smell in case of putrefaction), until the body joins company with the elements of the world, and little by little, particle by particle, it departs to enter into their peace. And yet in this process not a whit is abated from the laws of the most high Creator and Ruler by whom the peace of the universe is administered. For although tiny animals breed in the carcass of a larger animal, by the same law of the Creator all these little creatures serve in salutary peace their own little spirits. And although the flesh of dead animals be devoured by other animals, no matter where it is transported, no matter what other things it is mixed with, no matter what transformation or permutation it undergoes, it still finds itself among the same

laws that are everywhere diffused for the preservation of every mortal species, and act as peacemakers in that they match the parts that belong together.

*13. About the Universal Peace, Which Amid All Disturbances Whatsoever Is Preserved by a Law of Nature, While Every One Under the Decree of the Just Judge Attains to the Ordered State that He Has Earned by His Free Will.*

The peace of the body, therefore, is an ordered proportionment of its components; the peace of the irrational soul is an ordered repose of the appetites; the peace of the rational soul is the ordered agreement of knowledge and action. The peace of body and soul is the ordered life and health of a living creature; peace between mortal man and God is an ordered obedience in the faith under an everlasting law; peace between men is an ordered agreement of mind; domestic peace is an ordered agreement among those who dwell together concerning command and obedience; the peace of the heavenly city is a perfectly ordered and fully concordant fellowship in the enjoyment of God and in mutual enjoyment by union with God; the peace of all things is a tranquillity of order. Order is the classification of things equal and unequal that assigns to each its proper position.

Therefore the wretched,—for, in so far as they are wretched, they certainly are not in a state of peace,—lack the tranquillity of order, in which there is no tumultuous activity; nevertheless, because they are deservedly and justly wretched, in that very wretchedness of theirs they are still unable to escape from the realm of order. Though they are not indeed united with the blessed, yet it is by a law of order that they are separated from them. And when they are free from tumultuous activity, they are adjusted to their condition, no matter how slightly. Hence there is among them some tranquillity of order, and therefore there is among them some peace. But they are wretched because, although they are to some degree free from anxiety and suffering, they are not in such a case as could justify their being free from anxiety and suffering. Still more wretched are they, however, if they are not at peace with the law by which the natural order is ad-

ministered. But when they suffer, their peace is embroiled in the part that suffers; but in the part where there is no torment of pain and the frame of nature is not dissolved, peace still abides. Just as there can be life, then, without pain, while there can be no pain without life, so, too, there can be peace without any war, but no war without some sort of peace. This does not follow from the nature of war, but because war is waged by or within persons who have some natural being, for they could not exist if there were not some sort of peace to hold them together.

Therefore there is a nature in which there is no evil, nay, in which no evil can even exist; but there cannot be a nature in which there is no good. Hence not even the nature of the devil himself is evil, so far as it is nature; but perversity makes it evil. So he did not stand steadfast in the truth, yet did not escape the judgement of the truth; he did not remain in the tranquillity of order, yet did not thereby flee from the power of the ordainer. The goodness of God, imparted to his nature, does not remove him from the justice of God, which ordains his punishment; nor does God thereby punish the good that he has created, but the evil that the devil has committed. Nor does God take away all that he gave to his nature; but something he takes, and something he leaves, so that there should be something remaining to feel pain at the loss.

And this very pain is evidence of the good that was taken and the good that was left. For had good not been left, he could not feel pain for the good lost. For a sinner is worse if he rejoices in the loss of righteousness; but he who is tormented, though he may gain no good thereby, yet grieves for the loss of salvation. And since both righteousness and salvation are good, and the loss of any good is cause for grief rather than for joy (at least where there is no compensation in the form of a better good, as righteousness of soul is better than bodily health), surely it is more fitting for an unjust man to grieve in punishment than to rejoice in sin. So even as the rejoicing of a sinner because he has abandoned what is good is evidence of a bad will, so his grief in punishment, because of the good that he has lost, is evidence of a good nature. For he who mourns the lost peace of his nature does so by his possession of some remnants of that peace, by reason of

which his nature is friendly to itself. Now it is right that in the last punishment the wicked and impious should weep in their torments for the loss of the good that was in their natures, being aware that he who deprived them is an altogether just God whom they scorned when he was the altogether kindly distributor of bounty.

God, then, the most wise creator and most just ordainer of all natures, who has set upon the earth as its greatest adornment the mortal human race, has bestowed on men certain good things that befit this life; to wit, temporal peace, so far as it can be enjoyed in the little span of a mortal life in terms of personal health and preservation and fellowship with one's kind, and all things necessary to safeguard or recover this peace (such as the objects that are suitably and conveniently available for our senses: light, speech, air to breathe and water to drink, and whatever befits the body, to feed and cover it, to heal and adorn it); all this under the most just condition that every mortal who rightly uses such goods, that are designed to contribute to the peace of mortals, shall receive larger and better goods, that is, the peace of immortality, and the glory and honour appropriate to it in an everlasting life spent in the enjoyment of God and of one's neighbour in union with God; while he who uses the goods of this life perversely shall lose them, and shall not receive those of the everlasting life.

*14. About Order and Law, Whether Earthly or Heavenly, by Which Human Society Is Both the Concern of Those Who Rule and Served by Their Concern.*

Therefore every use of temporal things is related to the enjoyment of earthly peace in the earthly city, while in the heavenly city it is related to the enjoyment of everlasting peace. Wherefore, if we were irrational animals, we should seek nothing beyond the ordered proportionment of the components of the body and the assuagement of the appetites; nothing, that is, beyond repose of the flesh and good store of pleasures, so that the peace of the body might further serve the peace of the soul. For if bodily peace be wanting, the peace of the irrational soul is impaired, because it cannot achieve the assuagement of its appetites. But the

two together serve the mutual peace of soul and body, the peace of an ordered life and health. For just as animals, by avoiding pain, show that they love bodily peace, and by pursuing pleasure in order to satisfy the wants of their appetites show that they love peace of soul, so by their shunning death they give a sufficient indication how great is their love of the peace that harmonizes soul and body.

But because man has a rational soul, he subordinates all that he has in common with the beasts to the peace of the rational soul in order that he may exercise his mind in contemplation and may act in accordance with it, and in order that he may thus enjoy that ordered agreement of knowledge and action which we called the peace of the rational soul. It is for this end that he ought to prefer to be annoyed by no pain, moved by no desire, and dissipated by no death, namely that he may discover some profitable knowledge and may shape his life and character in accordance with such knowledge. But lest by his very eagerness for knowledge he should fall, through the weakness of the human mind, into some fatal infection of error, he needs divine instruction that he may follow with assurance, and divine assistance that he may follow it as a freeman. And since, so long as he is in this mortal body, he wanders on alien soil far from God, he walks by faith, not by sight, and therefore he subordinates all peace, of body or of soul or of both, to that peace which exists between mortal man and the immortal God, that he may show an ordered obedience in faith under the everlasting law.

Now since the divine instructor teaches two chief precepts, love of God and love of one's neighbour, and since in them man finds three objects of love, God, himself, and his neighbour, and he who loves God does not err in loving himself, it follows that he is concerned also for his neighbour that he should love God, since he is bidden to love his neighbour as himself. He is thus concerned for his wife, his children, his household and for other men so far as he can be; and he would wish his neighbour to be so concerned for him, should he perchance stand in need of it. Therefore he will be at peace, so far as in him lies, with all men in that human peace, or ordered agreement, of which the pattern is this: first, to do harm to no man, and,

secondly, to help every man that he can. In the first place, then, he has the care of his own household, inasmuch as the order of nature or of human society provides him with a readier and easier access to them for seeking their interest. Wherefore the Apostle says: “Whosoever does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he denies the faith, and is worse than an infidel.” So at this point begins domestic peace, the ordered agreement among those who dwell together, concerning command and obedience. For those who are concerned for others give commands, the husband to his wife, the parents to their children, the masters to their servants; while those who are objects of concern obey; for example, the women obey their husbands, the children their parents, the servants their masters. But in the home of the just man who lives by faith and who is still a pilgrim in exile from the celestial city, even those who give commands serve those whom they seem to command. For they command not through lust for rule but through dutiful concern for others, not with pride in exercising princely rule but with mercy in providing for others.

*15. About the Freedom Natural to Man, and About the Servitude of Which the Prime Cause Is Sin, Because a Man Whose Will Is Evil, Even Though He Is Not the Property of Another Man, Is the Slave of His Own Lust.*

This is the prescription of the order of nature, and thus has God created man. For he says: “Let him have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds that fly in the heavens, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” For he did not wish a rational creature, made in his own image, to have dominion over irrational creatures: not man over man, but man over the beasts. So it was that the first just men were established as shepherds of flocks, rather than as kings of men, so that even so God might indirectly point out what is required by the principle of gradation among his creatures, and what the guilt of sinners demands; for of course it is understood that the condition of slavery is justly imposed on the sinner. Wherefore we do not read of a slave anywhere in the Scriptures until the

just man Noah branded his son’s sin with this word; so he earned this name by his fault, not by nature. The origin of the Latin word for “slave” is believed to be derived from the fact that those who by the law of war might have been put to death, when preserved by their victors, became slaves, so named from their preservation. But even this could not have occurred were it not for the wages of sin; for even when a just war is waged, the enemy fights to defend his sin, and every victory, even when won by wicked men, humbles the vanquished through a divine judgement, correcting or punishing their sins. Witness the man of God, Daniel, who in captivity confesses to God his own sins and those of his people, and in pious sorrow recognizes in them the cause of his captivity. The prime cause of slavery, then, is sin, so that man was put under man in a state of bondage; and this can be only by a judgement of God, in whom there is no unrighteousness, and who knows how to assign divers punishments according to the deserts of the sinners.

But as our Lord in heaven says: “Every man who sins is the slave of his sins,” so many wicked masters, though they have religious men as their slaves, yet are not on that account themselves free; “For by whom a man is vanquished, to him is he also bound as a slave.” And surely it is a happier lot to be slave to a man than to a lust; for the most cruel overlord that desolates men’s hearts, to mention no other, is this very lust for overlordship. Moreover, in a peaceful order in which some men are subjected to others, humility is as beneficial to servants as pride is harmful to masters. But by nature, in which God first created man, no man is the slave either of another man or of sin. Yet slavery as a punishment is also ordained by that law which bids us to preserve the natural order and forbids us to disturb it; for if nothing had been done contrary to that law, there would have been nothing requiring the check of punishment by slavery. For this reason too the Apostle admonishes slaves to be subject to their masters, and to serve them heartily and with good will, so that if they cannot be freed by their masters they may themselves make their very slavery in some sense free, by serving not in crafty fear but in faithful affection, until all wickedness pass away and all lordship and human authority be done away with and God be all in all.

16. *About Equitable Rule of Masters over Slaves.*

Therefore even if our righteous fathers had slaves, they so administered domestic peace as to distinguish the lot of children from the condition of slaves in regard to these temporal goods; yet in regard to the worship of God, in whom we should find our hope of everlasting goods, they took thought with an equal affection for all the members of their households. And this the order of nature prescribes, so that from it the name of *paterfamilias* arose, and has been so widely used that even those who rule unjustly are glad to be called by it. But those who are true fathers of their households take thought for all in their households just as for their children, to see that they worship and win God's favour, desiring and praying that they may reach the heavenly home where the duty of commanding men will not be necessary, because there will be no duty of taking thought for those who are already happy in that immortal state; but until they arrive there the fathers are more obligated to maintain their position as masters than the slaves to keep their place as servants.

So if any one in the household by disobedience breaks the domestic peace, he is rebuked by a word or a blow or some other kind of just and legitimate punishment, to the extent permitted by human fellowship, for the sake of the offender, so that he may be closely joined to the peace from which he broke away. For just as it is no kindness to help a man at the cost of his losing a greater good, so it is not blameless behaviour to spare a man at the cost of his falling into a graver sin. Hence blamelessness involves the obligation not only to do evil to no man but also to restrain a man from sinning or to punish him if he has sinned, so that either the man himself who is chastised may be reformed by his experience or others may be deterred by his example. Since, then, a man's house ought to be the beginning or least part of the city, and every beginning ministers to some end of its own kind and every part to the integrity of the whole of which it is a part, it follows clearly enough that domestic peace ministers to civic peace, that is, that the ordered agreement concerning command and obedience among those who dwell together in a household ministers to

the ordered agreement concerning command and obedience among citizens. Thus we see that the father of a family ought to draw his precepts from the law of the city, and so rule his household that it shall be in harmony with the peace of the city.

17. *About the Origin of Peace and of Discord Between the Heavenly and the Earthly Societies.*

But a household of human beings whose life is not governed by faith pursues an earthly peace by means of the good things and the conveniences of this temporal life, while a household of those who live by faith looks to the everlasting blessings that are promised for the future, using like one in a strange land any earthly and temporal things, not letting them entrap him or divert him from the path that leads to God, but making them a means to brace his efforts to ease the burden and by no means to aggravate the load imposed by the corruptible body, which weighs down the soul. Therefore both kinds of human groups and of households use alike the things that are necessary for this mortal life; but each has its own very different end in using them. So, too, the earthly city, that lives not by faith, seeks an earthly peace, and its end in aiming at agreement concerning command and obedience on the part of citizens is limited to a sort of merging of human wills in regard to the things that are useful for this mortal life. Whereas the heavenly city, or rather the part of it that goes its pilgrim way in this mortal life and lives by faith, needs must make use of this peace too, though only until this mortal lot which has need of it shall pass away. Therefore, so long as it leads its life in captivity, as it were, being a stranger in the earthly city, although it has already received the promise of redemption, and the gift of the spirit as a pledge of it, it does not hesitate to obey the laws of the earthly city whereby matters that minister to the support of mortal life are administered to the end that since this mortal life is common to both, a harmony may be preserved between both cities with regard to the things that belong to it.

But because the earthly city has had certain philosophers of its own, whose doctrine is rejected by the divine teaching, and who followed their own surmise or

were deceived by demons, and so believed that there are many gods to be won over to support human interests, and that different provinces belong to different responsibilities of theirs, so that the body is the province of one, the soul of another; and in the body, one governs the head, another the neck, and so forth with each of the several members; likewise in the soul, one presides over the natural intelligence, another over education, another over anger, still another over lust; and in the adjuncts of life, one god cares for flocks, other gods severally for grain, wine, oil, woods, money, navigation, wars and victories, marriage, birth, fecundity and so forth; and because the heavenly city, on the other hand, knew only one God to be worshipped, and believed with faithful piety that he is to be served with that service which in Greek is called *latreia* and should be rendered only to God, it has come to pass that the heavenly city could not have common laws of religion with the earthly city, and on this point must dissent and become a tiresome burden to those who thought differently, and must undergo their anger and hatred and persecutions, except that at length it shook the hostile intent of its adversaries with fear of its own numbers and with evidence of the ever-present divine aid.

While this heavenly city, therefore, goes its way as a stranger on earth, it summons citizens from all peoples, and gathers an alien society, of all languages, caring naught what difference may be in manners, laws and institutions, by which earthly peace is gained or maintained, abolishing and destroying nothing of the sort, nay rather preserving and following them (for however different they may be among different nations, they aim at one and the same end, earthly peace), provided that there is no hindrance to the religion that teaches the obligation to worship one most high and true God. Even the heavenly city, therefore, in this its pilgrimage makes use of the earthly peace, and guards and seeks the merging of human wills in regard to the things that are useful for man's mortal nature, so far as sound piety and religion permit, and makes the earthly peace minister to the heavenly peace, which is so truly peace that it must be deemed and called the only peace, at least of a rational creature, being, as it is, the best ordered and most harmonious fellowship in the enjoyment of God and of one

another in God. And when we arrive thither, there shall be no mortal life, but a life indeed; no animal body to burden the soul with its corruption, but a spiritual body that wants nothing and is subdued in every part to the will. This peace the heavenly city during its pilgrimage enjoys by faith, and by this faith it lives justly when it makes the attainment of that peace the goal of every good action in which it engages for the service of God and one's neighbour; for the life of a city is certainly a social life.

18. *How Different the Uncertainty of the New Academy Is from the Certainty of the Christian Faith.*

As to that peculiarity which Varro alleges to be a characteristic of the New Academy, the uncertainty of everything, the City of God utterly denounces such doubt, as madness. About matters that its mind and reason apprehend it has most certain knowledge, even though it is slight because of the corruptible body that weighs down the spirit; for, as the Apostle says: "We know in part." It also trusts in all matters the evidence of the senses, which the mind uses through the agency of the body; for wretchedly deceived indeed is he who supposes that they should never be trusted. It believes, too, in the holy Scriptures, old and new, that we call canonical, whence comes the very faith by which the just man lives; by this faith we walk without doubting, so long as we are exiled from the Lord on our pilgrimage. Provided that this faith is sound and certain, we may without just reproach feel doubt about some matters that neither sense nor reason has perceived, and that have not been revealed to us by the canonical Scriptures, and that have not come to our knowledge through witnesses whom it is absurd not to trust.

24. *What Definition of a People and of a State Must Be Accepted If Not Only the Romans but Other Kingdoms Are to Claim These Titles.*

But if a people be defined not in this but in some other manner, for example, in this way: "A people is a large gathering of rational beings united in fellowship by their agreement about the objects of their love," then surely, in order to perceive the character of each

people, we must inspect the objects of its love. Yet whatever it loves, if it is a large gathering, not of cattle but of rational beings, and is united in fellowship by common agreement about the objects of its love, then there is no absurdity in using the term “people” of it; and surely the better the objects of its united love, the better the people, and the worse the objects of its love, the worse the people. According to this definition of ours, the Roman people is a people, and its estate is without doubt a state. But what this people loved in its early and in subsequent times, and by what moral decline it passed into bloody sedition and then into social and civil warfare, and disrupted and corrupted that very unity of heart, which is, so to speak, the health of a people, history bears witness, and I have dealt with it at length in the preceding books. And yet I shall not on this account say either that there is no people or that the people’s estate is not a state, so long as there remains, however slight, a gathering of rational beings united in fellowship by a common agreement about the objects of its love. But what I have said about this people and about this state let me be understood to have said and meant about those of the Athenians, those of any other Greeks, of the Egyptians, of that earlier Babylon of the Assyrians and of any other nation whatsoever, when they maintained in their states an imperial sway, whether small or great. For in general a city of the impious, not governed by God, since it is disobedient to the command of God that sacrifice be not offered save to himself only, whereby in that city the soul should exercise righteous and faithful rule over the body and reason over the vices, has no true justice.

*25. That There Can Be No True Virtues Where There Is No True Religion.*

For however praiseworthy may seem to be the rule of the soul over the body and of the reason over the vices, if the soul and the reason do not serve God as God has commanded that he should be served, then in no wise do they rightly rule the body and the vices. For what kind of mistress over the body and the vices can a mind be that knows not the true God, and that instead of being subject to his command is prostituted to the corrupting power of the most vicious demons? Accord-

ingly, the very virtues that it thinks it possesses, and by means of which it rules the body and the vices in order to obtain or keep any object whatsoever, if it does not subordinate them to God, are themselves vices rather than virtues. For although some suppose that virtues are true and honourable when they are made subject to themselves and are sought for no further end, even then they are puffed up and proud, and so must be reckoned as vices rather than as virtues. For as it is not something that comes from the flesh that makes the flesh live, but something above it, so it is not something that comes from man but something above man that makes him live a blessed life; and this is true not only of man but of every heavenly domination and power.

*26. About the Peace of a People that Is Alienated from God, and the Use Made of It for Pious Ends by the People of God During Their Pilgrimage in the World.*

Wherefore, as the life of the flesh is the soul, so the blessed life of man is God, of whom the sacred scriptures of the Hebrews declare: “Blessed is the people whose God is the Lord.” Wretched, therefore, is the people that is alienated from that God. Yet even this people loves a peace of its own, which must not be rejected; but it will not possess it in the end, because it does not make good use of it before the end. But that it should possess this peace meanwhile in this life is important for us, too, since so long as the two cities are intermingled we also profit by the peace of Babylon; and the people of God is by faith so freed from it as meanwhile to be but strangers passing through. For this reason the Apostle too admonished the church to pray for its kings and other high persons, adding these words: “That we may live a quiet and tranquil life with all piety and love.” And the prophet Jeremiah, in predicting the captivity that was to befall the ancient people of God, and in bidding them by divine inspiration to go obediently to Babylon and by their very patience to do God service, added his own admonition that they should pray for Babylon, saying: “Because in her peace is your peace”; that is, of course, the temporal peace of the present that is common to the good and the evil alike.

*27. About the Peace of the Servants of God, a Peace Whose Perfect Tranquillity Cannot Be Apprehended in this Temporal Life.*

But the peace that is ours we even now enjoy with God by faith, and we shall enjoy it with him forever by sight. But peace in this life, whether that common to all men or our own special possession, is such as must be called rather a solace of our wretchedness than a positive enjoyment of blessedness. Our very justice, too, though true, thanks to the true final good to which it is subordinated, is nevertheless in this life only such as consists rather in the remission of sins than in the perfection of virtues. Witness the prayer of the whole City of God that is exiled on earth, when it cries out to God through all its members: "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." And this prayer is not efficacious for those whose faith is without works, and dead, but only for those whose faith brings forth works through love. It is because the reason, though subjected to God, in this mortal condition and in the corruptible body, which weighs down the soul, does not perfectly rule the vices, that just men need such a prayer. For even though the reason exercises command over the vices, surely it is not without a struggle on their part. And even if we fight the good fight or rule as master, after foes of that sort have been defeated and subdued, still in this realm of weakness something creeps in, so that sin is found, if not in quick-acting performance, at least in some tripping utterance or some fleeting dalliance of thought.

Hence there is no complete peace so long as mastery is exercised over the vices, because on the one hand the battle is precarious as long as the war continues against such vices as resist, while those that have been defeated do not yet permit a triumph of carefree ease, but are held down under a sway that is still full of anxiety. Among all these temptations, therefore, about which it has been briefly said in the divine oracles: "Is man's life on earth anything but temptation?", who will dare assume that his life is such that he need not say to God: "Forgive us our debts," unless it be a proud man, one not truly great, but puffed up and bloated, who is justly resisted by him who gives grace in abundance to the humble?

Wherefore it is written: "God resists the proud, but to the humble he gives grace." In this life, accordingly, justice for the individual means that God rules and man obeys, the soul rules over the body and reason rules over the vices even when they are rebellious, whether by subjugating or by withstanding them, and that from God himself we seek to obtain favour for our well-deserving deeds and forgiveness for our sins, and that we offer our service of thanksgiving for the benefits received. But in that final peace to which this justice should be subordinated and for the sake of winning which it should be maintained, since our nature will be healed of its sickness by immortality and incorruption and will have no vices, and since nothing either in ourselves or in another will be at war with any one of us, the reason will not need to rule the vices, since they will be no more; but God will rule man, and soul the body, and we shall find in obeying a pleasure and facility as great as the felicity of our living and reigning. And there, for all and for every one, this state will be everlasting, and its everlastingness will be certain; and therefore the peace of this blessedness, and the blessedness of this peace, will be the highest good.

*28. What End Awaits the Wicked.*

But, on the other hand, those who do not belong to that City of God will receive everlasting wretchedness, which is called also the second death, because neither the soul that is alienated from God's life can be said to live there, nor the body, which will be subjected to everlasting torments; and this second death will be all the harder to bear in that it cannot find an end in death. But since, just as wretchedness is the opposite of blessedness, and death of life, so war is the opposite of peace, the question is properly raised what or what sort of war can be understood as present in the final state of the wicked, to correspond to the peace that is heralded and lauded in the final state of the righteous. But let the questioner note what is harmful or destructive in warfare, and he will see that it is nothing but the mutual opposition and conflict of things. Now what war can he imagine more grievous and bitter than one in which the will is so opposed to passion and

passion to the will that their enmities can be ended by the victory of neither, and in which the power of pain so contends with the very nature of the body that neither yields to the other? For in this life, when such a conflict arises, either pain conquers, and death takes away feeling, or nature conquers, and health removes the pain. But in the life beyond, pain remains, on the one hand, to torment, and nature lasts, on the other,

to feel it; neither ceases to be, lest the punishment also should cease.

But since these are the ultimate limits of good and evil, of which we should seek to win the former and escape the latter, and since there is a judgement through which good men will pass to the former and bad men to the latter I will, so far as God may grant, deal with this judgement in the following book.

# Boethius, c.475–526

“The last of the Roman philosophers, and the first of the scholastic theologians” (as he has been described), Boethius was, next to Augustine, the most decisive formative influence on pre-thirteenth century Christian thought. Even after the reintroduction of the complete Aristotelian corpus diminished his importance, scholastics continued to study his works and comment on them.

Boethius’ contributions to medieval thought were many. In philosophy, thinkers of the eleventh and twelfth centuries gained from him most of the knowledge of Aristotle they possessed; and his translations of Aristotelian logical works, his commentaries on them, and his independent treatises formed the foundations of their logical doctrines. In theology, his use of technical philosophical terms for the solution of theological issues, his rigorous demonstrations, and his distinction between faith and reason contributed to what was to become the scholastic method. Moreover, his contention that each science has its own principles made of theology an autonomous science. His example helped to make the commentary a standard form for teaching and writing, his logical and mathematical works became integral parts of the curriculum of medieval schools, and his *Consolation* provided a noble vision of the philosophical life which, at the same time, was compatible with Christian teachings.

Varied as these contributions are, much of Boethius’ fame in modern times rests on his role in the early medieval discussion of universals. Almost as old as philosophy itself, the question “what kind of being do universals have?” had been discussed extensively by Plato, Aristotle, and their followers. But the decisive Platonic and Aristotelian writings were not extant in

early medieval times and, in their absence, a passage from Porphyry’s *Isagoge* (Introduction to Aristotle’s *Categories*) together with Boethius’ commentary on it became the fundamental texts on which much of the controversy between nominalists and realists rested (see page 4).

Prior to discussing what genera and species are, Porphyry, in his *Isagoge*, inquires concerning the ontological status of these notions. Do genera and species subsist in themselves or do they exist only in the mind? If they subsist in themselves are they corporeal or incorporeal? If they are incorporeal, do they exist in separation from sensible substances or in conjunction with them? But having raised these questions, Porphyry considers it inappropriate to answer them in an introductory work on logic.

Ever the responsible commentator, Boethius undertakes to answer the questions that Porphyry had left unanswered. Weighing the alternatives proposed, Boethius finds that genera and species subsist not solely in themselves nor do they exist only in the mind. For if genera and species subsist only in themselves, it is difficult to see how they can be common to many individuals. And if they exist only in the mind—not in reality—would it not follow that in thinking them the mind thinks nothing? Turning to Alexander of Aphrodisias, Boethius finds a solution intermediate between these two extremes. Genera and species, he concludes, exist in things in one respect, in the mind in another. As he puts it in a classical formulation: “they subsist in sensible things, but they are understood apart from bodies.”

This solution, as Boethius is well aware, is that of Aristotle, and in a commentary on an Aristotelian work it is the one to be set down. But this solution, as

he tells us, is at variance with that of Plato, who holds that genera and species are substances existing apart from sensible things. There exists evidence that, for himself, Boethius follows the Platonic solution. For in a passage in the *Consolation*, in which he describes in typical Platonic fashion the mind's ascent from sensation to understanding, he concludes that the understanding "beholds with the clear eye of the mind that simple form itself."

One of Boethius' many incisive statements gave rise to another distinction much discussed by later medievals. Commenting on the difference between God and creatures, he states that in beings other than God, "being" (*esse*) and "that which is" (*id quod est*) are different. In making this distinction Boethius has in mind that while individual substances are composed of various parts, none of these parts make a substance to be what it is. Its determinate characteristic is provided by a unifying and determining principle—its being (*esse*). Though for Boethius this distinction serves only to describe the relation between a substance and that principle which makes it to be what it is, Aquinas finds in it a supporting text for his own distinction between "essence" and "existence."

Boethius' numerous definitions became commonplaces in scholastic thought. Two in particular became important for their bearing on theological speculations concerning the Trinity—that of person and that of nature. According to Boethius' definitions, "a person is an individual substance having a rational nature," and "nature is the specific difference that gives form to anything."

Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius was born about 475 into a prominent senatorial family. Through his studies he gained the knowledge that later enabled him to translate Greek philosophical writings into Latin. Following the family tradition, he entered upon a distinguished political career. He soon came to the attention of Theodoric, the Ostrogoth; and, after having served in a number of advisory capacities, he was appointed consul in 510 and master of offices, a position requiring his regular attendance at court, in 522. But his political fortune soon changed. For reasons still unknown, he was accused of treason and condemned; and after some time spent in prison he was executed.

Early in life, Boethius set himself the monumental task of translating all the works of Plato and Aristotle, showing at the same time that on fundamental philosophical issues the two philosophers agreed. Though Boethius never completed this ambitious undertaking, he succeeded in translating Aristotle's *Organon* and Porphyry's *Isagoge* and in commenting on many of these works. His translations of the *Isagoge*, the *Categories*, and *On Interpretation* together with his various commentaries on these works helped to make up the "old logic" (*logica vetus*), while his translations of *Prior Analytics*, *Posterior Analytics*, *Topics*, and *On Sophistical Refutations*—unknown until the middle of the twelfth century—formed a part of the then emerging "new logic" (*logica nova*). He composed two commentaries each on the *Isagoge* and *On Interpretation* and one on the *Categories*. He commented on Cicero's *Topics* and wrote independent works on categorical and hypothetical syllogisms, on division, and on topical differences.

Boethius' masterwork, however, was *The Consolation of Philosophy*, which he wrote during his imprisonment. Gibbon calls it "a golden volume, not unworthy of the leisure of Plato or of Tully." Drawing for his imagery, style, and philosophical notions upon his extensive classical learning, Boethius (in alternating verse and prose sections) relates how Lady Philosophy visited him in prison to offer him her consolation and cure him of his grief. Be not overcome by your misfortunes, she counsels, for the gifts of fortune are fleeting and happiness is not to be found in temporal goods. Only by being like God, who is the highest good, can lasting happiness come to man. But the *Consolation* is not merely an exhortatory work. In it Boethius undertakes to solve the cluster of problems arising from the attempt to justify God's ways to man. Why does evil exist? What are providence, fate, and chance? How can divine predestination and knowledge be reconciled with the freedom of the human will? Though the general tenor of the work is neoplatonic, Boethius freely draws upon Aristotelian and Stoic teachings. Direct references to the Bible or any of the Christian writings are lacking from the work. The *Consolation* was the recipient of many glosses and commentaries and it was translated early into the various European tongues. It became one of the most

popular books of medieval times. C. S. Lewis wrote, "To acquire a taste for [the *Consolation*] is almost to become naturalised in the Middle Ages."

In his theological treatises, the titles of which indicate their content, Boethius undertakes to solve a number of theological issues in a precise and rigorous manner. Among these treatises are *On the Trinity* (*De Trinitate*); *Whether Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit May Be Substantially Predicated of Divinity* (*Utrum Pater et Filius et Spiritus Sanctus de divinitate substantialiter praedicentur*); *On Person and Two Natures in Christ* (*De persona et duabus naturis in Christo*); and *How Substances Can Be Good in Virtue of their Existence without Being Absolute Goods* (*Quomodo substantiae in eo quod sint bonae sint cum non substantialia bona*).

Boethius also composed a work on arithmetic (*De institutione arithmetica*) as well as one on music (*De institutione musica*); these became part of the *quadrivium* (a term he is said to have coined).

The first of the following selections, from *The Consolation of Philosophy*, begins at the point in Book 3 at which Lady Philosophy begins to lay out the nature of true happiness. It continues through the end of the work, taking in the famous discussions of eternity, divine providence and foreknowledge, and human freedom in Book 5. This is followed by two shorter selections, one from *Contra Eutychem* and the other from *On the Trinity*, which present, in a remarkably compact form, the elements of Boethius' metaphysics of substance and accident, form and matter, and identity and difference.

## 9. The Consolation of Philosophy

### Book 3

#### Prose 9

Let this demonstration of the essence of deceitful happiness suffice, this far and no farther; if you give it a penetrating look, next in logical progression is to point out what true happiness is.

[2] And I do see it, I said; self-sufficiency can't possibly be a property of wealth and resources, nor can power be a property of kingdoms, nor preeminence of high offices, nor acclamation of glory, nor delight of physical pleasures.

And have you discovered the reasons why this is so?

[3] I seem to myself to be looking on them as if through some microscopic crack, but I would prefer to know them from you, in a more open way.

[4] And the explanation for this is very near to hand. What is simple and indivisible in its own nature, human miscalculation divides and drags away from the true and the perfect to the false and the imperfect. Or do you think that what has need of nothing lacks power?

I said: Hardly.

[5] And you're right; for if anything exists that is possessed of a strength that is unable to sustain itself in any way, it must necessarily need some assistance outside of itself in this regard.

I said: It is as you say.

[6] Therefore the nature of self-sufficiency and the nature of power are one and the same.

So it seems.

[7] Now do you think that a thing that is of this sort should be dismissed or, conversely, do you think that beyond all other things it is worthy of the highest esteem?

The latter, I said; it cannot even be doubted.

[8] So let us add preeminence to self-sufficiency and power, so that we may determine that these three are one.

Yes, let's add it, so long as it is our wish to agree on what is true.

[9,10] Well then, what's next? she said. Do you think that such a unity is veiled in darkness and undistinguished in character? Or is it the most renowned thing of all, possessed of every acclamation? It is conceded that it lacks nothing, that it is both most powerful and most worthy of honor; but look at it carefully, to make sure that it does not want for a renown that it cannot provide for itself and for that reason seem disreputable in some particular.

[11] I cannot help but agree with you, I said; this thing, just as it is, is just so the most acclaimed thing of all.

[12] Therefore, the logical consequence is that we must admit that renown differs in no way from the above three categories.

I said: That is the consequence.

[13] Therefore, a thing that needs nothing that is outside of itself, which is capable of all things by its own strength, which is renowned and preeminent—surely it is agreed that this is most full of delight?

[14] In fact, I cannot even think, I said, of a place from where any grief could steal up on any such thing as this. And for this reason, so long as the above conclusions shall remain unchanged, I must agree with you that it is full of delight.

[15] And so that earlier point is also necessary, and for the same reasons: To be sure, the names self-sufficiency, power, renown, preeminence, and delight are different, but their substance is not different in any way.

I said: Yes, it is necessary.

[16] Therefore it is human perversity that has divided this thing up, which is one and simple by nature; and while this perversity strives to secure a part of a thing which has no parts, it neither acquires this portion, that is a nonentity, nor the whole itself, which it tries very ineffectually to win.

[17] I said: And how is that?

[18–21] A man who seeks riches in a flight from poverty makes no efforts as regards power, prefers to be

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From Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, tr. Joel Relihan (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2001). Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

worthless and veiled in darkness, and even deprives himself of many natural pleasures as well, all so that he may not lose the money he has amassed. Yet in this way not even self-sufficiency is in his possession, as his bodily strength abandons him, his troubles annoy him, his worthlessness casts him aside, and his darkness surrounds him. And a man who longs for power alone wastes his wealth, despises physical pleasures, despises the honor that has no power, and considers glory a thing without value as well. But you see how many things let this man down as well, for it happens at various times that he lacks the necessities of life or that he is gnawed by fretfulness; and when he cannot drive these things away, he ceases even to be that one thing that he most particularly sought, to be powerful. One may use a similar line of reasoning about honors, glory, and physical pleasures; as each one of them is the same as the others, whoever seeks one of them without the others does not even gain that one thing that he longs for.

[22] Well then! I said. What if someone wants to secure all of them for himself simultaneously?

Then such a man would be wishing for the sum total of true happiness; but he will not find it, will he, in those things that we have shown to be incapable of bestowing what they promise?

[23] I said: Hardly.

Therefore: True happiness is not to be tracked down in these things that are believed to offer one-at-a-time the objects that must be sought.

I said: I admit it; nothing can be said that is truer than this.

[24] So there you have it, she said: Both the essence and the causes of false happiness. Now direct the gaze of your mind to the opposite side, for there you shall see immediately the true happiness that we have promised.

[25–27] But this is quite obvious, I said, even to a blind man, and you pointed it out just a little while ago when you were attempting to reveal the causes of false happiness. For unless I am mistaken, that is the true and perfect happiness which brings it about that a person is perfectly self-sufficient, powerful, preeminent, acclaimed, and full of delight. And, just so that you may know that I have learned these things deep inside: Since all of these things are the same, the happiness

that can truly offer any one of them I know without a doubt is happiness full and true.

[28] O my son, you whom I have nursed! How happy you would be in this opinion, if you would only add this one thing to it!

I said: Tell me, what?

[29] Do you think that there is anything in the world of mortal and falling things that is able to confer a status of this sort?

Hardly, I said; and I think that this was already shown by you, to the point that no more proof was desired.

[30] Therefore, these things *seem* to give to mortals images of the true good, perhaps, or some imperfect goods, but the true and perfect good they cannot bestow.

I said: I agree.

[31] Therefore, since you have come to know what true happiness is, and what are the things that counterfeit happiness, it only remains that you come to know the source from which you can seek this true happiness.

I said: That's the very thing that I have been so long and so passionately expecting.

[32] She said: But since, just as our Plato in *Timaeus* would have it, one ought to invoke divine assistance even in the smallest matters, what do you think we ought to do now so as to merit the discovery of the dwelling place of that highest good?

[33] I said: We must invoke the Father of all things; were he to be omitted, there could be no starting point that is properly grounded.

[34] She said: Correctly so!

[35] And with that word she began to sing as follows:

#### Meter 9

Yóu who contról all the wórld everlástingly bý your  
own reáson,  
Sówing the seéds of the eárrh and the heávens, com-  
mánding the éons  
To róll from etérnity; résting unmóved, you put áll  
things in mótion,  
Yóu whom no álien cáuses demánded to fáshion creá-  
tion

- 5 From mútable mátter, but ónly the únstinting éssence  
of trué good  
Plánted withín you; and fróm their celéstial exémplar  
you leáð things,  
Áll of them, óút and, most spléndid yourself, in your  
ówn mind you cárry  
Thís splendid wórld and you shápe it to mírror your  
ímage and líkeness,  
Ánd you commánd that its pérfect compónents ac-  
cómplish perféctíon.
- 10 You bind in númer and rátió the élements, íce and  
flame máatching,  
Drý matching móist, so there ís no flight úp for the  
rárifed fíre,  
Eárrth is not drággéd by its weíght to sink dówn to the  
dépths of the wáters.  
You center Souíl: It únites threefold Náture, sets áll  
things in mótióin;  
You divide Souíl and appórtiún it ínto harmóniún  
mémbers;
- 15 Souíl, once divided, collécted its mótióin in twó equal  
órbits,  
Móving so ás to retúrín to itsélf, and complételey encir-  
cling  
Mínd at the córe, so the úniverse wheéls in its ímage  
and líkeness.  
You by líke cáúses bring fórrth lesser sóúls; for these  
lésser créatiúnis  
You fáshion nímbles convéyances fít for a heávenly  
jóurney.
- 20 You plant these sóúls in the heávens, in eárrth; by your  
générous státtutes  
You make them túrn back toward you and retúrín—a  
regréssiún of fíre.  
Gránt to the mínd, Fátter, thát it may ríse to your hóly  
foundátiúnis;  
Gránt it may ríng round the sóúrce of the Goód, may  
discóver the trué light,  
Ánd fíx the sóúls vísiún fírmly on you, vísiún keén and  
clear-síghted.
- 25 Scátter these sháddows, díssólve the dead weíght of thís  
eárrthly concrétiún,  
Shíne in the spléndor thát ís yours álóne: ónly you are  
the bríght sky,  
You are serénity, peáce for the hóly; their goál is to seé  
you;

You are their sóúrce, their convéyance, their leáder,  
their páth, and their háven.

Prose 10

[1–6] Therefore, since you have now seen what is the essence of the imperfect good, and the essence of the perfect good as well, I believe that I now must show you where the perfection of this happiness has been established. So that no empty image of thought may confuse us, taking us beyond the truth of the matter before us, in this investigation I think that this question needs to be asked first, whether there can possibly exist in the nature of the universe any good of the sort that you defined just a little while ago. But it can't be denied that it does exist and that this is, as it were, a sort of source of all good things; for everything that is said to be imperfect is held to be imperfect by reason of its distance from what is perfect. And so it is that, if there seems to be anything imperfect in any class of objects, there must necessarily be something perfect in it as well; after all, once perfection has been removed, one can't even imagine a source from which a thing that is held to be imperfect could have arisen. No; for the nature of the universe has not taken its starting point from diminished and incomplete things, but, in procession from what is whole and absolute, it disintegrates into these exhausted things at the furthest remove. Therefore if, as we have shown just a little while ago, there does exist some imperfect happiness in some fragile good, it cannot be doubted that there also exists a steadfast and perfect good.

I said: This conclusion has been drawn most unshakably and most truly.

[7–10] She said: But as to where it dwells, look at it this way: the common conception of human minds grants that God, the ruler of all things, is good; since nothing can be imagined that is better than God, who could doubt that that thing is good, than which nothing is better? But reason shows that God is good in such a way that it also proves that the perfect Good exists within him. For if the good in him were not of this sort, he could not be the ruler of all things; for there would then be something more excellent than God, possessing the perfect Good, a thing that would seem to be prior to and more ancient than God; for it has

been made clear that all things that are perfect are prior to things that are less whole. And for this reason we must agree, to keep this line of reasoning from regressing to infinity, that God is highest and is most full of the Good that is highest and perfect; but we have established that true happiness is the highest Good; therefore, it is necessary that true happiness is located in this highest God.

I said: I accept that, and there is nothing that can in any way be said against it.

[11] She said: You do grant what we said, that the highest God is most full of the highest Good, but I beg you please observe in what a holy way you do so, a way not to be transgressed.

I said: What way is this?

[12–16] So that you do not assume that this Father of all things perhaps took to himself from something external to himself that highest Good that he is held to be full of, or that he possesses it by his nature in such a way that you think that the substance of the God who possesses it and the substance of the true happiness that is possessed are different. For if you think that it has been taken in from something external to himself, you could reckon that what gave it is more excellent than what took it; but we very appropriately agree that this God is the most surpassing of all things. On the other hand, if it is present in God according to its own nature, but is present as a thing different in principle—since we are talking about the God who is ruler of all things, let anyone who is able to just imagine who it was who joined these different things together. A last point: That which is different from any other thing is not itself the same as what it is understood to be different from. Consequently, that which is by its own nature different from the highest Good is not the highest Good; this is a wicked thing to think about God, as we have agreed that there is nothing more excellent than he is. For as a rule there cannot exist a nature in any thing that is better than its source; and for this reason I would conclude, by the truest possible line of argument, that a thing that is the source of all things is also in its own substance the highest Good.

I said: Indeed, most correctly so.

[17] But it has been conceded that the highest Good is happiness.

I said: It is as you say.

She said: Therefore it is necessary that we agree as well that God is happiness itself.

I said: I cannot speak against your prior propositions, and I see that this inference is their logical consequence.

[18–20] She said: Now contemplate whether the same conclusion can be assented to more strongly from this angle as well, from the fact that there cannot exist two highest goods that are different from each other. For it is clear that of two goods which are not the same the one is not what the other one is; and for this reason neither of them can be perfect, because either one of them lacks the other. But it is obvious that what is not perfect is not the highest thing; therefore, there is no way in which goods that are highest goods can be different from each other. And yet we have deduced that both happiness and God are each a highest good; for this reason, what is the highest divinity is necessarily the highest happiness.

[21] I said: No conclusion can be drawn that is more true in reality, more strong in rational argument, or more worthy of God.

[22–25] She said: It is the practice of geometers, after they have demonstrated their propositions, to draw an additional conclusion; such things they call in Greek *porismata*, or bonuses. Therefore I shall, like them, give to you too in Latin a corollary, or gift, in addition to these conclusions of ours. Since people become happy by securing happiness for themselves, yet true happiness is divinity itself, it is obvious that they become happy by securing divinity for themselves. But, as people become just by the securing of justice and wise by the securing of wisdom, it is necessary, by a similar line of reasoning, that those who have secured divinity for themselves become gods. Therefore, every truly happy person is God. But, to be sure, God is one by nature; however, nothing prevents there being as many gods as you please by participation.

[26] I said: Whether you would have it called a *porisma* or a corollary, this is indeed a beautiful and precious gift.

[27] And yet there is nothing more beautiful than this additional thing that reason convinces us must be attached to this chain.

I said: What?

[28] She said: Given that true happiness seems to contain many things—do all these things join together and make, as it were, the single body of happiness through some sort of variety of parts, or is there among them some one thing that consummates the substance of happiness, and all the other parts are understood in reference to it?

[29] I said: I would like you to make this question more clear by reminding me of the things themselves.

She said: We do think that true happiness is a good, don't we?

In fact, the highest Good, I said.

[30, 31] She said: You can add that qualification to all of them. For this same true happiness is judged to be the highest self-sufficiency, the highest power, the highest preeminence as well, and renown and physical pleasure. Well then: Are all these things, self-sufficiency, power, and the rest, certain kinds of limbs, as it were, of the body of happiness, or are they all to be understood in reference to the Good, their head, as it were?

[32] I said: I understand what you propose we track down here, but I long to hear what your determination is.

[33, 34] So accept this division of the problem, as follows: If all these things were the limbs of true happiness, they would also be different one from another; this is the nature of parts, so that they can, as different things, compose a single body. And yet all of these things have been shown to be the same. Therefore, they are hardly limbs; otherwise, it will seem that happiness has been joined together from a single limb, which cannot happen.

[35] I said: To be sure, there can be no doubt of that; but I am waiting to hear what comes after.

[36–42] But it is patent that the others are to be understood in reference to the Good. Self-sufficiency is sought for this reason, because it is judged to be good; and power for this reason, because it too is believed to be good; one may make the same supposition about preeminence, renown, and delight. Therefore, the Good is the sum total of and the cause of all the things that are to be pursued; for that which has within itself no good at all, either in reality or in likeness, can in no way be pursued. Conversely, even those things that are not good by nature are nevertheless craved as

if they truly were good, even if they only seem to be so. And so it happens that goodness is rightly believed to be the sum total, the center point, and the cause of all the things that are to be pursued. But the thing for whose sake something else is pursued seems to be what is most particularly chosen. For example: If someone wants to ride horseback for the sake of physical well-being, such a person longs for the effect of well-being, not the motion of horse riding. Therefore, since all things are sought for the sake of the Good, it is not those things but the Good itself that all people desire. But we have conceded that happiness is the reason why the other things are chosen. From this it is clearly obvious that the substance of the Good itself and the substance of true happiness are one and the same.

I see no opportunity for anyone to be able to disagree.

[43] But we have shown that God and true happiness are one and the same.

It is as you say.

Therefore we may confidently conclude that the substance of God is also located in the Good itself and nowhere else.

#### Meter 10

Cóme hére áll of you, síde by síde, you cáptives  
 Whóm fóul lúst, which resides in mínds of mátter,  
 Bínnds in cháíns, ever fálse and éver wícked—  
 Hére you wíll fínd peáce. Here is rést from lábor,  
 Hére thé pórt that abídes in tránquil quáet, 5  
 Ópen doór ánd réfuge from désolátion.  
 Whát thé Tágus in Spáin with gólden sándbars,  
 Whát thé Lýdíán Hérmus from búrnished shóre-  
 lines,  
 Whát thé Índus, hard bý the Eástern súnrise,  
 Júmbling greén ánd nácreous stónes, can óffer— 10  
 Poúrs nó líght in the éyes, but wíth its dárkness  
 Veíls and hídes thé mínds that are máde yet móre  
 blind.  
 Súch thínigs, whátever cálm or stír mind's súrface,  
 Bórn of eárh, áre núrse'd in her deépest cávern;  
 Bút thé spléndor that guídes and móves the heávens 15  
 Shúns the soúls that plúnge down beneáth the shá-  
 dows.

Whó cán récognize ánd distínguish thís light  
 Wíll dený trúe bríghtness to shíníng Phoébus.

## Prose 11

I said: I agree. All these points stand together, woven from the most solid lines of argument.

[2] Then she said: If you come to know what the Good itself is, what do you think that will be worth?

[3] I said: An infinite sum! Inasmuch as it will then also be my lot to know at the same time God, who is the Good.

[4] And yet I will make this clear by the truest possible line of argument, provided that the conclusions drawn just a little while ago remain unchanged.

They shall so remain.

[5] She said: Have we not shown that the things that are craved by most people are not true and perfect goods for this very reason, because they are different one from another? When one is not present in another it cannot confer the full and absolute Good, but they become the Good when they are gathered together as it were into a single essence and potentiality, with the result that what self-sufficiency is, power is that same thing also, as are preeminence, renown, and decent delight. Were all of these not one and the same thing, they would possess nothing that would let them be counted among the things that are to be pursued.

[6] I said: That has been shown, and it cannot in any way be doubted.

[7] Therefore: Things that are hardly good things when they differ from each other, but that become good when they begin to be *one*—surely it is by their securing of unity for themselves that it happens that these things are good?

I said: So it seems.

[8] But you do concede that everything that is good is good by its participation in the Good—or is this hardly so?

Yes, it is so.

[9] Therefore you must concede by a similar line of reasoning that the One and the Good are the same thing; for if there is by their nature no diversity of result from things, then the same substance exists in them.

I said: I am unable to deny it.

[10] She said: So do you know that everything that exists remains unchanged and has substance only so long as it is one, but that it is destroyed and disintegrates as soon as it ceases to be one?

How is that?

[11–13] As is the case with animate beings, she said. When a soul and a body come together and remain unchanged together, that is called an animate being; but when this unity disintegrates through the separation of each component from the whole, it is clear that it is destroyed and is no longer an animate being. The body itself likewise. While it remains unchanged in one form by the joining together of its limbs, a human appearance is there to view; but if the parts are divided up and separated and so pull apart the unity of that body, it ceases to be what it once was. As you run through all the other examples in the same way it will become clear to you beyond any doubt that each and every thing has substance only so long as it is one, and that it is destroyed when it ceases to be one.

I said: When I look at still more examples, it hardly seems otherwise to me.

[14] Well then! she said. Is there anything that, insofar as it acts in accordance with its own nature, would abandon its craving for existence and long to come to destruction and decomposition?

[15–17] I said: If I look at animate beings, which have some natural ability to want and not to want, I find no reason why they should cast aside their striving to remain unchanged and hasten of their own free will to their destruction, provided that there are no external forces compelling them. For every animate being works at protecting its own physical well-being; death, however, and physical dissolution it avoids. But in the case of grasses and trees and inanimate things as a whole—I am completely uncertain as to what I can say in agreement with you.

[18, 19] And yet there is no reason why you could possibly be in doubt about this matter as well. In the first place, when you take a look at grasses and trees, you see that they grow up in places that are appropriate for them, where they cannot quickly wither and perish, insofar as their nature is capable. I mean, some spring up in the fields, others on the mountains; marshes bear some, others cling to rocks; the barren

sands are teeming with still others; and they would all wither were someone to try to transplant them into other environments. But Nature gives to each thing what is appropriate to it, and works hard to keep them all from destruction, for as long as they are able to remain unchanged.

[21–24] And what of the fact that trees, with their mouths as it were sunk deep in the earth, draw up nourishment through their roots and then disperse this nourishment through their pith, their wood, and their bark? And what of the fact that whatever is the most tender part, as the pith is, is always kept hidden away because of its inner foundation, and because of a certain strength of wood outside of it, while the outermost bark is positioned as if it were a guardian against the violence of the weather, enduring all hardship? And besides, just consider how far reaching is the careful attention of Nature, that all things are extended in time by their seed, endlessly repeated. Who is there who does not know that all these processes are machines of a sort—not only for individuals, that they remain as they are in their own time, but also for species, that they remain unchanged in perpetuity?

[25–29] And as for those other things that are believed to be inanimate—surely, by a similar line of argument, each of them desires what is its own? For why are the flames carried upward by their lightness, and the earth forced downward by its weight, if not for the fact that these places and these motions are appropriate to them? Further: That which is fitting for each and every thing is what preserves it, just as the things that are opposed to it annihilate it. And besides, things that are hard, like rocks, cohere in their constituent parts most unyieldingly and fight back against being easily disintegrated, while liquids, like air and water, do yield quite easily to things that divide them, but quickly return again to the wholes from which they were cut off—fire, however, resists all division.

[30–34] We are not now discussing the voluntary motions of a conscious soul, but only its natural striving, as is the situation when we digest without thinking the food that is given us, or when we breathe in our sleep without knowing it. For not even in animate creatures does the desire for remaining unchanged come from the acts of the soul's will, but from the first

principles of its nature. For when causes compel it, the will often embraces the death from which its nature recoils; conversely, the act of procreation (the only act by which the world of mortal things endures and is extended in time, the act that an individual's nature always craves) the will represses from time to time. To such an extent, then, does this love of self proceed from its natural striving and not from the motion of its animating soul; for Providence has given this to the things that have been created by it as perhaps the greatest cause of their remaining unchanged, that they by their own nature desire to remain unchanged for as long as they naturally can. Consequently, there is no reason why you could in any way doubt that all the things that exist crave by their nature the permanence of remaining unchanged and by their nature avoid dissolution.

[35] I said: I agree with you, and now I see without any doubt the things that for so long seemed to me uncertain.

[36] She said: But that which seeks to have substance and to remain unchanged desires to be one; for when you have taken that away from anything, not even existence itself will remain.

I said: That is true.

[37] She said: Therefore, all things desire what is One.

I have concurred in this.

But we have shown that what is One is itself the Good.

Indeed we have.

[38] Therefore, all things seek the Good; or you may in fact define the Good this way, as that which is desired by all things.

[39] I said: Nothing can be imagined that is truer than this, for all things are either understood in reference to no Oneness at all and so, deprived of the One as of their head, will bob up and down without a helmsman; or, if there is something toward which things universally and eagerly direct themselves, that will be the highest of all goods.

[40] And she said: I nursed you; now I take great delight in you, for you have set securely in its place the very signpost of the all-central truth. But what just a little while ago you said you did not know has become obvious to you in this assertion.

I said: What was that?

[41] She said: What is the goal of all things. For make no mistake—this goal is what is longed for by all things; and because we have deduced that this thing is the good, we must admit that the Good is the goal of all things.

#### Meter 11

- Whoéver trácks the trúth from óút the mínd's gréat  
 dépth  
 And néver wánts to bé misléd on fálse síde trácks,  
 Must túrn the líght of ínner vísion deép wíthín  
 And bénd and fórcé íntó a wheél the sóul's lóng páth,  
 5 Must teách the mínd that whát it stríves for fár óútsíde  
 It ówns alréády, hídden ín its ówn stórehóuse;  
 And whát the cloúds of mídnight érror lóng cónceáled  
 Will bláze more thán the ráys of Phoébus, cleár tó  
 víéw.  
 'The bódy thát bore with it gróss forgétfúlness  
 10 Did nótt from mínd then dríve out évery tráce óf líght;  
 'There clíngs wíthín the seéd of trúth—make nó  
 místáke—  
 Aroused and fánned by próper teáching íntó fláme.  
 How cóuld you mórtals freély thínk the trúth whén  
 ásked  
 Were thére no líve coal búried deép in héart's cóld  
 ásh?  
 15 For íf the Múse of Pláto criés the trúth óút loúid,  
 All thát forgétful mórtals leárn, they récóllect.

#### Prose 12

Then I said: I am in utter agreement with Plato. Now through you I am reminded of these things for the second time; the first time was when I lost my memory through contact with the body; and then again when overwhelmed with the weight of grief.

[2] Then she said: If you look back over what you conceded earlier, it will not be very long at all until you remember what you admitted you had long known.

I said: What is that?

[3] She said: What are the rudders by which the world is governed.

I said: I remember that I had admitted my lack of awareness; but, though I can now see at a distance what you have to bestow, I am longing all the same to hear it from you more distinctly.

[4] She said: Just a little while ago you were of the opinion that it could hardly be doubted that this world is ruled by God.

[5–8] I do not think now, I said, nor shall I ever be of the opinion, that this can be doubted, and I will briefly set out the reasons why I come to this conclusion. This world could hardly have come together into a single form out of components so different and so opposed to each other if there were not one who could join together such different things. Further, this very difference of natures, mutually inharmonious, would decompose and tear apart what had been joined together if there were not one who could constrain what had been bound together. Still further, there would be no such definite order to the procession of nature, nor would the different parts create such well-arranged motions in place, time, effect, distance, and quality if there were not one who, remaining unchanged himself, arranged these multiplicities of change. This thing, whatever it is—by which the things that have been established both remain unchanged and are set in motion—using the word that everyone habitually uses, I call God.

[9] Then she said: Since such is your understanding, I think that I have only a little work remaining so that you can return to your fatherland fully recuperated, the master of your happiness. But let us look closely at the propositions we have established. Have we not counted self-sufficiency as part of true happiness, and have we not concurred that God is happiness itself?

Indeed we have.

[11] And for governing the world, she said, he will need therefore no externally sought instruments; were it otherwise, he would not have complete self-sufficiency if he lacked anything.

I said: Yes, that is necessarily so.

[12] Therefore he arranges all things by means of himself alone?

I said: That can't be denied.

[13] And yet it has been shown that God is the Good itself.

I said: I remember.

[14] Therefore he arranges all things by means of the Good, inasmuch as he who we concur is the Good governs all things by means of himself; this is as it were the tiller and the rudder by which the world machine is kept fixed, secure, and undecomposed.

[15] I am in utter agreement, I said, and that is what just a little while ago I saw from a distance that you were going to say, though it was only a microscopic presentiment.

[16] She said: I believe you because, as I see it, you are directing your eyes with greater watchfulness now, so that they can see the things that are true. But what I am about to say is no less obvious to behold.

I said: What is that?

[17] She said: Since God is rightly believed to pilot all things by the tiller of Goodness, and since, as I have taught you, all these things eagerly direct themselves toward the Good by their natural striving, then it can't be doubted, can it, that they are governed voluntarily and that they of their own free will turn themselves toward the beck and call of the one who arranges them as if they were in agreement with and adapted to their governor?

[18] I said: It must be so; his governance would not seem to be truly happy if it were a yoke for those who resist him and not the health and well-being of those who obey him.

[19] So there is nothing that can preserve its own nature and attempt to move in opposition to God?

I said: Nothing.

[20] She said: And were it to make the attempt, would it ultimately have any success against him who is, by the principle of true happiness, as we have conceded, most powerful as well?

I said: It would be completely incapable of it.

[21] Therefore there is nothing that either desires to or is able to oppose this highest Good?

I said: I do not think so.

[22] It is therefore the highest Good, she said, that governs all things forcefully and arranges all things sweetly.

[23] Then I said: It is not only the summary of your arguments, which you have just completed, that delights me; what delight me much more are the words

themselves that you have used! Now at long last they make the stupidity that rips great things apart ashamed of itself.

[24, 25] She said: You have heard in myths of the Giants attacking heaven; but it was a generous forcefulness that put them in their proper place as well, just as they deserved. But do you want us to smash the arguments themselves into each other? Perhaps from a striking of this sort some beautiful spark of truth may fly out.

I said: As you think best.

[26] She said: No one can doubt that God has the power to do all things.

I said: Provided that he is in his right mind, there is absolutely no one who is in doubt of this.

[27] She said: But he who has the power to do all things—there is nothing that such a one cannot do?

I said: Nothing.

[28] Now God is not able to do that which is evil, is he?

I said: Hardly.

[29] She said: Therefore, evil is nothing, since he cannot do what is evil, and there is nothing that he cannot do.

[30–35] I said: Are you playing with me, weaving with your arguments a labyrinth from which I cannot find the path that leads out? Now you go in where you just went out, and now you come out where you just went in—or are you joining together the ends of some marvelous circle of divine simplicity? For just a little while ago you started with happiness and said that it was the highest Good, and you said that it was located in the highest God. Then your discourse was that this God is the highest Good himself, and complete and true happiness; from this you gave me as a little gift that no one would be truly happy except by being God at the same time. Furthermore, you said that the essence of the Good is the substance of God and of true happiness, and you taught me that Oneness itself is the very Goodness itself that is sought by every nature of every thing. You also argued that God governs the universe by the rudders of Goodness, that all things willingly obey him, and that there is no real nature of evil. And what is more, you were unfolding these arguments by proofs located within, domestic as

it were, each acquiring its trustworthiness from the others, not a one of them adopted from something external to it.

[36, 37] Then she said: This is hardly a game that we are playing; this fact is the most important one of all, and we have achieved it by the gift of God, whom we prayed to just now. For such is the essence of the divine substance: It never disintegrates into the things that are far removed from it, nor does it take up into itself anything external to it but, just as Parmenides says about it,

éver resémbing the shápe of a sphére, wéll-  
rounded on áll sides,

[38] it spins the moving circle of the universe while it keeps itself unmoving. And as to the fact that we have repeatedly used arguments that were not externally sought but within the bounds of the topic we were discussing, there is no reason for you to be amazed—after all, you have learned, as Plato has decreed it, that discourse ought to be closely related to the topics that it addresses.

#### Meter 12

- Ó hów háppy the mán who víewed  
Áll thé rádiánt sóurce of Goód;  
Ó hów háppy the mán who bróke  
Áll thé búrdensome cháins of eárh!  
5 Ónce thé póet and seér of Thráce,  
Deép ín griéf for his yóung wífe deád,  
Thróúgh hís dírges and móurnful sóngs  
Fórced thé treés to get úp and rún,  
Fórced thé rívers to stóp and stáy.  
10 Thén, íntrépid, the deér wóuld stánd  
Bý thé rávenous líon's síde;  
Thén thé rábbít, made bóld, behéld  
Dógs nów cálméd by such hármoniés.  
Yét stíll hótter the féver búrned  
15 Deép ínsíde of his heárt and sóul,  
Ánd thé sóngs that subduéd all élse  
Cóuld nótlácate their lórd, who criéd  
Thát thé góds in the ský were cruél,  
Ánd só wént to the hálls belów.  
20 Thére hé cárefúly pláys his sóngs

- Ón hís lýre's sympathétic stríngs,  
Síngs ín teárs what he ónce had drúnk  
Fróm thé spríngs of his Móther Múse,  
Síngs whát óbstínate griéving prómpts  
Ánd thé lóve that redóubles griéf, 25  
Sénds á shúdder thróugh Hádes' cáves,  
Ánd ín géntle and lýric práyer  
Ásk the lórd's of the shádes for gráce.  
Nów, énthrálléd by this únknown sóng,  
The wátchfúl threé-headed dóg stánds dúmb; 30  
Nów thé góddesses whó pursúe  
Guíltý mén and avéngé their crímes  
Lét theír cheéks run with teárs, depressed;  
Nów thé swíftly-revólving wheél  
Dóes nótlást down Ixíon's heád; 35  
Thírst-párchéd Tántalus, wásted lóng,  
Nów dísmísses hís wátercóurse;  
Nów thé vúlture, fed fúll on sóng,  
Shúns thé líver of Títýús.  
Nów thé júdge of the shádes is móved, 40  
Criés ín sýmpathy, "Wé submít!  
Nów wé gíve to this mán hís máte,  
Gíve thé wífe he has bóught with sóng.  
But lét thís láw límit whát we gíve:  
Hé múst nótlást gíve a báckward glánce, 45  
Nótlást béfóre he leáves Héll behínd."  
Whó cán gíve to such lóve a láw?  
Lóve ís láw to ítsélf alóne.  
Woé ís hím! At the édge of níght  
Órphéús sáw hís Eurýrdicé, 50  
Sáw ánd lóst her and díéd hímself.  
Mórtál mén! Thís tale póínts at yóu,  
Yóu whó seék to condúct your mínds  
Tó thé líght of the dáy abóve:  
Lét nótlást mán gíve a báckward glánce 55  
Ín défeát, to the cáves of Héll—  
Whát hé tákes with hímself as hís  
Hé wíll lóse when he seés the deád.

#### Book 4

##### Prose 1

Philosophy had sung these words softly and sweetly, never losing the dignity of her appearance or the impressiveness of her speech, but I had not yet forgotten

the sorrow that was planted within me, and so I interrupted her train of thought then, just as she was getting ready to say something else.

[2–5] I said: Yes, you are the one who leads on toward the true light, and the words that flowed from your pleading were not only obviously divine, examined in themselves, but also irrefragable, according to your arguments; still, though I had recently forgotten them in my depression because of the wrongs done to me, you have spoken things that were not completely unknown to me before. But here is what is perhaps the greatest cause of my sorrow: the fact that evil things can exist at all, or that they can pass unpunished, when the helmsman of all things is good. Make no mistake: Only you can ponder this with the amazement that it deserves. No, there is another, an even greater thing connected to it: I mean, when gross wickedness thrives and has dominion, that not only does virtue go without its true rewards, but it is even forced to grovel at the feet of lawless men and to be ground beneath their heels, subjected to punishments as if for crimes committed. That such things happen in the kingdom of a God who knows all things, who is capable of all things, but who desires good things and the good alone—no one can be amazed at it, and no one can complain about it, as it deserves.

[6, 7] And then she said: True, it would be everlastingly incomprehensible, a thing more monstrous than all other monstrosities if, as you reckon it, the cheap earthenware pots were prized, and the expensive ones defiled, in what I may call so great a master's perfectly appointed house. But that is not the way it is. If the conclusions we reached a little while ago have not been torn to pieces but still hold, then, by the agency of that same creator of whose kingdom we now speak, you will come to see that good people are always powerful, while evil people are always disreputable and unable to sustain themselves; that vices are never without punishment, and virtues never without reward; that things worthy of rejoicing always happen to good people, and disasters always happen to the evil.

[8] There are many other conclusions of this sort, and they can brace you with an unshakable steadfastness, when first your complaints have been laid to rest. And since you have seen the essence of true happiness through my previous demonstrations, and have even

come to recognize where it is to be found, I will show to you the way that can carry you back home, after we've run through all the things that I think I must first set before it. In fact, I will equip your mind with wings, so that it can raise itself on high, so that you can cast your confusion into exile and return recuperated to your fatherland, following my lead, along my path, by my conveyances.

Meter 1

Seé what I háve: These are swift-beating wings for you,  
 Alért to ríse to heáven's heíghts;  
 Swift-thinking mínd, once these wíngs are attáched  
 to it,  
 Looks dówn to eárrh in vást disgúst.  
 Quíckly surpássing the límitless átmosphere 5  
 It seés the clóuds behínd its báck;  
 Soón it transcénds fire's tápering élement  
 That glóws in éther's rápid cóurse,  
 Vaúlts ítself ínto the dwéllings that hólđ the stars,  
 And the wáys of Phoébus áre íts ówn. 10  
 Ór ít máy fóllow the páth of the cóld old man,  
 The fiéry plánet's sátellíte;  
 Ór on the bríght-páinted cánvas of mídnight black  
 Máy retráce the círcles óf a stár.  
 Thén when ít háś been exháusted ín órbiting 15  
 Ít leáves the pólestar fár behínd,  
 Ánd as the máster of trúé líght's preéminence  
 Ít rídes on rápid éther's báck.  
 Hére wíth the scépter and réíns of the úniverse  
 Ín hánd, ís fóund the Lórd of kíngs, 20  
 Ánd he, unmóving, contróls the swift cháriot,  
 As fiéry júdge of áll the wórld.  
 Nów íf your páth tákes you báck to thís pláce ágain,  
 Whích nów you loók for únrecáled,  
 Youí wíll sáy, "Nów I remémber my fátherlánd— 25  
 Hére wás I bórn, hére sháll I stánd."  
 Thén shóuld ít pleáse you to víew on the eárrh below  
 The níght thát youí háve léft behínd—  
 Pítiless týrants, whom désolate peóples féar,  
 You wíll behóld as éxíles thére. 30

Prose 2

Then I said: Well fancy that! What great promises you make! And I have no doubt that you will fulfill them,

but please, don't hold me back now that you have aroused me.

[2–4] She said: Therefore you will first be permitted to realize that power is always the possession of good people, and that evil people are always deserted by every one of their strengths; in fact, the one proposition is proved from the other. For, since good and evil are opposites, if it is established that good is powerful, then the inability of evil to sustain itself is obvious; on the other hand, if the fragility of evil is made clear, then the stability of good has been recognized. However, in order to make this axiom of ours all the more abundantly trustworthy, I shall proceed along each of the two paths, making my two propositions mutually unshakable, now from the one side and now from the other.

[5–7] There are two things on which the outcome of every human act depends: These are will and power, and if either one of the two is missing, there is nothing that can then be created. After all, if the will should fail, a person does not even attempt what is not desired; but should power be absent, the will would be in vain. So it is that, should you see someone desiring to secure for himself that which he does not secure for himself at all, you would not be able to doubt that he lacked the strength necessary to make what he wanted his own.

I said: This is quite obvious, and it cannot in any way be denied.

[8] But should you see someone accomplish what he wanted, you would not doubt that he had the power to do so as well, would you?

Hardly.

[9] Each person must be thought to be powerful in regards to that which he can do, but must be thought to be incapable in regards to that which he cannot.

I said: I admit that.

[10] So do you remember, she said, that it was deduced by our previous arguments that all the striving of human nature, which is driven on in diverse pursuits, directs itself eagerly toward true happiness?

I said: I remember that that has been shown as well.

[11] You do remember, don't you, that true happiness is the Good itself, and that when happiness is sought, it is in this way that the Good is longed for by all people?

I said: No, I hardly *remember* that, since I have it now fixed in my memory.

[12] Therefore all mortals, the good and the evil alike, strive to reach the Good by their indiscriminate strivings?

I said: Yes, that is the logical consequence.

[13] But it is certain that people become good by securing the Good for themselves?

It is certain.

So they are the good who secure for themselves that which they crave?

So it seems.

[14] But if the evil secure for themselves what they crave, which is the Good—then they couldn't be evil.

It is as you say.

[15] Therefore: Since both the good and the evil seek the Good, but the former do secure it while the latter do not at all, it is not a doubtful proposition, is it, that the good are powerful, while those who are evil are incapable?

[16] I said: Whoever doubts this cannot be looking closely either at the universe or at the logical consequences of rational arguments.

[17] Or from the other angle, she said. If there are two people who have the same goal in accordance with their natures, and one of these two performs it and brings it to completion in accordance with his natural functioning, while the other is not at all able to manage this natural functioning, but rather, in some manner other than what is appropriate to his nature, does not even satisfy his goal but only imitates the one who has satisfied it— which do you judge to be the stronger of these two?

Even if I can guess at what you're after, I said, I am longing all the same to hear it more distinctly.

[19] She said: You won't deny, will you, that the motion of walking is in accordance with the nature of mortals?

I said: Hardly.

[20] You don't doubt, do you, that the functioning of the feet is the natural functioning for this?

I don't deny this either, I said.

[21] Therefore, if someone walks who has the ability to move by means of his feet, while another man, who lacks this natural functioning of his feet, tries to

walk supporting himself with his hands—which of these can rightly be thought to be the stronger?

[22] I said: Weave in your other arguments; for there is no one who is in doubt that the man who has the power of his natural functioning is stronger than the man who cannot do the same.

[23] But the highest Good, which is equally the goal of evil people and of good people, good people seek to gain by the natural functioning of their virtues while the evil try to secure the same thing for themselves through their multiform desires, which do not constitute a natural functioning for the securing of the Good—or do you think otherwise?

[24] I said: Hardly, for it is also obvious what is the logical consequence of this; I mean, from the points that I have granted it must be the case that the good are powerful, while the evil are incapable.

[25–28] She said: You are hurrying on ahead of me and on the right path; this, as is the doctors' usual expectation, is a sign of a nature that is both revived and fighting back. But since I see that you are now very eager for learning, I will pile up my arguments thick and fast; just observe how great is the weakness of corrupt men who cannot even reach that goal toward which their natural striving leads and practically forces them. And what would happen if they were to be deserted by these reinforcements (so great, practically undefeated) of a nature that would lead them onward? Just look at what great powerlessness has lawless men in its grip. For the rewards that they seek to gain and that they cannot achieve and cannot make their own are no "trifling or trivial things." No, but at the very height and head of things they fall away, and the outcome that is the only thing they struggle for day and night never comes to them in their desolation; and it is in this that the strength of the good people stands out. Take a man who, walking on foot, was able to go all the way to that place beyond which there lay nothing further that was accessible to his walking. Just as you would judge him to be the most powerful person in terms of walking, just so must you judge that man to be most powerful absolutely who has gained the goal of the things that are to be sought, beyond which there is nothing else.

[30–32] So it is that the opposite is true, that [those who do not achieve their ultimate goals] seem to be

deserted by all of their strengths. I mean, why have they left their virtue behind to go chasing after vices? Because of their lack of awareness of the things that are good? But what is there more powerless than the blindness of ignorance? Or do they know what they should chase after, but lust drives them headlong away, at right angles? In this way too they are fragile in their lack of self-control, because they are unable to wrestle against vice. Or do they desert the Good knowingly and willingly, and cast themselves off toward the vices? But in this way they not only cease to be powerful, but cease even to exist at all; after all, those who abandon the common goal of all the things that are also quit existing as well.

[33–39] Now this is a fact that may seem paradoxical to some, that we say that evil men, the majority of mortals, do not exist; but that is the way it is. To be sure, I do not reject the statement that evil men are evil men; but I do deny that they exist in the pure and simple sense. For just as you may call a corpse a dead human being, but cannot denominate it a human being in the simple sense, so may I grant that there are corrupt men, but I am unable to admit as well that they exist in an absolute sense. For that thing exists that keeps its place in nature and preserves its own nature; but whatever falls away from this abandons even the existence that was placed within its own nature. But, you will say, evil people have power; I wouldn't deny this either, but this power of theirs derives not from their strength but from their incapability. For they have the power to do evil things, things that they would not be able to do at all had they been able to remain unchanged with the potentiality of good people. And this false power proves even more clearly that they have no real power; for if, as we deduced just a little while ago, evil is nothing, then, since they only have the power to do evil things, it is clear that the unrighteous have no power at all.

This is quite obvious.

[40] And, just so you can understand exactly what the force of this power of theirs is—just a little while ago we defined it this way: There is nothing more powerful than the highest Good.

I said: It is as you say.

But, she said, the highest Good cannot do what is evil.

Hardly.

[41] So tell me, she said, is there anyone who thinks that mortals have the power to do all things?

There is no one, except for the madman.

And yet these mortals have the power to do evil things?

And how I wish, I said, that they did not!

[42–46] Therefore: Since he who has power only to do good things has the power to do all things, while those who do have the power to do evil things do not have the power to do all things, it is perfectly clear that those who have the power to do evil have less power. To this is attached the fact that we have shown that all power is to be counted among the things that are to be sought, and that all the things that are to be sought are understood in reference to the Good as if to a sort of head and summation of their nature. But this false power of committing crimes cannot be referred to the Good, and is therefore not a thing to be sought. And yet every power is to be sought; consequently, it is clear that this false power is not true power. From all of these considerations it is the power of the good people and the utterly unquestionable weakness of the evil that is made obvious, and the truth of that opinion of Plato's is clear: Only the wise have the power to do what they long to do, while the unrighteous, though they may keep themselves busy at whatever they please, do not have the power to accomplish what they long to do. For they do whatever they please, thinking all the while that they will secure for themselves the good that they long for by means of the things that give them joy; but they secure it not at all, since wicked deeds do not come into the realm of true happiness.

#### Meter 2

Hígh exálted t́yrants sítting on their ráised thrónes—  
 can you seé thém,  
 Brílliant in the bláze of púrple, through the hígh fénce  
 of their grím speárs,  
 Gláre and threáten without píty, in the hót breáth of  
 their mád heárts?  
 Coúld you stríp awáy the tráppings from the príde of  
 their adórnment,  
 5 Únderneáth you'd seé these másters in the tíght chaíns  
 of their shácklés.

Hére is lúst with ácid póisons, discompósing all the lífebloód;

Ánger whíps the mínd to fréncy on the hígh seás of the pássións;

Sórrów hére exháústs her cáptives or incónstánt hope tórménts thém.

Whén you seé one síngle pérson thus endúring all these t́yránts—

Hé does nótt do whát he wánts to, overwhélméd bý  
 10 cruel mástérs.

#### Prose 3

[1–5] So do you see what is the expanse of filth in which wicked deeds wallow, and what is the light with which righteousness shines? From this it is quite obvious that the good people are never without their rewards, and that crimes are never without their punishments. The fact is, for all actions that are undertaken, that particular thing for the sake of which any individual action is undertaken can be seen, not without cause, as the reward of the action, just as the crown for which the race is run lies as the reward for running on the track. But we have shown that happiness is the Good itself; the Good is the very thing for the sake of which all actions are undertaken; therefore it is the Good itself that has been placed before human actions as if it were their common reward. And yet, this reward cannot be separated from good people—for one would not rightly be called good any longer if one lacked the Good—and for this reason its proper rewards do not abandon righteous conduct. Therefore, no matter how brutal evil people may be, the crown shall never fall from the head of the wise man and shall never wither; nor shall another person's unrighteousness pluck from the souls of the righteous the distinctions that are theirs alone.

[6–10] For were a person to take delight in a reward received from an external source, then it could be taken away, perhaps by someone different, or even perhaps by the very person who had bestowed it; but since it is each person's righteousness that bestows this reward on each of them, then only when he ceases to be righteous will a righteous man be without his reward. Finally, since every reward is craved for this reason, that it is believed to be good, who is there who would

judge a person who is master of the Good to be without a share of its reward? But what sort of a reward is it? Only the most beautiful, the greatest reward of all—please remember that corollary that I gave you just a little while ago as your very own, and consider this: Since true happiness is the Good itself, it is clear that all good people, by the very fact that they are good, become happy. But it is agreed that those who are truly happy are gods. Therefore, this is the reward of good people, which no future day can grind down, which no other man’s power can humble, which no other man’s unrighteousness can stain—to become gods.

[11–13] Given that all of this is true, may the wise man never be in doubt about the punishment that cannot be separated from evil people. For, since good and evil, and likewise punishments and rewards, are incompatible, their faces set against each other, the same things that we see constituting the reward of the good man must necessarily, on the opposite side, correspond to the punishment of the evil man. Therefore, just as righteousness itself becomes the reward of the righteous, so too is gross wickedness itself the punishment of the unrighteous. And further, no one who has been affected by a punishment doubts that he has been affected by an evil. So tell me: Those whom this gross wickedness, this farthest limit of all evil things, not only has affected, but has even passionately infected—if these people want to take their own measure, can they seem to themselves to have no share of punishment?

[14, 15] But as to what is the punishment that is the companion of the unrighteous—take a look at it from the other side, the side of the good people. You have learned just a little while ago that everything which exists exists as one thing, and that the One itself is the Good; the logical consequence of this is that everything that exists seems in fact to be good. And so it is in this way that whatever falls away from the Good ceases to exist. And so it happens that evil people cease to be what they once were. But the very appearance of a human body that remains shows them up as having been human before; and for this reason, because they have turned toward evil conduct, they have lost their human nature as well.

[16–21] But since it is righteousness alone that has the power to promote anyone beyond the realm of hu-

man beings, it is necessarily the case that unrighteousness deservedly tramples down below what a human being deserves those whom it has cast down from the human condition. And so it comes about that anyone whom you see metamorphosed by vices you can no longer judge to be a human being. One man, a savage thief, pants after and is ravenous for the goods of other people—you can say that he is like a wolf. Another man, vicious, never resting, has his tongue always in motion in lawsuits—you can compare him to a dog. One man, the hidden plotter, lying in wait, is glad to steal by his deceptions—he can be said to be the same as the foxes. Another roars, giving free rein to his anger—he may be believed to have within him the spirit of the lion. One man, a coward, is quick to turn tail, afraid of things that he need not fear—he is thought to be like the deer. Another, indolent and slack-jawed, is simply inert—he lives the life of an ass. One man, fickle and flighty, changes his interests constantly—he is not at all different from birds. Another wallows in foul and unclean lusts—he is held under by the physical delights of a filthy sow. And so it is that anyone who has ceased to be a human being by deserting righteousness, since he has not the power to cross over into the divine condition, is turned into a beast.

### Meter 3

Ónce, the Íthacan cáptain’s shíp  
 Wíth his fleét that had béen adríft  
 Cáme by wínds from the Eást to pórt  
 Whére the beaútifúl góddess líved,  
 Bórn the chíld of the Sún, who míxed 5  
 Fór her chánce, unsusπέcting guésts  
 Cúps that shé had transfórméd by sóng.  
 Stróng in mágical hérb, her tóuch  
 Túrn, these mén into mány shápes—  
 Óne is sheáthed in a boár’s-head másk; 10  
 Óne, a líon from Líbyá,  
 Seés his teéth and his náils grów;  
 Óne is nów to the páck of wólves,  
 Hówling whén he inténds to wáil;  
 Óne, an Índian tíger, strólls 15  
 Úncompláiníngly thróugh her hálls.  
 Thóugh Arcádia’s wíngèd gód

In compássi3n for áll the ílls  
 Which encómpassed the cáptain's life,  
 20 Sét him freeé from the lády's cúrse,  
 Yét the bánd of his shípmates thén  
 Pút their líps to the póisoned cúps,  
 Chánged the food that was Céres' gíft  
 Fór the ácorns they áte as pígs.  
 25 Nóthing, nóthing remaíns intáct;  
 Áll is lóst of their voíce, their shápe.  
 Nó; the mínd stands unchánged alóne  
 Móurns the hórrors it háas endúred.  
 Áh, her touéh was a wóρθless thíng,  
 30 Ánd her hérbas had no stréngth at áll!  
 Théy could ónly transfórm the límbas,  
 Bút could néver transfórm the héart;  
 Húman lífe force was képt secúre  
 Ín its cítadel, óút of síght.  
 35 Thére are póisons with fáar more stréngth,  
 Whích can stríp from a máan his sélf,  
 Pássiing hórríbbly deép withín,  
 Leáving bódy unháarmed alóne,  
 Brútálízíng with méntal wóundas.

#### Prose 4

And then I said: I admit that, and I see how it is not improperly said that corrupt men, even if they preserve the appearance of a human body, are all the same changed into beasts in the quality of their minds; but as to the fact that their minds, so abominable and so lawless, act so brutally for the destruction of good people—I would not have wanted that to be allowed them.

[2–5] She said: But it is not allowed them, a proof that shall be made in its own proper place; but all the same, if the very thing that is thought to be allowed them should be taken away from them then, to a large extent, the punishment of these lawless men would be alleviated. In fact, and this is a thing which may perhaps seem incredible to some, it is necessarily the case that evil men are less happy if they have brought to completion the things that they once desired than if they are unable to satisfy what they now desire. For if it brings desolation merely to have desired immoral things, it brings even greater desolation to have had the power to do them; without this power, the out-

come of the desolate will would collapse. And so, since each of these things one by one has its own desolation, it is necessarily the case that those people are overwhelmed by a triple punishment, the people you see to be willing, capable of, and bringing to completion a criminal act.

[6] I said: I yield that, but it is my passionate desire that these people be deserted by their false power of committing crimes and so immediately be free of this punishment.

[7–9] She said: Ah, but they will be free of it, perhaps even sooner than you yourself would wish, perhaps even sooner than they would think that they would be free of it themselves. The mind is first and foremost an immortal thing, and with the swift circuit of this life there is nothing that comes so late that the mind would consider the anticipation of it to be long drawn out. The great hope of these people, the lofty siege engine of their crimes, often falls to ruins in a sudden and unexpected end. In fact, this places a limit to their desolation—for if it is gross wickedness that makes them desolate, then it is necessarily the case that, the more long-lasting is his wickedness, the more desolate a man is. And I would judge them to be incalculably unhappy if that death that comes at the end did not put an end—to say no more—to their evil conduct; for if we have drawn true conclusions about the punishment attendant on immorality, it is clear that a desolation that we have agreed is eternal is infinite as well.

[10] Then I said: This is indeed a paradoxical inference, difficult to admit to; but I recognize that it agrees to an incredible degree with the points that were conceded earlier.

[11, 12] She said: And you are right to think so. On the other hand, it is only fair that someone who thinks it difficult to accept a conclusion either prove that some false proposition has preceded it or else show that the ordered sequence of propositions is not productive of a necessary conclusion; otherwise, there is absolutely no reason for him to object to the inference, if all of the preceding propositions have been conceded. For this point too that I am about to make may seem no less paradoxical, but it is no less necessary, drawn from the propositions already adopted.

I said: Tell me, what?

[13, 14] She said: That the unrighteous are more happy when they suffer their punishments than when no penalty derived from justice represses them. Now, I'm not laboring the point that might come into anyone's mind, that immoral conduct is corrected by retribution and led back to the right path by fear of punishment, and that for other people as well this is a deterrent that they should run away from things that would bring them reproach. No; it is in another way that I think that the unrighteous are unhappier when unpunished, even if correction is not taken into account, even if there is no consideration for deterrence.

[15] And what would this other way be, I said, that leaves these behind?

And she said: Have we not granted that good people are happy, and that evil people are desolate!

It is as you say.

[16] She said: Therefore, if some good be added to a person's desolation, such a person surely is happier than the one whose desolation is unmixed and unaccompanied, without the admixture of any good?

I said: So it seems.

[17] Now what if some evil, beyond the evils that make him desolate already, were added to this same desolate man who lacks all good things? Surely he must be judged to be much more unhappy than one whose punishment is alleviated by participation in the good?

I said: Well, of course he must.

[18] But it is perfectly clear that the punishment of the unrighteous is just, and that it is not right that they make their escape unpunished?

Who could deny it?

[19] But there is no one, she said, who could deny *this* either, that what is just is good and that, on the other hand, what is unjust is evil.

[20] I answered that it was clear.

Therefore the unrighteous do indeed have some good added to them when they are punished; namely the punishment itself, which is good by reason of its justice. These same people, when they are free of punishment, have within them some further evil, which is impunity itself, a thing that you have agreed was evil by virtue of its injustice.

[21] I cannot deny it.

Therefore: The unrighteous are much more unhappy when they receive the gift of unjust impunity than when they are punished in just retribution.

[22] Then I said: Those are indeed the logical consequences of the conclusions that were drawn just a little while ago. But, I said, I beg you, please: Do you bequeath no punishments for souls, after the body has been extinguished by death?

[23–25] I do, and they are great indeed, she said. I think that some of the punishments are employed in the bitterness of discipline, others in the clemency of purgation; but it is not now my plan to discourse upon them. We have taken this discussion up to this point so that you could realize that the power of evil people, which seemed to you to be the most dishonorable thing, is no power at all; so that you could see that the people who you complained were unpunished are never free from the punishments of their own unrighteousness; so that you could learn that the license granted them, a license whose swift termination you prayed for, is not for long, and that it is the more unhappy the more long-lasting it is, and that it would be the most unhappy if it were to be eternal; and so that, after all these demonstrations, you could learn that the unrighteous are more desolate when let go by an unjust impunity than when punished by a just retribution. The logical consequence of this conclusion is that they are overwhelmed by weightier punishments precisely when they are believed to be unpunished.

[26] Then I said: When I look at your arguments, I think that nothing has been more truly spoken; but, should I go back to the judgments of mortal men, who is there for whom they would seem, I won't say credible, but even worthy of a hearing?

[27–29] She said: It is as you say. Once their eyes have become accustomed to the darkness, people are not able to raise them up to the penetrating light of truth; they are like the birds whose vision the nighttime illumines though the daytime blinds them. So long as they do not look closely at their place in nature but only at their own passions, they think that the license for their crimes, or the impunity for their crimes, is a happy thing. But observe what eternal law has decreed. If you mold your mind to the shape of better things, you have no need of a judge to bring you your reward, for you yourself have added yourself to the

realm of superior things; if you direct your pursuits toward the worse things, don't look for any avenger outside of yourself, for you yourself have trampled yourself down into the realm of inferior things. It is just this way—if you were to contemplate now the foul earth, now the heavens, in alternation, then, if all other things were disregarded, you would seem to yourself, just by the very principle of your perception, now to dwell in the mud, now to dwell among the stars.

[30–32] But the common herd does not contemplate these things. Well then! Are we to yield to those whom we have shown to be no different from beasts? What if a man who had completely lost his sight were to forget that he even had vision once, and so think that there was nothing lacking in him for human perfection—we who can see wouldn't think the same things this blind man thinks, would we? People will not even yield this point, which is supported by foundations of rational argument that are just as strong, that those who commit an injustice are more unhappy than those who suffer it.

I said: Myself, I would like to hear these very arguments.

[33] She said: You don't deny, do you, that every unrighteous person is worthy of punishment?

Hardly.

[34] And it is clear in many ways that those who are unrighteous are unhappy?

I said: So it is.

So you have no doubt that those who are worthy of punishment are desolate?

I said: That is consistent.

[35] So if you were sitting as magistrate, she said, to whom would you think punishment ought to be given: to the one who committed the injustice or to the one who endured it?

I said: There is no dispute—I would give satisfaction to the victim through the pain of the one who committed the injustice.

[36] Therefore, the one who does the injustice would seem to you to be more desolate than the one who receives it.

I said: That is the logical consequence.

[37] Therefore: It is for this reason, and for other reasons that all rest upon this one root—that shame-

lessness makes people desolate by its very nature—that this is obvious: An injustice that is done to someone is the desolation not of the one who receives it but of the one who does it.

[I said: It is obvious.]

[38–42] She said: And yet the lawyers do just the opposite. I mean, they try to rouse the compassion of the judges in behalf of those who are the victims of some serious or bitter wrong, when a more just compassion is owed to the perpetrators instead. It is better that they be led to judgment, not by indignant accusers, but rather by kindly and compassionate accusers, like sick men to the doctor, so that the diseases brought on by their wrongdoing can be cut out by their punishment. From these considerations, the efforts of the defense lawyers would either be utterly superseded or, if these lawyers preferred to do some good for mortal men, they would transform themselves for the prosecutor's role. So also the unrighteous themselves—were it permitted them to gaze through some crack at the virtue that they had left behind, and to see that they could set aside the defilement of their vices through the tortures of their punishments, the righteousness that they would secure for themselves would counterbalance such tortures. They would think that those were *not* tortures; they would reject the efforts of their defense lawyers, and they would give themselves over completely to their accusers and to their judges. So it is that, as far as the wise are concerned, there is absolutely no place left for anger. I mean, except for the most utter fool, who would hate good people? And to hate evil people has no logical defense. Just as physical collapse is a disease of bodies, so too is a vice-ridden nature a sort of disease of minds. If this is the case, then, since we certainly judge those who are sick in body to be worthy of compassion rather than anger, it is all the more true that vice-ridden people are to be pitied, not persecuted, since their minds are driven on by an unrighteousness that is more abominable than any physical collapse.

#### Meter 4

Whý délight to stir úp such gréat upheávals?

Whý would you teáse your own fáte, goád it on bý your own hánd?

Mórtál mén! Is it Deáth you seék? Behóld her  
 Hére of her ówn freé wíll, swift horses néver held  
 báck.  
 5 Snáke, beár, boár, with the líon ánd the tíger  
 Seék to kill mén with their teéth, whó seek them-  
 sélves with their swórd.  
 Íncómpátibly dífferent cústoms *fórc*e them,  
 Márchíng to béstíal wár, swéllíng ínjústíce's ráńks,  
 To lóng tó díe ín the gíve-áńd-táke of speár-póńts?  
 10 Nó! Whére ís jústíce enóúgh, fít for brutálisty's cáuse?  
 Shóúld you wísh then to gíve their deéds their mérits—  
 Chérísh ín jústíce the goód, shéd for the évil your  
 teárs.

Prose 5

[1–4] At this point I said: Now I see what is the happiness, and what is the desolation, that has been established for the actual merits of the righteous and the unrighteous. But as I weigh things, there is some good and evil to be found in the very Fortune of popular opinion. After all, there is not a single wise man who would prefer to be an exile, to have no resources and no good name rather than to remain unchanged in his own city and to thrive as one predominant in his wealth and resources, preeminent in his political honor, and strong in his power. For the proper functioning of wisdom is carried out with greater renown and to better acclaim in this way, when the true happiness of those who govern spills over somehow or other into the peoples who are at their borders, and especially when prison, death, and all the other tortures that belong to the punishments of the legal process are reserved for the destructive citizens instead, for whom they have in fact been established. Therefore I am utterly amazed that these things are changed and reversed, that punishments for crimes overwhelm good people, and that evil people snatch away the rewards owed to virtues. I am longing to learn from you what seems to be the just principle for such an unjust confusion.

[5, 6] And in fact I would be less amazed at this were I to believe that all things are confused together by chance occurrences happening at random. But as it is now, the God who is the helmsman makes my incomprehension that much greater. Given that he as-

signs delightful things to good people and calamitous things to evil people, but on the other hand assigns harsh things to good people while granting to evil people the things that they desire—if a reason for this cannot be discovered, what is there here that differs from chance occurrences happening at random?

[7] She said: It is not paradoxical that something is believed to be random and confused if the principle behind the order is not known. But even though you do not know the cause of this great arrangement, please have no doubt that all things happen in the right way; indeed, the one who is the helmsman, who balances the world, is good.

Meter 5

Áre you blínd to thís? Stárs of the Greát Bear  
 Turn slówly néxt to heáven's hígh céńter;  
 Slów to dóuse híis flámes, lágging Boótes  
 Condúct híis óxen dówn tóward the Ócean.  
 Whén he soón díspláys swíftness ín rísíng, 5  
 Then you'll be áwed by láws of hígh heáven.  
 Shóúld the fúll móon's hórn's grów dark áńd ghástly,  
 By níght's thíc k shádw grímly ínféctéd;  
 Shóúld dázed Phoébe shów stárs ónce conceáled,  
 The stárs kept hídden bý her bríght súrface; 10  
 Máss delúسیون dríves nátions to mádness,  
 Who frét brass kettles éńdlessly cláńgíng.  
 Nó óne stáńds amázed thát blásts of the Wést Wíńd  
 Cń báter shórelínes, róáring wíth seá swélls;  
 Nó r thát drífts of snów, íce-hard áńd frígíd, 15  
 Áre tháwed by Phoébus, híis heát íncándéscént.  
 Thése háv cáuse áńd éńd, símples to wítness,  
 Whíle hídden cáuses tróuble the spírit.  
 Áll thát lápse of tíme bríńgs unexpéctéd,  
 Thát áwe the brúte herd, eásily stártled: 20  
 Dríve delúسیون óút, the clóúd of unknówing—  
 Máké nó místáke— they'd céáse to seém wóńdróus.

Prose 6

I said: It is as you say. But since it is your function to unfold the causes of things that are hidden and to reveal their principles, veiled in darkness, I beg you, please explain in full what is your judgment in these matters. For this supernatural occurrence confuses me most of all.

[2–6] Then she smiled at me for a time and said: You now summon me to a matter that is, in the asking, the greatest of all and for which, in the answering, there is hardly anything that will suffice. For its composition is such that, after one source of doubt has been lopped off, others grow up to replace it, more than you can count, like the heads of the Hydra. There would be no limit to these doubts if one didn't keep them in check with the mind's liveliest fire. In this matter questions are usually asked about the simplicity of Providence, the sequence of fated events, unexpected chance occurrences, divine perception and divine predestination, and the freedom of independent judgment—and just how burdensome such things are you yourself can weigh in the balance. But since it is a certain portion of your medicine that you know these things as well, although we are hemmed in by the circumscribed limit of our time, we shall try all the same to examine them, to some limited extent. And yet, if it is the delights of music and song that you find delightful, you must put off this physical pleasure for a time while I weave together arguments that are tightly bound to each other in sequence.

[7] I said: As you please. Then, as if beginning from another starting point, she presented the following discourse:

[8–10] The coming-into-being of all things, each and every development of natures that are subject to change, whatever is set in motion by whatever means—all these things are allotted their causes, their order, and their appearances from the immutability of the divine mind. This divine mind, securely settled in the citadel of its own simplicity, has established for the carrying out of things a complex mode of operation. When this mode is viewed in the unmixedness of the divine intelligence, it is called Providence. However, when it is referred to those things that the divine intelligence sets in motion and arranges, it has, according to the ancients, received the name of Fate. Should one look at the force of these two terms in one's own mind, it will appear quite easily that they are different; for Providence is the divine reason itself, established in the highest ruler of all things, which arranges all things; Fate is the arrangement that inheres in the things that have motion, the arrangement through which Providence weaves all things together in their

proper orders. Providence embraces all things equally, despite the fact that they are different, and despite the fact that they are infinite; Fate sets out individual things into their motions, things that are apportioned to specific places, appearances, and times. As a result, this unfolding of the order of things in time, which is unified according to the divine mind's seeing of it in advance, is Providence; this same unification, when set out and unfolded in specific times, is called Fate.

[11–13] Though it be granted that these are different, nevertheless the one is dependent on the other; the order of fated events proceeds from the simplicity of Providence. For example: An artisan anticipates in his mind the appearance of the thing that he is about to make, sets in motion the process of the work's completion, and so leads through the ordered stages of time the thing which he had seen in advance in its simplicity and in a single moment. It is in just this way that God by his Providence arranges the things that are to be made in a uniform and unchanging way; by Fate he manages these very things that he has arranged in a multiform and temporal way. Now whether Fate is driven by certain divine spirits that are servants of Providence; whether the sequence of fated events is woven together by the World Soul or by all of nature in service to it, or by the heavenly motion of the stars, the power of angels, the multiform resourcefulness of demons, or by some of them or all of them together; this is at any rate perfectly clear, that Providence is the unmoving and simple form of the things that are to be carried out, and Fate is the interweaving in motion and the ordering in time of those things that divine simplicity arranged so that they could be carried out.

[14–17] And so it happens that all the things that are subordinated to Fate have been made subject to Providence as well, and even Fate itself is subject to Providence; however, there are certain things, placed inferior to providence, that are superior to the sequence of Fate. These are the things that are set firmly and unchangeably next to the first divinity and pass beyond the realm of the ordering of motion by Fate. For example: Of all the circles that turn about the same center point, the one which is innermost approaches the simplicity of the middle, and for all of the other circles that lie outside of it *it* exists as a kind of center point about which they turn. However, the outermost

circle, set in rotation in a greater circumference, is unfolded in areas that are ever greater the greater is its remove from the central indivisibility of that point. On the other hand, if something could bind itself and join itself to that center, it would be forced into simplicity and would cease to be dispersed and to dissipate itself. By a similar line of reasoning, that which is at a further remove from the first mind is entangled in greater meshes of Fate; a thing is free from Fate to the extent that it seeks to gain ever more closely that center point of things. And should it cling to the stability of the mind that is above it, then, free from motion, it transcends the necessity of Fate as well. Therefore: As is the relation of rational argument to knowledge; of that which comes into being to that which is; of time to eternity; of the circle to its center point—such is the relation of the moving sequence of Fate to the unchanging simplicity of Providence.

[18–22] This sequence moves heaven and the stars, balances the elements among themselves one with the other, and transforms these elements in the interchange of each with each; the same sequence renews all the things that are born and die, through the development of their offspring and seed, resembling each other from generation to generation. This sequence also ties together the actions and the fortunes of mortal men, in an indecomposable interweaving of causes; and since this sequence sets out from the loom of motionless Providence, it is necessarily the case that these actions and fortunes be unalterable as well. For it is in this way that things are governed best, if the simplicity that remains unchanged in the divine mind brings into the world an inevitable order of causes, while here in the world this order keeps in bounds, in their proper and mutual unalterability, the things that are alterable and otherwise liable to bob up and down at random. And although you mortals have not at all the strength to investigate this order, so that all things seem to you confused and dislocated, nevertheless there is for all things individually a proper mode of operation that arranges them and directs them toward the Good. For there is nothing that happens for the sake of evil, not even what the unrighteous themselves do; as has been most abundantly shown, it is an immoral miscalculation that turns them from the path as they seek the Good. It is hardly the case that the order

that advances from the center point of the highest Good changes course in any direction away from its own starting point.

[23–31] You will say: But what confusion can there be that is more unjust than this, that good people now have adverse things as their lot, now favorable things; while evil people too have now the things they hope for, now the things they detest, as theirs? But surely people do not live their lives with such an infallibility of mind that it is necessarily the case that those whom they have judged to be righteous or unrighteous must also actually be just as others think they are? And what is more, the judgments of people are at odds in this matter; those whom some think to be worthy of reward others think worthy of punishment. But let us grant that someone could tell good people and evil people apart—surely such a person could not therefore look upon, to use the term usually applied to the body, the inmost constitution of the mind? For example: someone does not know why, in the case of healthy bodies, sweet things are right for some, sour things for others; or why some sick people are helped by gentle things while others are helped by more bitter things; such would seem to be a “supernatural occurrence” that is no different. But the doctor, who can distinguish the mode of operation and the constitution of health itself and of sickness itself, is not at all amazed. In fact, what else does the health and well-being of the mind seem to be other than its righteousness; what else is its sickness other than its vices? Or who else is there who preserves what is good and drives out what is evil other than God, the helmsman and the healer of minds? When God has looked down from the high watchtower of Providence, he sees what is appropriate for each person, and he supplies to each what he knows to be appropriate. And it is here that the remarkable supernatural occurrence of the order of Fate comes to be; it is a thing that holds the ignorant spellbound, but which is put into effect by one who knows.

[32–38] For if I may touch briefly on just those few aspects of the unfathomable depth of God that human reason has the strength for: To the Providence that knows all things, it seems quite otherwise concerning the man whom *you* think to be the most just and the one most devoted to the preservation of what is right. As our kinsman Lucan has warned us, it was the

conqueror's cause that pleased the gods, but the cause of the conquered pleased Cato. In this regard, therefore, whatever you see happening that falls short of your hopes—though to your opinion it is a topsy-turvy confusion, for the things themselves it is the right ordering. But let there be someone of such excellent character that divine and human judgment are in complete accord about him; but he is weak as to the strength of his mind and would perhaps, if something adverse happened to him, cease to cherish the innocence that was the reason why he could not keep his fortune. And so it is a wise dispensation that spares him, a man whom adversity could have made worse, and does not allow him to struggle with something that is not appropriate for him. Another man is perfect in all of his virtues, holy and next to God himself; Providence judges it wicked that such a man have any adversity at all as his lot, so much so that it does not even allow him to be hounded by diseases of the body. For as someone who is even superior to me has said:

Heávenly pówers have fáshioned the hóly man's  
phýsical bódy.

[39–42] Furthermore, it often happens that the fortunes of the state are handed over to good men for them to control, so that unrighteousness running riot can be beaten back. To others Providence apportions certain mixtures of the favorable and the adverse in accordance with the quality of their minds. Some it torments to keep them from an overindulgence in protracted happiness; others it hounds with difficulties so that they may strengthen the virtues of their minds by the experience and the practice of forbearance. Some fear more than is appropriate that which they can endure; others disparage more than is appropriate that which they cannot endure. Such people Providence leads on, by means of disagreeable measures, to discover by trial who they are. There are some who have purchased at the price of a glorious death a name that is esteemed by the ages; some, proved to be unconquerable by the punishments imposed upon them, have offered an example to others, that evil people have no victory over virtue. There is no source of doubt that these things happen in accordance with what is

right and what is the divine arrangement, and for the good of those to whom they are seen to befall.

[43–49] Furthermore, this too comes from the same causes, that now things that are disagreeable, now things that they hoped for, spring up for the unrighteous. In particular, no one is amazed at the disagreeable things, at least, because everyone thinks that these people deserve evil. In fact, the punishments of such people both frighten others away from criminal deeds and improve those very people to whom the punishments are applied. On the other hand, the prosperity of evil people speaks a great argument to good people as to what they ought to think about a happiness of *this* sort, which they often observe to be the servant of the unrighteous. And I believe that this prosperity falls to such a man in this case by dispensation, for a man may be by nature so headlong and so impulsive that a lack of resources and prosperity could actually provoke him to criminal acts; Providence cures a man's disease by the remedy of money conferred upon him. Another man, contemplating a conscience befouled by immoral acts and drawing the parallels between himself and his fortune, perhaps grows fearful that the loss of what is for him a delightful experience would be depressing; he will therefore change his ways and will, at the same time as he fears for the loss of his fortune, forsake his gross wickedness. A happiness that has been unworthily lived has cast some down headlong into a disaster that they deserved; others have been granted the right to administer discipline that this may be a cause of training for the good and of punishment for the evil. After all, just as there is no eternal pact between the righteous and the unrighteous, so too can the unrighteous themselves never agree among themselves. No, of course not: The unrighteous individually are of two minds within themselves, as their own vices pull their consciences to pieces, and they often perform acts that they determine should never have been committed after they have committed them.

[50–53] And it is from this that most high Providence produces the remarkable supernatural occurrence that evil people make evil people good. For while some people seem to suffer what they do not deserve at the hands of those who are most despicable,

as they burn with hatred for those who are to blame, they have returned in fact to the fruits of virtue because they strive to make themselves unlike the people whom they hate. Indeed, the divine power is the only power in respect of which even evil things are good. when by using them in due proportion it draws forth from them the end result of some good. For there is a certain order that embraces all things; consequently, whatever has withdrawn from the principle of the order that has been assigned to it falls into another order, but it is an order all the same; there is therefore no room given to randomness in the kingdom of Providence. Yet, as Homer says:

Bút it is hárd to expláin all these thínghs as if Í were a góddess.

[54, 55] No, and it is forbidden to mortals either to grasp all of the machines of the divine operation in the acuity of their minds or to unfold them in the words of their mouths. I hope it is enough just to have seen this, that God, who brings forth all natures, is the same one who arranges all things and directs them toward the Good; and that, inasmuch as he hastens to keep the things that he has brought forth in his own image and likeness, he banishes every evil from the boundaries of his state through the agency of the sequence of fated necessity. And so it is that the evils that are thought to be present in abundance on the earth—if you should look to the Providence that arranges all things well, you would weigh in the balance that there is no evil anywhere.

[57] But I see that you have been for some time now both burdened by the weight of the question and exhausted by the great length of the explanation, and so you are waiting for some sweetness that comes from song. So take a drink—once you have been refreshed, you may press forward toward the further reaches as a stronger man.

#### Meter 6

If you lóng to seé, mínd pure and fáicile,  
The Thúnderer's státutes, lófty, exálted,  
Loók to the zénith, heáven's high pláces.

Thére, constellátions keép ancient cóncords,  
Thé wórlđ thús held in bónds that are jústice, 5  
The réđ planet's fires néver impélling  
The sún to block Phoébe's cóld path and órbit.  
And the Beár gíves réin tó her swift cóurses  
At the hínge of the wórlđ, híghest abóve us.  
Thóugh she seés others sínk ín Western wátters, 10  
Stárs báthed in the deép, shé néver desíres  
Tó doúse hér flámes in wáves of the Ócean.  
Véspér broádcásts sháđows at évening  
In tíme's just exchánghes, órdered, as álways,  
Ánd now as Lúcífer brínghs back the deár day. 15  
Thús, recíprocal Lóve mákes new the páthways  
Étérnally sét, thús from the fíxed stars  
Wár's díshármony fleés into éxile.  
Thís hármony rúles élements bálanced  
Ín their just meásures: Moístness and drýness, 20  
Át wár back and fórh, yíeld to each óther,  
Íce and flame jóíngh tógéther as fríends.  
Thús the quívergh fíre ríses to heáven  
Ánd heávy eárh sínks by its ówn weíght.  
Fór thése reásóns ín the warm spríngtime 25  
Thé yeár in its bloóm breáthes forth sweet ódors;  
Summer párches the graín, íncándéscént;  
Aútúmn rétúrns weíghted with ápples;  
Raín leáping dównward floóds through the wínter  
Thís sáme bálánce nóúrishes, brínghs forth 30  
Eách creáture on eárh with the breáth óf lífe;  
Ít steáls them awáy, búries them, hídes them,  
Sínks their begínnghs ín their last éndghs.  
And the creátor síts stíll thróugh all, abóve all,  
Gúídhg the réíns and contróllgh the whóle wórlđ, 35  
Íts kíng and its lórd, its sóurce and begínngh,  
Íts láw and íts júdge, its wísdóm and jústice.  
He ímpéls thínghs to móve, tó chánghgh of státe;  
He recálls them to hált, mákes stand what wánderghs.  
If hé díđ not recáll thése stráight-líne móthghs 40  
Ánd bénd them báck ínto curved órbits,  
Thínghs that are képt now ín stáble órder,  
Cút óff from their sóurce wóúld búrst at the seáms.  
Ánd thís ís Lóve cómmón to álł thínghs:  
Théy seék the embráce of their goál, thé Goód. 45  
Ín nó other wáy cóúld they be lástghg  
Únléss bý Lóve túrnghg them báckward  
They flow báck to the cáuse thát gáve them beíng.

## Prose 7

So do you see now what is the logical consequence of all that we have said?

I said: Tell me, what!

[2] She said: That absolutely every fortune is good. And how can that be? I said.

[3] She said: Concentrate. Since every fortune, be it delightful or calamitous, is handed down sometimes for the sake of rewarding or training the good, sometimes for the sake of punishing or correcting the unrighteous, then every fortune is good, since we have agreed that it is either just or advantageous.

[4, 5] I said: The argument is true, too true. And if I look to the Providence and to the Fate that you taught me about just a little while ago, it is a conclusion that is supported by steadfast fighting forces. But, if you don't mind, let's count it among those arguments that you established just a little while ago as unexpected

She said: Why?

[6] Because the everyday conversation of mortal men uses the expression, and uses it quite often, that some people have an evil fortune.

[7] She said: Do you want us then to enter the realm of the conversations of the common people so that we do not seem to have withdrawn too far from the usages of humanity?

I said: As it pleases you.

[8] So: you do think, don't you, that what is to someone's advantage is good?

I said: It is as you say.

[9] And the fortune that trains or corrects—is it to someone's advantage?

I said: I admit that.

And so it is good?

Well, of course it is.

[10] But this is perhaps the fortune of people who, standing their ground in virtue, wage war against calamities, or of those who turn aside from their vices and rapidly start down the road of virtue.

I said: I cannot deny it.

[11] But what about a delightful fortune, which is granted to the good as a reward—common people don't judge that to be an evil fortune, do they?

No, not at all; in fact, they think that it is, just as it is, the best fortune of all.

[12] And what about the fortune that remains which, because it is calamitous, represses the evil with a punishment that is just? The people don't think that that is a good fortune, do they!

[13] I said: No; they judge it rather to be the most desolate of all the fortunes that can be imagined.

[14] Watch out! In following the opinion of the people we may have achieved something *really* unexpected.

I said: What?

[15] She said: Because from these points that have been conceded it turns out that for these people, who are in possession of, or who are making progress toward, or who are just securing, virtue for themselves, every fortune is good whatever it is, while for those who remain unchanged in their unrighteousness every fortune is the very worst.

[16] I said: This is true, even if no one dares to agree with it.

[17–22] She said: And for this reason the wise man ought not to take it with annoyance whenever he is drawn into a struggle with Fortune, just as it is shameful for a strong man to take offense whenever the roar of the clash of battle is heard. For each of them the difficulty is itself opportunity: for the latter, for the prolongation of his glory; for the former, for the education of his wisdom. Indeed, it is from this that it is called virtue, the fact that, because it is supported by its own strength, it is not overcome by adversities. No; for all of you who stand your ground in your progress toward virtue have not come this far to dissipate yourselves in self-indulgences or to fade away in physical pleasures. Now with your minds you join harsh battle with every fortune, so that a depressing fortune may not overwhelm you nor a delightful one annihilate you. Seize the middle ground with steadfast fighting forces; whatever halts below it, or marches beyond it, has a contempt for happiness, but not a reward for labor, to show for it. For the fortune that you prefer to fashion for yourselves has been placed in your own hands; indeed, every fortune that seems calamitous *does* punish you, unless it trains you or corrects you.

Meter 7

Thé avéngíng són of Atreús for tén yeárs  
 Fought and lévéled Tróy to make réparáíon  
 Fór his bróthér's béd, for a wífe abdúcted—  
 Hé who lónged tó seé all the Greék fleet sèt sail,  
 5 Paíd the príce and boúght off the wínds in bloodshed,  
 Sloúghed his fáthér's skín, for his lúckless daúghter  
 Hé, as priést, máde cóvenant fróm her slít throat.  
 Ánd the lórd of Íthaca wépt for lóst friends—  
 Ín his vást cáve wíld Polyphémus sánk them  
 10 Deép in hís húge gút, lyíng át his léisure.  
 Áll the sámé hé paíd for his jóy in hót tears  
 Fróm his blíndéd fáce, driven nów to mádness.  
 Hérculés ís súnng for his toíls and lábors:  
 Hé it wás whó beát down the haúghty Céntaurs,  
 15 Toók as spoíls thé skín of the sávage líon,  
 Shót the swíft-wínged bírds with unérríng árróws,  
 Stóle the fruít áwáy from the wátchíng drágon  
 (Wíth a máss óf góld to weígh dówn his léft hand),  
 Léd on threé cháíns Cérberus óút of dárkness.  
 20 Só the stóry goés: conquered Díomédes,  
 Máde their hársh lórd foód for his sávage hórses;  
 Pút a tórch tó poíson and kílled the Hýdra;  
 Máde the rívéer gód Achelóus, shámefaced,  
 Plúnge his défórmed brów far belów the wáters;  
 25 Laíd Antaeús lów on the sánds of Líbya;  
 Kílled, to stíll thé wráth of Evánder, Cácus;  
 Thén the wíld boár's fróth drípped to stáín the shóuldérs  
 Soón to bé weíghed dówn by the glóbe of heáven.  
 Ón his néck únboúwed was his fínal lábor,  
 30 Heáven tó úphóld; his rewárd was heáven  
 Fór his fínal lábor, the príce and páyment.  
 Fórward, stróng men áll, where this greát exámple,  
 Whére thís hígh roáð leáds! Shóulder nów your búrden,  
 Nów withóút déláy, for the eárrh, once cónquered,  
 35 Gíves you the fíxed stars.

Book 5

Prose 1

So she concluded, and she was starting to turn the direction of her pleading toward the treatment and explanation of some other things.

[2, 3] But then I said: A proper encouragement to be sure, completely and absolutely worthy of your authority. But as to what you said previously about Providence, that it is a question bound up with many other questions—I know that by personal experience. That is to say, I'm asking you whether you think there is such a thing as chance at all and, tell me, what sort of thing do you think it is?

[4, 5] Then she said: I'm hurrying to make good the debt of my promise, and to open up for you the path by which you may be carried back to your fatherland. But these questions—even though they are quite useful to know, they are all the same a little off to one side of the path of what I had proposed. And it's reasonable for me to be afraid that you'll be exhausted on the side-tracks and won't be able to bear up for traveling the straight path through to its end.

[6, 7] I said: You must have absolutely no fear of that. For it will be like tranquil quiet for me to bring to mind the things in which I take the greatest delight. And at the same time, when every side of your argument stands fixed, its trustworthiness undoubted, I want there to be no doubt at all about what follows.

[8–10] Then she said: I'll humor you; and as she did so she began as follows. She said: If someone were to define chance as a result that is a product of random motion, without any interweaving of causes, I would state that chance is nothing at all; my judgment is that it is a word absolutely devoid of meaning, in the absence of any signification of any underlying reality. I mean, what place can be left for randomness, when there is a God who keeps all things in bounds, binding them into order? For that axiom is true, which none of the old philosophers ever spoke against: Nothing comes from nothing. (Granted, they laid this down as a sort of foundation for all of their theories about the natural world only in consideration of the subject material, not the active first principle.) But should something arise from no causes, it will seem to have arisen from nothing; but if this can't happen, then it is impossible that there be chance of the sort that we have just now defined.

[11] Well then! I said. Is there really nothing that can rightly be called chance or accident? Or is there

something that these words are appropriate for, even if it is hidden from the common herd?

[12] She said: It is in his *Physics* that my good Aristotle has defined it, in a brief demonstration that is very near to the truth.

I said: Tell me, in what way?

[13–19] She said: Whenever something is done for some one particular purpose, and something other than what was intended occurs, from whatever causes—this is called chance. For example: if someone plows the earth in order to cultivate a field, and finds a mass of buried gold. And so it is that this is actually believed to have happened accidentally, but it is not from nothing, because it has its own causes, and it is the unforeseen and unexpected confluence of these causes that seems to have engineered a chance occurrence. For if the cultivator of the field were not plowing the earth, and if the one who hid the money had not hidden it in that very place, the gold would not have been found. And so these are the causes of the accidental profit, which arose not from the intention of the doer but from intersecting and confluent causes. For neither the one who buried the gold nor the one who worked the field intended that this money be found but, as I've said, that the one dug where the other had buried—this is a coincidence and a confluence. We may therefore define chance as follows: In the realm of things done for some particular reason, it is an unexpected outcome, deriving from confluent causes. Further, the order that makes these causes coincident and confluent proceeds in an inescapable interweaving of causes; it descends from the source of Providence and arranges all things in their proper places and in their proper times.

#### Meter 1

Dówn from the crágs of the Párthian móúntains,  
where gálloping árchers

Sénd arrows shót in retreát ínto the ényemy's breást,  
Thére the Euphrátes and Tígris, twin rívers, are freéd  
from the sáme source,

Soón flowing séparate wáys, keéping their wátters  
apárt.

5 Shóúld they combíne and be súmmoned agáin into  
óne single cúrrént,

Shóúld what the wáves of each beár meét in con-  
flúence at ónce,

Shíps would collíde and the trúunks of the treés tórn  
loóse by the tórrént;

Wáves thus confóunded would bríng tángles of  
rándóm evénts.

Súch chance evénts and meánders are rúled by the  
lándscape, the órder

Óf the deep éddies themsélves, fálling, down-  
leáping, downhíll.

Chánce then that seéms to be given free réin, to bob  
úpward and dównward—

Ít has the bít in its móúth, ít too must rún on by láw.

#### Prose 2

[1,2] I said: I recognize this, and I concur that things are just as you say they are. But in this sequence of causes, so attached to one another—is there any freedom of our independent judgment? Or does the chain of fate tie together the very motions of human minds as well?

[3–7] She said: There is; in fact, there can be no rational nature without there being freedom of independent judgment in its possession. For a thing that is able by its own nature to employ reason has the discrimination by which it can tell things apart; consequently, it distinguishes between things that it must avoid and things that it must choose on its own. What it judges must be chosen, it seeks to gain; what it reckons must be avoided, it runs away from. For this reason, within the beings that have reason present within them, a freedom to want and not to want is present as well. However, it is my determination that this freedom is not the same in all of them. For substances that are ethereal and divine have at their disposal a penetrating discrimination, a will that suffers no decomposition, and a true power capable of effecting the things they have chosen.

[8–11] Now it is necessarily the case that human souls are indeed at their freest when they preserve themselves intact within the contemplation of the divine mind; but they are less free when they fall away toward bodies, and still less free when they are tied to limbs of earthly matter. At their furthest remove there

is slavery, when they have fallen away from the possession of the reason that belongs to them because they have surrendered themselves to vices. For once they have cast their eyes down from the light of the highest truth to the lower and shadowy realms, they are soon darkened over by the cloud of unknowing, they are caught in the whirlwind of destructive passions. By yielding to these passions and agreeing with them they help along the slavery that they have brought down upon themselves and, in a certain sense, they are the captives of their own liberty. Nevertheless, the gaze of Providence perceives these things, a gaze that from eternity looks out at all things in advance; it assigns to their merits each and every thing that has been predestined for them.

#### Meter 2

This is the s6ng of the h6ney-voiced H6mer:  
 Gl6rious Pho6bus, in p6re light sh6ning,  
 L6oks over 6ll things and listens to 6ll things.  
 Y6t he cann6t, in the d6m glow of s6nshine,  
 5 Pi6rce to the 6nnermost w6mb of the h6rd Earth,  
 6r to the h6dd6n d6pths of the 6cean.  
 B6t the cre6tor of he6ven's great circle—  
 Th6re is no m6ss 6f e6rth that withst6nds him,  
 6s he looks d6wn from ab6ve over 6ll things,  
 10 Ne6ther can n6ight and its bl6ck clouds obstr6ct him.  
 H6, in a s6ngle str6ke of his 6wn mind,  
 Se6s wh6t is, wh6t w6s and what will be.  
 Th6s you may c6ll him the 6ne and the tru6 sun—  
 H6s is the v6sion of 6verything s6lely.

#### Prose 3

Then I said: Now look here! Now I am confounded by a still more difficult doubt.

[2] She said: Tell me—what is that? Although I can already guess at the things that are the source of your confusion.

[3–6] I said: That God has foreknowledge of absolutely everything and that there is any freedom of independent judgment—these things seem to me to be set against each other, and to be at odds with each other, far too much. For if God sees all things in ad-

vance and cannot be mistaken in any way, that thing must necessarily happen that Providence foresees will happen. And for this reason, if Providence has foreknowledge from eternity not only of the actions of mortal men but of their deliberations and of their wills as well, then there would be no freedom of independent judgment. For there could exist no action, no will of any sort, other than what divine Providence, which does not know how to be mistaken, perceives beforehand. I mean, if such things could be forcibly turned aside in some other direction than they were foreseen to go, then there would now be no immovable foreknowledge of the future, but only indefinite opinion instead. And this I judge to be a wicked thing to believe about God.

[7–14] Nor do I approve of the line of argument by which some people believe they can untie the knot of this question. I refer to the people who deny that *this* is the reason that something will happen, that Providence sees in advance that it will be so. Rather to the contrary: Because something is going to be, it cannot escape the notice of divine Providence, and in this way the necessity falls to the other side. For they say that the things that are foreseen are not contingent by necessity; rather, the things that are going to be are necessarily foreseen. Ha! As if the contention were which is the cause of which—whether foreknowledge of future things is the cause of the necessity, or whether the necessity of future things is the cause of the foreseeing. *This* is what we are striving to demonstrate: Exactly how the order of causes is constituted is irrelevant—there is a necessary result of foreknown things, even if the foreknowledge does not seem to impose a necessity of resulting on future events. In fact, if someone is sitting, it is necessarily the case that the opinion that conjectures that he is sitting is true; and then again, from the other side, if it is a true opinion about someone that he is sitting, it is necessarily the case that he is sitting. Consequently, necessity is present in either case: in the latter, the necessity of the sitting; in the other, the necessity of the truth of the opinion. But it is not for *this* reason, that the opinion is true, that someone is sitting; rather, this opinion is true because the fact of a man's sitting preceded it. Thus, even though the cause of truth proceeds from

only one side, there is present all the same a common necessity on both sides. A similar line of reasoning is obvious concerning Providence and future events. For even if things are foreseen because they are going to happen, and they do not happen because they are foreseen, it is nevertheless the case that things to come are foreseen by God, or that things foreseen by God happen as they were foreseen to happen. This alone is sufficient to destroy the freedom of independent judgment.

[15–18] What's more, how utterly backwards it is to say that the outcome of temporal events is the cause of eternal knowledge! To judge that God foresees future things for this reason, that they are going to happen—what else is this but to think that things that happened at some point before are the cause of his most high Providence? In addition, just as when I know that something is, it is necessarily the case that that same thing be; similarly, when I know that something will be, it is necessarily the case that that same thing will be. And so it happens that the outcome of a foreseen event cannot be avoided. A last point. If someone were to think that something is otherwise than it is actually constituted—not only is that not knowledge, but it is a deceitful opinion, far removed from the truth of knowledge.

[19–24] Therefore, if something is going to happen in such a way that its outcome is not a definite and necessary thing, how could it happen that its occurrence be foreknown? For true knowledge admits no admixture of falsity; in just the same way, whatever has been thought by knowledge cannot be in any way other than it was thought to be. Furthermore, the reason why such knowledge has no share of falsehood is that each action is necessarily constituted in just the same way that knowledge grasps that it is constituted. Well then! Tell me, what is the way in which God has foreknowledge that these indefinite things will occur? I mean, if he determines that things will inevitably happen that could possibly not happen, then he is mistaken, and it is wicked not only to hold this opinion but to speak it out loud as well. On the other hand, if it is his judgment that these things will be just as they are, so that he recognizes that they can just as well happen as not happen—what sort of foreknowledge is this,

which grasps nothing as definite, nothing as stable? Or in what way is this different from that absurd prophecy of Tiresias in Horace?

Whatever I say either will be or won't be.

[26] And really, how would divine Providence be superior to mere opinion if, just as mortals do, it makes judgments about indefinite things that have indefinite outcomes?

[27–32] And yet, if within that source of all things, that most definite source, there can be nothing that is indefinite, then there is a definite outcome of those things which he, by his unshakable foreknowledge, knows will be. So for this reason there is no freedom for human resolutions or for human actions: The divine mind that sees all things in advance without the miscalculation of falsity binds them and ties them all together for one and only one result. And as soon as this is accepted, it is clear what a great downfall of human affairs follows as its logical consequence. I mean, rewards and punishments are set before good and evil people in vain—no free and voluntary motion of their minds has deserved them. That the righteous are rewarded and the unrighteous are punished, as is now judged to be perfectly just—this will seem to be the most perfectly unjust thing of all, for it would not be an individual will that directs them, but the definite necessity of the future that forces them, to the one or the other. Consequently, both virtues and vices would be nothing; in their place would be a jumbled and indiscriminate confusion of all merits. Nothing more wicked can be imagined than this: Since that entire order of things is led out from Providence and since there is nothing permitted to mortal resolution, what happens is that our vices too are to be referred to the creator of all good things.

[33–36] Therefore: There is no reason to hope for something or to pray for deliverance; for what would a person hope for or even pray to be delivered from if an unbendable sequence weaves together all the things that could be chosen? Therefore: That one and only avenue of exchange between human beings and God will be taken away, the avenue of hope and prayer for deliverance; provided, of course, that for the price

of our rightful humility we deserve the return of divine grace, which is beyond price. This is the only way by which human beings seem to be able to speak with God—by the act of supplication—and to be joined to that inapproachable light even before they succeed in attaining it. Once the necessity of future events is accepted, if these hopes and prayers are then believed to have no force, what will there be by which we can be woven together with and cling to that most high ruler of all things? And so it is, just as you were singing a little while ago, that it will necessarily be the case that the human race, separated and “cut off from its source, will burst at the seams.”

## Meter 3

- Whát díscordant caúse tóire into píeces  
 Áll the wórl'd's cóncord? Whát gód has decreéd  
 Fór thése twó trúths súch bitter wárfare?  
 Eách stánding its gróund séparate and équal,  
 5 Bút dráwing the líne at jóining togéther.  
 Ór cóuld ít bé thére is no díscord—  
 Thát défnite trúths ever clíng each to éach—  
 Bút mínd, búried bý body's blíndness,  
 Éxcépt by the fíre of líght deep-concéaled,  
 10 Cánnót see the wórl'd's bónds, microscópic?  
 Bút whý does it búrn with súch a great lóve  
 To díscóver the trúth, trúth's hídden sígnposts?  
 Does ít knów ít knóws what ít frétfúly seéks?  
 Whó strúggles to knów thát whích he dóes knów?  
 15 Bút ít he knóws nó, whý lóok for blínd thínghs?  
 Whát ígnórant mán cóuld máke any chóice?  
 Whó hás thé stréngth tó chásé the unknówn?  
 Whére wóuld he fínd ít? Whó then cóuld seé ít,  
 Its fórm thus díscóvered, ít unenlíghtened?  
 20 Ór, whén ít behéld the dépths of dívíné mínd,  
 Díd ít knów thése trúths, thé whóle and ít párts?  
 Now hídden in dárk clóuds, límbs of the bódy,  
 Ít dóes nó forgét sélf absolútely,  
 Ánd lóses the párts bút clíngs to the whóle?  
 25 Thús, whóévr seárches for trúé thínghs  
 Hás néither cóndítion: for he dóes nó knów,  
 Nór does he nó knów, áll thínghs complétely.  
 With an éye on the whóle, képt and remémbered,  
 Hé pónders anéw the dépths he ónce gázed on,

Thát he may ádd to párts that were képt safe  
 Párts ónce forgóttén.

30

## Prose 4

[1–6] Then she said: This is an old complaint about Providence. It was a topic passionately discussed by Cicero when he broke divination into its constituent parts; you pursued it yourself over quite a long period of time and at great length. However, up until now it has been in no way adequately dealt with by any one of you in a painstaking and rigorous way. Here is the cause of all this darkness: The motion of human rational argument cannot set itself next to the simplicity of divine foreknowledge. If this could in any way be imagined, there would then be absolutely no doubt about it remaining. I shall try at the end to make this clear to you and explain it to you, provided that I can first get the heft of the things that have got you upset. I want to know why you hold that one line of reasoning offered by those who would solve this problem is less than productive—the line of reasoning that holds that freedom of independent judgment is not obstructed by foreknowledge, because it thinks that foreknowledge is not a cause of necessity for future events. You aren't drawing your argument about the necessity of future things from any other source, are you, than that things that are foreseen cannot *not* happen? Therefore: If foreknowledge places no necessity upon future events—a thing that you yourself admitted a little while ago—what reason is there for the voluntary outcomes of events to be forced toward a definite result?

[7, 8] And further, just for the sake of argument, so you can see what the logical consequence is, let us claim that there is no foreknowledge. It isn't the case then, is it, as far as this situation is concerned, that such things as come from independent judgment are forced toward necessity?

Hardly.

[9–14] Next, let us claim that there is foreknowledge, but that it binds no necessity on events; there will remain unchanged, I think, that same freedom of the will, whole and absolute. But foreknowledge, you will say, even if there is no necessity of their resulting

for future things, is nevertheless a sign that such things are necessarily going to occur. And so it is in this way that it would be agreed that the outcomes of future things are necessary, even if there is no cognition beforehand; the point being that every sign merely *shows* what is, but is not *productive* of what it points to. For this reason, what would have to be shown first is that there is no contingency except through necessity, so that it may be manifest that foreknowledge is a sign of this necessity. Otherwise, if there were no such necessity, it could not be a sign of an event that does not exist. However, it is already agreed that a proof that rests upon an unshakable line of argument must be drawn neither from signs nor from arguments that are sought in what is external to it, but rather from causes that are appropriate and necessary. But how can it happen that those things do not come to pass that are foreseen as things that are going to be? As if we were to believe that what Providence foreknows as things that are going to be are not going to happen! As if we were to believe this instead, that, granted that they do happen, they nevertheless had by their own nature no necessity that they happen!

[15, 16] Now this objection you will be able to weigh easily in the balance, from this consideration. There are in fact many things that we gaze upon while they are happening, things subject to our eyes. For example, the things that charioteers are seen to do as they guide their teams and give them rein, and all the other things of this sort. Surely it is not the case here, is it, that any necessity compels any of these things to happen as they do!

Hardly; if all these were forced actions that were set into motion, the effect of the driver's skill would be all in vain.

[17–20] Therefore: The things that lack the necessity of their existence while they are happening are things which, before they happen, are going to exist without necessity. For this reason there are certain things that will happen whose outcome is divorced from all necessity. In fact, I think that no one would say this, that things that are now happening were not about to result before they happened? Consequently, these things, even if there were cognition beforehand, have free outcomes. For knowledge of present events

brings in with it no necessity to the things that are happening; and in just the same way foreknowledge of future events brings in no necessity to the things that are going to occur.

[21–25] But, you say, this is itself a source of doubt: *Can* there be any foreknowledge of those events that do not have necessary outcomes? They do indeed seem to be discordant: you think that if things are foreseen then necessity is the logical consequence; you think that there can in no way be foreknowledge if necessity is absent; you think that nothing can be grasped by knowledge unless it is a definite thing. For if things that are characterized by indefinite outcomes are foreseen as if they were definite, that would be the darkness of opinion and not the truth of knowledge; for you believe that it is opposed to the infallibility of knowledge to think of a thing in some way other than it is constituted. The cause of this miscalculation is that it judges that all the things that a person knows are perceived only in accordance with the force and nature of the things which are known themselves. But it is completely the opposite. Everything that is perceived is grasped not according to its own force but rather according to the capability of those who perceive it.

[26–30] To make this clear with a brief example: Vision and touch, each in its distinct way, recognize the same three-dimensionality of a body. The former, at a distance, remaining itself unmoved, gazes upon the whole thing all at once by casting its rays; the latter, adhering to its curvature and joined to it, set in motion on all sides of the surface itself, grasps its three-dimensionality part by part. Similarly, sense perception, imagination, reason, and understanding, each in its distinct way, view the same human being. For sense perception judges the shape as it has been constituted in its subject material, while imagination judges the shape alone, without its material; reason transcends this as well and from its universal point of view weighs in the balance that very appearance that is present in all individuals. And the eye of understanding exists as something higher yet; for it has passed beyond what is encompassed by universality and views the one simple form itself in the pure vision of the mind.

[31–36] In all of this, here is the one point that must be considered in particular: Namely, that the higher power of comprehension embraces the lower, but in no way does the lower rise to the level of the higher. For sense perception has no power beyond what is material; imagination does not view universal appearances; reason does not grasp the simple form. Understanding, however, looking down as it were from on high, grasps the form and then judges separately the things that are beneath it, all of them; but it does so in the way in which it comprehends the form itself, which could not be known to any of the other powers. For it perceives reason's universal and imagination's shape and sense perception's material, but not by using reason or imagination or the senses but by the characteristic single stroke of mind, formally, if I may use the word, seeing all things in advance. And reason similarly: When it views something universal, it comprehends the things that can be perceived by imagination and the senses, but not by using imagination or the senses. This is reason, and it defines the universal of its own conception this way: A human being is a two-legged, rational animal. And although this is a universal knowledge, there is no one who is unaware that its object is a thing of the imagination and a thing of sense perception as well, yet a thing that this knowledge looks at not by imagination and not by sense but in its state of rational conception.

[37–39] And imagination similarly: Even if it has taken from the senses the starting point of seeing and forming shapes, nevertheless it is in the absence of sense that it casts its gaze over each and every thing of the senses by a rationale of judgment that is not of the senses but of the imagination. So do you see how in perception all things use their own capability rather than the capability of the things that are perceived? And not without cause: For since every judgment exists as an act of the one who judges, it is necessarily the case that all who judge bring their work to completion by their own true powers, and not by a power outside of themselves.

Meter 4

Ónce, óld Stóic philósophý  
Brougħt forħ ríddling, obscúre old mén:

Séense pércéptions and ímagés,  
Théy bélieved, were ímpréssed on mínds  
Fróm thé oútermost skín of thínghs. 5  
Á swíft stýlus does múch the sáme,  
Ón á páge's smooth súrface cálm,  
Ímprínting létters now deép-ímpréssed  
Whére thére wére no such síghs befóre.  
Bút íf mínd with íts próper stréngth, 10  
Próper mótions, unfólds no trúths—  
Líes stíll ín íts passívítý,  
Júst súbjéct to the síghs of thínghs,  
To répródúce, as a mírror doés,  
The émpítý ímage of wórlđly thínghs— 15  
Whénce thís stréngth in the húman mínd?  
Whénce thís knówledge that seés all thínghs?  
What fórcé seés séparate thínghs so cleár?  
What fórcé séparates whát is knówn?  
Whát fórcé gáthers the séparate párts! 20  
Whát fórcé choóses the twófold páth,  
Thrúst íts heáđ in the híghest réalms,  
Goés báck dówn to the dépths belów,  
Thén rétúrns to ítsélf íts sélf,  
Thús tó cóntradíct fálse with trúe? 25  
Seé á fár more prodúctive cáuse,  
Móre fár-reáching, more pówerfúl,  
Thán thát cáuse whích, as máttér doés,  
Áccépts pássívely síghs ímpréssed.  
Nónetheléss, there is pássíve fórcé 30  
Whích précédes, whích excíteés and stírs  
Mínd's ówn stréngth in the bódy's lífe,  
Ás whén líght bátters át the éyes,  
Ór whén voíces ring ín the éárs.  
Thén thé stréngth of the mínd, aroúsed, 35  
Dráws áppeárances képt wíthín,  
Cálléd tó mótions as líke to líke,  
Póínts thém tó these extérnal síghs,  
Thús tó míngle with ímages  
Thóse trúe fórms that were hóused wíthín. 40

Prose 5

[1–4] When physical objects are perceived by the senses—even though their qualities, presented from the outside, exert an influence on the instruments of sense perception, even though the strength of the active

mind is preceded by the passivity of the body, which calls forth an act of the mind within the body and arouses the forms that have hitherto been dormant within—when, as I was saying, physical objects are perceived by the senses, if it is the case that the mind is not in passivity impressed by a sign, but by its own strength judges the passivity to which the body is subject, well then! To an even greater extent do the things that are divorced from all of the external influences exerted on bodies set the action of their own minds free in their acts of judgment, not pursuing the things presented to them externally. And so it is, according to this line of reasoning, that multiple modes of perception have been allotted to the various substances, different among themselves. For sense and sense alone, deprived of all other modes of perception, has been allotted to animate creatures without self-motion (to the shellfish of the sea, for example, and to other such things as cling to rocks); while imagination is allotted to beasts with self-motion, who seem to have within them already some desire for what must be avoided and what must be chosen. On the other hand, reason is the property of the human race only, just as understanding alone is the property of the divine; and so it is that that particular way of knowing excels all the others which, by its own nature, perceives not only what is properly subject to it, but the subjects of all the other ways of knowing as well.

[5–7] Well then! What if sense and imagination were to speak against rational argument, and say that the universal which reason thinks it gazes upon is nothing at all? After all, they could say that what can be perceived by sense or imagination cannot be universal; consequently, either reason’s judgment is true and nothing that can be perceived by sense truly exists; or, since sense and imagination are well aware that there are many things subject to them, reason’s conception is a thing devoid of meaning, since reason contemplates a particular thing, one that can be perceived by sense, as though it were some sort of universal. Now let reason answer these arguments and counter them; let it say that it does indeed look upon what can be perceived by sense and imagination, but in accordance with the reason which is directed toward the universal, while they cannot aim at the mode of perception that is directed toward the

universal; let it argue that the knowledge possessed by sense and imagination cannot go beyond the bounds of the shapes of physical bodies, whereas one should rather put one’s trust in a stronger and more powerful judgment for the perception of what truly exists. So if there were to be a dispute along these lines, oughtn’t we, who have within us the force of reason as well as of imagination and sense perception, give our approval rather to the case presented by reason, you and I?

[8–12] The situation is similar with human reason: It does not think that divine intelligence gazes upon future things in any other way than it perceives them itself. For your discourse is as follows: If there are some things that are not seen to have definite and necessary outcomes, then there can be no definite foreknowledge of them as outcomes. Consequently, there is *no* foreknowledge of these events; were we to believe that there is foreknowledge in these things as well, there will then be nothing that does not come to pass through necessity. And yet, consequently, were we able to possess the judgment of the divine mind in just the same way as we are partakers of reason, then we would think it most just that human reason surrender to the divine mind in just the same way that we judged that imagination and sense perception ought to yield to reason. And for this reason let us raise ourselves up, if we can, into the head of that highest intelligence, for it is in that place that reason will see what it cannot gaze upon within itself, and that is this: in just what way a fixed and definite foreknowledge can still see even those things that do not have definite outcomes, and how this is not mere conjecture but the simplicity of the highest knowledge instead, knowledge bounded by no limits.

#### Meter 5

Ánimate béings in hów many shápes and forms páss  
acróss the lándscape!  
Sóme háve bódiés strecthed and elóngated, sweéping  
óut their dúst-trails;  
Dríven by stróng désíre they léngthen out óne un-  
bróken fúrrów.  
Óthers, capríciús, take wíng in their weightlessness,  
beáting wínd and témpést,

- 5 Skimming expanses of limitless atmosphere in fluid  
 exaltation.  
 Others delight to set foot on the solid earth, striding  
 through the green fields,  
 Into the greenwood and under its canopy, with a firm  
 impression.  
 Though you may witness in these many shapes and  
 forms nothing but discordance,  
 There is the downcast countenance, capable of weigh-  
 ing down dull senses.
- 10 Nót so the race of mortal men, who can lift their  
 upraised heads high,  
 Stand with body upright and imponderous, look to  
 earth below them.  
 Be not a creature of earth! Be not ignorant! The pos-  
 ture thus reminds you:  
 You who reach for the heights with your upturned gaze,  
 pointing face to heaven,  
 You must lift spirit as well to such altitude—mind must  
 not be weighed down,
- 15 Múst nót sink down below where the body is, raised to  
 higher stature.

Prose 6

[1–3] Therefore: Since, as has been shown just a little while ago, everything that is known is perceived not in accordance with its own nature but rather the nature of those who grasp it—let us now look closely, as far as is allowed, at what is the condition of the divine substance, so that we may be able to recognize what its knowledge is as well. Therefore: It is the common judgment of all who live in accordance with reason that God is eternal. Therefore, let us look at what eternity is, for this will make obvious to us the divine nature and the divine knowledge at one and the same time.

[4–8] Therefore: Eternity is a possession of life, a possession simultaneously entire and perfect, which has no end. This becomes clear in a more transparent way from a comparison with temporal things. For whatever exists in time proceeds as a present thing from the things that have happened into the things that are going to happen, and there is nothing that has been established in time that is able to embrace the entire space of its own life at one and the same time.

Instead, it does not yet gain what is tomorrow's, but has already lost what is yesterday's; furthermore, within the life that is today's, none of you lives to any greater extent than in that swift and passing moment. Therefore: That which endures the condition of time—even granted that, as Aristotle has judged to be true about the world, it did not begin to exist at any time, nor would it cease to exist, and its life would be extended to the infinity of time—it is, for all that, not the sort of thing that can rightly be believed to be eternal. For it does not grasp and embrace the entire extent of its life, even though it is infinite, simultaneously; rather, it does not yet have the future things, and the things that have been completed it has no longer. Therefore: That which grasps and possesses the entire fullness of a life that has no end at one and the same time (nothing that is to come being absent to it, nothing of what has passed having flowed away from it) is rightly held to be eternal. Further, it is necessary both that, as master of itself, it always be present to itself as a present thing and that it always have the infinity of swift time as present.

[9–14] There are certain people who think, when they hear that it was Plato's opinion that the world neither had a beginning in time nor would it ever disappear, that in this way the created world is coeternal with its creator. But from these considerations, they do not think correctly. For it is one thing to be drawn out through a life that has no end (this is what Plato assigned to the world), and quite another to have embraced the entire presentness of a life which has no end at one and the same time (this is what perfectly clearly is appropriate to the divine mind). Further, God ought not to be seen as more ancient and glorious than created things by the measurement of time, but rather by the distinctive character of his own simple nature. For that infinite motion of temporal things imitates this present-moment condition of motionless life. Since the former cannot represent or equal the latter, it falls away from motionlessness into motion and devolves from the simplicity of the present into the infinite quantity of what is to come and what has passed; and since it is not able to possess the entire fullness of its own life at one and the same time, then, for this very reason, because it never ceases to be (in some way or other) that which it cannot satisfy or express, it

seems to rival it to some small degree by binding itself to any sort of presentness it can of this minuscule and swiftly-passing moment. Because this presentness carries within itself a sort of image of that other, stable present, it provides *this* to whatever things it happens to come in contact with: that is, that they are seen to be. But, because such a thing could not be stable, it started rapidly down the infinite road of time and it is in this way that it happened that it protracted its life through motion, the life whose fullness it was not able to embrace by remaining unchanged. Consequently, if we want to impose on things names that are worthy of them, let us follow Plato and say that God is eternal, but that the world is perpetual.

[15–24] Therefore: Since every judgment grasps the things that are subject to it in accordance with its own nature, and since God has an ever-eternal and ever-present-moment condition, his knowledge as well has passed beyond all the motion of time and is stable in the simplicity of its own present; it embraces the infinite reaches of what has passed and what is to come and, in its own simple perception, it looks at all things as if they are being carried out *now*. And so, should you want to ponder the foresight by which God distinguishes all things, you will more accurately determine that it is not a foreknowledge as of something that is to come, but rather a knowledge of a never-failing present. From these considerations, it is not named Providence (foresight) but Providence (looking out), because, established far from the bottommost things, it looks out at all things as if from some lofty head of things. Well then! Do you demand that the things that the light of the divine eye passes over come about as necessary things, when not even human beings cause the things that they see to be as necessary things? Why would you? Surely your gaze does not add any necessity to those things that you perceive as present? Hardly. And yet, if there is any worthy comparison between the divine present and the human present—just as you humans see certain individual things in this time-bounded present of yours, he perceives all things in his own eternal present. And it is for this reason that this divine foreknowledge does not change the nature and the distinctive character of things; it looks at such things as are present to it just as they will eventually come to pass in time as future

things. Nor does it confuse its judgments; rather, with the single gaze of its own mind, it distinguishes both what will happen of necessity as well as what will happen, but not of necessity. Similarly, when you mortals see in the same way both a man walking upon the earth and the sun rising in the heavens, although each of these two has been observed at one and the same time, nevertheless you tell them apart and judge that the former is voluntary and the latter is necessary. Therefore: The divine gaze, by discerning all things in this way, does not at all confuse the quality of the things which are, to be sure, present to it but which, in respect of their condition in time, are going to come to pass. And so it happens that this is not mere opinion but rather perception supported by truth, that the same thing which it knows will arise it does not fail to know lacks the necessity of coming into being.

[25–32] Now if you should say at this point that what God sees will happen cannot *not* happen, and that what cannot not happen is contingent by necessity, and if you bind me tight to this word “necessity,” then I will admit that it is indeed a thing of the most steadfast truth, but one that scarcely anyone but a contemplator of the divine has approached. For I shall answer that the same future event seems to be necessary when it is referred to divine knowledge, but completely and absolutely free when weighed in the balance of its own nature. There are in fact two necessities: One is simple (for example, the fact that all human beings are mortal); the other is conditional (as when it is necessary that a man is walking if you know that he *is* walking). For whatever anyone knows cannot exist in any other way than it is known to exist, but this condition does not at all draw along with it that other, simple necessity. For it is not the thing’s own nature that makes this necessity but only the addition of condition; for no necessity compels a man to move forward who is taking a step voluntarily, even though it is a necessary thing that he move forward at the point at which he takes a step. Therefore, it is in just this way that it is necessary that a thing exists if Providence sees it as a present thing, even if it has no necessity in its nature. And yet, God views as present those future things that come to pass from the freedom of independent judgment. Therefore: These things, when referred to the divine gaze, come about as necessary

things, because of the condition of divine knowledge; but when looked at in and of themselves they do not cease from the absolute freedom of their natures. Therefore: Beyond any doubt, all the things that God foreknows as future things will come into being, but certain of these things proceed from free and independent judgment; although they do happen, nevertheless they do not lose by their existing their own proper nature, by virtue of which they could have *not* happened before they did come into being.

[33–36] Well then! Does it make a difference that they are not necessary when, because of the condition of divine knowledge, what is in all respects a facsimile of necessity will happen? Yes it does, and in this way. The examples that I proposed just a little while ago, the rising sun and the man taking a step: while they happen, they cannot *not* happen; nevertheless, it was necessary even before it happened that one of them come into existence, but the other one not at all. So too the things that God possesses as present: They will beyond any doubt exist, but one descends from the necessity of things while another descends from the power of those who do it. Therefore, it is not at all improper that we said that these things are necessary if they are referred to divine knowledge, but divorced from the meshes of necessity if they are looked at in and of themselves. Similarly, everything that is obvious to the senses is universal if you refer it to reason, but particular if you look to the things themselves.

[37–43] But, you will say, if it has been placed within my power to change my intention, then I shall gut Providence, since, perhaps, I shall have changed the things that it has foreknowledge of. I shall answer that yes, you can alter the course of your intention; however, since the present truth of Providence observes that you can do so and whether you will do so and to what end you will redirect it, you cannot avoid divine foreknowledge, just as you cannot escape the gaze of its present eye even though you redirect yourself by your free will toward actions of different sorts.

Well then! you will say; will divine knowledge be changed by my arrangements, with the result that, when I wish for now this thing, now that, divine knowledge seems to switch back and forth the vicissitudes of its foreknowing? Hardly. For the divine gaze runs on ahead of every thing that will come to pass and twists it back and calls it back to the present of its own proper perception; it does not, as you reckon it, switch back and forth in an alternation of a foreknowledge of now this thing, now another; rather, remaining stable, it anticipates and embraces your changes in its single stroke. It is not from the coming to pass of future events but rather from his own proper simplicity that God has been allotted this present grasping and seeing of all things. And from this also comes an answer to the problem you had posed just a little while ago, that it is an unworthy thing that our future actions be said to provide a cause for the foreknowledge of God. For such is the force of this knowledge, embracing all things by its present-moment knowledge, that it has itself established the status of all things, while it owes nothing to things that are subsequent to it.

[44–48] And since this is the way things are, this remains unchanged for mortals: an inviolate freedom of independent judgment. Laws are not unjust, and they assign rewards and punishments to wills that are free of every necessity. God also remains unchanged, looking down from on high with foreknowledge of all things; the ever-present eternity of his vision keeps pace with the future qualities of our actions, dispensing rewards to good people and punishments to the bad. Nor are hopes and prayers placed in God in vain; they cannot help but be effective, provided that they are blameless. Therefore, all of you: Avoid vices, cherish virtues; raise up your minds to blameless hopes; extend your humble prayers into the lofty heights. Unless you want to hide the truth, there is a great necessity imposed upon you—the necessity of righteousness, since you act before the eyes of a judge who beholds all things.

## 10. Contra Eutychen

### Book 1

Hence, if “person” is [found] only in substances, and [only] in rational ones [at that], and [if] every nature is a substance and is not found in universals but rather in individuals, [then] the definition of “person” has been found: *an individual substance of a rational nature*. Now by this definition we have determined what the Greeks call ὑπόστασις.

For the name ‘person’ seems to have been taken from elsewhere, namely from the masks<sup>1</sup> that represent the men portrayed in comedies and tragedies. Now ‘person’ is derived from ‘*personare*,’ with a circumflex on the penultimate [syllable].<sup>2</sup> If the antepenult has an acute [accent],<sup>3</sup> [the word] will appear quite clearly [to be] derived from *sonus* [—that is, from ‘sound’]. It [comes] from ‘sound’ because necessarily a greater sound rolls around [in it] because of [its] concavity. The Greeks also call these masks πρόσωπα<sup>4</sup> because they are put on the face and conceal the expression from the eyes [of the viewers]: παρὰ τοῦ πρόσ

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1. ‘*Persona*’ means both “mask” and “person,” as is clear in the following explanation.
2. Latin does not have a circumflex. Boethius simply means: with the accent on the penultimate—*personāre*. (To make the point, I explicitly wrote in an accent there, although Latin would do no such thing.)
3. Again, Latin does not distinguish kinds of accent. All Boethius means is: if the accent is put on the antepenult, as for instance in the first person singular *pérsono* (again, writing an accent in explicitly). This makes it clear that the second syllable is short (if it were long, then the rules of Latin accentuation would require the accent to go there), and so that the word comes etymologically from *sonus* with a short ‘o.’
4. πρόσωπα: Literally, “before the eyes,” as Boethius goes on to explain.

ῶπας τίθεσθαι. But, because the stage-players, when they put on [their] masks, represented the individual men portrayed in the tragedy or in the comedy, as has been said—that is, Hecuba or Medea or Simon or Chremes—therefore other men too, who would be certainly recognized by their form, the Latins called ‘person’ and the Greeks πρόσωπα.

But [the Greeks], much the more clearly, called the individual subsistence of a rational nature by the name ὑπόστασις, while we [Latins], through our poverty of meaningful words, have kept to a metaphorical nomenclature and call ‘person’ what they call ὑπόστασις. But Greece, richer in words, calls the individual subsistence a ὑπόστασις.

To use the Greek language in matters that were [first] treated in Greek, and [then] transferred in Latin translation: αἱ οὐσίαι ἐν μὲν τοῖς καθόλου εἶναι δυνατόν· ἐν δὲ τοῖς ἀτόμοις καὶ κατὰ μέρος μόνοις ὑφίστανται. That is, essences can indeed be in universals, but they “substand” only in individuals and particulars. For the understanding of universal things is taken from particulars. Hence, since these subsistences are indeed in universals, but take on substance in particulars, [the Greeks] rightfully called ὑποστάσεις the subsistences substanding particularly. For to one who looks carefully and with subtlety, subsistence and substance will not seem to be the same.

For what the Greeks call οὐσίωσις or οὐσιῶσθαι, that we call “subsistence” or “to subsist.” But what they call ὑπόστασις or ὑφίστασθαι, that we translate as “substance” or “to substand.” For that “subsists” which does not need accidents in order to be able to be. But that “substands” which furnishes a certain subject to other accidents, so that they may be. For it “stands under” them, as long as it is a subject for accidents. Hence genera and species only subsist. For accidents do not befall genera or species. But individuals not only subsist, they also substand. For neither do they need accidents in order to be. For they are already informed by their properties and specific differences, and provide to accidents

the opportunity to be—that is to say, as long as they are subjects.

Hence, εἶναι and οὐσιῶσθαι are understood as ‘to be’ and ‘to subsist,’ while ὑφίστασθαι [is understood] as ‘to substand.’ For, as Marcus Tullius [Cicero] says in jest,<sup>5</sup> Greece is not in want of words, and has names to correspond one for one with ‘essence,’ ‘subsistence,’ ‘substance,’ [and] ‘person,’ calling essence οὐσία, subsistence οὐσιώσις, substance ὑπόστασις, [and] person πρόσωπον.

5. Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 2.15.35.

Now the Greeks call individual substances ὑποστάσεις<sup>6</sup> because they are under the rest and are underpinnings and subjects for certain (so to speak) “accidents.” Hence we too call “substances”—as it were, “underpinnings”—what they call ὑποστάσεις. And since they call the same substances πρόσωπα, we too can call [them] “persons.” Therefore, οὐσία is the same as essence, οὐσιώσις the same as subsistence, ὑπόστασις the same as substance, [and] πρόσωπον the same as person.

6. The etymology of ὑπόστασις is from “to stand under,” as is the etymology of ‘substance.’

## 11. On the Trinity

### Book 1

The judgment of this [Christian religion] about the unity of the Trinity is: “The Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God. Therefore, Father, Son, Holy Spirit are one, not three gods.” The reason for this conjoining is lack of difference.<sup>1</sup> For difference follows on those who either augment or diminish [the persons of the Trinity], such as the Arians who, varying the Trinity through degrees of merits, tear [it] apart and split [it] into a plurality.

For the principle of plurality is otherness. Neither can it be understood what plurality is without otherness. Now of three things, or however many, there exists a diversity in genus, in species, and in number. For in however many ways ‘the same’ is said, in that many

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1. Lack of difference: *indifferentia*. The term will have a distinguished future in the twelfth century

ways ‘diverse’ is said too. Now ‘the same’ is said in three ways: (a) either by genus, as a man is the same as a horse, because there is the same genus for them, to wit, animal; (b) or by species, as Cato is the same as Cicero, because he is the same species, to wit, man; (c) or by number, as Tully and Cicero, because he is one in number. Hence ‘diverse’ is also said either by genus or by species or by number. Now it is the variety of accidents that makes for difference in number. For three men are distinguished not by genus or species, but by their accidents. If by the mind we separate all their accidents from them, nevertheless *place* is diverse for each of them, and we can in no way suppose that it is one. For two bodies will not occupy one place, which is an accident. And therefore they are several in number, because they are made several by their accidents.

Let us then begin, and investigate each point insofar as it can be understood and grasped. For as, it seems, [was] most well said,<sup>2</sup> it is the learned man’s job

2. Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 5.7.19.

to try to adopt a belief about each thing that conforms to the way it is.

Now there are three parts of speculative [science]: (a) *Natural* [science, which is] non-abstract, ἀνυπεξ-αίρετος<sup>3</sup> [and] in motion.<sup>4</sup> For it considers bodies' forms together with matter, [forms] that cannot be actually separated from bodies. These bodies are in motion. For example, when earth is borne downwards and fire upwards, the form conjoined to the matter has the motion too. (b) *Mathematics*, [which is] non-abstract *without* motion. For it examines bodies' forms without matter, and therefore without motion. Since these forms are in matter, they cannot be separated from [bodies].<sup>5</sup> (c) *Theological* [science, which is] without motion, abstract and separable. For God's substance lacks both matter and motion.

Therefore, with [topics] in natural [science], one will have to proceed in a rational manner, with mathematics in a disciplined manner, with divine [topics] in an intellectual manner,<sup>6</sup> and not be drawn away to the products of imagination but rather gaze upon the very form that is truly a form and not an image, and that is being itself and that from which being comes.

For every being is from form. For a "statue" is not so called because of the bronze that is its matter, but because of the form by which the likeness of an animal is impressed on the bronze. [And] the "bronze" itself is so called not because of earth, which is its matter, but because of the configuration of bronze. "Earth" itself is also so called not because of ἄπειρον

ἄλην,<sup>7</sup> but because of dryness and heaviness, which are forms. Thus nothing is said to be because of matter, but because of its proper form.

But the divine substance is a form without matter, and therefore one. And it is what it is. For other things are *not* what they are.<sup>8</sup> For each thing has its being from the [things] of which it is [made up] (that is, from its parts) and is "this *and* that" (that is, its parts joined together), but not "this" or "that" taken singly. For example, since earthly man consists of soul and body, he is "body *and* soul," not either the body or the soul alone. Therefore, he is not what he is. But what is not "this and that," but is only "this," is truly what it is. And it is most beautiful, and strongest, because it depends on nothing.

Therefore, that is truly one in which there is no number, in which there is nothing besides what it is. Neither can it be a subject. For it is a form, and forms cannot be subjects. When another form, like humanity, is a subject for accidents, it does not take on accidents insofar as it is, but insofar as matter is subjected to it. For, as long as matter, subject to humanity, takes on any accident, humanity itself *appears* to take it on. But a form that is without matter cannot be a subject, and cannot be in matter. For it would not be a form but an "image." From the forms that are outside matter come the forms that are in matter and make a body. We misuse the others, which are in bodies, when we call them "forms" while they are images. For they are made like those that are not constituted in matter.

Therefore, in him there is no diversity, no plurality [arising] from diversity, no multitude from accidents, and so no number.

3. That is, inseparable.

4. That is, its *objects* are non-abstract, inseparable (from matter) and in motion. So too for (b) and (c) below.

5. The idea is that, like physics (= natural science), mathematics deals with forms in matter and in motion. But it does not take account of the matter or the motion.

6. Rational, disciplined, intellectual: *rationabiliter, disciplinaliter, intellectualiter*. Commentators have had a grand time explaining what Boethius meant here, particularly about mathematics. See, for example, Thomas

Aquinas, *The Division and Method of the Sciences: Questions V and VI of His Commentary on the "De Trinitate" of Boethius*, tr. Armand Maurer, 4th rev. ed., (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1986), q. 6, a. 1.

7. ἄπειρον ἄλην: 'unqualified matter.'

8. What they are: *id quod sunt*. One would have expected the plural pronoun '*ea quae sunt*.'

# Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, Late Fifth or Early Sixth Century

According to Acts 17, Saint Paul proclaimed the resurrection of Jesus in Athens and was invited by the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers to address them at the Areopagus. Most of Paul's audience was unreceptive, but he did make a few converts, including, we are told, Dionysius the Areopagite. Some time in the late fifth or early sixth century, texts purporting to have been written by this first-century convert appeared. Their writer claims to have been taught by Paul and addresses some of his writings to apostles (such as John) or the immediate followers of apostles (such as Timothy). In one place he claims to have attended the Virgin Mary's funeral—or, as the author puts it in his characteristically exuberant style, "the depositing of the Life-springing and God-receptive body"—with the apostle Peter and James, the brother of Jesus; and in another he reports the strange celestial phenomena he observed at the time of Jesus' crucifixion. Thus he seeks to establish his credentials as one of the earliest Christians, and an extremely well-connected one at that. And although some doubts were raised concerning the authenticity of the writings, by and large they were accepted as genuine and were accorded the considerable prestige and author-

ity that their antiquity and apostolic connections were taken to deserve.

In fact, however, the writer presenting himself as Dionysius the Areopagite was writing in the late fifth or early sixth century, heavily influenced by fifth-century Neoplatonism, especially that of Proclus (412–485). In *The Mystical Theology*, presented here in full, we see his characteristic emphasis on the transcendence of God and the incapacity of the human intellect fully to grasp the divine. The author speaks of three ways in which language about God can work. One way, which would become known as the *via affirmativa* or *via affirmationis* (the "affirmative way" or "way of affirmation"), involves attributing positive characteristics to God on the ground (says Pseudo-Dionysius) that God is the cause of those characteristics in creatures. But if we are to speak of God as he is in himself, we must deny that he has any of those characteristics; this is the *via negativa* or *via remotionis* (the "negative way" or "way of negation"). Finally, however, we may seek through language to express the being of God in his transcendence, as when Dionysius says that God is "supersubstantial" or "supergood." This last approach came to be known as the *via eminentiae*, the "way of eminence."

## 12. The Mystical Theology

### Chapter 1: What Is the Divine Darkness?

1

Oh supersubstantial, superdivine, supergood Trinity, overseer of Christians' divine wisdom, direct us to the superunknown, superbright outermost summit of mystical oracles where in the superlight, the darkness of mystical silence, there lie hidden the simple, unconditioned and unchanged mysteries of theology that outshine in deepest darkness what is most superbrilliant and that, in the wholly intangible and invisible, fill eyeless intellects to overflowing with superbeautiful splendors. These things I pray.

But you, dear Timothy,<sup>1</sup> in your earnest study of mystical sights, leave behind sensations and intellectual activities, all things sensible and intelligible, all non-beings and beings, and be lifted up in an unknowable manner to the unity of what is above all being and knowledge, insofar as that can be reached. For, by an irresistible and purely unconditioned going out<sup>2</sup> from yourself and from all things, you will be lifted up to the supersubstantial ray of divine shadow, setting aside all things and turned loose from all things.

2

But see to it that none of the uninitiated hear these things, by whom I mean those tangled up in beings, who imagine that there is nothing supersubstantially above beings but rather think that by their own knowledge they know Him<sup>3</sup> Who has made darkness His

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1. "Timothy" is of course supposed to be the Timothy to whom Saint Paul wrote two epistles. Pseudo-Dionysius, whoever he really was, is here forging his credentials before our very eyes.

2. going out = ἐκτάσει (*ekstasei*), 'ecstasy.'

3. In this translation I have capitalized pronouns refer-

ring to God, since sometimes the antecedents are confusing. See, for example, Ch. 1, § 3, par. 2 of the translation.

4. Compare Ps. 18:11.

5. The double comparative is in the Greek.

6. I must confess I do not entirely see the point here. Would an *opposition* be a *privation*? Is the idea that a privation somehow involves *both* affirmation and negation?

7. Bartholomew the apostle? See Matt. 10:3.

8. marvelously = ὑπερφύως, 'supernaturally.' But the word has a more common and quite ordinary meaning too: 'excessively,' 'marvelously.'

3

So, at any rate, says blessed Bartholomew,<sup>7</sup> and also that theology is great, and yet the smallest, and the Gospel broad and large, and again concise. It seems to me that he marvelously<sup>8</sup> understands the fact that the good cause of all is both loquacious and taciturn and speechless, as possessing neither speech nor understanding, because it supersubstantially lies above all things and appears truly and without disguise only to those who cross over all things polluted and pure, climb above every ascent of all the holy peaks, leave behind all divine lights and sounds and heavenly words, and enter into the darkness where, as the Scriptures say, He truly is Who is above all.

For blessed Moses himself is not simply commanded to be first purified and, again, to be separated from those not such;<sup>9</sup> after all the purification he also hears many-voiced trumpets, sees many lights flashing forth pure and broadly diffused rays. Then he is separated from the many and, together with the sacred elect, arrives at the peak of divine ascents. But he does not meet God Himself by these means; he does not see Him, for He is unseen, but rather the place where He is.

I think this signifies that the most divine and highest of things seen and understood are certain subordinate reasons<sup>10</sup> of things subject to what surpasses all. Through them is indicated its presence above all thought, standing on the intelligible summits of its most holy places.

Then he<sup>11</sup> abandons the seen things themselves and also those who see (them), and enters into the truly mystical darkness of unknowing. There, belonging entirely to what is above all and to nothing [else], whether himself or another, he shuts out all cognitive apprehensions and emerges in the altogether intangible and invisible. By the inactivity of all knowledge, he is united in his better part with the entirely unknown. And by knowing nothing, he knows superintellectually.

## Chapter 2: How One Must Be United with and Tell of<sup>12</sup> the Cause of All, [Which Is] above All Things.

We pray that we may reach this darkness above light and, through blindness and unknowing, see and know the not seeing or knowing that is itself beyond sight and knowledge—for this is really to see and to know—and supersubstantially to tell of the supersubstantial

9. Not such. That is, not purified.

10. subordinate reasons = υποθετικούς . . . λόγους (*hypothetikus logous*), “hypothetical reasons,” in the sense that they are the “hypotheses” or prerequisites for other things, not in the sense that they themselves depend on yet further hypotheses or prerequisites.

11. he = Moses.

12. tell of = ὕμνους ἀνατιθέναι (*hymnous anatithenai*), “to devote hymns to.” Compare Latin *laudo*.

through the separation of all beings, just like those making a life-like statue who, removing all the hindrances that impede the pure view of what is hidden, show forth, by a mere separation, the concealed beauty itself, by itself.

Now I think the separations must be told of in opposite manner to the positive features. For we were positing the one kind [when], beginning with the very first, we went down through the intermediaries to the last. But, performing the ascents from the last to the originals, we separate all things, so that we may unconcealedly know the unknowing concealed under all the knows among all beings, and may see the supersubstantial darkness hidden away under all the light in beings.

## Chapter 3: What Are the Affirmative Theologies<sup>13</sup> and What Are the Negative Ones?

Now we told the most important points of affirmative theology in the *Theological Outlines*:<sup>14</sup> how the divine and good nature is called one, how triple; what Fatherhood and Sonship are in it; what the theology of the Spirit means to show; how, from the immaterial and undivided good, the lights at the heart of goodness were born and remained, not departing from the abiding that is coeternal with their shooting forth, in it and in themselves and in one another; how the supersubstantial Jesus took on substance<sup>15</sup> among the truths of human nature; and all the other things, made known in the Scriptures, that are told in the *Theological Outlines*. In *On the Divine Names*, on the other hand, [we told] how it is called good, how being, how life and wisdom and power, and all the other things in the intelligible theonymy.

In the *Symbolic Theology*,<sup>16</sup> [we told] what metaphors for the divine [are] taken from sensibles: what

13. theologies = θεολογίαι (*theologiai*), “statements about God.”

14. No longer extant, if indeed it ever really existed.

15. took on substance = οὐσίωται, “made to be.”

16. Also no longer extant (if it ever existed).

[are] the divine forms, what the divine shapes and parts and organs, what the divine places and ornaments, what the angers, what the pains and the wraths, what the drunkennesses and hangovers, what the oaths and what the curses, what the sleeps and what the wakings, and whatever other sacred-formed shapes belong to the symbolic sketching of God.

I think you have observed how the last are more extensive than the first. For the *Theological Outlines* and the explication of the divine names had to be briefer than the *Symbolic Theology*. For, to the extent that we raise our heads toward the uphill slope, general views of the intelligibles, just as even now, as we enter into the darkness above intellect, we shall find not brevity but total speechlessness and absence of thought. In the former [treatises], the reasoning was broadened to an extent proportional to the descent. But now, ascending from below to what lies above, it is contracted according to the measure of its ascent. And after the whole ascent it will be wholly speechless<sup>17</sup> and wholly united with the unutterable.

But after all, you say, why do we begin the divine separation with the last things, when we posit the divine positive features [beginning] from the very first ones? Because in positing that which is above every positive feature, we had to posit [beginning] from what is most akin to it, the subordinative affirmation.<sup>18</sup> But in separating what is above all separation, [we had to] separate [beginning] from the things more distant from it. Is it not more life and goodness than air and stone? And [is it not] more non-hungover and non-wrathful than it is not spoken of nor thought?

#### Chapter 4: That the Cause, by Superabundance, of Every Sensible Is None of the Sensibles.

We say, therefore, that the cause of all, being above all things, is neither insubstantial nor lifeless nor unrea-

soning nor mindless, nor is it a body. Neither does it have shape nor form nor quality nor quantity nor mass. Neither is it in a place nor is it seen nor does it have a sensible feel. Neither does it sense nor is it sensed. Neither does it have disorder and trouble, disturbed by material passions. Neither is it powerless, subject to sensible misfortunes. Neither is it in need of light. Neither is it, nor does it have, alteration or corruption or division or privation or flowing away, or anything else among sensibles.

#### Chapter 5: That the Cause, by Superabundance, of Every Intelligible Is None of the Intelligibles.

Ascending once more, we say it is neither soul nor mind. Neither does it have imagination nor opinion nor reasoning nor understanding. Neither is it reasoning nor understanding. Neither is it spoken of nor thought. Neither is it a number nor an arrangement, neither greatness nor smallness, neither equality nor inequality, neither similarity nor dissimilarity. Neither has it stood still nor is it moved. Neither is it at rest nor does it have power nor is it power, or light. Neither does it live nor is it life. Neither is it a substance nor eternity nor time. Neither is there intellectual contact with it. Neither is it knowledge nor truth nor dominion nor wisdom, neither one nor unity, neither divinity nor goodness. Neither is it Spirit, as we know it, nor Sonship nor Fatherhood, nor anything else of the non-beings nor any of the beings. Neither do beings know it as it is, nor does it know beings as they are beings. Neither is there any reasoning about it, nor a name nor knowledge. Neither is it darkness nor light nor error nor truth. Neither in general is there a positing nor a separating of it. Rather, we do positings and separatings for things [that come] after it; it we neither posit nor separate, since the all-perfect and unitary cause of all things is above every positive feature, and the superabundance of what is freed absolutely from all things and beyond all things is above all separation.

17. speechless = ἄφωνος, "soundless."

18. subordinative: See n. 10.

# John Scottus Eriugena, c.800–c.877

John Scottus Eriugena was a rather singular figure within medieval Christian thought. Possessed of an original philosophical gift and able to use the writings of the theologians of the Eastern Church (Gregory of Nazianz, Gregory of Nyssa, Pseudo-Dionysius, and Maximus the Confessor), he formulated a metaphysical system in which he sought to fuse Christian and neoplatonic teachings. His writings appear to have been read in his own time, and he had some influence on later thinkers, but there is a sense in which he was outside the mainstream of medieval Christian thought.

The interpretation of Eriugena's teachings is not an easy task. On the one hand, he cites scripture and the writings of the Greek and Latin Fathers and expresses himself in the language of orthodox Christian thought. On the other, many passages in his work have a pantheistic ring. Probably he was an orthodox Christian expressing himself in language theologically difficult at times, but it can be seen why he is sometimes considered a pantheist in Christian guise. His discussion of how faith and reason are related reflects a certain ambiguity of expression, if not of thought. Using an Augustinian notion, he affirms that belief must precede all understanding; but he interprets many scriptural passages as metaphors needing to be translated into philosophical terms, and he holds that when faith and reason conflict, the teachings of reason must prevail.

"Nature" is the fundamental concept of Eriugena's thought. Identifying nature with being or reality, he defines it as the totality of "those things which are and those which are not." This most general description of nature includes even God, though it does not seem to

follow that Eriugena considered God as a part of nature or that, for him, God and nature are identical.

Distinguishing between creating and created beings and using these terms and their negations in all possible combinations, Eriugena divides nature into four species. There is, first of all, nature which creates, but is not created. Then there is nature which is created and creates. Thereafter comes nature which is created, but does not create and, finally, there is nature which neither creates nor is created. Having made these logical distinctions, Eriugena proceeds to interpret them ontologically.

Nature which creates but is not created is identical with God, who is the uncaused cause who created all things out of nothing. Viewed in this manner God is the transcendent God described in scripture. But, at the same time, God is said to be the essence of all things, their beginning, middle and end, and a being appearing in all things. According to this description, God is immanent.

Though God's essence is unknowable in itself, man can attain a certain measure of knowledge about God. To describe what man can know of God, Eriugena makes use of the threefold theology of the Greek Fathers. According to this doctrine, God is described negatively by denying of Him all things which are, positively by affirming of Him all things which are, and superlatively by saying that attributes applied to Him and creatures exist in a superior manner in Him. The ten Aristotelian categories, Eriugena states (developing an Augustinian point), are inapplicable to God.

From God, who is uncreated but creates, proceeds that nature which is created and creates. Eriugena

identifies this nature with the causes, Ideas, predestinations, or prototypes of earlier thinkers (see page 3). The primordial causes are the exemplary causes of all things, and they were implanted by God, the Father, within the Divine Word, the Son. But since, in God, there is no making in time, Eriugena affirms, in language later criticized by theologians, that the primordial causes are coeternal with God, though, as he adds by way of modification, “not completely coeternal.”

From the primordial causes flows that nature which is created but does not create. This is the world of angels, men, and bodies. To describe the creation of the world, Eriugena uses a variety of metaphors, all analogies for emanation. For example, the world is said to come from God as water from a fountain. Then again, the world is said to be related to God as the radii of a circle to its center. In still another way, Eriugena describes creation as the self-manifestation or revelation of God (theophany). In line with this description, he affirms that God, in making the world, makes Himself. However, in somewhat more orthodox language, creation is said to result from the influence of the Holy Spirit on the primordial causes.

The fourth division of nature (that which neither creates nor is created) refers once again to God. But whereas in the earlier description God was considered as the source of all beings, He is now understood as the final goal to which all things return. Described as “deification,” this return does not bring about the obliteration of all distinctions between God and creatures. Though mutable matter will disappear, neither man nor the world will become identical with God. Once again using theological language, Eriugena describes man’s return as the redemption of fallen man by the Incarnate Logos.

John Scottus Eriugena was born in Ireland c.800 and was educated in a monastery there. Since, in the

ninth century, Greek was still taught in the Irish schools, Eriugena gained a knowledge of that language as part of his education. In the 840s he went to France, where Charles the Bald appointed him head of the palace school. Eriugena became involved in the controversy between Hincmar, the bishop of Rheims, and Gottschalk, a monk, concerning divine predestination. At the request of Hincmar, Eriugena wrote *Concerning Predestination (De praedestinatione)*, but the work did not find favor with either party to the dispute and it soon came under suspicion of heresy. Eriugena’s general position was condemned by councils of Valence (855) and Langres (859). It appears that he died c.877.

Besides composing independent works, Eriugena translated and commented on the writings of the theologians of the Eastern Church. He translated Gregory of Nyssa’s *On the Making of Man*, and works by Pseudo-Dionysius and Maximus the Confessor. His most important work was *On the Division of Nature (De divisione naturae)*, which contains the metaphysical system outlined above.

The following selections are all taken from the first book of *On the Division of Nature*. The first contains Eriugena’s definition of nature and the four species into which it is divided. But, since nature is the totality of those things which are and those which are not, there follows a description of five ways in which things are said to be and not to be.

In the second selection, Eriugena undertakes to clarify a patristic statement affirming that God not only creates but also is created in things. This passage not only provides a glimpse of his doctrine of creation but is an excellent illustration of his dialectical method. The final selection contains his account of the threefold manner in which Divine attributes are to be understood.

## 13. On the Division of Nature

### Book I

MAGISTER. "While considering, and, as diligently as [my] powers allow, inquiring into the first and highest division of all things, which can be perceived by the soul, or which surpass its reach, into those things which are, and those which are not, a general verbal designation of all these occurred to me, which in Greek is called *physis*, in Latin, *natura*. Or does it seem otherwise to you?"

DISCIPLE. No indeed, I agree; for even I, although I am [only] entering on the way of reasoning, find these to be so.

MAGISTER. Therefore nature is the general name, as we have said, of all things which are and which are not.

DISCIPLE. It is indeed; for nothing in the universe can occur to our thoughts which could lack such a designation.

MAGISTER. Since therefore we agree concerning the generality of this designation, I should like you to discourse on the principle [*ratio*] of its division through differentiae into species: or if it pleases you, I shall first attempt the dividing, but it will be your task to judge of the divisions.

DISCIPLE. Begin, I beg you, for I am impatient, wanting to hear from you the true principle [*ratio*] of these things.

1. MAGISTER. It seems to me that the division of nature receives four species through four differentiae: of which the first is into that which creates and is not created; second into that which is created and creates; third into that which is created and does not create; fourth into that which neither creates nor is created. Of these four there are two pairs of opposites; for the third division is opposed to the first, the fourth to the

second; but the fourth is placed with the impossible, whose differentia is not-being-able-to-be. Does such a division seem right to you or not?

DISCIPLE. Right indeed: but I should like you to go over it again so that the opposition of the aforesaid forms may shine forth more clearly.

MAGISTER. You see, unless I am mistaken, the opposition of the third species to the first. For the first creates and is not created; to which that which is created and does not create is opposed *ex contrario*. The second, moreover, to the fourth; inasmuch as the second is both created and creates, which the fourth, which neither creates nor is created, contradicts universally.

DISCIPLE. I see clearly. But the fourth species which has been adjoined by you disturbs me very much. For in no way should I dare to hesitate concerning the other three, since the first is understood, as I judge, in the cause of all those things, which are and which are not; but the second is understood in the primordial causes; the third is understood in those things of which we become aware in generation in times and places. And therefore it is necessary to argue each of them more subtly, as I see.

MAGISTER. You think rightly. But by what order of reasoning the course is to be held, that is, what species of nature should be discussed first, I commit to your judgment.

DISCIPLE. It seems right to me, to say of the first before the others whatever the light of minds has bestowed.

2. MAGISTER. So be it. But first I think that we ought to speak briefly of the highest and principal division of all things, as we have said, into those things which are and those which are not.

DISCIPLE. Rightly and prudently. For I see that reasoning should begin from no other starting point: not only because it is the first differentia of all things, but because it both seems to be and is more obscure than the others.

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MAGISTER. Consequently this primordial discrete [class producing] differentia of all things requires certain modes of interpretation.

3. The first of these modes seems to be that through which reason [*ratio*] induces us to say that all things which are susceptible to corporeal sense or to the perception of intelligence can reasonably be said to be; but those things, which through the excellence of their nature elude not only the material [*hylion*], that is, every sensitive power, but also the intellect and reason [*ratio*], seem rightly not to be. Which latter things are not rightly understood except in God alone, and in matter, and in the reasons [*rationes*] and essences of all things which are constituted by Him. And not without cause; for He who alone truly is, is the essence of all things, as Dionysius the Areopagite says: *The being, he says, of all things is superbeing Divinity*. Gregory the Theologian also with many reasons [*rationes*] confirms that no substance or essence, whether of a visible or invisible creature, can be comprehended as to what it is [*quid sit*] by the intellect or by reason [*ratio*]. For just as God himself in himself as beyond every creature is comprehended by no intellect, so also the *ousia* [essence] considered in the most secret recesses of the creature made by him and existing in him, is incomprehensible. For whatever in any creature is perceived by the corporeal sense or considered by the intellect is nothing else than a certain accident incomprehensible per se of each essence, as has been said. For the essence which is known through quality, quantity, form, matter, or a certain differentia, place or time, is not the what [*quid*], but the that [*quia*]. This therefore is the first and highest mode of the division of the things which are said to be and not to be; because the mode, which seems admissible in a certain way, [namely] the mode consisting in the privations of relations with respect to substances, such as sight and blindness with respect to the eyes, should not be admitted at all, as I judge. For I do not see how that which entirely is not, nor is able to be, nor surpasses the intellect because of the excellence of its existence, can be received into the divisions of things, unless by chance someone might say that absences and privations of things which are, are not entirely nothing, but that they are supported by a certain marvelous natural

power of those things of which they are the privations or absences or oppositions, so that in a certain way they are.

4. Therefore let the second mode of being and of not being be that which is considered in the orders and differentiae of the natures of creatures, which beginning from the most pre-eminent intellectual power placed closest to God descends as far as the extremity of the rational and irrational creature; that is, to speak more plainly, from the most sublime angel down to the extreme part of the rational and irrational soul, namely the nutritive and augmentative life. That general part of the soul which nourishes and augments the body is the lowest. Whence each order including the very last one looking downwards, which is [the order] of bodies, and in which the whole division is terminated, can in a marvelous manner of understanding be said to be and not to be. For affirmation of the inferior is a negation of the superior. And again negation of the inferior is an affirmation of the superior. And in the same way affirmation of the superior is a negation of the inferior. Negation indeed of the superior will be an affirmation of the inferior. The affirmation, certainly, of man, I mean insofar as mortal, is the negation of the angel. Negation indeed of man is an affirmation of the angel: and on the contrary. For if man is a rational animal, mortal and visible, an angel in fact is neither a rational animal, nor mortal, nor visible. Likewise if an angel is an essential intellectual motion regarding God and the causes of things, man in fact is not an essential intellectual motion regarding God and the causes of things. And the same law can be observed in all celestial essences, until the highest order of all things is reached; but the highest order is terminated in a supreme negation upward. For its negation asserts no creature superior to itself. Now there are three orders, which they call *homotageis* [of the same order], of which the first are Cherubim, Seraphim, and Thrones; the second Virtues, Powers, Dominations; the third Principles, Archangels, Angels. But downwards the lowest [order] of bodies only negates or affirms [what is] superior to itself, because it has nothing below itself to either deny or affirm, because it is preceded by all things superior to itself, but it precedes no thing inferior to itself. For this reason

[*ratio*] likewise every order of the rational and intellectual creature is said to be and not to be. For *it is* insofar as it is known by superiors or by itself, and *it is not*, insofar as it does not permit itself to be comprehended by inferiors.

5. The third mode is observed not unfittingly in those things by which the plenitude of this visible world is perfected, and in their preceding causes in the most secret recesses of nature. For whichever of these causes is formed matter is known through generation in times and places, is said to be, by a curious human habit [of speech]. But moreover whatever is contained in the very recesses of nature, and does not appear in formed matter either in place or time or in the other accidents, is said not to be by the same aforesaid habit [of speech]. Examples of this mode appear widely, and most of all in human nature. For since God has constituted all men simultaneously in that first and one man, whom he made to his image, but did not produce them at once in this visible world, rather at certain times and in certain places bringing the nature, which he had founded simultaneously, into visible being [*essentiam*], according to a certain series, as he himself knew it [from the beginning], these who already appear visibly in the world and have appeared are said to be; those who are latent thus far, but nevertheless are to be, are said not to be. There is this difference between the first and third mode. The first mode is generally in all things, which have been made simultaneously and once in causes and effects. The third specially in those things which are partly latent thus far in their causes, and partly apparent in their effects, out of which the fabric of this world is properly woven. To this mode pertains that reason [*ratio*] which considers the power of seeds, whether in animals, or in trees, or in herbs. For the power of seeds, at that time when it is quietly at rest in the secrets of nature, because it does not yet appear, is said not to be; but as soon as it has appeared in the birth and growth of animals or in the flowers or the fruits of trees and herbs, it is said to be.

6. The fourth mode is that mode which says according to the philosophers, [and] not improbably, that those things only truly are, which are comprehended

by the intellect alone; but things which through generation are varied, united, separated by additions or subtractions of matter, also by intervals of places and by motions of time, are truly said not to be, as are all bodies, which can come to be and can be corrupted.

7. The fifth mode is that which reason [*ratio*] observes in human nature alone. Which [human nature], when it has deserted by sinning the dignity of the divine image in which it properly subsists, has deservedly lost its being, and therefore it is said not to be. But when human nature, restored by the grace of the only begotten son of God, is led back to the pristine state of its substance, in which it has been made according to the image of God, it begins to be, and begins to live in him who was made according to the image of God. What the Apostle says seems to pertain to this mode; *And he calls those things that are not, as those that are*; that is, those who have been lost in the first man, and who have fallen to a certain insubsistence, God the Father calls through faith in his Son, so that they may be, just as they who have already been born again in Christ. And yet this could be understood also of those persons whom God calls daily from the secret recesses of nature, where they are estimated not to be, that they may appear visibly in form, and in matter, and in other ways, in which hidden things can appear, and whatever a more searching mind [*ratio*] can find beyond these modes. But as I judge, enough has been said concerning these things for the present, unless it seems otherwise to you.

DISCIPLE. Enough indeed, unless what seems to be said by Saint Augustine in his Exameron should disturb me for a short time; that is, that *the angelic nature was made before every creature in dignity, not in time*; and through this also considered the primordial causes of everything except itself, that is, the angelic nature considered the principal exemplars, which the Greeks name *prōtotypa*, first in God, then in itself, then considered the creatures themselves in their effects. . . .

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11. MAGISTER. And so of the aforesaid divisions of Nature the first differentia seen by us is into that which

creates and is not created. Not unreasonably, because such a species of Nature is predicated rightly of God alone, who alone is understood as the *anarchos*, i.e., without a beginning, creating all things, because the principal cause of all things, which have been made from him and through him, alone is, and by this he is also the end of all things which are from him. For all things desire him. Therefore he is the beginning, middle and end: the beginning, because all things which participate [in] essence are from him; but the middle because they subsist and are moved in him and through him; the end, indeed, because they are moved to him seeking the quiet of their motion and the stability of their perfection.

DISCIPLE. I believe most firmly, and, insofar as it is given, I understand that this is predicated rightly only of the divine cause of all things, because it alone creates all things that are from it, and is created from nothing superior as though preceding it. For it itself is the highest and sole cause of all things, which subsist from it and in it.

12. Nevertheless I should like to know what your opinion is concerning this thing. For it disturbs me not a little that most often in the books of the holy Fathers, who attempted to argue about divine nature, I find that it not only creates all things that are, but also is created, inasmuch as they say it makes them and is made, and creates and is created. Therefore if this is so, I do not easily find how our reasoning could stand. For we say that it [divine nature] alone creates, but is created by nothing.

MAGISTER. You are disturbed with cause; for I both wonder much concerning this, and I should have wished to have known through you how these things which seem to be contrary, could fail to be opposed to each other, and how true reason [*ratio*] is to be consulted about this.

DISCIPLE. I pray, begin; for I am awaiting your opinion and your way of reasoning concerning such things, not mine.

MAGISTER. Accordingly, I judge that we should consider first, if it seems appropriate, concerning the name itself, which is most used in sacred Scripture, which is God. For although divine nature is denominated by many names, as it is Goodness, Being, Truth,

and others of this kind, nevertheless Scripture most frequently uses that divine name.

DISCIPLE. That is plainly seen.

MAGISTER. And thus the etymology of this name has been assumed from the Greeks. For it is derived either from the verb *theōrō*, that is, I see; or from the verb *theō*, that is, I run; or what is more probable it is said rightly to be derived from both, because one and the same meaning is present. For when *theos* [God] is deduced from the verb *theōrō*, he is interpreted as seeing. For he himself sees in himself all things which are, while he looks upon nothing outside himself, because there is nothing outside himself. But when from the verb *theō*, *theos* is rightly understood as running. For he himself runs in all things, and rests in no way, but fills all things by running; as it is written: *his speech runs swiftly*. Nevertheless he is moved in no way: inasmuch as restful motion and mobile rest are said most truly of God. For he rests incommutably in himself, never deserting his natural immobility. But he moves himself through all things, that they may be those things that subsist essentially from himself; for all things are made by his motion. And through this it is one and the same meaning in the two interpretations of his name, which is God. For to run through all things is not other to God than to see all things; but just as by seeing, and so also by running all things are made.

DISCIPLE. It has been persuaded sufficiently and probably concerning the etymology of the name. But I do not see sufficiently, whither he may move himself, who is everywhere, without whom nothing can be, and outside of whom nothing is extended; for he is the place and the limit of all things.

MAGISTER. I have said that God is moved not outside himself, but by himself, in himself, to himself. For no other motion ought to be believed [to be] in him, beyond the appetite of his will, by which he wills that all things be made; just as his rest is understood not as if it came to rest after motion, but as the incommutably proposed object of his same will, by which he defines the permanence of all thing in the incommutable stability of their ratios. For rest or motion is not properly said [to be] in him. For these two seem to be opposite to each other: but true reason [*ratio*] prohibits that opposites be thought or understood in him,

particularly since rest is properly the end of motion. But God does not begin to be moved in order to arrive at a certain state. Therefore these names, just as also many similar [names], are referred from the creature to the Creator through a certain divine metaphor. Nor unreasonably, since he is the cause of all things, which are in rest and in motion. For by him they begin to run, that they may be, since he is the principle of all things, and through him they are brought to him by a natural motion, that they may rest eternally and immutably in him, since he is the end and the quiet of all things. For they desire nothing beyond him. For in him they find the beginning and end of their motion. Therefore God is said [to be] running, not because he runs outside of himself, who always stands immutably in himself, who fills all things; but because he makes everything run from things non-existing into things existing.

DISCIPLE. Return to what was proposed [for investigation], for these things do not seem to be said unreasonably.

MAGISTER. Tell me, I beg you, what proposal do you seek? For when we attempt to say something about incidental questions, we most often forget the principal question.

DISCIPLE. Have we not proposed this, that we should investigate in proportion to our powers, by what reason [*ratio*] those who argue concerning the divine nature say that it both creates and is created? For that it creates all things, no one of intelligence assuredly doubts; but in what way it is said to be created has seemed to us not to be passed over perfunctorily.

MAGISTER. In fact so. But, as I judge, from these things which have been said before, not a slight entrance to the solving of this question has been opened. For it was deduced by us that nothing else is to be understood by the motion of the divine nature than the proposal of divine will to the founding of those things that are to be made. Divine nature, which is nothing else than divine will, therefore is said to be made in all things. For being and willing are not distinct in it, but one and the same willing and being [is] in establishing all things which were seen to be made. For example, if one said that the motion of the divine will is brought about for this, that those things that are, might be: therefore it creates all things, which it brings out

of nothing, that they may be in being from non-being; but it is created, because nothing besides itself is essentially; for it is the essence of all things. For just as there is no natural good besides itself, but everything which is said to be good, is good from participation of the one highest good: so everything which is said to exist, does not exist in itself, but exists truly by a participation of the existing nature [divine nature]. And not only as it has been considered in those things that have been said before is the divine nature said to be made, as well as in those who are reformed by faith, hope and charity and the other virtues, the Word of God is born in a marvelous and ineffable way, as the Apostle says speaking of Christ: *Who has been made in us wisdom from God, and justification, and redemption*; but also it is not unfittingly said to have been made, because it, which is invisible per se, appears in all the things that are. For our intellect too, before it arrived at thought and memory, is not unreasonably said to be; for it is invisible per se, and is known by no one except by God and by ourselves. But as soon as it has arrived at thought, and receives a form from certain phantasms, it is said not without cause to be made. For it [intellect], which was unformed before it arrived at memory, is made in memory, receiving certain forms of things, or of words, or of colours and of the other sensibles; then it receives as it were a second forming, when by certain signs of forms, or of words, that is, letters, which are signs of words, and figures, which are signs of forms, it is formed by the mathematical, or the other sensible indices, through which it can be insinuated to the senses of those experiencing [these signs]. By this similitude, although it is remote from the divine nature, nevertheless I judge that it can be persuaded, how it [divine nature], while it creates everything, and cannot be created by anything, is created in a marvelous way, in all things which are from it; so just as the intelligence of the mind, or the design, or counsel, or in whatever way this our innermost and first motion can be spoken of, when, as we have said, it has arrived at thought, and has received certain forms of phantasms, and then has proceeded in the sign of words, or in the indices of sensible motions, is not unfittingly said to be made; for it becomes formed in phantasms, which per se is without every sensible form: thus the divine essence, which subsisting per se

surpasses every intellect, is rightly said to be created in these things, which have been made from it and through it and in it and for it, that it may be known in them whether by the intellect, if they are intellectual only, or if they are sensitive by sense, by those, i.e. who investigate it [divine essence] by right study.<sup>1</sup>

DISCIPLE. Enough has been said about these things, as I judge.

13. . . . DISCIPLE. Already I see the response of the aforesaid Theologian entirely supported by the truth. For the name of the relation, whether in divine or in human nature, cannot be understood in substance or essence, as has been persuaded. Nevertheless I should like to know plainly and briefly through you, whether all the categories, since they are ten in number, can be predicated truly and properly of the one highest essence of divine goodness in three substances, and of the three substances in the same one essence.

MAGISTER. Concerning this difficulty, I do not know who can say briefly and plainly. For either one should be silent once and for all concerning a cause of this kind, and leave it to the simplicity of orthodox faith; for it surpasses every intellect, as it is written: *Who alone has immortality and inhabits inaccessible light*; or if anyone should have begun to argue about it, necessarily he will persuade in the likeness of truth in many ways and by many arguments, using the two principal parts of Theology, namely affirmative [*affirmativa*], which is called *katafatikē* by the Greeks, and negative [*abnegativa*], which is called *apofatikē* [deprivative]. Indeed one, *apofatikē* [the negative], denies that the divine essence or substance is something of those things which are, that is, which can be said or understood; but the other, *katafatikē* [affirmative], predicates of it all things which are, and therefore is said [to be] affirmative, not that it confirms something to be of those things which are, but it would persuade that all things that are from it can be predicated of it. For it can be reasonably signified causally through the things of which it is the cause. For it says that it is truth, goodness, essence, light, justice, sun, star, spirit, water,

lion, city, worm, and other innumerable things. And it not only teaches it [cause] from those things which are according to nature, but from those contrary to nature, when it says it is inebriated and is foolish and is insane. But concerning these things it is not our intention to treat now, for enough has been said concerning such things by holy Dionysius the Areopagite in symbolic Theology. And therefore we should return to that which has been sought by you. For you had sought whether all the categories are properly to be predicated of God or some of them.

DISCIPLE. Assuredly we should return. But first it is to be considered, as I judge, why the aforesaid most holy father and Theologian should have pronounced that the aforesaid names, I mean, essence, goodness, truth, justice, wisdom, and others of that kind, which seem to signify not only divine, but even most divine things, and nothing else than that very divine substance or essence, are to be taken metaphorically, that is, transferred from creature to creator. For we should not think that he said such things without a certain mystic and secret reason [*ratio*].

MAGISTER. You are very watchful; for I see that this also is not to be passed over inconsiderately. And I should like you to respond through answering this question, whether you understand anything as opposed to God or as co-understood with him. I mean by opposed either through privation, or through contrariety, or through relation, or through absence: but by co-understood, that is, understood eternally simultaneously with him, nevertheless not coessential with him.

DISCIPLE. I see clearly what you would like and through this I dare to say neither something opposed to him, nor [something] co-understood to him *heterousion* [diverse essences], that is, that which is of another essence than he is. For opposite things are always opposed to each other through a relation in such a way that they both begin to develop simultaneously and cease to be simultaneously, as long as they are of the same nature, as the simple to the double, subsesquialter to the sesquialter; either through negation, as [for example] it is, it is not; or through natural qualities; through absence, as light and darkness; or according to privation, as death and life; or through a contrary, as sanity and imbecility, speech and silence. But these

1. As the intellect is formed in the phantasms, so God is formed in the creation.

are attributed by right reason [*ratio*] to those things that are accessible to intellect and sense, and through this they are not in God. Certainly those things that differ from each other cannot be eternal. For if they were eternal, they would not differ from each other. For eternity is similar to itself, and is whole through everything; one, simple, and individual, it subsists in itself. And indeed it is the one principle and the one end of all things, differing in nothing from itself.

14. I do not know who would dare to affirm [that] that which is not coessential with him, is by the same reason [*ratio*] coeternal with God. For if this can be thought or found, it necessarily follows that there is not one principle of all things, but two distinct [ones] or many, widely different from each other—which true reason [*ratio*] is accustomed to reject without any hesitation. From one all things properly begin to be, but from two or many nothing [begins to be].

MAGISTER. You determine rightly, as I think. If therefore the aforesaid divine names refer to other names directly opposed to themselves, necessarily also the things that are properly signified by them are understood to possess contrarities opposite to each other, and through this they cannot properly be predicated of God, to whom nothing [is] opposed, or with whom nothing is observed differing coeternally in nature. For of the aforesaid names and of others similar to it, true reason can discover no one for which there cannot be discovered some other name differing from it either in some opposed division or in the same genus with it. And that which we know in names, it is necessary that we should know in those things that are signified by them. But although the divine significations, which are predicated of God in sacred Scripture transferred from the creature to the Creator—if indeed it is rightly said that anything can be predicated of God, which is to be considered in another place—are innumerable and by the smallness of our reasoning can neither be discovered nor simultaneously tied together, nevertheless a few divine designations should be proposed for the sake of example. God then is called essence, but properly he is not essence, to whom nothing is opposed; therefore he is *hyperousios*, that is, superessential. Likewise he is called goodness, but properly he is not goodness; for

evil is opposed to goodness; therefore *hyperagathos* [supergood], more than good, and *hyperagathotēs* [supergoodness], that is, more than goodness. He is said to be Deus, but he is not properly Deus; for blindness is opposed to vision, and not seeing to seeing; therefore *hypertheos* [superseeing], more than seeing, if *theos* is interpreted as he who sees. But if you should turn back to another origin of this name, so that you may understand *theon*, God, to be derived, not from the verb *theōrō*, I see, but from the verb *theō*, that is, I run, the same reasoning [*ratio*] is similarly against you. For not running is opposed to running, as slowness to quickness. Therefore he will be *hypertheos* [superrunning], that is, more than running, as it is written: *his speech runs swiftly*. For we understand this of God the Word, that he runs ineffably through all things that are, that they may be. We are obliged to understand in the same way concerning [the name] truth. For falsity is opposed to truth, and for this reason properly he is not truth; therefore he is *hyperalēthēs*, and *hyperalētheia*, more than true, and more than truth. The same reason [*ratio*] is to be observed in all divine names. For he is not properly called eternity, since temporality is opposed to eternity; therefore he is *hyperaiōnios*, and *hyperaiōnia*, more than eternal, and more than eternity. Of wisdom also the same reason [*ratio*] presents itself and therefore it is not to be judged to be predicated properly of God, since foolish and foolishness oppose wisdom and wise; hence he is rightly and truly said to be *hypersofos* [superwise], that is, more than wise, and *hypersofia* [superwisdom], more than wisdom. Similarly he is more than life, inasmuch as death is opposed to life. In the same way it is to be understood concerning light; for darkness stands against light. Thus far, as I judge, we have said enough concerning these things.

DISCIPLE. By all means it [is] to be allowed that enough has been said. For of those things [granted that] whatever ones are necessary to be brought forth for the sake of matters to be argued in the present affair, [nevertheless] what we have proposed for our discussion does not admit them at the present time. Therefore return, if you will, to the consideration of the tenfold number of categories.

MAGISTER. I admire the sharpness of your purpose, which has seemed very watchful thus far.

DISCIPLE. What evidence, I ask, do you have for saying that?

MAGISTER. Have we not said that the ineffable nature can be properly signified by no word, no name, that is, by any sensible sound, [and] by no thing signified? And you have granted this. For he is called essence, truth, wisdom and other things of this kind not properly but translatively; but he is called superessential, more than truth, more than wisdom, and similar things. But do not even these seem to be almost, as it were, certain proper names, if he is not properly called the essence, but properly superessential? Similarly if he is not named truth or wisdom properly, but is properly called more than truth, and more than wisdom? Therefore he is not without proper names; for these names, although they are not pronounced among Latins with a single accent dominating a single harmony of composition [single word] as is customary, with the exception of the name superessential, nevertheless [these words] are pronounced by the Greeks as a single composite word. For never or scarcely ever will you find that supergood [*superbonum*] or supereternal [*superaeternum*] and other similar words are pronounced as a single word.

DISCIPLE. And I myself greatly wonder whither I was tending, when I had completely omitted this important inquiry. And therefore I request it to be investigated thoroughly by you. For so long as divine substance is properly expressed in whatever way either by simple or composite parts of speech, or by phrases [breaking one word into many in translation], in Greek or Latin, it will not seem to be ineffable. For what can be said in a certain manner is not ineffable.

MAGISTER. Now you are vigilant, I see.

DISCIPLE. Indeed I am vigilant, but I see nothing thus far concerning this interposed question.

MAGISTER. Return therefore to those things that have been concluded between us a little before. For indeed, unless I am mistaken, we have said that there are two most sublime parts of Theology; and accepting this not from ourselves, but from the authority of S. Dionysius the Areopagite, who most plainly, as has been said, asserts that Theology has two parts, that is, *katafatikēn* [affirmative], and *apofatikēn* [deprivative or negative], which Cicero translates as *attraction* [*intentio*] and *repulsion* [*repulsionem*], but we, in or-

der that the force of the words be made more abundantly clear, have chosen to translate [them] by affirmation and negation.

DISCIPLE. I seem to recall these things, as I judge. But what would be useful to these things, which we wish to consider now, I do not yet recognize.

MAGISTER. Do you not see that these two, namely affirmation and negation, are opposed to each other?

DISCIPLE. I see enough, and I judge that nothing can be more contrary.

MAGISTER. Therefore direct [your thoughts] more diligently. For when you will have arrived at a sight of perfect reasoning, you will consider clearly enough that these two, which seem to be contrary to each other, are opposed to each other in no way when they refer to divine nature, but are consistent with each other through all things in all things. And in order that this become more plain we shall use a few examples. For example *katafatikē* [affirmative or positive Theology] says, he is truth; *apofatikē* [negative Theology] contradicts, he is not truth. This seems a certain form of contradiction; but when it is looked into more intently, no controversy is discovered. For [by] those things which it [affirmative Theology] says, saying that it [divine essence] is truth, it [affirmative Theology] does not affirm that divine substance is properly truth, but can be called by such a name through a metaphor from the creature to the Creator; it clothes divine essence with such designations although it is naked and untouched by every proper signification. But those things which it says, saying that it is not truth, rightly and clearly knowing the incomprehensible and ineffable divine nature, does not deny that it is, but that properly it is neither said to be, nor is, truth. For *apofatikē* [negative Theology] is unable to despoil the Divinity of all the significations, with which *katafatikē* [positive Theology] clothes it. For one [positive Theology] says that it is wisdom, thereby clothing it [divine essence]; the other says it is not wisdom, thereby unclothing the same thing. Therefore the one says it can be called this, but does not say it properly is this; the other says he is not this, although he can be called from this.

DISCIPLE. I see these things most plainly, unless I am mistaken, and those things which thus far seemed to me to be opposed to each other are now disclosed

more clearly than light to convene with each other, and to contradict each other in nothing, so long as they are considered concerning God. But how they may attain to the solution of the present question, I do not yet profess to know.

MAGISTER. Therefore attend more watchfully and show forth as much as you can to which part of Theology, whether affirmative or negative, those significations that have been added first—I mean superessential, more than truth, more than wisdom, and others similar—are to be applied.

DISCIPLE. I do not dare sufficiently to decide this by myself. For when I consider that the aforesaid significations are without a negative particle, which is *non*, I become afraid to join them to the negative part of Theology. But if I shall have joined the same [ones] to the affirmative part, I become aware that their meaning does not agree with me. For when it is said that it [divine essence] is superessential, nothing other is given to me to be understood than a negation of essence. For he who says that it is superessential, plainly denies that it is essential. And through this, although the negation does not appear in the pronouncement of the words, nevertheless its meaning is not concealed in secret from those considering well. Then, as I think, I am forced to acknowledge, that those aforesaid significations, which seem to lack a negation, convene more to the negative part of Theology, than to the affirmative, insofar as it is given to understand.

MAGISTER. I see you have responded most cautiously and watchfully, and I approve very much of the way in which you have seen into the meaning of the negative most subtly in the enunciation of the affirmative part. Therefore if it is pleasing, let the solution of this present question be made in this way, that all these things that are predicated of God by the addition of the particles *super* or *more than*, as [for example that] he is superessential, more than truth, more than wisdom and similar things, are most fully comprehended *in se* in the two aforesaid parts of Theology [taken together]; so that they may obtain the form of the affirmative in enunciation, but the power of the abdicative in meaning. And let us conclude with this brief example. He is essence, affirmation; he is not essence, abdication; he is superessential, simultaneously affirmation and abdication. For on the surface it is without negation; in meaning it has negative force. For he who says, He is superessential, does not say what He is, but what He is not; for he says that He is not essence, but more than essence. But what that is which is more than essence, he does not express, asserting that God is not anything of those [things] which are, but is more than those things which are: but what that being may be, he defines in no way.

DISCIPLE. We should not linger any longer on this question, as I think, and now, if it seems proper, let us consider the nature of the categories.

# Anselm of Canterbury, 1033–1109

Anselm was sometimes called “the second Augustine” because of his professed unwillingness to say anything inconsistent with Augustine’s writings. Like Augustine, he sought “necessary reasons” and thought of their elaboration as a partial fulfillment of religious faith, a position nicely epitomized in his prayer to be granted some degree of understanding of that which he loves and believes. As opposed to those who would remove the faith from logical considerations, Anselm offered his necessary reasons even for the Incarnation and the Holy Trinity—topics reserved as mysteries for most later theologians. From this point of view, he constitutes the high-water mark of reason in the great controversy between faith and reason. But it is not utterly clear just what he interprets as a “necessary reason”; and from another point of view, his position is not nearly so extreme. He sometimes seems to suppose that the discernment of those reasons depends on a divine illumination to be sought in prayer, and even this leaves unsolved the mystery as to *how* the reasons are necessary. If Anselm is the proponent of reason, then, it is hardly the “natural reason” of later structurings of the problem that he represents; and some scholars have even wondered whether he thought of his arguments as philosophical at all. Perhaps it is best to conclude that, bringing to his reflections upon Augustine the rigors of the Boethian and Aristotelian dialectic, his importance lies primarily in his lucid demarcation of problems. Although he is known chiefly for his proofs for the existence of God, Anselm wrote penetratingly on other topics of philosophical interest. He developed a conception of ontological truth, “the truth of things,” which is their fulfillment of the relevant standard or ideal, and compared this with the

more usual conception of truth as limited to signification. From this he arrived at a single conception of truth as rightness perceptible to the mind alone, with God as the ultimate truth. His further explorations of some of the more subtle problems of signification have recently attracted interest. He also followed Augustine in elaborating a number of distinctions pertaining to the concept of ability and its relation to the problem of free choice.

Anselm was born at Aosta, in the Italian Alps, in 1033. He took up the life of a wandering scholar and eventually settled at the Norman monastery of Bec. There he was the disciple of the prior, Lanfranc, who engaged in controversies over the propriety and extent of the use of dialectic in religious matters. Anselm became a monk in 1060; by 1063 he was himself a prior, and in 1078, an abbot. From 1063 to 1093 he was thus the administrator and teacher of one of the model abbeys, and the practice of dialectic in the quiet of Bec must have been subtly different from its later practice in the noisy schools of Paris. It is worth noting that Anselm was an unusually humane medieval teacher, who objected to the popular assumption that frequent beatings have pedagogical value. During these years he wrote his celebrated works dealing with the existence of God, the *Monologion* and *Proslogion*; a semantical work, *On “Literate” (De grammatico)*; and studies of the nature of truth and of free choice, *On Truth (De veritate)*, *On Freedom of Choice (De libertate arbitrii)*, and *On the Fall of the Devil (De casu diaboli)*. In 1093 he was literally dragged into the office of archbishop of Canterbury, in which role he engaged in the investiture controversy with Kings William II and Henry I of England. Anselm persistently main-

tained the position that on clerical matters he must obey the pope, and his trials for what he called “the liberty of the Church” were long and wearisome. In spite of pastoral duties, journeys, and exiles, he wrote *Why God Became Man* (*Cur Deus Homo*), a number of theological treatises, and left unfinished a logical work that has been titled *On Power and Powerlessness, Possibility and Impossibility, Necessity and Liberty* (*De potestate et impotentia, possibilitate et impossibilitate, necessitate et libertate*). The character of the man can perhaps be seen in his reply to the report that he would soon die: “If it is His will I shall gladly obey, but if He should prefer me to stay with you just long enough to solve the question of the origin of the soul which I have been turning over in my mind, I would gratefully accept the chance, for I doubt whether anybody else will solve it when I am gone.”<sup>1</sup> He was canonized in 1494.

The first selection is drawn from the *Monologion*, in which Anselm offers several arguments—depending, he tells us, on reason alone, at the request of his monks—for the conclusion that there is a best and greatest being that does not derive its goodness and greatness from any source external to itself. These

arguments set forth only the beginning of a complicated chain of reasoning that Anselm pursues in the *Monologion* in his exploration of the divine nature, and he came to be dissatisfied with those arguments. It was not that he came to think they were bad arguments, that they failed to prove what he had hoped to prove; but he longed to find a single argument that would prove everything at once. The search for this single argument (really a single pattern or form of argument) became something of an obsession with him, and he tried, unsuccessfully, to put the idea out of his mind. At last the single argument came to him, and he set it forth in the *Proslogion*. This is the argument to which Kant gave the curiously unhelpful name “ontological argument”; it first appears in Chapter 2. Since, however, the whole point of the argument was to prove a wide range of conclusions about the divine nature, we have included the whole of the *Proslogion*, in which Anselm puts his formula, “that than which nothing greater can be thought,” to use in establishing many of the conclusions that he had reached piecemeal in the *Monologion*. Following the *Proslogion* is a “Reply on Behalf of the Fool,” written by a monk named Gaunilo, and Anselm’s reply to Gaunilo’s criticisms. It was Anselm himself who directed that Gaunilo’s reply and his own rejoinder always be appended to the *Proslogion*, so we have it on the best authority that the *Proslogion* is best understood when read in the light of Anselm’s exchange with Gaunilo.

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1. Quoted from M. Charlesworth, *St. Anselm’s Proslogion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 21.

## 14. Monologion

### Chapter 1

*That there is something that is best and greatest and supreme among all existing things*

If anyone does not know, either because he has not heard or because he does not believe, that there is one nature, supreme among all existing things, who alone is self-sufficient in his eternal happiness, who through his omnipotent goodness grants and brings it about that all other things exist or have any sort of well-being, and a great many other things that we must believe about God or his creation, I think he could at least convince himself of most of these things by reason alone, if he is even moderately intelligent.

There are many ways in which he could do this, but I shall set forth the one that I think would be easiest for him. After all, everyone desires to enjoy only those things that he thinks good. It is therefore easy for him to turn the eye of his mind sometimes toward investigating the source of the goodness of those things that he desires only because he judges that they are good. Then, with reason leading and him following, he will rationally advance toward those things of which he is irrationally ignorant. But if in this I say anything that a greater authority does not teach, I wish to be understood in this way: even if I present a conclusion as necessary on the basis of arguments that seem compelling to me, I mean only that it can *seem* necessary for the time being, not that it is therefore in fact altogether necessary.

So, then, someone might easily speak silently within himself in this way: Since there are countless goods, whose great diversity we both experience through our bodily senses and discern through the reasoning of our mind, are we to believe that there is some one thing through which all goods whatsoever are good? Or are

different goods good through different things? Indeed, to all who are willing to pay attention it is clear and quite certain that all things whatsoever that are said to be more or less or equally a certain way as compared to each other are said to be so through something that is not understood as different but rather as the same in diverse things, whether it is detected equally or unequally in them. For whatever just things are said to be equally or more or less just by comparison with other just things, they must be understood to be just through justice, which is not different in diverse things. Therefore, since it is certain that all goods, if they are compared to each other, are either equally or unequally good, it must be that they are all good through something that is understood to be the same in diverse good things, even though it seems that sometimes different goods are said to be good through different things.

For it seems that a horse is called good through one thing because it is strong and through another because it is fast. After all, though it seems that the horse is called good through its strength and good through its speed, it does not seem that strength is the same thing as speed. Yet if a horse is good because it is strong or fast, how is it that a strong and fast robber is bad? So instead, just as a strong and fast robber is bad because he is harmful, so too a strong and fast horse is good because it is useful. And indeed, nothing is ordinarily considered good except either because of some usefulness, as health and things that contribute to health are called good, or because of some intrinsic value, as beauty and things that contribute to beauty are regarded as good.

But since the argument we have already considered cannot be refuted in any way, it must also be the case that all useful or intrinsically valuable things, if they are genuinely good, are good through the very same thing—whatever that is—through which all goods must exist. Now who would doubt that this thing, through which all goods exist, is itself a great good? Therefore, he is good through himself, since every good exists through him. It follows, therefore,

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that all other things are good through something other than what they themselves are, and he alone is good through himself. Now no good that exists through another is equal to or greater than that good who is good through himself. And so only he who alone is good through himself is supremely good. For something is supreme if it surpasses others in such a way that it has neither peer nor superior. Now that which is supremely good is also supremely great. There is, therefore, some one thing that is supremely good and supremely great—in other words, supreme among all existing things.

## Chapter 2

### *On the same thing*

Now just as it has been found that there is something supremely good, since all good things are good through some one thing that is good through itself, in the same way it is inferred with necessity that there is something supremely great, since whatever great things exist are great through some one thing that is great through itself. Now I do not mean great in size, as a given body is great; rather, [I mean great in the sense] that the greater something is, the better or worthier it is, as wisdom is great. And since only what is supremely good can be supremely great, there must be something greatest and best, that is, supreme among all existing things.

## Chapter 3

### *That there is a certain nature through whom all existing things exist, and who exists through himself and is supreme among all existing things*

Furthermore, not only are all good things good through the same thing, and all great things great through the same thing, but it seems that all existing things exist through some one thing. For every existing thing exists either through something or through nothing. But nothing exists through nothing. For it is not so much

as conceivable that any existing thing does not exist through something. So whatever exists, exists through something. Since this is so, either there is one thing, or there are several things, through which all existing things exist.

Now if there are several, either they are traced back to some one thing through which they [all] exist, or each of them exists through itself, or they exist through each other. But if they exist through one thing, it is no longer true that all things exist through several things; rather, all things exist through that one thing through which the several things exist.

If, however, each of them exists through itself, there is surely some one power or nature of self-existing that they have in order to exist through themselves. And there is no doubt that they exist through this one thing through which they have self-existence. Therefore, all things exist more truly through that one thing than through the several things that cannot exist without that one thing.

Now no reasoning allows for several things to exist through each other, since it is irrational to think that something exists through that to which it gives existence. For not even relatives exist through each other in this way. For when a master and a slave stand in relation to each other, the men who stand in relation do not in any way exist through each other, and the relations by which they are related do not in any way exist through each other, since they exist through their subjects.

And so, since truth altogether rules out the possibility that there are several things through which all things exist, there must be one thing through which all existing things exist. Therefore, since all existing things exist through that one thing, undoubtedly that one thing exists through himself. So all other existing things exist through another; he alone exists through himself. Now whatever exists through another is less than the one through whom all other things exist and who alone exists through himself. Therefore, he who exists through himself exists most greatly of all things. So there is some one thing that alone exists most greatly and supremely of all things. Now he who exists most greatly of all things, and through whom exists whatever is good or great and whatever is anything at all, must be supremely

good, supremely great, and supreme among all existing things. Therefore, there is something (whether he is called an essence or a substance or a nature) that is best and greatest and supreme among all existing things.

## Chapter 4

### *On the same thing*

Moreover, if someone considers the natures of things, he cannot help realizing that they are not all of equal dignity; rather, some of them are on different and unequal levels. For anyone who doubts that a horse is by its very nature better than wood, and that a human being is more excellent than a horse, should not even be called a human being. Therefore, since it is undeniable that some natures are better than others, reason makes it no less obvious that one of them is so preeminent that he has no superior. For if this difference of levels is infinite—so that there is no level so high that an even higher level cannot be found—reason is brought to the conclusion that there is no limit to the multitude of these natures. But everyone thinks this is absurd—except for someone who is quite absurd himself. Therefore, there must be some nature that is so superior to any other thing or things that there is nothing to which he is inferior.

Now either the nature that is like this is the only one, or there are several like him and equal to him. Suppose they are several and equals. They cannot be equals through different things, but rather through the same thing. Now that one thing through which they are equally so great is either the very thing that they are—that is, their essence—or something other than what they are. Now if it is nothing other than their

essence, then just as their essences are not several but one, so also the natures are not several but one. For I am here understanding nature to be the same as essence. On the other hand, if that through which those several natures are so great is other than that which they themselves are, they are certainly less than that through which they are great. For whatever is great through another is less than that through which it is great. Therefore, they are not so great that there is nothing else greater than they are. So if it is not possible either through that which they are or through something else for there to be several natures than which nothing is more excellent, there can in no way be several such natures. So the only remaining possibility is that there is one and only one nature that is so superior to the others that he is inferior to none.

Now whatever is like this is the greatest and best of all existing things. So a certain nature exists that is supreme among all existing things. But this cannot be the case unless he is through himself what he is and all existing things are through him what they are. For reason showed a little earlier that he who exists through himself, and through whom all other things exist, is supreme among all existing things. Therefore, either (conversely) he who is supreme exists through himself and all other things exist through him, or there will be several supreme beings. But it is evident that there are not several supreme beings. Therefore, there is a certain nature or substance or essence who through himself is good and great and through himself is what he is; through whom exists whatever truly is good or great or anything at all; and who is the supreme good, the supreme great thing, the supreme being or subsistent, that is, supreme among all existing things.

# 15. Proslogion

## Chapter 1

### *A rousing of the mind to the contemplation of God*

Come now, insignificant mortal. Leave behind your concerns for a little while, and retreat for a short time from your restless thoughts. Cast off your burdens and cares; set aside your labor and toil. Just for a little while make room for God and rest a while in him. “Enter into the chamber” of your mind, shut out everything but God and whatever helps you to seek him, and seek him “behind closed doors.”<sup>1</sup> Speak now, my whole heart: say to God, “I seek your face; your face, Lord, do I seek.”<sup>2</sup>

Come now, O Lord my God. Teach my heart where and how to seek you, where and how to find you. Lord, if you are not here, where shall I seek you, since you are absent? But if you are everywhere, why do I not see you, since you are present? Truly “you dwell in unapproachable light.”<sup>3</sup> And where is this “unapproachable light”? How am I to approach an unapproachable light? Who will lead me into it, so that I can see you in it? And by what signs am I to seek you? Under what aspect? I have never seen you, O Lord my God; I do not know your face. What shall he do, O Lord Most High? What shall he do, this distant exile from you? What shall your servant do, deeply troubled by his love for you and “banished far from your face”?<sup>4</sup> He longs to see you, but your face is too far away from him. He desires to approach your presence, but your dwelling is unapproachable. He wants to find you, but he does not know where you are. He aspires to seek you, but he does not know your face. Lord, you are my

God, and you are my Lord, but I have never seen you. You have made me and remade me, you have given me every good thing that is mine, and still I do not know you. I was created so that I might see you, but I have not yet done what I was created to do.

How wretched human beings are! They have lost the very thing for which they were created. Hard and terrible was their fall! Alas! Think what they have lost and what they have found; think what they left behind and what they kept. They have lost the happiness for which they were created and found an unhappiness for which they were not created. They left behind the only source of happiness and kept what brings nothing but misery. Once “human beings ate the bread of angels,”<sup>5</sup> for which they now hunger; now they “eat the bread of sorrow,”<sup>6</sup> which once they did not know. Alas for the common lamentation of human beings, the universal outcry of the children of Adam! He was satisfied to the full; we sigh with hunger. He had everything he needed; we go begging. He happily possessed those things and abandoned them in misery; we unhappily do without them and miserably desire them, but alas, we remain empty handed. Why did he not preserve for us, as he could easily have done, what we so woefully lack? Why did he thus shut us out from the light and cover us with darkness? Why did he take away our life and inflict death upon us? What wretches we are! Think whence we have been cast out, whither we have been driven; thrown down from so great a height, and buried so deep. From our homeland into exile; from the vision of God into our blindness; from the joy of immortality into the bitterness and terror of death. What a wretched change! From such great good into such great evil! O woeful loss, woeful sorrow, all is woeful!

Alas, wretched man that I am, one of the wretched children of Eve, far from the presence of God. What have I undertaken, and what have I accomplished?

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1. Matt. 6:6.

2. Ps. 27:8 (= Vulgate 26:8).

3. 1 Tim. 6:16.

4. Ps. 51:11 (50:13).

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5. Ps. 78:25 (77:25).

6. Ps. 127:2 (126:2).

Where was I heading, and where have I come to? What was I reaching toward, and what do I long for? “I have sought the good,”<sup>7</sup> and “behold, confusion!”<sup>8</sup> I was heading for God but stumbled over myself. I sought rest in my solitude but “found trials and sorrow”<sup>9</sup> deep within. I wanted to laugh as my mind rejoiced, but I am forced to “cry out as my heart weeps.”<sup>10</sup> Joy was hoped for, but look where the sighs are closing in.

“How long, O Lord?”<sup>11</sup> How long, O Lord, will you forget us? How long will you turn your face from us?<sup>12</sup> When will you look favorably upon us and hear us? When will you “enlighten our eyes”<sup>13</sup> and show us your face?<sup>14</sup> When will you give yourself to us again? Look favorably upon us, O Lord; hear us, enlighten us, show yourself to us. Give yourself to us again, that it might go well for us; for without you it goes so badly for us. Take pity upon our toils and strivings after you, for without you we can do nothing. You call us; come to our aid. I beseech you, Lord: let me not sigh in despair, but let me breathe hopefully again. I beseech you, Lord: my heart is made bitter with its desolation; sweeten it with your consolation. I beseech you, Lord: in my hunger I began to seek you; let me not depart from you empty. I have come to you starving; let me not leave unsatisfied. I have come as a beggar to one who is rich, as a pitiful wretch to one who has pity; let me not go back penniless and despised. If indeed “I sigh before I eat,”<sup>15</sup> grant that I might eat after I sigh. Lord, I am bent double; I can only look down. Raise me up so that I can turn my gaze upwards. “My sins are heaped up over my head” and entangle me; “like a heavy burden” they weigh me down.<sup>16</sup> Extricate me;

7. Ps. 122:9 (121:9).

8. Jer. 14:19.

9. Ps. 116:3 (114:3).

10. Ps. 38:8 (37:9).

11. Ps. 6:3 (6:4).

12. Cf. Ps. 13:1 (12:1).

13. Cf. Ps. 13:3 (12:4).

14. Cf. Pss. 80:3,7,19 (79:4, 8, 20).

15. Job 3:24.

16. Ps. 38:4 (37:5).

lift my burdens, “lest like a pit they swallow me up.”<sup>17</sup> Let me look up at your light, whether from afar or from the depths. Teach me how to seek you, and show yourself to me when I seek. For I cannot seek you unless you teach me how, and I cannot find you unless you show yourself to me. Let me seek you in desiring you; let me desire you in seeking you. Let me find you in loving you; let me love you in finding you.

I acknowledge, Lord, and I thank you, that you have created in me this image of you so that I may remember you, think of you, and love you. Yet this image is so eroded by my vices, so clouded by the smoke of my sins, that it cannot do what it was created to do unless you renew and refashion it. I am not trying to scale your heights, Lord; my understanding is in no way equal to that. But I do long to understand your truth in some way, your truth which my heart believes and loves. For I do not seek to understand in order to believe; I believe in order to understand. For I also believe that “Unless I believe, I shall not understand.”<sup>18</sup>

*Chapter 2*

## Chapter 2

### *That God truly exists*

Therefore, Lord, you who grant understanding to faith, grant that, insofar as you know it is useful for me, I may understand that you exist as we believe you exist, and that you are what we believe you to be. Now we believe that you are something than which nothing greater can be thought. So can it be that no such nature exists, since “The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God”?”<sup>19</sup> But when this same fool hears me say “something than which nothing greater can be thought,” he surely understands what he hears; and

17. Ps. 69:15 (68: 16).

18. Cf. Isa. 7:9 in the Old Latin version: “Unless you believe, you will not understand.” Anselm is here indebted to Augustine, who frequently appealed to this verse in explaining his views on the relationship between faith and reason.

19. Pss. 14:1 (13:1); 53:1 (52:1).

what he understands exists in his understanding,<sup>20</sup> even if he does not understand that it exists [in reality]. For it is one thing for an object to exist in the understanding and quite another to understand that the object exists [in reality]. When a painter, for example, thinks out in advance what he is going to paint, he has it in his understanding, but he does not yet understand that it exists, since he has not yet painted it. But once he has painted it, he both has it in his understanding and understands that it exists because he has now painted it. So even the fool must admit that something than which nothing greater can be thought exists at least in his understanding, since he understands this when he hears it, and whatever is understood exists in the understanding. And surely that than which a greater cannot be thought cannot exist only in the understanding. For if it exists only in the understanding, it can be thought to exist in reality as well, which is greater. So if that than which a greater cannot be thought exists only in the understanding, then the very thing than which a greater *cannot* be thought is something than which a greater *can* be thought. But that is clearly impossible. Therefore, there is no doubt that something than which a greater cannot be thought exists both in the understanding and in reality.

### Chapter 3

*That he cannot be thought not to exist*

This [being] exists so truly that it cannot even be thought not to exist. For it is possible to think that something exists that cannot be thought not to exist, and such a being is greater than one that can be thought not to exist. Therefore, if that than which a greater cannot be thought can be thought not to exist, then that than which a greater cannot be thought is *not* that than which a greater cannot be thought; and

20. The word here translated 'understanding' is *intellectus*. The text would perhaps read better if I translated it as 'intellect,' but this would obscure the fact that it is from the same root as the verb *intelligere*, 'to understand.' Some of what Anselm says makes a bit more sense if this fact is constantly borne in mind.

this is a contradiction. So that than which a greater cannot be thought exists so truly that it cannot even be thought not to exist.

And this is you, O Lord our God. You exist so truly, O Lord my God, that you cannot even be thought not to exist. And rightly so, for if some mind could think something better than you, a creature would rise above the Creator and sit in judgment upon him, which is completely absurd. Indeed, everything that exists, except for you alone, can be thought not to exist. So you alone among all things have existence most truly, and therefore most greatly; for whatever else exists has existence less truly, and therefore less greatly. So then why did "the fool say in his heart, 'There is no God,'" when it is so evident to the rational mind that you among all beings exist most greatly? Why indeed, except because he is stupid and a fool?

### Chapter 4

*How the fool said in his heart  
what cannot be thought*

But how has he said in his heart what he could not think? Or how could he not think what he said in his heart, since to say in one's heart is the same as to think? But if he really—or rather, *since* he really—thought this, because he said it in his heart, and did not say it in his heart, because he could not think it, there must be more than one way in which something is "said in one's heart" or "thought." In one way, to think a thing is to think the word that signifies that thing. But in another way, it is to understand what the thing is. God can be thought not to exist in the first way, but not at all in the second way. No one who understands what God is can think that God does not exist, although he may say these words in his heart with no signification at all, or with some peculiar signification. For God is that than which a greater cannot be thought. Whoever understands this properly, understands that this being exists in such a way that he cannot, even in thought, fail to exist. So whoever understands that God exists in this way cannot think that he does not exist.

Thanks be to you, my good Lord, thanks be to you. For what I once believed through your grace, I now understand through your illumination, so that even if

I did not want to *believe* that you exist, I could not fail to *understand* that you exist.

## Chapter 5

*That God is whatever it is better to be than not to be; and that he alone exists through himself and makes all other things from nothing*

Then what are you, Lord God, than which nothing greater can be thought? What are you, if not the greatest of all beings, who alone exists through himself and made all other things from nothing? For whatever is not this is less than the greatest that can be thought, but this cannot be thought of you. What good is missing from the supreme good, through which every good thing exists? And so you are just, truthful, happy, and whatever it is better to be than not to be. For it is better to be just than unjust, and better to be happy than unhappy.

## Chapter 6

*How God can perceive even though he is not a body*

Now it is better to be percipient, omnipotent, merciful, and impassible than not. But how can you perceive if you are not a body? How can you be omnipotent if you cannot do everything? How can you be both merciful and impassible? If only corporeal things can perceive, because the senses exist in a body and are directed toward bodies, then how can you perceive? For you are not a body but the highest spirit, which is better than any body.

But if to perceive is just to know, or is aimed at knowledge—for whoever perceives knows according to the appropriate sense, as, for example, we know colors through sight and flavors through taste—then it is not inappropriate to say that whatever in some way knows also in some way perceives. Therefore, Lord, although you are not a body, you are indeed supremely percipient in the sense that you supremely know all things, not in the sense in which an animal knows things through its bodily senses.

## Chapter 7

*In what sense God is omnipotent even though there are many things he cannot do*

But how are you omnipotent if you cannot do everything?<sup>21</sup> And how can you do everything if you cannot be corrupted, or lie, or cause what is true to be false (as, for example, to cause what has been done not to have been done), or many other such things?

Or is the ability to do these things not power but weakness? For someone who can do these things can do what is not beneficial to himself and what he ought not to do. And the more he can do these things, the more power misfortune and wickedness have over him, and the less he has over them. So whoever can do these things can do them, not in virtue of his power but in virtue of his weakness. So when we say that he “can” do these things, it is not because he has the power to do them, but because his weakness gives something else power over him. Or else it is some other manner of speaking, such as we often use in speaking loosely. For example, we sometimes say ‘to be’ instead of ‘not to be,’ or ‘to do’ instead of ‘not to do’ or ‘to do nothing.’ For often when someone denies that something exists, we say “It is as you say it is”; but it would seem more correct to say “It is not as you say it is not.” Again, we say “This man is sitting just as that man is doing” or “This man is resting just as that man is doing”; but to sit is not to do anything, and to rest is to do nothing. In the same way, then, when someone is said to have the “power” to do or suffer something that is not beneficial to himself or that he ought not to do, by ‘power’ we really mean ‘weakness.’ For the more he has this “power,” the more power misfortune and wickedness have over him, and the less he has over

21. This chapter is full of word play in the Latin that does not all come across in English. The words for ‘power’ (*potentia*), ‘weakness’ (*impotentia*), and various forms of the verb ‘can’ (*posse*)—also translated here as ‘have power’—all share a common stem. And the word for ‘omnipotent’ (*omnipotens*) means literally “able to do everything” (*omnia potens*).

them. Therefore, Lord God, you are all the more truly omnipotent because you can do nothing through weakness, and nothing has power over you.

## Chapter 8

### *How God is both merciful and impassible*

But how are you both merciful and impassible? For if you are impassible, you do not feel compassion, and if you do not feel compassion, your heart is not sorrowful out of compassion for sorrow; and that is what being merciful is.<sup>22</sup> But if you are not merciful, how is it that you are such a comfort to the sorrowful?

So how, Lord, are you both merciful and not merciful? Is it not because you are merciful in relation to us but not in relation to yourself? You are indeed merciful according to what we feel, but not according to what you feel. For when you look with favor upon us in our sorrow, we feel the effect [*effectum*] of mercy, but you do not feel the emotion [*affectum*] of mercy. So you are merciful, because you save the sorrowful and spare those who sin against you; but you are also not merciful, because you are not afflicted with any feeling of compassion for sorrow.

## Chapter 9

### *How the one who is completely and supremely just spares the wicked and justly has mercy on them*

But how do you spare the wicked if you are completely and supremely just? For how does the one who is completely and supremely just do something that is not just? And what sort of justice is it to give everlasting life to someone who deserves eternal death? How then, O good God, good to the good and to the wicked, how do you save the wicked if this is not just and you do not do anything that is not just?

Or, since your goodness is incomprehensible, does this lie hidden in the unapproachable light in which

you dwell?<sup>23</sup> It is indeed in the highest and most secret place of your goodness that the spring is hidden whence the river of your mercy flows. For although you are totally and supremely just, you are nonetheless kind even to the wicked, since you are totally and supremely good. After all, you would be less good if you were not kind to any wicked person. For one who is good both to the good and to the wicked is better than one who is good only to the good, and one who is good to the wicked both in punishing and in sparing them is better than one who is good only in punishing them. So it follows that you are merciful precisely because you are totally and supremely good. And while it may be easy to see why you repay the good with good and the evil with evil, one must certainly wonder why you, who are totally just and lack for nothing, give good things to your evil and guilty creatures.

O God, how exalted is your goodness! We can see the source of your mercy, and yet we cannot discern it clearly. We know whence the river flows, but we do not see the spring from which it issues. For it is out of the fullness of goodness that you are kind to sinners, while the reason why you are lies hidden in the heights of goodness. True, out of goodness you repay the good with good and the evil with evil, but the very nature of justice seems to demand this. When you give good things to the wicked, however, one knows that he who is supremely good willed to do this, and yet one wonders why he who is supremely just could have willed such a thing.

O mercy, from what rich sweetness and sweet richness you flow forth for us! O immeasurable goodness of God, how intensely ought sinners to love you! You save the just whom justice commends and set free those whom justice condemns. The just are saved with the help of their merits, sinners despite their merits. The just are saved because you look upon the good things you have given them, sinners because you overlook the evil things you hate. O immeasurable goodness that thus "surpasses all understanding!"<sup>24</sup> Let the mercy that proceeds from your great riches come

22. In Latin, "sorrowful heart" is *miserum cor*; 'merciful' is *misericors*.

23. 1 Tim. 6:16.

24. Phil. 4:7.

upon me. Let that which flows forth from you flow over me. Spare me through your mercy, lest you exact retribution through your justice. For even if it is difficult to understand how your mercy coexists with your justice, one must nonetheless believe that it is in no way opposed to justice, because it flows out of your goodness, and there is no goodness apart from justice—indeed, goodness is actually in harmony with justice. In fact, if you are merciful because you are supremely good, and supremely good only because you are supremely just, then you are indeed merciful precisely because you are supremely just. Help me, O just and merciful God, whose light I seek, help me to understand what I am saying. You are indeed merciful because you are just.

So, then, is your mercy born of your justice? Do you spare the wicked because of your justice? If it is so, Lord, if it is so, teach me how it is so. Is it because it is just for you to be so good that you cannot be understood to be better, and to act so powerfully that you cannot be thought to act more powerfully? For what could be more just than this? And this would certainly not be the case if you were good only in punishing and not in sparing, and if you made only those not yet good to be good and did not do this also for the wicked. And so it is in this sense just that you spare the wicked and make them good. And finally, what is not done justly should not be done, and what should not be done is done unjustly. So if it were not just for you to be merciful to the wicked, you should not be merciful; and if you should not be merciful, you would act unjustly in being merciful. But since it is wrong to say this, it is right to believe that you act justly in being merciful to the wicked.

## Chapter 10

### *How God justly punishes and justly spares the wicked*

But it is also just for you to punish the wicked. For what could be more just than for the good to receive good things and the wicked bad things? So how is it both just that you punish the wicked and just that you spare the wicked?

Or do you justly punish the wicked in one way and justly spare them in another? For when you punish the

wicked, this is just, because it accords with their merits; but when you spare the wicked, this is just, not because it is in keeping with their merits, but because it is in keeping with your goodness. In sparing the wicked you are just in relation to yourself but not in relation to us, in the same way that you are merciful in relation to us but not in relation to yourself. Thus, in saving us whom you might justly destroy, you are merciful, not because you experience any emotion, but because we experience the effect of your mercy; and in the same way, you are just, not because you give us our due, but because you do what is fitting for you who are supremely good. And so in this way you justly punish and justly pardon without any inconsistency.

## Chapter 11

### *How “all the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth,” and yet “the Lord is just in all his ways”*

But is it not also just in relation to yourself, O Lord, for you to punish the wicked? It is certainly just for you to be so just that you cannot be thought to be more just. And you would by no means be so just if you only repaid the good with good and did not repay the wicked with evil. For one who treats both the good and the wicked as they deserve is more just than one who does so only for the good. Therefore, O just and benevolent God, it is just in relation to you both when you punish and when you pardon. Thus indeed “all the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth,”<sup>25</sup> and yet “the Lord is just in all his ways.”<sup>26</sup> And there is no inconsistency here, for it is not just for those to be saved whom you will to punish, and it is not just for those to be condemned whom you will to spare. For only what you will is just, and only what you do not will is not just. Thus your mercy is born of your justice, since it is just for you to be so good that you are good even in sparing the wicked. And perhaps this is why the one who is supremely just can will good things for the wicked. But even if one can somehow grasp why you can will to save the wicked, certainly no reasoning can

25. Ps. 25:10 (24:10).

26. Ps. 145:17 (144:17).

comprehend why, from those who are alike in wickedness, you save some rather than others through your supreme goodness and condemn some rather than others through your supreme justice.

Thus you are indeed percipient, omnipotent, merciful, and impassible, just as you are living, wise, good, happy, eternal, and whatever it is better to be than not to be.

## Chapter 12

*That God is the very life by which he lives,  
and so on for similar attributes*

But clearly, you are whatever you are, not through anything else, but through yourself. Therefore, you are the very life by which you live, the wisdom by which you are wise, and the very goodness by which you are good to the good and to the wicked, and so on for similar attributes.

## Chapter 13

*How he alone is unbounded and eternal, although  
other spirits are unbounded and eternal*

Everything that is at all enclosed in a place or a time is less than that which is not restrained by any law of place or time. Therefore, since nothing is greater than you, you are not confined to any place or time; you exist everywhere and always. Since this can be said of you alone, you alone are unbounded and eternal. So how can other spirits also be said to be unbounded and eternal?

And indeed you alone are eternal, because you alone of all beings do not cease to exist, just as you do not begin to exist. But how are you alone unbounded? Is it that a created spirit is bounded compared to you but unbounded compared to a body? Surely something is completely bounded if, when it is in one place, it cannot at the same time be somewhere else. This is true only of bodies. On the other hand, something is unbounded if it is wholly everywhere at once, and this is true of you alone. But something is both bounded and unbounded if, when it is wholly in one

place, it can at the same time be wholly in another place but not everywhere; and this is true of created spirits. For if the soul were not present as a whole in each part of its body, it would not as a whole sense each part. Therefore, Lord, you are uniquely unbounded and eternal, and yet other spirits are also unbounded and eternal.

## Chapter 14

*How and why God is both seen and  
not seen by those who seek him*

Have you found what you were seeking, O my soul? You were seeking God, and you have found that he is the highest of all beings, than which nothing better can be thought; that he is life itself, light, wisdom, goodness, eternal happiness and happy eternity; and that he exists always and everywhere. If you have not found your God, how is he the one whom you have found, whom you have understood with such certain truth and true certainty? But if you have found him, why do you not perceive what you have found? Why does my soul not perceive you, O Lord God, if it has found you?

Or has it not found him whom it found to be light and truth? For how did it understand this, if not by seeing that light and truth? Could it have understood anything at all about you except by "your light and your truth"?<sup>27</sup> Therefore, if it has seen the light and the truth, it has seen you. If it has not seen you, it has not seen the light or the truth. Or perhaps it was indeed the light and the truth that it saw, but it has not yet seen you, because it saw you only in part and did not see you as you really are.<sup>28</sup>

O Lord my God, you who have fashioned and refashioned me, tell my longing soul what you are besides what it has seen, that it might see purely what it longs to see. It strives to see more, but beyond what it has already seen it sees nothing but darkness. Or rather, it does not see darkness, for in you there is no darkness;<sup>29</sup> it sees that it cannot see more because of

27. Ps. 43:3 (42:3).

28. Cf. 1 John 3:2.

29. Cf. 1 John 1:5.

its own darkness. Why is this, Lord, why is this? Is its eye darkened by its own infirmity, or is it dazzled by your splendor? Surely it is both darkened in itself and dazzled by you. Indeed it is both obscured by its own littleness and overwhelmed by your vastness. Truly it is both pinched by its own narrowness and vanquished by your fullness. How great is that light, for from it flashes every truth that enlightens the rational mind! How full is that truth, for in it is everything that is true, and outside it is only nothingness and falsehood! How vast it is, for in one glance it sees all created things, and it sees by whom and through whom and how they were created from nothing! What purity, what simplicity, what certainty and splendor are there! Truly it is more than any creature can understand.

## → Chapter 15

*That God is greater than can be thought*

Therefore, Lord, you are not merely that than which a greater cannot be thought; you are something greater than can be thought. For since it is possible to think that such a being exists, then if you are not that being, it is possible to think something greater than you. But that is impossible.

## Chapter 16

*That this is the unapproachable light in which he dwells*

Truly, Lord, this is the unapproachable light in which you dwell.<sup>30</sup> For surely there is no other being that can penetrate this light so that it might see you there. Indeed, the reason that I do not see it is that it is too much for me. And yet whatever I do see, I see through it, just as a weak eye sees what it sees by the light of the sun, although it cannot look at that light directly in the sun itself. My understanding cannot see that light. It is too dazzling; my understanding does not grasp it,

30. Cf. 1 Tim. 6:16.

and the eye of my soul cannot bear to look into it for long. It is dazzled by its splendor, vanquished by its fullness, overwhelmed by its vastness, perplexed by its extent. O supreme and unapproachable light, O complete and blessed truth, how far you are from me while I am so close to you! How far you are from my sight while I am so present to yours! You are wholly present everywhere, and yet I do not see you. “In you I move and in you I have my being,”<sup>31</sup> and yet I cannot approach your presence. You are within me and all around me, and yet I do not perceive you.

## Chapter 17

*That in God there is harmony, fragrance, savor, softness, and beauty in his own ineffable way*

Still, O Lord, you are hidden from my soul in your light and happiness, and so it still lives in its darkness and misery. It looks around, but it does not see your beauty. It listens, but it does not hear your harmony. It smells, but it does not perceive your fragrance. It tastes, but it does not know your savor. It touches, but it does not sense your softness. For you have these qualities in you, O Lord God, in your own ineffable way; and you have given them in their own perceptible way to the things you created. But the senses of my soul have been stiffened, dulled, and obstructed by the longstanding weakness of sin.

## Chapter 18

*That there are no parts in God or in his eternity, which he himself is*

Once again, “behold, confusion!”<sup>32</sup> Behold, once again mourning and sorrow stand in the way of one seeking joy and happiness. My soul hoped for satisfaction, and once again it is overwhelmed by need. I tried to eat my fill, but I hunger all the more. I strove

31. Cf. Acts 17:28.

32. Jer. 14:19.

to rise to the light of God, but I fell back down into my own darkness. Indeed, I did not merely fall into it; I find myself entangled in it. I fell before “my mother conceived me.”<sup>33</sup> I was indeed conceived in darkness; I was born enshrouded in darkness. Truly, we all fell long ago in him “in whom we all sinned.”<sup>34</sup> In him, who easily possessed it and wickedly lost it for himself and for us, we all lost what we desire to seek but do not know; what we seek but do not find; what we find but is not what we sought. Help me “because of your goodness, O Lord.”<sup>35</sup> I have sought your face; your face, Lord, will I seek. Turn not your face from me.”<sup>36</sup> Lift me up from myself to you. Cleanse, heal, sharpen, “enlighten the eye”<sup>37</sup> of my soul so that I may look upon you. Let my soul gather its strength, and let it once more strive with all its understanding to reach you, O Lord.

What are you, Lord, what are you? What shall my heart understand you to be? Surely you are life, you are wisdom, you are truth, you are goodness, you are happiness, you are eternity, and you are every true good. These are many things; my narrow understanding cannot see so many things in one glance and delight in all of them at once. How then, Lord, are you all these things? Are they parts of you? Or rather, is not each of them all that you are? For whatever is composed of parts is not completely one. It is in some sense a plurality and not identical with itself, and it can be broken up either in fact or at least in the understanding. But such characteristics are foreign to you, than whom nothing better can be thought. Therefore, there are no parts in you, Lord, and you are not a plurality. Instead, you are so much a unity, so much identical with yourself, that you are in no respect dissimilar to yourself. You are in fact unity itself; you cannot be divided by any understanding. Therefore, life and wisdom and the rest are not parts of you; they are all one. Each of them is all of what you are, and each is what

33. Ps. 51:5 (50:7).

34. Rom. 5:12.

35. Ps. 25:7 (24:7).

36. Ps. 27:8–9 (26:8–9).

37. Ps. 13:3 (12:4).

the rest are. And since you have no parts, and neither does your eternity, which you yourself are, it follows that no part of you or of your eternity exists at a certain place or time. Instead, you exist as a whole everywhere, and your eternity exists as a whole always.

## Chapter 19

*That God is not in a place or a time,  
but all things are in him*

But if by your eternity you have been, and are, and will be, and if to have been is not the same as to be in the future, and to be is not the same as to have been or to be in the future, then how does your eternity exist as a whole always?

Is it that nothing of your eternity is in the past in such a way that it no longer exists, and nothing is in the future as if it did not exist already? So it is not the case that yesterday you were and tomorrow you will be; rather, yesterday, today, and tomorrow you *are*. In fact, it is not even the case that yesterday, today, and tomorrow you *are*; rather, you *are* in an unqualified sense, outside time altogether. Yesterday, today, and tomorrow are merely in time. But you, although nothing exists without you, do not exist in a place or a time; rather, all things exist in you. For nothing contains you, but you contain all things.

## Chapter 20

*That he is before and beyond even all eternal things*

Therefore you fill and embrace all things; you are before and beyond all things. And indeed you are before all things, since before they came into being, you already *are*.<sup>38</sup> But how are you beyond all things? In what way are you beyond those things that will have no end?

Is it because they can in no way exist without you, whereas you do not exist any less even if they return to nothingness? For in this way you are in a certain

38. Cf. Ps. 90:2 (89:2).

sense beyond them. And is it also because they can be thought to have an end, whereas you cannot at all? Thus they do in one sense have an end, but you do not in any sense. And certainly what does not in any sense have an end is beyond what does in some sense come to an end. And do you not also surpass even all eternal things in that both your and their eternity is wholly present to you, whereas they do not yet possess the part of their eternity that is yet to come, just as they no longer possess the part that is past? In this way you are indeed always beyond them, because you are always present somewhere they have not yet arrived—or because it is always present to you.

### Chapter 21

*Whether this is “the age of the age”  
or “the ages of the ages”*

So is this ‘the age of the age’ or ‘the ages of the ages’? For just as an age of time contains all temporal things, so your eternity contains even the very ages of time. This eternity is indeed ‘an age’ because of its indivisible unity, but it is ‘ages’ because of its boundless greatness. And although you are so great, Lord, that all things are full of you and are in you, nonetheless you have no spatial extension, so that there is no middle or half or any other part in you.

### Chapter 22

*That he alone is what he is and who he is*

Therefore, you alone, Lord, are what you are; and you are who you are. For whatever is one thing as a whole and something else in its parts, and whatever has in it something changeable, is not entirely what it is. And whatever began to exist out of non-existence and can be thought not to exist, and returns to non-existence unless it subsists through some other being; and whatever has a past that no longer exists and a future that does not yet exist: that thing does not exist in a strict and absolute sense. But you are what you are, since whatever you are in any way or at any time, you are wholly and always that.

And you are the one who exists in a strict and unqualified sense, because you have no past and no future but only a present, and you cannot be thought not to exist at any time. And you are life and light and wisdom and happiness and eternity and many such good things; and yet you are nothing other than the one supreme good, utterly self-sufficient, needing nothing, whom all things need for their being and their well-being.

### Chapter 23

*That this good is equally Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and that this is the “one necessary thing,”  
which is the complete, total, and only good*

This good is you, O God the Father; it is your Word, that is to say, your Son. For there cannot be anything other than what you are, or anything greater or less than you, in the Word by which you utter yourself. For your Word is as true as you are truthful, and therefore he is the same truth that you are and no other. And you are so simple that nothing can be born of you that is other than what you are. And this good is the one love that is shared by you and your Son; that is, the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from you both. For this love is not unequal to you or to your Son, since you love yourself and him, and he loves himself and you, as much as you and he are. Moreover, the one who is equal to both you and him is not other than you and him; nothing can proceed from the supreme simplicity that is other than that from which it proceeds. Thus, whatever each of you is individually, that is what the whole Trinity is together, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; for each of you individually is nothing other than the supremely simple unity and the supremely united simplicity, which cannot be multiplied or different from itself.

“Moreover, one thing is necessary.”<sup>39</sup> And this is that one necessary thing, in which is all good—or rather, which is itself the complete, one, total, and unique good.

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39. Luke 10:42.

## Chapter 24

*A conjecture as to what sort of good  
this is, and how great it is*

(3x6.2)  
Bestir yourself, O my soul! Lift up your whole understanding, and consider as best you can what sort of good this is, and how great it is. For if particular goods are delightful, consider intently how delightful is that good which contains the joyfulness of all goods—and not such joyfulness as we have experienced in created things, but as different from that as the Creator differs from the creature. If created life is good, how good is the life that creates? If the salvation that has been brought about is joyful, how joyful is the salvation that brings about all salvation? If wisdom in the knowledge of created things is desirable, how desirable is the wisdom that created all things from nothing? In short, if there are many and great delights in delightful things, what kind and how great a delight is there in him who made those delightful things?

## Chapter 25

*What great goods there are for  
those who enjoy this good*

O those who enjoy this good: what will be theirs, and what will not be theirs! Truly they will have everything they want and nothing they do not want. There will be such goods of both body and soul that “neither eye has seen nor ear heard nor the human heart”<sup>40</sup> conceived. So why are you wandering through many things, you insignificant mortal, seeking the goods of your soul and of your body? Love the one good, in which are all good things, and that is enough. Desire the simple good, which is the complete good, and that is enough. What do you love, O my flesh? What do you long for, O my soul? It is there; whatever you love, whatever you long for, it is there.

If it is beauty that delights you, “the righteous will shine like the sun.”<sup>41</sup> If it is swiftness, or strength, or

the freedom of a body that nothing can withstand, “they will be like the angels of God”;<sup>42</sup> for “it is sown an animal body, but it will rise a spiritual body,”<sup>43</sup> with a power that is not from nature. If it is a long and healthy life, there is a healthy eternity and eternal health, for “the righteous will live for ever”<sup>44</sup> and “the salvation of the righteous is from the Lord.”<sup>45</sup> If it is satisfaction, “they will be satisfied when the glory of God has appeared.”<sup>46</sup> If it is drunkenness, “they will be drunk with the abundance of the house”<sup>47</sup> of God. If it is music, there the choirs of angels sing unceasingly to God. If it is some pleasure, not impure but pure, God “will give them to drink from the torrent of his pleasure.”<sup>48</sup> If it is wisdom, the very wisdom of God will show itself to them. If it is friendship, they will love God more than themselves and one another as themselves, and God will love them more than they do themselves; for they will love God and themselves and one another through God, and God will love himself and them through himself. If it is concord, everyone will have but one will, for there will be no will among them but the will of God. If it is power, they will be omnipotent through their wills, just as God is through his. For just as God can do what he wills through himself, so they will be able to do what they will through God; for just as they will only what God wills, so he will will whatever they will—and what he wills cannot fail to be. If it is wealth and honor, God will set his good and faithful servants over many things;<sup>49</sup> indeed, they will be called, and will truly be, “sons of God”<sup>50</sup> and “gods.”<sup>51</sup> And where his Son is, there they too will

40. 1 Cor. 2:9.

41. Matt. 13:43.

42. Matt. 22:30.

43. 1 Cor. 15:44.

44. Ws 5:16.

45. Ps. 37:39 (36:39). The word for ‘salvation’ (*salus*) is the same as the word for ‘health.’

46. Ps. 17:13 (16:15).

47. Ps. 36:8 (35:9).

48. Ibid.

49. Cf. Matt. 25:21, 23.

50. Matt. 5:9.

51. Ps. 82:6 (81:6); John 10:34.

be, “heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.”<sup>52</sup> If it is true security, they will be certain that they will never in any way lose this security—or rather, this good: just as they will be certain that they will never give it up of their own accord, and that the loving God will never take it away against their will from those who love him, and that nothing more powerful than God will separate them from God against their will.

What great joy is there where so great a good is present! O human heart, O needy heart, heart that has known troubles, that is indeed overwhelmed by troubles: how greatly would you rejoice if you abounded in all these things! Ask your inmost self whether it can even comprehend its joy at such great happiness. And yet surely if someone else whom you loved in every respect as yourself had that same happiness, your joy would be doubled, for you would rejoice no less for him than for yourself. And if two or three or many more had that same happiness, you would rejoice as much for each of them as you would for yourself, if you loved each one as yourself. Therefore, in that perfect charity of countless happy angels and human beings, where no one will love anyone else less than he loves himself, each one will rejoice for each of the others just as he does for himself. If, then, the human heart will scarcely comprehend its own joy from so great a good, how will it be able to contain so many and such great joys? And indeed, since the more one loves someone, the more one rejoices in his good, it follows that, just as everyone in that perfect happiness will love God incomparably more than himself and all others with him, so everyone will rejoice inconceivably more in God’s happiness than in his own, or in that of everyone else with him. But if they love God so much with “their whole heart, mind, and soul”<sup>53</sup> that their whole heart, mind, and soul are too small for the greatness of their love, they will truly rejoice so much with their whole heart, mind, and soul that their whole heart, mind, and soul will be too small for the fullness of their joy.

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52. Rom. 8:17.

53. Matt. 22:37.

## Chapter 26

### *Whether this is the “fullness of joy” that the Lord promises*

My God and my Lord, my hope and the joy of my heart, tell my soul whether this is that joy of which you tell us through your Son, “Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full.”<sup>54</sup> For I have found a joy that is full and more than full. Indeed, when the heart, the mind, the soul, and the whole human being are filled with that joy, there will still remain joy beyond measure. The whole of that joy will therefore not enter into those who rejoice; instead, those who rejoice will enter wholly into that joy. Speak, Lord, tell your servant inwardly in his heart whether this is the joy into which your servants will enter who “enter into the joy of the Lord.”<sup>55</sup> But surely the joy with which your chosen ones will rejoice is something “no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the human heart.”<sup>56</sup> Therefore, Lord, I have not yet expressed or conceived how greatly your blessed ones will rejoice. They will indeed rejoice as much as they love, and they will love as much as they know. How much will they know you then, Lord, and how much will they love you? Truly in this life “eye has not seen, nor has ear heard, nor has it entered into the human heart” how much they will love and know you in that life.

O God, I pray that I will know and love you that I might rejoice in you. And if I cannot do so fully in this life, I pray that I might grow day by day until my joy comes to fullness. Let the knowledge of you grow in me here, and there let it be full. Let your love grow in me here, and there let it be full, so that my joy here is great in hope, and my joy there is full in reality. O Lord, by your Son you command us—or rather, you counsel us—to ask, and you promise that we will receive,<sup>57</sup> that our joy may be full.<sup>58</sup> Lord, I ask what you

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54. John 16:24.

55. Matt. 25:21.

56. 1 Cor. 2:9.

57. Matt. 7:7.

58. Cf. John 16:24.

counsel us through our “Wonderful Counselor.”<sup>59</sup> Let me receive what you promise through your truth, that my joy may be full. O truthful God, I ask that I may receive, that my joy may be full. Until then, let my mind ponder on it, my tongue speak of it. Let my heart love it and my mouth proclaim it. Let my soul hunger for it, my flesh thirst for it, my whole being long for it, until I “enter into the joy of my Lord,”<sup>60</sup> who is God, Three in One, “blessed for ever. Amen.”<sup>61</sup>

### Gaunilo’s Reply on Behalf of the Fool

[1] Someone who either doubts or denies that there is any such nature as that than which nothing greater can be thought is told that its existence is proved in the following way. First, the very person who denies or entertains doubts about this being has it in his understanding, since when he hears it spoken of he understands what is said. Further, what he understands must exist in reality as well and not only in the understanding. The argument for this claim goes like this: to exist in reality is greater than to exist only in the understanding. Now if that being exists only in the understanding, then whatever also exists in reality is greater than it. Thus, that which is greater than everything else<sup>62</sup> will be less than something and not greater than everything else, which is of course a contradiction. And so that which is greater than everything else, which has already been proved to exist in the understanding, must exist not only in the understanding but also in reality, since otherwise it could not be greater than everything else.

He can perhaps reply:

[2] “The only reason this is said to exist in my understanding is that I understand what is said. But in the

59. Isa. 9:6.

60. Matt. 25:21.

61. Rom. 1:25.

62. Gaunilo regularly says “*maius omnibus*,” which literally translated is “greater than everything.” English idiom demands “greater than everything else,” and I have translated it accordingly, but I thought it important to note the discrepancy.

same way, could I not also be said to have in my understanding any number of false things that have no real existence at all in themselves, since if someone were to speak of them I would understand whatever he said? Unless perhaps it is established that this being is such that it cannot be had in thought in the same way that any false or doubtful things can, and so I am not said to think of what I have heard or to have it in my thought, but to understand it and have it in my understanding, since I cannot think of it in any other way except by understanding it, that is, by comprehending in genuine knowledge the fact that it actually exists.

“But first of all, if this were true, there would be no difference in this case between having the thing in the understanding at one time and then later understanding that the thing exists, as there is in the case of a painting, which exists first in the mind of the painter and then in the finished work.

“Furthermore, it is nearly impossible to believe that this being, once someone had heard it spoken of, cannot be thought not to exist, in just the same way that even God can be thought not to exist. For if that were so, why bother with all this argument against someone who denies or doubts that such a nature exists?

“Finally, it must be proved to me by some unassailable argument that this being merely needs to be thought in order for the understanding to perceive with complete certainty that it undoubtedly exists. It is not enough to tell me that it exists in my understanding because I understand it when I hear about it. I still think I could likewise have any number of other doubtful or even false things in my understanding if I heard them spoken of by someone whose words I understand, and especially if I am so taken in by him that, as often happens, I believe him—as I still do not believe in that being.

[3] “Accordingly, that example of the painter, who already has in his understanding the picture that he is going to paint, is not a close enough analogy to support this argument. For before that picture is painted, it is contained in the craft of the painter, and any such thing in the craft of a craftsman is nothing but a part of his intelligence. For, as Saint Augustine says, ‘when a carpenter is about to make a chest in reality, he first has it in his craft. The chest that exists in reality is not

a living thing, but the chest that exists in his craft is a living thing, since the soul of the craftsman, in which all those things exist before they are produced, is alive.<sup>63</sup> Now how can they be living things in the living soul of the craftsman unless they are nothing other than the knowledge or intelligence of his soul itself? By contrast, except for things that are recognized as belonging to the nature of the mind itself, when the understanding upon hearing or thinking of something perceives that it is true, that truth is undoubtedly distinct from the understanding that grasps it. So even if it is true that there is something than which a greater cannot be thought, that thing, when it is heard and understood, is not the same sort of thing as a picture that exists in the understanding of the painter before it is painted.

[4] “There is a further argument, which I mentioned earlier. When I hear someone speak of that which is greater than everything else that can be thought (which, it is alleged, can be nothing other than God himself), I can no more think of it or have it in my understanding in terms of anything whose genus or species I already know, than I can think of God himself—and indeed, for this very reason I can also think of God as not existing. For I do not know the thing itself, and I cannot form an idea of it on the basis of something like it, since you yourself claim that it is so great that nothing else could be like it. Now if I heard something said about a man I do not know at all, whose very existence is unknown to me, I could think of him in accordance with that very thing that a man is, on the basis of that knowledge of genus or species by which I know what a man is or what men are. Nonetheless, it could happen that the one who spoke of this man was lying, and so the man whom I thought of would not exist. But I would still be thinking of him on the basis of a real thing: not what that particular man would be, but what any given man is.

“But when I hear someone speak of ‘God’ or ‘something greater than everything else,’ I cannot have it in my thought or understanding in the same way as this false thing. I was able to think of the false thing on the basis of some real thing that I actually knew. But in the

case of God, I can think of him only on the basis of the word; and one can seldom or never think of any true thing solely on the basis of a word. For in thinking of something solely on the basis of a word, one does not think so much of the word itself (which is at least a real thing: the sound of letters or syllables) as of the signification of the word that is heard. And in the present case, one does not do this as someone who knows what is customarily signified by the word and thinks of it on the basis of a thing that is real at least in thought. Instead, one thinks of it as someone who does not know the meaning of the word, who thinks only of the impression made on his mind by hearing the word and tries to imagine its signification. It would be surprising if one ever managed to reach the truth about something in this way. Therefore, when I hear and understand someone saying that there exists something greater than everything else that can be thought, it is in this way, and this way only, that it is present in my understanding. So much, then, for the claim that that supreme nature already exists in my understanding.

[5] “Then I am offered the further argument that this thing necessarily exists in reality, since if it did not, everything that exists in reality would be greater than it. And so this thing, which of course has been proved to exist in the understanding, would not be greater than everything else. To that argument I reply that if we are to say that something exists in the understanding that cannot even be thought on the basis of the true nature of anything whatever, then I shall not deny that even this thing exists in my understanding. But since there is no way to derive from this the conclusion that this thing also exists in reality, there is simply no reason for me to concede to him that this thing exists in reality until it is proved to me by some unassailable argument.

“And when he says that this thing exists because otherwise that which is greater than everything else would not be greater than everything else, he does not fully realize whom he is addressing. For I do not yet admit—indeed, I actually deny, or at least doubt—that this being is greater than any real thing. Nor do I concede that it exists at all, except in the sense that something exists (if you want to call it ‘existence’) when my mind tries to imagine some completely unknown thing solely on the basis of a word that it has heard. How, then, is the fact that this greater being has been proved

63. *In Iohannem*, tractate 1, n. 17.

to be greater than everything else supposed to show me that it subsists in actual fact? For I continue to deny, or at least doubt, that this has been proved, so that I do not admit that this greater being exists in my understanding or thought even in the way that many doubtful and uncertain things exist there. First I must become certain that this greater being truly exists somewhere, and only then will the fact that it is greater than everything else show clearly that it also subsists in itself.

[6] “For example, there are those who say that somewhere in the ocean is an island, which, because of the difficulty—or rather, impossibility—of finding what does not exist, some call ‘the Lost Island.’ This island (so the story goes) is more plentifully endowed than even the Isles of the Blessed with an indescribable abundance of all sorts of riches and delights. And because it has neither owner nor inhabitant, it is everywhere superior in its abundant riches to all the other lands that human beings inhabit.

“Suppose someone tells me all this. The story is easily told and involves no difficulty, and so I understand it. But if this person went on to draw a conclusion and say ‘You cannot any longer doubt that this island, more excellent than all others on earth, truly exists somewhere in reality. For you do not doubt that this island exists in your understanding, and since it is more excellent to exist not merely in the understanding, but also in reality, this island must also exist in reality. For if it did not, any land that exists in reality would be greater than it. And so this more excellent thing that you have understood would not in fact be more excellent.’—If, I say, he should try to convince me by this argument that I should no longer doubt whether the island truly exists, either I would think he was joking, or I would not know whom I ought to think more foolish: myself, if I grant him his conclusion, or him, if he thinks he has established the existence of that island with any degree of certainty, without first showing that its excellence exists in my understanding as a thing that truly and undoubtedly exists and not in any way like something false or uncertain.”

[7] In this way the fool might meet the objections brought against him up to this point. The next assertion is that this greater being is such that even in thought it cannot fail to exist, and that in turn rests entirely on the claim that otherwise this being would not

be greater than everything else. To this argument he can make the very same response, and say, “When did I ever say that any such thing as that ‘greater than everything else’ exists in actual fact, so that on that basis I am supposed to accept the claim that it exists to such a degree that it cannot even be thought not to exist? Therefore, you must first prove by some absolutely incontestable argument that there exists some superior nature, that is, one that is greater and better than all others that exist, so that from this we can also prove all of the qualities that that which is greater and better than all other things must necessarily possess.” So instead of saying that this supreme thing cannot be *thought* not to exist, perhaps it would be better to say that it cannot be *understood* not to exist, or even to be capable of not existing. For in the strict sense of the word, false things cannot be understood, even though they can of course be thought in the same way that the fool thought that God does not exist.

Furthermore, I know with absolute certainty that I myself exist, but nonetheless I also know that I can fail to exist. But I understand beyond all doubt that the supreme being that exists, namely, God, both exists and cannot fail to exist. Now I do not know whether I can think I do not exist even while I know with absolute certainty that I do exist. But if I can, why can I not do the same for anything else that I know with the same certainty? And if I cannot, it is not God alone who cannot be thought not to exist.

[8] The rest of this book is argued so truly, so lucidly and magnificently, full of so much that is useful, and fragrant with the aroma of devout and holy feeling, that it should by no means be belittled on account of the claims made at the beginning, which are indeed accurately understood, but less compellingly argued. Rather, those claims should be demonstrated more solidly, and then the whole book can be accorded great honor and praise.

### Anselm’s Reply to Gaunilo

Since the one who takes me to task is not that fool against whom I was speaking in my book, but a Christian who is no fool, arguing on behalf of the fool, it will be enough for me to reply to the Christian.

[1] You say—whoever you are who say that the fool could say these things—that something than which a greater cannot be thought is in the understanding no differently from that which cannot even be thought according to the true nature of anything at all. You also say that it does not follow (as I say it does) that that than which a greater cannot be thought exists in reality as well simply because it exists in the understanding, any more than it follows that the Lost Island most certainly exists simply because someone who hears it described in words has no doubt that it exists in his understanding. I, however, say this: if that than which a greater cannot be thought is neither understood nor thought, and exists neither in the understanding nor in thought, then either God is not that than which a greater cannot be thought, or else he is neither understood nor thought, and exists neither in the understanding nor in thought. I appeal to your own faith and conscience as the most compelling argument that this is false. Therefore, that than which a greater cannot be thought is indeed understood and thought, and exists in the understanding and in thought. So either the premises by which you attempt to prove the contrary are false, or else what you think follows from them does not in fact follow.

You think that from the fact that something than which a greater cannot be thought is understood, it does not follow that it exists in the understanding; nor does it follow that if it exists in the understanding, it therefore exists in reality. But I say with certainty that if it can be so much as thought to exist, it must necessarily exist. For that than which a greater cannot be thought cannot be thought of as beginning to exist. By contrast, whatever can be thought to exist but does not in fact exist, can be thought of as beginning to exist. Therefore, it is not the case that that than which a greater cannot be thought can be thought to exist, but does not in fact exist. If, therefore, it can be thought to exist, it does necessarily exist.

Furthermore, if it can be thought *at all*, it necessarily exists. For no one who denies or doubts that something than which a greater cannot be thought exists, denies or doubts that if it did exist, it would be unable to fail to exist either in reality or in the understanding, since otherwise it would not be that than which a greater cannot be thought. But whatever can

be thought, but does not in fact exist, could (if it did exist) fail to exist either in reality or in the understanding. So if that than which a greater cannot be thought can be thought at all, it cannot fail to exist.

But let us assume instead that it does not exist, although it can be thought. Now something that can be thought but does not exist, would not, if it existed, be that than which a greater cannot be thought. And so, if it existed, that than which a greater cannot be thought would not be that than which a greater cannot be thought, which is utterly absurd. Therefore, if that than which a greater cannot be thought can be thought at all, it is false that it does not exist—and much more so if it can be understood and can exist in the understanding.

I shall say something more. If something does not exist everywhere and always, even if perhaps it does exist somewhere and sometimes, it can undoubtedly be thought not to exist anywhere or at any time, just as it does not exist in this particular place or at this particular time. For something that did not exist yesterday but does exist today can be conceived of as never existing in just the same way that it is understood as not existing yesterday. And something that does not exist here but does exist elsewhere can be thought not to exist anywhere in just the same way that it does not exist here. Similarly, when some parts of a thing do not exist in the same place or at the same time as other parts of that thing, all its parts—and therefore the thing as a whole—can be thought not to exist anywhere or at any time. Even if we say that time always exists and that the universe is everywhere, nevertheless, the whole of time does not always exist, and the whole of the universe is not everywhere. And just as each individual part of time does not exist when the others do, so each can be thought never to exist. And just as each individual part of the universe does not exist where the others do, so each can be thought to exist nowhere. Moreover, whatever is composed of parts can, at least in thought, be divided and fail to exist. Therefore, whatever does not exist as a whole in all places and at all times, even if it does exist, can be thought not to exist. But that than which a greater cannot be thought, if it exists, cannot be thought not to exist. For otherwise, even if it exists, it is not that than which a greater cannot be thought—which is ab-

surd. Therefore, there is no time and no place in which it does not exist as a whole; it exists as a whole always and everywhere.

Do you think the being about whom these things are understood can in any way be thought or understood, or can exist in thought or in the understanding? If it cannot, these claims about it cannot be understood either. Perhaps you will say that it is not understood and does not exist in the understanding because it is not *fully* understood. But then you would have to say that someone who cannot gaze directly upon the purest light of the sun does not see the light of day, which is nothing other than the light of the sun. Surely that than which a greater cannot be thought is understood, and exists in the understanding, at least to the extent that these things about it are understood.

[2] And so I said in the argument that you criticize, that when the fool hears someone utter the words “that than which a greater cannot be thought,” he understands what he hears. Someone who does not understand it (if it is spoken in a language he knows) is rather feeble-minded, if indeed he has a mind at all.

Then I said that if it is understood, it exists in the understanding. Or does that which has been shown to exist necessarily in actual fact not exist in any understanding? But you will say that even if it exists in the understanding, it still does not follow that it is understood. Notice, however, that if it is understood, it does follow that it exists in the understanding. For when something is thought, it is thought by means of thinking; and what is thought by means of thinking exists in thinking just as it is thought. And in the same way, when something is understood, it is understood by means of the understanding; and what is understood by means of the understanding exists in the understanding, just as it is understood. What could be clearer than that?

After that I said that if it exists only in the understanding, it can be thought to exist in reality as well, which is greater. Therefore, if it exists only in the understanding, the very same thing is both that than which a greater *cannot* be thought and that than which a greater *can* be thought. Now I ask you, what could be more logical? For if it exists only in the understanding, can it not be thought to exist in reality as well? And if it can, does not the one who thinks it,

think something greater than that thing is if it exists only in the understanding? So if that than which a greater *cannot* be thought exists only in the understanding, it is that than which a greater *can* be thought: what more logical conclusion could there be? But of course that than which a greater cannot be thought is not the same in anyone’s understanding as that than which a greater can be thought. Does it not follow, therefore, that if that than which a greater cannot be thought exists in any understanding at all, it does not exist only in the understanding? For if it exists only in the understanding, it is that than which a greater can be thought, which is absurd.

[3] But, you say, this is just the same as if someone were to claim that it cannot be doubted that a certain island in the ocean, surpassing all other lands in its fertility (which, from the difficulty—or rather, impossibility—of finding what does not exist, is called “the Lost Island”), truly exists in reality, because someone can easily understand it when it is described to him in words. I say quite confidently that if anyone can find for me something existing either in reality or only in thought to which he can apply this inference in my argument, besides that than which a greater cannot be thought, I will find and give to him that Lost Island, never to be lost again. In fact, however, it has already become quite clear that that than which a greater cannot be thought cannot be thought not to exist, since its existence is a matter of such certain truth. For otherwise it would not exist at all.

Finally, if someone says that he thinks it does not exist, I say that when he thinks this, either he is thinking something than which a greater cannot be thought, or he is not. If he is not, then he is not thinking that it does not exist, since he is not thinking it at all. But if he is, he is surely thinking something that cannot be thought not to exist. For if it could be thought not to exist, it could be thought to have a beginning and an end, which is impossible. Therefore, someone who is thinking it, is thinking something that cannot be thought not to exist. And of course someone who is thinking this does not think that that very thing does not exist. Otherwise he would be thinking something that cannot be thought. Therefore, that than which a greater cannot be thought cannot be thought not to exist.

[4] When I say that this supreme being cannot be *thought* not to exist, you reply that it would perhaps be better to say that it cannot be *understood* not to exist, or even to be capable of not existing. But in fact it was more correct to say that it cannot be *thought* not to exist. For if I had said that this thing cannot be understood not to exist, you (who say that in the strict sense of the word false things cannot be understood) might well object that nothing that exists can be understood not to exist, since, after all, it is false that something that exists does not exist. Consequently, it is not God alone who cannot be understood not to exist. But if any of those things that most certainly exist can be understood not to exist, then other things that are certain can likewise be understood not to exist. If, however, we say ‘thought’ [rather than ‘understood’], this objection will have no force if it is examined properly. For even if nothing that actually exists can be *understood* not to exist, everything can be *thought* not to exist, except for that which exists supremely. Indeed, all and only those things that have a beginning or end, or are made up of parts, as well as whatever does not exist always and everywhere as a whole (as I discussed earlier), can be thought not to exist. The only thing that cannot be thought not to exist is that which has neither beginning nor end, and is not made up of parts, and which no thought discerns except as wholly present always and everywhere.

So you should realize that you can indeed *think* of yourself as not existing even while you know with absolute certainty that you exist. I am amazed that you said you did not know this. For we think of many things as not existing that we know exist, and we think of many things as existing that we know do not exist—not judging, but imagining, that things are as we are thinking of them. And so we can in fact think of something as not existing even while we know that it exists, since we can think the one thing and know the other at the very same time. And yet we cannot think of something as not existing even while we know that it exists, since we cannot think of it as existing and not existing at the same time. So if someone distinguishes the two senses of this statement in this way, he will understand that in one sense nothing can be thought of as not existing when we know that it exists, and in another sense anything besides that than which a greater

cannot be thought can be thought not to exist, even when we know that it exists. Thus God alone cannot be thought not to exist, but nonetheless it is also true that there are many things that cannot be thought not to exist while they actually exist. I think, however, that I adequately explained in my book the sense in which God is thought not to exist.<sup>64</sup>

[5] Now as for the other objections you raise against me on behalf of the fool, anyone with much sense at all can easily see through them, so I had judged it best not to bother proving this. But since I hear that some readers think they have some force against me, I will deal with them briefly. First, you repeatedly say that I argue that that which is greater than everything else exists in the understanding; and that if it exists in the understanding, it also exists in reality, for otherwise that which is greater than everything else would not be greater than everything else. Nowhere in anything I said can such an argument be found. For “that which is greater than everything else” and “that than which a greater cannot be thought” do not have the same force in proving that the thing spoken of exists in reality. For if someone says that that than which a greater cannot be thought is not something existing in reality, or is capable of not existing, or can be thought not to exist, he is easily refuted. For whatever does not exist is capable of not existing, and whatever is capable of not existing can be thought not to exist. Now whatever can be thought not to exist, if it does exist, is not that than which a greater cannot be thought. And if it does not exist, it would not be that than which a greater cannot be thought *even if it were to exist*. But it makes no sense to say that that than which a greater cannot be thought, if it exists, is not that than which a greater cannot be thought, and that if it [does not exist but] were to exist, it would not be that than which a greater cannot be thought. It is therefore evident that it exists, that it is not capable of not existing, and that it cannot be thought not to exist. For otherwise, if it exists, it is not the thing spoken of; and if it [does not exist but] were to exist, it would not be the thing spoken of.

This does not seem to be so easily proved with regard to what is said to be greater than everything else.

64. See Ch. 4 of the *Proslogion*.

For it is not as evident that something that can be thought not to exist is not that which is greater than everything else that exists, as it is that such a thing is not that than which a greater cannot be thought. Nor is it indubitable that if there is something greater than everything else, it is the same as that than which a greater cannot be thought, or that if such a thing were to exist, there would not exist another thing just like it. But these things are certainly true of what is called "that than which a greater cannot be thought." For what if someone were to say that something exists that is greater than everything else that exists, and yet that this very thing can be thought not to exist, and that something greater than it can be thought, although that greater thing does not actually exist? Can it be just as easily inferred in this case that it is not greater than everything else that exists, as it was perfectly certain in the previous case that it was not that than which a greater cannot be thought? In the second case we would need another premise, besides the mere fact that this being is said to be "greater than everything else," whereas in the first case there was no need for anything more than the expression "that than which a greater cannot be thought." Therefore, since "that than which a greater cannot be thought" proves things about itself and through itself that cannot be proved in the same way about what is said to be "greater than everything else," you have unjustly criticized me for saying things I did not say, when they differ greatly from what I actually said.

If, however, this can be proved through some further argument, you should not have criticized me for saying something that can be proved. And that it can in fact be proved should be easily perceived by anyone who knows that it can be proved for that than which a greater cannot be thought. For that than which a greater cannot be thought cannot be understood as anything other than the one thing that is greater than everything else. Therefore, just as that than which a greater cannot be thought is understood and exists in the understanding, and therefore is affirmed to exist in actual fact, even so that which is said to be greater than everything else is with necessity inferred to be understood, to exist in the understanding, and consequently to exist in reality. So you see how right you were to compare me to that stupid man who was willing to af-

firm the existence of the Lost Island solely because the island would be understood if someone described it.

[6] But you also raise the objection that all sorts of false or doubtful things can be understood, and exist in the understanding, in the very same way as the being I was talking about. I wonder what force you thought this objection could have against me. I was simply trying to prove something that was still in doubt, and for that it was enough for me to show that this being is understood, and exists in the understanding, *in some way or other*, since on that basis the argument would go on to determine whether it exists only in the understanding, like a false thing, or also in reality, like a real thing. For if false and doubtful things are understood, and exist in the understanding, in the sense that one who hears them spoken of understands what the speaker means, there is no reason that the being I was discussing could not be understood or exist in the understanding.

But how can these two claims of yours be consistent: first, that if someone spoke of false things, you would understand whatever he said; and second, that if what you heard is not had in thought in the same way that false things are, you would not say that you think it and have it in your thought, but rather that you understand it and have it in your understanding, since you cannot think this thing without understanding it, that is, comprehending in genuine knowledge that it exists in reality? How, I ask, can these be consistent: that false things are understood, and that to understand is to comprehend in genuine knowledge that something exists? You should realize that this objection has no force against me. If false things can indeed be understood in some sense, and your definition of understanding applies not to all but only to some cases of understanding, then I should not have been criticized for saying that that than which a greater cannot be thought is understood and exists in the understanding even before it was certain that it exists in reality.

[7] Next, you say that it is nearly impossible to believe that when this thing has been spoken of and heard, it cannot be thought not to exist in the way that even God can be thought not to exist. Let those who have acquired even a meager knowledge of disputation and argument reply on my behalf. Is it rational for someone to deny [the existence of] what he understands, simply because it is said to be the same as something

[whose existence] he denies because he does not understand it? Or if [its existence] is sometimes denied because it is only partly understood, and it is the same as something that is not understood at all, are not things in doubt more easily proved to be true of what exists in some understanding than of what exists in no understanding? Therefore, it is impossible to believe that someone would deny [the existence of] that than which a greater cannot be thought, which he understands to some extent when he hears of it, simply because he denies [the existence of] God, whose meaning he is not thinking of in any way. Or, if he also denies [the existence of] that than which a greater cannot be thought, because he does not fully understand it, is it not easier to prove [the existence of] what is understood to some extent than to prove what is not understood at all? So it was not irrational for me to prove against the fool that God exists by making use of the expression “that than which a greater cannot be thought,” since he would understand that expression to some extent, whereas he might not understand ‘God’ at all.

[8] You go to some trouble to show that that than which a greater cannot be thought is not the same sort of thing as a picture, not yet painted, in the understanding of the painter, but your argument is not to the point. I did not bring up the picture that is thought out beforehand in order to claim that it was the same sort of thing as the being I was discussing, but merely so I could show that something exists in the understanding that would not be understood to exist [in reality].

Again, you say that when you hear “that than which a greater cannot be thought,” you cannot think it in accordance with some thing that you know by genus or species, or have it in your understanding, since you do not know the thing itself and cannot form an idea of it on the basis of something similar. But that is clearly wrong. For since every lesser good, insofar as it is good, is similar to a greater good, it is clear to every reasonable mind that by raising our thoughts from lesser goods to greater goods, we can certainly form an idea of that than which a greater cannot be thought on the basis of those things than which a greater can be thought. Who, for example, is unable to think (even if he does not believe that what he thinks exists in reality) that if something that has a beginning and end is

good, then something that has a beginning but never ceases to exist is much better? And that just as the latter is better than the former, so something that has neither beginning nor end is better still, even if it is always moving from the past through the present into the future? And that something that in no way needs or is compelled to change or move is far better even than that, whether any such thing exists in reality or not? Can such a thing not be thought? Can anything greater than this be thought? Or rather, is not this an example of forming an idea of that than which a greater cannot be thought on the basis of those things than which a greater can be thought? So there is in fact a way to form an idea of that than which a greater cannot be thought. And so in this way it is easy to refute a fool who does not accept the sacred authority, if he denies that one can form an idea of that than which a greater cannot be thought on the basis of other things. But if an orthodox Christian were to deny this, he should recall that “since the creation of the world the invisible things of God—his everlasting power and divinity—have been clearly seen through the things that have been made.”<sup>65</sup>

[9] But even if it were true that that than which a greater cannot be thought cannot be thought or understood, it would not be false that [the expression] “that than which a greater cannot be thought” can be thought and understood. For just as one can use the word ‘ineffable,’ even though the thing that is said to be ineffable cannot be spoken of; and just as ‘unthinkable’ can be thought, even though the thing to which the word ‘unthinkable’ applies cannot be thought; in the same way, when someone says “that than which nothing greater can be thought,” that which is heard can undoubtedly be thought and understood, even though the thing itself than which a greater cannot be thought cannot be thought or understood.

For even if someone is foolish enough to say that something than which a greater cannot be thought does not exist, he will surely not be shameless enough to say that he cannot understand or think what he is saying. Or, if such a person does turn up, not only should his words be repudiated, but he himself should

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65. Rom. 1:20.

be ridiculed. So anyone who denies the existence of something than which a greater cannot be thought surely understands and thinks the denial that he is making. Now he cannot understand or think this denial without its parts. And one part of it is "that than which a greater cannot be thought." Therefore, whoever denies this, understands and thinks that than which a greater cannot be thought. Now it is quite clear that something that cannot fail to exist can be thought and understood in the same way. And one who thinks this is thinking something greater than is one who thinks something that can fail to exist. Therefore, if, while he is thinking that than which a greater cannot be thought, he thinks that it can fail to exist, he is not thinking that than which a greater cannot be thought. But it is not possible for the same thing at the same time both to be thought and not to be thought. Therefore, someone who thinks that than which a greater cannot be thought does not think that it can, but rather that it cannot fail to exist. For this reason the thing that he is thinking exists necessarily, since whatever can fail to exist is not what he is thinking.

[10] I believe I have now shown that my proof in the

foregoing book that that than which a greater cannot be thought exists in reality was no weak argument, but a quite conclusive one, one that is not weakened by the force of any objection. For the signification of this expression has such great force that the thing it expresses is, from the mere fact that it is understood or thought, necessarily proved both to exist in reality and to be whatever we ought to believe about the divine nature. Now we believe about the divine nature everything that can be thought, absolutely speaking, better for something to be than not to be. For example, it is better to be eternal than not eternal, good than not good, and indeed goodness itself rather than not goodness itself. That than which something greater cannot be thought cannot fail to be anything of this sort. So one must believe that that than which a greater cannot be thought is whatever we ought to believe about the divine nature.

I am grateful for your kindness both in your criticisms and in your praise of my book. For since you lavished such great praise on the things you found worthy of acceptance, it is quite clear that you criticized the things that seemed weak to you not from ill will but in a friendly spirit.

# Peter Abelard, 1079–1142

From the revival of the schools until the assimilation of Aristotle's non-logical works, the medieval curriculum consisted of the trivium and the quadrivium. The trivium included grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric; the quadrivium, arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy. Emphasis was placed on the trivium, which dialectic came more and more to dominate. But early medieval dialectic was very much affected by its association with the other arts of speech and was known as the *scientia sermocinalis* or the *ars disserendi*: the science of disputation or the art of discussion or discourse. This period has been aptly termed "The Boethian Era," in that Boethius' translations and logical treatises were the leading manuals of instruction and also because his effort to apply dialectic to religious concepts was intensively cultivated. In such a context it is understandable that philosophical problems attendant upon dialectic should have theological repercussions and take on added significance from this. The most prominent such problem concerned the ontological status of universals: whether genera and species exist only in the mind or also in reality, and if the latter, whether they exist in individual things or also apart from them. Realism, the doctrine that universals are not merely mental, fitted into the Neoplatonism of both Augustine and Pseudo-Dionysius, and had been employed in interpreting the dogmas of the Holy Trinity, transubstantiation, and even original sin. Thus Anselm of Canterbury said of the nominalist Roscelin that he who does not understand how several individual men are specifically one man can hardly understand how several divine Persons are one God.

The outstanding figure of this era of dialectic and theology, and indeed the one who is credited with giv-

ing "theology" its modern sense, is Peter Abelard. He was called "the Socrates of Gaul," and, like Socrates, his greatest contribution is found less in any doctrine than in the rigor of his method and in his raising the standards of philosophy. To judge from recent estimates of his work he was a gifted logician. Abelard's work is ancestral to Peter Lombard's *Four Books of Sentences*, the point of departure for later systematic theology. It was not very clear just what Abelard was trying to accomplish with such exercises as a dialectical analysis of the types of similarity and difference present in the Holy Trinity—or perhaps only in a "similitude" of the Trinity. Sometimes he denounced the pseudo-dialecticians who would accept nothing not comprehensible by their little reasons. But his more characteristic pronouncement was that man is created in the image of the divine Logos by his reason, and he went so far as to credit the ancient philosophers with awareness of the Trinity. This kind of thing provoked Bernard of Clairvaux to say that while Abelard sweated to prove Plato a Christian, he only proved himself a heretic. But Abelard himself wrote to Heloise that he did not want to be a philosopher to contradict Paul, nor an Aristotle to be cut off from Christ.

His life was spectacular, and ended in a sort of Socratic martyrdom. He was born in 1079 at Le Pallet in Brittany and gave up the life of a knight to "follow the tourney-grounds of dialectic." About 1094 he heard the nominalist Roscelin and later he heard the realist William of Champeaux. By about 1105 he had his own school; but about 1113 he turned to theology, studying at Laon. Abelard always attacked and abandoned his teachers, and he soon returned to Paris, where he apparently directed the cathedral school and

became famous. Soon there unfolded the tragic romance with Heloise; by 1118 Heloise had been sent to a convent, their son had been sent to Abelard's sister, and Abelard had become a monk at the royal abbey of St. Denys. Before 1120 he had produced several short logical glosses and the more elaborate glosses known from the opening words as *Logica 'ingredientibus.'* About 1120 he wrote *Treatise on the Divine Unity and Trinity (Tractatus de unitate et trinitate divina)*, which was promptly condemned at Soissons in 1121. After confinement he was returned to St. Denys, where he made the discovery that the patron saint was not the Areopagite and had to flee the patriotic wrath of the monks. He tried rural solitude, but students sought him out and he entered into a fruitful period of teaching and writing. During the next few years he produced *Yes and No (Sic et non)*, *Christian Theology (Theologia christiana)*, part of *Introduction to Theology (Introductio ad theologiam)*, and a logical work known as *Logica 'nostrorum petitioni sociorum.'* About 1126 he undertook the role of reforming abbot at a wild Breton monastery, a role which he gave up by about 1132, after an attempt on his life. This is as far as his *History of My Adversities (Historia calamitatum mearum)* carries us; but we know that by 1136 he was teaching again at Paris. In this period he must have written the remainder of his *Introduction* and the ethical work *Know Thyself (Scito teipsum)*. His gift for making enemies never rested, and by 1140 he had found the most dangerous of all, Bernard of Clairvaux. They met at

Sens in what Abelard thought was to be a debate and Bernard had turned into a trial. Abelard appealed to Rome, but the great Cistercian's influence was there before him, and he was condemned. He retired to the monastery of Cluny and was sent to a daughter house for his health. During these last years he produced a revised edition of *Dialectica (Dialectic)* and the unfinished *Dialogue between a Philosopher, a Jew, and a Christian (Dialogus inter philosophum, Judaeum et Christianum)*. In the course of his career he also produced several devotional and exegetical works, as well as his part of the celebrated correspondence with Heloise. At his death in 1142, the Abbot of Cluny struck the right note by calling him, not only the Socrates of Gaul, but also "a genius versatile, subtle, and sharp."

In the following selections, Abelard's treatment of universals in the "Glosses on Porphyry" from *Logica 'ingredientibus'* comes first. If nominalism is taken loosely as anti-realism, Abelard is clearly a nominalist. But if finer lines are drawn and nominalism is taken to be the doctrine that universals are merely *names*, then Abelard should rather be considered a conceptualist, for his general position is that a universal must be capable of predication and no thing, whether a universal substance or a particular name-sound, can be predicated. These selections on universals are followed by excerpts from *Know Thyself*, where he argues that consent alone, and neither desire nor the act performed, constitutes sin.

## 16. Glosses on Porphyry

[1] “For the present about genera.” He settles what those higher questions are, although he does not solve them. And the cause is given for both facts: the fact that he passes over inquiring into them, and the fact that nevertheless he does make mention of them.

[2] He does not discuss them, because the unskilled reader will not be strong enough to inquire into them and grasp them. But he does mention them in order not to make the reader overlook them. For if he had kept silent about them altogether the reader, thinking there was absolutely nothing more to be asked about them, would entirely disregard their investigation.

[3] There are three questions, as Boethius says “mysterious” and “very useful” ones, attempted by not a few philosophers, but solved by few of them.

[4] The first is this: “Do genera and species subsist, or are they posited only in,” etc.? As if he said: “Do they have true being, or do they reside in opinion only?”

[5] The second is: “If it is granted that they truly are, are they corporeal essences or incorporeal?”

[6] The third: “Are they separated from sensibles or posited in sensibles?” For there are two species of incorporeals. Some of them, such as God and the soul, can endure in their incorporeality outside sensibles. But others, such as a line without any subject body, are entirely unable to be outside the sensibles they are in.

[7] He passes over these questions, saying “As for genera and species, I shall decline for the present to say (a) whether they subsist,” etc., “or (b) whether, if they subsist, they are corporeal or incorporeal, and whether (c),” when they are called “incorporeal,” they are separated “from sensibles,” etc., [or posited in sensibles] “and agree with them.”

[8] This can be taken in different senses. For we can take it as if it says: “About genera and species I

shall decline to say what the answers are to the three questions given above, and about certain other questions that agree with them” — that is, with these three questions.

[9] For other, similarly difficult questions too can be raised about these same genera and species. For instance, the question about the common cause of the impositions of universal names. That question is: “Diverse things agree according to *what*?” Or also the question about the *understanding* of universal names, by which understanding *no thing* appears to be conceived. Neither does it appear that any thing is dealt with by a universal word. There are many other difficult questions as well.

[10] Again [see 8], we can analyze the words “and agree with them” in such a way that we add a fourth question: Do genera and species, as long as they are genera and species, necessarily have some thing subject to them by nomination? Or alternatively, even if the things named are destroyed, can the universal consist even then of the understanding’s signification alone? For example, the name ‘rose’ when there are no roses to which it is common.

[11] We shall argue these questions more thoroughly below. But first let us follow the letter of Porphyry’s *Prologue*. Note that when he says “for the present” — that is, in the present treatise — he hints in a way that the reader may expect these questions to be answered elsewhere.

[12] “For that is a most exalted matter.” He sets out the cause why he refrains from these questions here: namely, because treating of them is “a most exalted matter” for the reader who cannot reach that far. He immediately establishes [that this is his meaning, when he says] “and requires a longer investigation.” For although the author is able to solve them, the reader is not able to inquire about these questions. [“It requires,”] I say, “a longer investigation” than yours, [the reader’s], is.

[13] “Rather what.” After showing us what he is not going to talk about, he tells us what he does set out [in the remainder of the *Isagoge*]: what “the ancients” —

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From *Five Texts on the Mediaeval Problem of Universals*, tr. Paul Vincent Spade (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1994). Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

not in age but in judgment<sup>1</sup>—“discussed about these matters”—namely, genera and species—“and about the” other three questions just “proposed, in a probable way”—that is, with likelihood. That is to say, the points on which everyone concurred and about which there was no disagreement. For in answering the questions above, some people thought one way and others another. Thus Boethius mentions that Aristotle said genera and species subsist only in sensibles but are understood outside sensibles, while Plato said they not only are understood outside sensibles but also exist there. “And of these ancients,” I say, and “the Peripatetics most of all,” that is to say, one party among these ancients. (He is calling “Peripatetics” the dialecticians—that is, all those who argue.)

[14] Note too that the features appropriate to prologues can be found in this one. For Boethius, in his *Commentary on Cicero’s “Topics”* [22], says: “Every prologue intended to prepare the listener, as is said in rhetorical writings, either tries to win his *good will*, or prepares his *attention*, or produces in him an *aptitude for being taught*.” It is appropriate for one of these three, or several of them together, to be in every prologue. Two of them can be noted in this one: first, *the aptitude for being taught*, where he gives a foretaste of his subject matter, which is the five predicables; and second, *attention*, where he recommends his treatise about what the ancients established for teaching these five predicables on the grounds of its fourfold utility.<sup>2</sup> Alternatively, *attention* can be found where he promises to proceed in an introductory manner. There is no need for *good will* here, where there is no knowledge that will be found hateful to whoever needs Porphyry’s treatment of it.<sup>3</sup>

1. This might mean either: (a) those who are not necessarily old in years, but who nevertheless have a mature judgment; or (b) the “ancients,” not necessarily those who actually lived in ancient times, but anyone who shares their views (= judgments).

2. Porphyry says the *Isagoge* is needed (a) in order to teach about Aristotle’s *Categories*, and is also useful (b) for giving definitions, and (c) for matters pertaining to division and (d) for matters pertaining to demonstration.

3. The sentence is convoluted, but the point is clear.

[15] But now, as we promised, let us return to the questions posed above and carefully examine and answer them. Because it is plain that genera and species are universals, and that in the discussion of them Porphyry touches on the nature of all universals in general, let us here distinguish the characteristics of all universals together from the characteristics of singulars, and let us examine whether these characteristics belong only to words or also to things.

[16] Aristotle defines the universal in *On Interpretation* [7, 17a39–40] as “what is naturally apt to be predicated of several.” But Porphyry defines the singular—that is, the individual—as “what is predicated of one only.”

[17] Authority seems to attribute this both to things and to words. Aristotle himself attributes it to things, where just before the definition of a universal [16], he states [*On Interpretation* 7, 17a 38–40]: “Now because, among *things*, some are universals and others singulars—now I call ‘universal’ what is naturally apt to be predicated of several, but I call ‘singular’ what is not,” etc.

[18] Porphyry too, when he says a species is made up of genus and difference, ascribes these to the nature of *things*.

[19] From these passages it is plain that *things* themselves are contained under the name ‘universal.’

[20] But names are also called “universals.” Thus Aristotle says [*Categories* 5, 3b19–21], “Genus determines a quality with respect to a substance. For it signifies what kind of a thing the substance is.” And Boethius in his book *On Division* [885C] says, “It is very useful to know that a genus is in a way one likeness of many species, a likeness that shows the substantial agreement of all of them.” Now “signifying” or “showing” belongs to words, but “being signified” belongs to things.

[21] And again he says [ibid. 886B], “The word ‘name’ is predicated of several names and in a way is a species containing individuals under it.” It is not *properly* called a species, since it is not a substantial but an accidental word. But there is no doubt it is a

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This isn’t a court of law. The reader’s good will can be *assumed*, or else he wouldn’t be reading the *Isagoge* in the first place.

universal, and the definition of a universal [16] fits it. On the basis of this passage, it is proven that words too are universals. To them alone is the task of being the predicate terms of propositions ascribed.

[22] Since both things and words seem to be called universals, it must be asked how the definition of a universal can be adapted to things. For no thing or collection of things seems to be predicated of several singly, which the characteristic feature of a universal demands. For even though this people, or this house, or Socrates, is said of all its parts together, yet no one ever calls them universals, since their predication does not reach to singulars.<sup>4</sup> Now *one* thing is predicated of several much less than a collection is. So let us hear how they call either one thing or a collection a “universal,” and let us set out all the views of everyone.

### [First Theory]

[23] Some people take “universal thing” in such a way that they set up *essentially the same* substance in things diverse from one another through forms. This substance is the “material essence” of the singulars it is in. It is one in itself, and diverse only through the forms of its inferiors. If these forms happened to be separated from it, there would be no difference at all among the things that are in fact distinct from one another only by the diversity of forms. For the matter is entirely the same essentially.

[24] For example, in single, numerically distinct men there is the same substance *man*, which becomes Plato here through these accidents and Socrates there through those accidents.

[25] Porphyry seems to agree completely with these people when he says, “Several men are one by participation in the species, but the one and common man is made several in its particulars.” And again, he says, “Such things are called individuals because each of

4. Let the parts of a house be the roof, the walls, and the floor. Then the house can in a sense be predicated of all its parts together (we can truly say “The roof and the walls and the floor *are* the house”). But it cannot be predicated of them singly (we cannot truly say “The roof is the house”).

them consists of characteristics the collection of which is not found in anything else.”

[26] Likewise, they also posit one and essentially the same substance *animal* in single animals that differ in species. They draw this substance into diverse species by taking on diverse differences. For example, if out of this wax I make on the one hand a statue of a man and on the other a statue of an ox, by adapting diverse forms to entirely the same essence that remains the same throughout.

[27] But it makes a difference in the example that the same wax does not make up the two statues at the same time, as is allowed in the case of a universal—that is, the universal is common, Boethius says, in such a way that the same whole is *at the same time* in diverse things, of which it constitutes the substance materially. Although *in itself* it is universal, the same whole is singular through *advening forms*. By nature it subsists in itself, without those advening forms, but in no way does it actually persist without them. It is universal in its nature, but singular in actuality. It is understood in the simplicity of its universality as incorporeal and nonsensible, but the same whole subsists in actuality through its accidents as corporeal and sensible. As Boethius testifies, the same things subsist as singulars and are understood as universals.

### [Objections to the First Theory]

[28] This is one of two views. Although most authorities appear to agree with it, the philosophy of nature contradicts it in all respects.

[29] [Objection 1:] For if essentially the same thing exists in several singulars, then even though diverse forms occupy it, this substance brought about by these forms must be [identical with] that one occupied by those forms. For example the *animal* formed by *rationality* is the *animal* formed by *irrationality*. Thus, *rational animal* is *irrational animal*. And so contraries reside together in the same thing. In fact, they are not contraries any more at all when they coincide in entirely the same essence at once. For example, whiteness and blackness would not be contraries if they happened to occur together in this one thing, even though the thing would be white from one source and

black from another, in the same way it is white from one source and hard from another—namely, from whiteness and hardness. For diverse contraries cannot inhere in the same thing at once, even in theory, as relatives and lots of other things can. Thus Aristotle, in the chapter on relation,<sup>5</sup> shows that *great* and *small* inhere together in diverse respects in the same thing. Nevertheless he proves that they are not contraries, just *because* they are together in the same thing.

[30] [Reply 1:] But perhaps it will be said, according to this theory, that rationality and irrationality are no less contraries because they are found in this way in the same thing—that is, in the same *genus* or in the same *species*—unless they are based in the same *individual*.

[31] [Refutation of reply 1: But that they *are* based in the same individual] is shown as follows: Rationality and irrationality are truly in the same individual, because they are in Socrates. Now the fact that they are together in Socrates is proved on the grounds that they are together in Socrates and Brownly.<sup>6</sup> But Socrates and Brownly are [identical with] Socrates. Socrates and Brownly really *are* Socrates, because Socrates is Socrates and Brownly<sup>7</sup>—that is, because Socrates is Socrates and Socrates is Brownly. That Socrates really is Brownly is shown as follows, following this view:

[32] Whatever is in Socrates other than the advening<sup>8</sup> forms of Socrates is what is in Brownly other than the advening forms of Brownly.<sup>9</sup> But whatever is in Brownly other than the advening forms of Brownly just

is Brownly.<sup>10</sup> Thus, whatever is in Socrates other than the advening forms of Socrates is Brownly. But if that is so, then since Socrates himself is what is other than the advening forms of Socrates,<sup>11</sup> Socrates himself is Brownly.

[33] The fact that what we assumed above is true, namely that whatever is in Brownly other than the advening forms of Brownly just *is* Brownly, is plain because (a) the *forms* of Brownly are not Brownly, since in that case accidents would be substance, and (b) neither are the matter and the forms of Brownly together Brownly, since in that case one would have to grant that body and something *already* a body are body.<sup>12</sup>

[34] [Reply 2:] Some people, looking for a way out of this problem, criticize only the words of the proposition ‘*Rational animal is irrational animal*,’ not the judgment. They say [*animal*] is indeed both but this fact is not properly shown by the words ‘*Rational animal is irrational animal*.’ For the thing [*animal*], although it is the same, is called “rational” on one basis and “irrational” on another—that is, from opposite forms.

[35] [Refutation of reply 2:] But surely forms attached to the same thing<sup>13</sup> at exactly the same time no longer stand in opposition to one another.<sup>14</sup>

[36] Furthermore, they do not criticize *these* propositions: ‘A rational animal is a mortal animal’ or ‘A white animal is a walking animal,’<sup>15</sup> on the grounds

5. The reference is to the *Categories*, but the passage is not in the chapter on relation (7), as Abelard says, but instead in the chapter on quantity, that is, in 6, 5b33–6a9.

6. Bumellus or Brunellus (= “Brownly”) is the name of an ass, the paradigm of an irrational animal. The example is a favorite one in Abelard.

7. The point of this step of the argument is merely to perform a simple conversion: If  $x$  is  $y$  and  $z$ , then  $y$  and  $z$  are  $x$ . The real work of the argument is still to come.

8. Throughout this and the next paragraph, I have interpreted Abelard’s “forms” as the “advening” forms of [27]. I do not think the interpretation is controversial, but the reader should be notified.

9. That is, *animality* is in both of them.

10. On this step, see [33].

11. Presumably this is so for the same reason that whatever is in Brownly other than the advening forms of Brownly just is Brownly. Again, see [33].

12. There is a textual problem in this sentence, the crucial sentence of the argument. I have followed the reading in Peter King, *Peter Abailard and the Problem of Universals* (Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1982), Ch. 6, § 4. The argument in (31)–(33) is a notoriously obscure one and subject to many interpretations. For a very sensible discussion, see King, Ch. 6.

13. Conjecturing ‘eidem’ for the edition’s ‘eis.’

14. Thus the problem has not been avoided. Either there cannot simultaneously be rational animals and irrational animals, or else rationality and irrationality are not contraries. Neither alternative is acceptable.

15. Latin’s lack of an indefinite article makes it some-

that the animal is not mortal *insofar as* it is rational and does not walk *insofar as* it is white. Rather they maintain these propositions as entirely true because the same animal has both features at once, even though the reason is different in each case. Otherwise they would not admit that any animal is a man, since nothing is a man *insofar as* it is an animal.

[37] [Objection 2:] Furthermore in accordance with what the above theory holds, there are only ten essences for all things: the ten most general genera. For in each of the categories there is found only one essence, which is made diverse (as was said [23]) only through the forms of its inferiors and would have no variety at all without them. Therefore, just as all substances are basically the same, so too for qualities and quantities, etc. Since therefore Socrates and Plato have in themselves things from each of the categories, but these things are basically the same, it follows that all the forms of the one are also forms of the other. The forms in themselves are not in essence diverse from one another, and neither are the substances they are attached to. For example, the quality of the one and the quality of the other, since each is basically *quality*. Therefore, Socrates and Plato are no more diverse from one another because of the nature of qualities than they are because of the nature of substance. For there is only one essence of their substance, just as there is only one essence of their qualities too. For the same reason neither does quantity make a difference between them, since it too is the same. Nor do the other categories. Thus no difference can arise from their forms, which are not diverse in themselves any more than their substances are.

[38] [Objection 3:] Further, how would we regard there as being a numerical “many” among substances, if there were only a diversity of adventing forms with what is basically the same subject substance persisting? For we do not call *Socrates* “numerically many” because of his taking on many forms.

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times hard to decide whether it is better to translate with or without one. Here it seems smoother to include it. But the reader should understand that the Latin syntax here is exactly the same as in “*Rational animal is irrational animal*” in [34].

[39] [Objection 4:] Neither can it be maintained that those who hold this first theory mean for individuals to be produced through their accidents. For if individuals draw their being from accidents, then surely accidents are naturally prior to individuals, just as differences are naturally prior to the species they bring into being. For just as *man* is distinguished by being informed by a difference, so they call Socrates [“Socrates”] from his taking on accidents. Thus Socrates cannot exist apart from his accidents, any more than *man* can exist apart from its differences. So Socrates is not the underlying foundation for the accidents, just as *man* is not the underlying foundation for its differences. But if accidents are not in individual substances as in subjects, they are surely not in universal substances. For Aristotle shows [*Categories* 5, 2a34–b6] that, in all cases, whatever is in secondary substances as in subjects, the same things are in primary substances as in subjects.

[40] So from these considerations it is plain that the theory in which what is basically the same essence is said to be in diverse things at once is completely lacking in reason.

### [Second Theory]

[41] Thus other people with a different theory of universality, who get closer to the true theory of the matter, say single things not only are diverse from one another by their adventing forms, but are discrete “personally” in their essences, and what is in one thing is in no way in any other, whether it is matter or form in the thing. They cannot subsist any the less discrete in their essences even when their forms are removed, because their “personal” discreteness (that is, the discreteness according to which this one is not that one) does not arise from those forms but is from the very diversity of the essence, just as the forms themselves are diverse from one another *in themselves*. Otherwise the diversity of forms would go on to infinity, so that one would have to assume yet others to account for the diversity of other forms.

[42] Porphyry made note of a difference like this between a most general genus and a most specific species when he said, “Further, neither would a

species ever become a most general genus or a genus a most specific species.” As if he were to say: “This is the difference between them, that the essence of this is not the essence of that.”

[43] So too the discreteness of the categories does not depend on any forms that produce it, but only on the diversification of each proper essence.

[44] But since these people want all things to be diverse from one another in such a way that none of them participates either *essentially* the same matter or *essentially* the same form with another, and yet they still retain a universal in *things*, they call things that are discrete “the same,” not *essentially* but *indifferently*. For example, single men who are in themselves discrete they call “the same *in man*” — that is, they do not differ in the nature of humanity. The same things they call singular according to their discreteness they call universal according to their “indifference” and the agreement of likeness.

[45] [Variation 1:] But there is disagreement here too. Some people take the universal thing as consisting only in a *collection* of several things. They do not at all call Socrates and Plato by themselves a “species”; rather they call all men collected together the “species” *man*, and all animals taken together the “genus” *animal*, and so on for other cases.

[46] Boethius seems to agree with them: “Species is to be regarded as nothing else than the thought gathered from the substantial likeness of individuals. Genus, on the other hand, is the thought gathered from the likeness of species.” When he says “gathered from the likeness,” he implies a gathering of several *things*. Otherwise genus and species would in no way have any “predication of *several*” or a “containing *many* in a universal thing,” and there would be no fewer universals than singulars.

[47] [Variation 2:] But there are other people who not only call all men collected together the “species,” but also *single men insofar as they are men*. When they say the *thing* that is Socrates is predicated of several, they are taking this in a metaphorical sense, as if they were saying several men are “the same” as (that is, “agree” with) him, or he with several men. With respect to the number of *things*, they maintain as many species as individuals, and as many genera. But with respect to *similarity* of natures, they assign a lesser

number of universals than of singulars. All men are both *many* by their personal discreteness and also *one* by the likeness of humanity. The same men are judged to be diverse from themselves with respect to discreteness and likeness. For example, Socrates insofar as he is a man is divided from himself insofar as he is Socrates. The same thing could not be its own genus or species unless it had some difference from itself; what are relatives should be opposites in at least some respect.

### [Arguments against the Various Forms of the Second Theory]

[48] Now let us first refute the theory stated above about a “collection” [45]. Let us ask how the whole collection of men taken together, which is said to be one species, is able to be *predicated* of several so that it is a universal, and yet the whole collection is not *said* of single things. If it is granted that the collection is predicated of diverse things through its *parts* — that is, insofar as its single parts are fitted to themselves<sup>16</sup> — that has nothing to do with the kind of community a universal has. The universal, as Boethius bears witness, is supposed to be in each of its singulars as a whole. In this respect a universal is distinguished from the kind of common thing that is common by parts, like a field, the different parts of which belong to different people.

[49] Furthermore, Socrates too would likewise be “said of” several through his diverse parts. So *he* would be a universal too.

[50] Further, *any* plurality of men taken together would rightly be called a “universal,” since the definition of a universal would fit them likewise. Or any such random collection would even be called a *species*, so that the whole collection of men would already include many species.

[51] Likewise, we would end up calling any collection whatever of bodies and spirits one universal “substance,” so that since the whole collection of sub-

16. I.e., the “collection” is predicated *part by part* of all the members of the collection.

stances is one most general genus, it would follow that when any one substance is taken away while the rest remain, [we would have a most general genus. And since this holds for *any* substance], we would have many most general genera among substances.

[52] But perhaps it will be said in reply that no collection included in a most general genus is itself a most general genus.

[53] But I still object that if when one of the substances is separated, the remaining collection is not a most general genus and yet the universal *substance* still endures, then that remaining collection has to be a species of substance and has to have a coequal species under the same genus. But what coequal species can there be opposite to it? For either the latter species of substance is straightforwardly contained in the former, or else it shares some individuals with it, as *rational animal* does with *mortal animal*.

[54] Further, every universal is naturally prior to its own individuals. But a collection of any things whatever is an integral whole with respect to the singulars of which it is constituted, and is naturally posterior to the things out of which it is put together.

[55] Further, Boethius in his *On Division* [879D] gives the following difference between an integral whole and a universal: The part is not the same as the integral whole, whereas the species *is* the same as the genus. But how can the whole collection of men be the same as the multitude of animals?

[56] It now remains for us to attack those [47] who call “universal” the single individuals *insofar as* they agree with others, and who grant that the same things are predicated of several, not in such a way that the several *are* essentially those things but because the several *agree* with them. But if being predicated of several is the same as “agreeing” with several, then how do we say an individual is predicated “of one thing only” [16], since there is nothing that “agrees” with only one thing?

[57] Also, how is there any difference between a universal and a singular in virtue of being “predicated of several,” since in entirely the same way as *man* agrees with several things, so too Socrates agrees with several things? Certainly *man* insofar as it is man and *Socrates* insofar as he is man agree with other things. But neither *man* insofar as it is Socrates nor *Socrates*

insofar as he is Socrates agrees with other things. So whatever *man* has *Socrates* has, and in exactly the same way.

[58] Furthermore, since the things are granted to be entirely the same—that is, the *man* that is in Socrates and Socrates himself—there is no difference between the one and the other. For no thing is diverse from itself at one and the same time, since whatever it has in itself, it has in entirely the same way. Thus Socrates, both white and literate, even though he has diverse things in himself,<sup>17</sup> nevertheless is not diverse *from himself* because of them, since he has them both and in exactly the same way. For he is not literate in any other way than from himself, or white in any other way than from himself. So too, as white he is not something other than himself, or as literate something other than himself.

[59] Also, how can their claim that Socrates and Plato “agree *in man*” be taken, since it is plain that all men differ from one another both in matter and in form? For if Socrates agrees with Plato in the *thing* that is man, but no other thing is man but Socrates or someone else, then Socrates has to agree with Plato either in himself or in someone else. But in *himself* he is instead *diverse* from Plato; the case with someone else is also plain, since Socrates is *not* someone else.

[60] On the other hand, there are those who take ‘agreeing *in man*’ negatively, as if to say: Socrates does *not* differ from Plato *in man*.

[61] But in this sense it can also be said that he does not differ from Plato *in rock*, since neither one is a rock. Thus there is no greater agreement between them to be noted *in man* than *in rock*, unless perhaps some premise is added in advance, as if to say “They are men because they do not differ *in man*.”<sup>18</sup>

[62] But this cannot work either, since it is completely false that they do not differ *in man*. For if Socrates does not differ from Plato in a thing that is *man*, then neither does he differ from Plato in himself.

17. Namely, whiteness and literacy.

18. I.e., one might want to add a premise that allows that if *A* and *B* do not differ *in man* then *they agree in man*, but that does not allow this to work where certain other terms (like ‘rock’) are substituted for ‘man.’

For if in himself Socrates differs from Plato, but Socrates is a thing that is *man*, then certainly Socrates also differs from him in a thing that is *man*.

### [Abelard's Own Theory]

[63] But now that we have shown the reasons why *things* taken neither singly nor collectively can be called "universals" insofar as they are predicated of several, it remains to ascribe this kind of universality only to words.

[64] Thus just as some names are called "appellative"<sup>19</sup> by grammarians and some are called "proper," so too some simple expressions are called "universal" by dialecticians and some are called "particular"—that is, "singular."

[65] Now a universal word is one that on the basis of its invention is apt to be predicated of several things one by one. For example the name 'man,' which can be conjoined to particular names of men in accordance with the nature of the subject things it is imposed on. But a singular word is one that is predicable of one thing only. For example 'Socrates,' when it is taken as the name of one person only. If you take it equivocally, you do not produce *one* word but *many* words in signification. For according to Priscian<sup>20</sup> [2.145.9] many names can come together in one word.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, when a universal is described as being "*what* is predicated of several" [16], the 'what' at the beginning not only indicates the simplicity of the expression, to distinguish it from a complex phrase, but also indicates the unity of signification, to distinguish it from equivocal terms.<sup>22</sup>

19. I.e., "common names."

20. A Latin grammarian, fl. A.D. 500. His work was frequently cited in the twelfth century.

21. 'Socrates' is a proper name even if there are many people named "Socrates." In that case it is a proper name of several people by equivocation, which is unlike the way a *common* name like 'man' names several people univocally.

22. A universal term signifies several things on the basis of one "institution" or "invention," whereas an equivocal

[66] Now that we have shown what the term 'what' at the beginning of the definition of a universal involves, let us carefully consider the two other parts of the definition that follow it: 'predicated' and 'of several.'

[67] To be "predicated" is to be conjoinable to something truly by means of the expressive force of a present-tensed substantive verb. For example 'man' can be truly conjoined to diverse things through a substantive verb. Verbs like 'runs' and 'walks,' which are predicated of several things, also have the force of a substantive verb in its copulative function.<sup>23</sup>

[68] Thus Aristotle in *On Interpretation* II [10, 20a3–6],<sup>24</sup> says "In those propositions in which 'is' does not occur—for example in one where 'runs' or 'walks' occurs—the verbs produce the same effect occurring there as if 'is' were added."

[69] And again he says [ibid. 12, 21b9–10], "There is no difference between 'A man walks' and 'A man is walking.'"

[70] His phrase 'of several' [16] groups names with respect to the diversity of what they name. Otherwise 'Socrates' would be predicated of several things when one says 'This man is Socrates,' 'This animal is Socrates,' 'This white thing is Socrates,' 'This musician is Socrates.' Although these names are diverse in meaning, they have entirely the same subject thing.

[71] But note that *syntactical* conjoining, which grammarians are concerned with, is other than conjoining with respect to *predication*, which dialecticians consider. For according to the force of the syntactical construction, 'man' and 'stone' (and any other noun in the nominative case) can be conjoined just as much as 'animal' and 'man' can with respect to making plain a certain understanding, but not with respect to showing the status of a thing.

[72] So a *syntactical* conjoining is a good one whenever it indicates a complete judgment, whether

term signifies several things on the basis of several institutions or inventions operating at once.

23. I.e., 'runs' amounts to 'is running,' and 'walks' to 'is walking.'

24. In the Middle Ages, *On Interpretation* was divided into two parts or books. The division came between Chs. 9 and 10.

the judgment is so or not. But a conjoining with respect to *predication*, which we are concerned with here, pertains to the nature of things and to indicating the truth of their *status*. If someone says ‘A man is a stone’ he produces a well-formed syntactical construction of ‘man’ or ‘stone’ with respect to the sense he wanted to indicate. There was no grammatical mistake. With respect to the force of the statement, ‘stone’ is here predicated of ‘man,’ with which it is grammatically construed as a predicate, insofar as false categorical propositions have a predicate term too. Nevertheless, ‘stone’ is *not* predicable of it in the nature of things. Here, when we are defining a “universal,” we are concerned only with the latter kind of force of predication.

[73] Now it seems that a “universal” name is never quite the same as an “appellative” name, or a “singular” name as a “proper” name. Rather they are related to one another as broader and narrower. For appellative and proper names not only include nominative cases but also the oblique cases, which are not predicated and so are excluded by the expression ‘to be predicated’ in the definition of a universal.

[74] Because oblique forms are less necessary [than nominative forms] for making a statement—which according to Aristotle [*On Interpretation* 4, 17a6–7] is the only present topic of speculation (that is, of dialectical consideration)—and because only the statement makes up arguments, therefore oblique forms are in a way not counted by Aristotle himself as names. He does not call them “names” but “cases of names” [ibid. 2, 16a32–b1].

[75] On the other hand, just as not all appellative or proper names have to be called universal or singular respectively, so too the other way around. For “universal” not only includes names, but also verbs and infinite names, to which infinite names the definition of an appellative Priscian gives does not seem to apply.<sup>25</sup>

[76] Now that the definition of ‘universal’ and ‘singular’ has been applied to *words* [rather than to *things*],

25. Priscian, *Institutiones grammaticae* 1.58.14–16: “Now this is the difference between a proper name and an appellative: the appellative is naturally common to many things that the same general or specific substance or quality or quantity joins together.”

let us carefully investigate the characteristic of *universal* words especially.

[77] Questions have been raised about these universals. For there is a doubt about their signification most of all, since they do not appear to have any [universal] subject thing [of which they can be predicated], or to establish a firm understanding of anything.

[78] Universal names did not seem to be imposed on any *things*, since all things subsisted discretely in themselves and did not agree in any *thing* (as was shown [59]–[62]) in such a way that universal names could be imposed in accordance with their agreement in this thing.

[79] So, since universal names are certainly not imposed on things according to the difference in their discreteness (for then they would not be common but singular names), and again since universal names cannot name things as agreeing in any *thing* (for there is no thing they agree in), therefore universal names seem to bring about no signification of things—especially since in addition they establish no understanding of any thing.

[80] Thus Boethius in his *On Division* [889A–B], says the word ‘man’ produces a doubt in the understanding. When the term is heard, he says, “the hearer’s intelligence is carried away by many disturbances and is drawn into errors. For unless someone delimits the term by saying ‘Every man walks,’ or at least ‘Some man walks,’ and indicates *this* man (if he happens to be walking), the hearer’s understanding has nothing it can reasonably understand.”

[81] Because ‘man’ is imposed on all single men from the same cause—namely because they are a rational, mortal animal—that very community of imposition prevents any one person from being understood in the term ‘man,’ as on the contrary in the name ‘Socrates’ there is understood one man’s own person. This is why ‘Socrates’ is called a “singular” name. In the common name ‘man,’ neither Socrates himself nor anyone else nor the whole collection of men is reasonably understood on the basis of the word.

[82] Neither, as some people say, is Socrates himself “*insofar as he is a man*” picked out by the name ‘man.’ For even if only Socrates is sitting in this house, and even if the proposition ‘A man is sitting in this

house<sup>26</sup> is true about him alone, nevertheless this is in no way imputed to Socrates by means of the name 'man' in subject position—not even “insofar as he is a man.” Otherwise it would reasonably be understood from the proposition itself that sitting inhered in Socrates, so that from the fact that a man is sitting in this house it could be inferred that *Socrates* is sitting in it.

[83] Likewise, no one else can be understood in the name 'man.' But neither is the whole collection of men understood in that term, since the proposition can be true on the basis of just one man.

[84] So neither 'man' nor any other universal word appears to signify anything. For it does not establish an understanding of any thing. But it seems there can be no understanding that does not have a subject thing it conceives. Thus Boethius in his *Commentary* says “Every understanding arises from a subject thing either as that thing is disposed or as it is not disposed (for no understanding can arise from *no* subject).”

[85] For these reasons universals seem wholly unsuited to signification.

[86] But this is not so. For they in a way “signify” diverse things by naming them, not by establishing an understanding that *arises* from them but one that *pertains* to each of them.

[87] For example, the word 'man' *names* single men on the basis of a common cause: that they are men. (It is called a “universal” on account of this cause.) It also *constitutes a certain understanding*, a common one, not a proper one—that is, a common understanding that pertains to the single men whose common likeness it conceives.

[88] But now let us carefully examine what we just touched on briefly: (i) what is the *common cause* in accordance with which a universal name is imposed, (ii) what is the understanding's *common conception* of the likeness of things, and (iii) whether a word is called “common” on account of the common cause things

26. Because Latin has no indefinite article, the sentence 'A man is sitting in this house' looks exactly the same in Latin as the sentence 'Man is sitting in this house.' I included the article for the sake of a smooth reading, but it should not be read as an existential quantifier.

agree in, or on account of the common conception, or on account of both together.

[89] First let us consider the *common cause*. Single men, who are discrete from one another since they differ both in their own essences and in their own forms (as we mentioned above while investigating the physics of the matter [28–40]), nevertheless agree in *that they are men*. I do not say they agree in *man*, since no thing is a man<sup>27</sup> unless it is discrete. Rather they agree in *being a man*.

[90] Now *being a man* is not a man or any other thing, if we consider the matter carefully, any more than *not being in a subject* is any thing, or *not admitting contraries*, or *not admitting of greater and less*. Yet Aristotle says [*Categories* 5, 2a12–4b19] all substances agree in these respects. For since (as was shown above [59–62]) there can be no agreement in a thing, if nevertheless there is an agreement among some things, it must be taken according to what is not any thing. Thus Socrates and Plato are alike in *being a man*, as a horse and an ass are alike in *not being a man*, for which reason each of them is called a “nonman.” So for things to agree with one another is for each one of them to *be the same* \_\_\_\_\_ or *not to be the same* \_\_\_\_\_<sup>25</sup>—for example, to be a man or to be white, or not to be a man or not to be white.

[91] But it seems we should balk at taking the agreement of things according to what is *not* any thing, as if we are uniting in *nothing* things that exist when we say this man and that man agree in the *status* of man—that is, *in that they are men*. But we mean only that they *are men* and in this respect do not differ at all—I mean in the respect that *they are men*, even though we appeal to no *essence* here.

[92] Now someone's *being a man*, which is not a thing, we call the *status* of man. We also called it [88–

27. See n. 26.

28. '*Idem esse vel non esse*.' I do not translate this as 'to be the same thing or not to be the same thing,' since the point of the passage is that we are not talking about *things*. I think the '*idem*' here is simply a placeholder. The idea is that for things to “agree” is for each of them to be \_\_\_\_\_, where the blank is filled with *the same* term in each case. The examples immediately following bear out this interpretation.

89] the “common cause” of the imposition of a name on single men insofar as they agree with one another. We often call by the name ‘cause’ what are not any *thing*. For example, when we say “He was flogged *because* he does not want to go to the forum.” ‘He does not want to go to the forum,’ which occurs as a “cause” here, is no essence. We can likewise call the *status* of man the things<sup>29</sup> themselves established in the nature of man, the common likeness of which he who imposed the word conceived.

[93] Now that the *signification* of universals has been shown (they signify things by naming them) and the *common cause* of their imposition has been pointed out, let us show what the *understandings* are that they constitute.

[94] First let us distinguish in general the nature of all understandings.

[95] Since both sensation and understanding belong to the soul, the difference between them is this: The senses are engaged only through bodily organs and perceive only bodies or what are *in* bodies. For example, vision perceives a tower or the tower’s visible qualities. But the understanding, just as it needs no bodily organ, so neither does it have to have a subject body to which it is directed. Instead it is satisfied with a thing’s likeness the mind itself makes up for itself, to which it directs the action of its intelligence. So when the tower is destroyed or removed from sight, the sensation that dealt with it is lost, but the understanding of it remains since the thing’s likeness is retained in the mind.

[96] Now just as the sense is not the thing sensed, to which it is directed, so the understanding is not the form of the thing it conceives. Instead an “understanding” is a certain *action* of the soul on the basis of which the soul is said to be in a state of understanding. But the form to which it is directed is a kind of imaginary and made-up thing, which the mind contrives for itself whenever it wants and however it wants. The imaginary cities seen in a dream are like this, or the form of a building that will be made, which the ar-

chitect conceives as a model and exemplar of the thing to be formed. We cannot call this either a substance or an accident.

[97] Yet some people call this made-up thing the same as the “understanding.” Thus the building (the tower) I conceive when the tower is absent, and observe as tall and square and in an open field, they call the same as the “understanding” of the tower. Aristotle seems to agree with them; in *On Interpretation* [1, 16a7] he calls “likenesses of things” the passions of the soul they call “understandings.”

[98] On the other hand, we call the *image* the “likeness of the thing.” But there is no objection if the understanding too is called a “likeness” in a way—that is, because it *conceives* what is *properly* called the “likeness of the thing.” We have said, and rightly so, that what is properly called the “likeness” is different from the understanding. For I ask: Is the squareness and the tallness a true form of the understanding that is led to the likeness of the tower’s quantity and of its structure? But surely true squareness and true tallness inhere only in bodies. Also, neither an understanding nor any true essence can be formed by a *made-up* quality. Thus all that remains is that, just as the quality is a made-up one, so too a made-up substance is the subject of that quality.

[99] Perhaps an image in a mirror, which seems to appear to sight as being a subject, can truly be said to be “nothing,” because in the white surface of the mirror the quality of the contrary color [black] often appears.

[100] When the soul both senses and understands the same thing at once—as when it discerns a stone—it can be asked whether then too the understanding is dealing with the *image* of the stone, or whether the understanding and the sense together are both dealing with the stone itself. But it seems more reasonable that the understanding does not need an image in that case, since the truth of the substance itself is present to it.

[101] But if someone says that where sensation occurs there is no understanding, we do not grant that. For it often happens that the soul perceives one thing and understands another, as is quite apparent with people who are studying. Although with their eyes open they perceive things present to them, yet they are thinking of the other things they are writing about.

29. The whole sentence is puzzling, but the word ‘things’ especially so. Abelard has been at pains to emphasize that the *status* is *not* a thing.

[102] Now that we have seen the nature of understandings in general, let us distinguish the understandings of universals and singulars. They are divided from one another insofar as the understanding that goes with a universal name conceives a common and confused image of many things. But the understanding a singular word generates comprises the proper and so to speak “singular” form of one thing—that is, a form related to one “person” only.

[103] Thus when I hear ‘man,’ a kind of model rises up in my mind that is related to single men in such a way that it is common to all of them and proper to none. But when I hear ‘Socrates,’ a certain form rises up in my mind that expresses the likeness of a certain person. Hence by the word ‘Socrates,’ which produces in the mind the proper form of one person, a certain thing is picked out and determined. But with the word ‘man,’ the understanding of which depends on the common form of all men, that very community produces a “confusion” so that we do not understand any one form from among them all.

[104] So ‘man’ is correctly said to signify neither Socrates nor anyone else, since no one man is picked out by the force of the name, even though it *names* singular men. But ‘Socrates’ or any other singular term, is not only able to *name* a singular but also to determine a subject thing.

[105] But because, following Boethius, we said above [84] that every understanding has a subject thing, how does this claim fit the understandings of universals?

[106] Certainly it should be noted that Boethius introduces this claim in the sophistical argument where he shows the understanding of universals is an empty one. So there is no problem if he does not proceed on this basis in stating the truth of the matter. Thus when he is avoiding falsehood he endorses other people’s reasoning.

[107] Also, we can call the understanding’s “subject thing” either (a) the true substance of the thing, as when understanding occurs together with sensation, or (b) the conceived form of any thing when the thing is absent, whether that form is common, as we said [happens in the case of a universal (102)], or proper. I mean “common” with respect to the likeness it preserves of many things, even though in itself it is regarded as one thing.

[108] In this way, to indicate the nature of all lions one picture can be made that is proper to none of the lions it represents. Again, another picture can be applied to distinguish any one of them, a picture that denotes something proper to it. For example, if the lion is painted as limping, maimed, or wounded by Hercules’ spear.

[109] Therefore, just as one kind of figure of things is painted common and another is painted singular, so too one kind is conceived common and another is conceived proper.

[110] Now it is not absurd to doubt whether the name also signifies this form the understanding is directed to. That it does appears to be confirmed both by authority and by reason.

[111] For Priscian in the first part of his *Constructions* [2.135.7–10],<sup>30</sup> although he had already pointed out the common imposition of universals on individuals, seemed to add another kind of signification for them as well: signifying a common form. He says, “The terms by which the genera or species of the things in nature are indicated can also be proper to the general and special forms of things constructed intelligibly in the divine mind before they go forth into bodies.” In this passage God is treated as a builder about to put something together, who conceives beforehand in his soul an exemplary form of the thing to be put together, and operates in accordance with the likeness of this form. The form is said to “proceed into a body” when a true thing is put together according to the likeness of this form.

[112] Now this common conception is rightly attributed to God, not to man. For those works—the general or special *statūs* in a nature—are God’s<sup>31</sup> work, not a builder’s. For instance *man, soul, stone* are God’s work, but a house or a sword are man’s. So the latter—the house and the sword—are not works of nature as the former are. The words for them do not fall under substance but rather accident, and so they are neither genera nor most specific species.

30. Bks. 17–18 of Priscian’s *Institutiones grammaticae* are on “construction—that is, the ordering of the parts of speech among themselves” (Priscian, 1.4.9–10).

31. Restoring ‘dei’ where the edition deleted it.

[113] Thus also such conceptions by abstraction are correctly attributed to the divine mind, not to the human mind. For men, who know things only through the senses, scarcely ever—or perhaps *never*—rise to this kind of simple intelligence. The external sensuousness of accidents prevents men from conceiving the natures of things purely. But God, to whom all the things he created are plain through themselves and who knew them before they existed, distinguishes the single *statūs* in themselves. Sensation is not an obstacle for him who alone has true intelligence.

[114] Hence for things they do not touch<sup>32</sup> by sense, men succeed in having only *opinion* rather than *intelligence*. Experience itself teaches us this. For thinking of some city we have not seen, when we arrive there we find we thought of it otherwise than it is.

[115] So too, I believe, we have opinion rather than real intelligence of the internal forms that do not reach the senses, such as rationality, mortality, fatherhood, sitting.

[116] Yet any names of any existing things, insofar as is in their power, generate understanding rather than opinion, since their inventor meant to impose them in accordance with certain natures or characteristics of things, even if he did not know how to think out the nature or characteristic of the thing.

[117] Priscian [111] calls these common conceptions “general” or “specific” because in one way or another they suggest general or specific names to us. He says universal terms are themselves, so to speak, proper names for these conceptions. Even though they are of confused signification as far as the named essences are concerned, they do immediately direct the listener’s mind to the common conception, just as proper names do to the one thing they signify.

[118] Porphyry himself, when he says certain things are constituted out of matter and form and certain others after a *likeness* of matter and form, seems to have understood this kind of conception in the phrase ‘after a likeness of matter and form.’ This will be discussed more fully in the appropriate place.

32. I conjecture ‘*attrectaverunt*’ for the edition’s ‘*attrac-taverunt*’ and am translating accordingly.

[119] Boethius too appears to have understood this same common conception when he says the thought gathered together from the likeness of many things is a genus or species.

[120] Some people also assert Plato was of the same view, insofar as he called the common Ideas he put in *nous* “genera” or “species.”

[121] Perhaps it is in this respect that Boethius mentions Plato disagreed with Aristotle, where Boethius says Plato meant genera and species and the rest not only to be *understood* as universal but also to *be* universal and to subsist outside bodies—as if he had said Plato was understanding by “universals” the common conceptions he set up in *nous* as separated from bodies, perhaps not taking ‘universal’ according to common predication, as Aristotle does, but according to a common likeness of many things. For that common conception does not seem to be predicated of several things at all, like a name that is applied to several things one by one.

[122] The fact that Boethius says Plato thought universals subsist outside sensibles can be explained in another way too, so that there is no dispute between the two philosophers’ views. For what Aristotle said, that universals always subsist in sensible things, he said insofar as their *act* is concerned. The nature *animal*, which is indicated by the universal name [‘animal’] (and in this respect is called a kind of “universal” by a transfer of meaning), is never actually found except in a sensible thing. Yet Plato thinks this nature subsists naturally in itself in such a way that it would retain its being even if not subjected to sense, and according to this “natural” being is called by the name ‘universal.’ And so what Aristotle denies with respect to the act Plato, the investigator of physics, assigns to a natural *aptitude*. So there is no disagreement between them.

[123] Reason too seems to agree with the authorities we have listed who seem to maintain that common forms are designated by universal names. What is it to *conceive* these common forms by means of names, other than for them to be *signified* by the names? But surely in that sense, when we make these common forms to be *different* from understandings, there emerges a third signification of names besides the *thing* and the *understanding*. Although authority does not maintain this, yet reason is not opposed to it.

[124] Now let us settle what we promised above [88] to decide, whether the community of universal names is judged by the common cause of imposition or by the common conception, or by both. There is no objection if it is by both. But the common cause, which is taken in accordance with the nature of things, seems to have the greater force.

[125] What we mentioned above [103?] must also be decided, that the understandings of universals come about by abstraction, and also how we call them “alone,” “bare,” and “pure”—but not “empty.”

[126] First about abstraction. You need to know that matter and form always exist thoroughly mixed together. But the mind’s reason has the power now to gaze on the matter by itself, now to attend to the form alone, now to conceive both mixed together. The first two understandings are by abstraction; they abstract something from conjoined things, to consider its very nature. But the third one is by conjunction.

[127] For example, the substance of this man is *body* and *animal* and *man*, and is covered with an infinity of forms. When I attend to it in the material essence *substance*, setting aside all its additional forms, I have an understanding “by abstraction.” Again, when I pay attention to the corporeality alone in it, which I conjoin to *substance*, here too even though the understanding is “by conjunction” with respect the first one (which only attended to the nature *substance*), nevertheless the same understanding also comes about “by abstraction” with respect to the forms other than corporeality, none of which I am paying attention to—for example being animate, having sensation, rationality, whiteness.

[128] Such understandings “by abstraction” perhaps seemed to be “false” or “empty” because they perceive the thing otherwise than as it subsists. For since such understandings attend to the matter by itself or the form separately, but neither of these subsists separately, those understandings certainly seem to conceive the thing otherwise than as it is, and so to be “empty.”

[129] But that is not so. If someone understands a thing otherwise than as it is in the sense that he attends to it in terms of a nature or characteristic it does not have, *that* understanding is surely empty. But this does not happen with abstraction. For when I attend to this man only in terms of the nature *substance* or *body*, but

not also in terms of the nature *animal* or *man* or *literate*, surely I understand nothing but what is in the nature. But I do not pay attention to *all* the features it has. And when I say that I attend to the nature “only” insofar as it has this or that feature, the term ‘only’ refers to the *attention*, not to the mode of subsisting. Otherwise the understanding *would* be empty. For the thing does not *have* only this, but it is only *attended to* as having this.

[130] Yet in another sense a thing is said to be understood in a certain way otherwise than as it is—not in another *status* than it is, as was said above [91?], but “otherwise” insofar as the mode of understanding is other than the mode of subsisting. For *this* thing is understood *separately*—not as *separated*—from *that* other one, although it does *exist* separately. The matter is perceived purely, and the form simply, although the former does not *exist* purely or the latter simply. Thus the purity or the simplicity is reduced to the *understanding*, not to the *subsistence* of the thing, so that they are a mode of understanding, not of subsisting.

[131] The senses, too, often deal with composites differently. For example if a statue is half gold and half silver, I can perceive the conjoined gold and silver separately, looking now at the gold by itself, now at the silver by itself, perceiving the conjoined metals *dividedly*, not as *divided*. Indeed they are not divided.

[132] So too the understanding attends by abstraction “dividedly,” not as “divided.” Otherwise it would be empty.

[133] Yet perhaps there could be a sound understanding that considers what are conjoined as *divided* in one sense and *conjoined* in another, and conversely. For again, both the conjunction and division of things can be taken in two senses. We call certain things “conjoined” to one another through some likeness—for example these two men insofar as they are men, or insofar as they are literate. But certain other things we call “conjoined” through a putting together or a kind of aggregation—for example matter and form, or wine and water. Things adjoined to one another in the latter way are conceived in one way as divided and in another way as conjoined.

[134] Thus Boethius ascribes to the mind the power of being able, by means of its reason, to put together disjoint things and to resolve composite ones.

Yet in neither operation does it go beyond the nature of the thing, but perceives only what is in the nature of the thing. Otherwise it would not be reason but opinion—that is, if the intelligence were to depart from the *status* of the thing.

[135] But a question arises here about the builder's plan:<sup>33</sup> Is it "empty" while he *now* holds in his mind the form of the *future* work, when the thing is not that way yet? If we grant this, we are forced to call God's plan "empty" too, which he had before his works were established. But if one says "empty" with respect to the effect—that is, in the sense that God would not by his labor complete what he foresees—then it is false that his providence was "empty." On the other hand, if someone calls it "empty" on the grounds that it would not yet be in harmony with the *status* of the future thing, we shudder at the awful words but do not reject the judgment. For it is true that the future *status* of the world did not materially exist while God was intelligibly arranging what was still future.

[136] But we do not usually call someone's thought or plan "empty" unless it lacks an effect, [so that it is not fulfilled]. Neither do we say we think "in vain" unless we think of things we do not finish by working them out. And so, changing the words back to their usual sense, we do not call a plan "empty" that does not think "in vain" but only conceives things that do not yet exist materially as if they subsisted. That is natural to all plans.

[137] Thinking about future matters is called "planning," about past ones is called "memory," and about present ones is called properly "intelligence."

[138] Now if someone calls a person "deceived" who in his planning thinks about a future *status* as if about what already exists, rather he himself is deceived who thinks such a person should be called "deceived." For one who plans the future is not deceived unless he believes the situation to be already as he plans. Neither does the *conception* of a nonexistent thing make

one "deceived," but rather the *belief* added to it. For even if I think of a rational crow, yet if I do not believe in it I am not deceived. So too neither is the planner deceived. For what he thinks of *as if* already existing he does not regard as really existing so. Rather he thinks of it as "present" in the sense that he posits it as present *in the future*.

[139] Surely *every* conception of the mind is so to speak about what is present. For example, if I consider Socrates either insofar as he *was* a boy or insofar as he *will be* an old man, I join childhood or old age to him *as if* at present. For I attend to him at present *in* a past or future characteristic. But no one calls this kind of memory "empty," because what it conceives as present it attends to in the past. We will discuss this more fully in our treatment of *On Interpretation*.

[140] The problem in the case of God—that his substance, which alone is immutable and simple, is not varied by any conceptions of things or by any other forms, [and so the above account of planning cannot be applied to him]—is solved rather satisfactorily. For although the custom of human speech presumes to speak about the creator as if about creatures, since it calls him "provident" or "understanding," yet nothing should be understood or can exist in him distinct from him—neither understanding nor any other form. So every question about the understanding is superfluous as applied to God. But if we speak the truth more plainly, for him to plan the future is nothing other than for future things not be to hidden from him who in himself is true reason.

[141] Now that we have pointed out many facts about the nature of abstraction, let us return to the understandings of universals, which must always come about by abstraction. For when I hear the term 'man' or 'whiteness' or 'white,' I am not by the force of the name itself reminded of all the natures or characteristics in the subject things. Rather by 'man' I have a conception only of *animal, rational, mortal*, not of later accidents as well. Yet this is a *confused* conception, not a discrete one. For the understandings of singulars too come about by abstraction, as when we say 'this substance,' 'this body,' 'this animal,' 'this man,' 'this white thing.' By the phrase 'this man' I attend only to the nature *man*, but as regards a certain subject thing. But

33. *Providentia*. The term may also be translated 'providence' or 'foresight,' depending on the context. Some of the following discussion may be clearer if the reader keeps these alternatives in mind.

by the word 'man' I attend to the same nature simply in itself, not as regards any one man.

[142] Thus the understanding of universals is deservedly called "alone" and "bare" and "pure." "Alone," apart from sensation, because it does not perceive the thing as sensible. "Bare," with respect to the abstraction of forms, either all or some of them. "Pure" of everything, as far as being discrete is concerned, because no thing, whether matter or form, is picked out in it. In this last respect we called this kind of conception "confused," above [102].

[143] Now that we have examined these points, let us proceed to solve the questions about genera and species posed by Porphyry. We can do this easily now that the nature of all universals has been clarified.

[144] Thus the first of these questions [4] was whether genera and species subsist—that is, signify any truly existing things—or are posited in the intellect alone, etc.—that is, are posited in empty opinion without any thing, such as the names 'chimera' and 'goat-stag,' which do not generate a correct understanding.

[145] To this it must be replied that they really do signify truly existing things by *naming* them, the same things singular names signify. They are not posited in empty opinion at all. Yet in a certain sense they are established by an intellect that is "alone" and "bare" and "pure," in the sense given above [142]. Now there is no objection if one who proposes a question takes certain words in one sense in asking it, and one who answers the question takes them in another sense in answering it.<sup>34</sup> It is as if the one who answers it were to say: "You are asking whether they are posited in the intellect alone," etc. You can take this so that it is true, as we have already explained above.

[146] The words can also be taken in exactly the same sense on both sides, both by the answerer and by

the asker. In that case there will be one question, not made up of opposites, about the first members of two dialectical questions, namely: "Do they exist or not?" and again "Are they posited in intellects alone, bare, and pure, or are they not?"

[147] The same thing can be said in the case of the second question [(5)], which is whether, as subsisting, they are corporeal or incorporeal. That is, since it is granted that they signify subsistents, do they signify subsistents<sup>35</sup> that are corporeal or that are incorporeal?

[148] Surely, as Boethius says, everything that exists is either corporeal or incorporeal, whether we take the names 'corporeal' and 'incorporeal' for a substantial body and for a nonbody, respectively, or for what can be perceived by a bodily sense (like man, stone, whiteness) and<sup>36</sup> for what cannot (like the soul, justice).

[149] The term 'corporeal' can also be taken for what is discrete, as if the question is: "Since they signify subsistents, do they signify them as discrete or as nondiscrete?" For whoever investigates the truth of a matter well not only pays attention to what can be said truly but also to whatever can be maintained in an opinion. So even if it is certain to someone that no things besides discrete ones subsist, nevertheless because there could be an opinion to the effect that there were other things too, it is not out of place to ask about them as well. This last way of taking the term 'corporeal,' so that the question asks about the discrete and the nondiscrete, seems to approximate the sense of the question more.

[150] But in that case, when Boethius says everything that exists is either corporeal or incorporeal, the alternative 'incorporeal' perhaps seems superfluous, since nothing that exists is "incorporeal"—that is, nondiscrete.

[151] Likewise, in that case, neither does the point about the order of the questions seem important at all,<sup>37</sup> except perhaps insofar as, just as 'corporeal' and

34. As Abelard is doing here. In the original question, the two alternatives were intended to be *exclusive*, so that the question meant: "Are universals to be regarded in the one way and not the other, or in the other way and not the one?" Abelard is answering the question as though the alternatives were not intended to be exclusive, so that he can say "They are to be regarded in *both* ways."

35. Conjecturing '*aliquid*' for the edition's '*alia*.' I have left the word untranslated, as implied in the word 'subsistents,' which I have supplied.

36. Conjecturing '*et*' for the edition's '*vel*.'

37. I.e., the words "*as subsisting*" at the beginning of question 2 [147], which presuppose the answer to question 1.

‘incorporeal’ divide subsistents in another signification of the terms, so it seems they divide subsistents in this signification too, as if the one asking the question said: “I see that some existents are called corporeal and others incorporeal. Which of these shall we say are the things signified by universals?”<sup>38</sup>

[152] The reply to this is: Corporeal things, in a sense. That is, things discrete in their essence and yet incorporeal with respect to being designated by a universal name—since universal names do not name them discretely and determinately but confusedly, as we explained well enough above [102].

[153] Thus universal names are called “corporeal” with respect to the nature of the things, and “incorporeal” with respect to the mode of signification. For although they name what are discrete, yet they do not do so discretely and determinately.

[154] Now the third question [6], whether universals are posited in sensibles, etc., is derived from their being granted as being incorporeal. For taken in a certain sense, ‘incorporeal’ is divided by being in a sensible and not being in a sensible, as we also remarked above [6].

[155] Universals are said to subsist in sensibles—that is, to signify an intrinsic substance existing in a sensible thing on the basis of the thing’s exterior forms. And although they signify the substance that actually subsists in a sensible thing, nevertheless they naturally indicate the same substance as separated from a sensible thing, as we explained above in accordance with Plato [122].

[156] Thus Boethius says that genera and species are *understood* (he does not say *exist*) beyond sensibles—that is, insofar as the realities of genera and species are rationally attended to in themselves with respect to their nature, beyond all sensibility. For they could truly subsist in themselves if the exterior forms through which they come to the senses were removed. For we grant that all genera or species inhere in sensible things. But because the understanding of them was always said to be apart from sensation [142], they seemed to be in no way in sensible things. Hence it was worth asking whether they could ever be in sensi-

bles. For some of them, the answer is that they do exist in sensibles, but in such a way that they naturally persist beyond sensibility, as has been said [122].<sup>39</sup>

[157] On the other hand, we can also take ‘corporeal’ and ‘incorporeal’ in the second question for “sensible” and “insensible” [148], so that the order of the questions is more appropriate. Because the understanding of universals was said to be “alone apart from sensation,” as was said [142], it was right to ask [in question 2] whether they were sensible or insensible. The answer was that some of them are sensible with respect to the nature of the things, and that the same ones are insensible with respect to the mode of signifying [153]. For they do not designate the sensible things they name in the same way they are sensed (that is, as discrete), and sensation does not find them by their being pointed out to it. Hence the question remained whether universals appellated only the sensibles themselves or also signified something else.

[158] The reply to this is that they signify the sensibles themselves and at the same time the common conception that Priscian ascribes especially to the divine mind [111].

[159] “And agree with them.” According to what we here understand as the fourth question, as we mentioned above [10], this is the answer: We say names are not universal at all when, with their subject things destroyed, they are no longer predicable of several things. Indeed they are not then common to any things. For example, the name ‘rose’ when roses no longer exist. But even then the name is significative in virtue of the understanding, although it lacks naming. Otherwise the proposition ‘There is no rose’ would not exist.

[160] Questions rightly arose about universal but not about singular words, because there was no such doubt about the signification of singular words. Their mode of signifying was surely quite in accordance with the *status* of things. Just as the things are discrete in themselves, so too they are signified discretely by singular terms. The understanding of singular terms grasps a fixed thing, which is not so for universal terms.

[161] Furthermore, while universal terms do not signify things as discrete, they do not seem to signify

38. The sense of the paragraph is very obscure.

39. The paragraph is remarkably obscure.

them as agreeing either. For there is no *thing* in which they agree, as we also explained above [59–62].

[162] So because there was such a great doubt about universals, Porphyry chose to treat universals only, and excluded singulars from his purpose as if they were plain enough by themselves, even though he sometimes treats them in passing in the course of discussing other matters.

[163] But note that even though the definition of a universal or a genus or species includes only words, nevertheless these names are often used figuratively for the corresponding *things*. For example, when someone says a species consists of genus and difference—that is, a thing in a species consists of a thing in a genus. For where the nature of words is being explained with respect to their signification, at one time the words are discussed and at another time the things, and the names of the former are often applied figuratively to the latter, and conversely.

[164] Thus because the treatment both of logic and of grammar was made extremely ambiguous because of such a figurative use of names, this led many people into error. They were not rightly distinguishing between the correct imposition of names and their figurative misuse.

[165] More than anyone else, Boethius in his *Commentaries* produces this confusion by figurative usages, especially in his investigation of the above questions. So it seems right to ignore the question what *he* calls genera or species. Nevertheless, let us quickly run through his questions and apply them as needed to the above theory.

[166] Here then in his investigation of these questions, in order to resolve the matter better, he first confuses the issue by means of sophistical questions and arguments so that afterwards he may teach us how to escape from them.

[167] He sets out such a great problem that all concern for and investigation of genera and species has to be postponed because of it. It is as if he says that the words ‘genera’ and ‘species’ cannot be said to be what they seem, either with respect to the signification of things or with respect to the understanding.

[168] He shows this for the signification of things, insofar as a universal *thing*, whether one thing or a multiple thing, is never found—that is, a thing predi-

cable of several, as he carefully explains and as we proved above.

[169] First he proves that one thing is not a universal, and so is neither a genus nor a species. He says everything that is one is *numerically* one—that is, discrete in its own essence. But genera and species, which have to be common to several things, cannot be numerically one, and so not one at all.

[170] But because someone could say, contrary to the assumption, that genera and species are numerically “one” in such a way that the “one” is nevertheless common, Boethius takes that means of escape away from him when he says that everything numerically one but common is common either *by parts*, or as a whole *by a succession in time*, or else as a whole at the same time but in such a way that *it does not constitute the substances of what it is common to*. He immediately distinguishes all these ways of being common from genus and species when he says the latter are common in such a way that they are as a whole and at the same time in singular things and constitute their substance. Surely universal names are not participated part by part by the different things they name. Rather they are, as wholes, in their entireties and at the same time, names of singulars. They can also be said to constitute the substances of what they are common to, insofar as they signify by a figurative usage things that constitute other things. For example ‘animal’ names a certain something in a horse and in a man that is their matter, or even the matter of the men who are inferior to the term ‘animal.’<sup>40</sup> Or else universal names are said to make up their substance insofar as they enter into a judgment about such things.<sup>41</sup> Thus they are said to be “substantial” to them. Certainly ‘man’ denotes the whole that is an animal and rational and mortal.<sup>42</sup>

[171] After Boethius has shown that one thing is not universal, he proves this also about a multiple thing,

40. I do not know what this clause adds. Men have already been accounted for earlier in the sentence.

41. The only plausible antecedents here are ‘horse’ and ‘man’ a few lines above.

42. The overall sense of the paragraph is perhaps not totally missing, but there are lots of obscurities in it.

showing that neither is a multitude of discrete things a species or a genus. He demolishes the theory according to which someone could say all substances collected together are the genus *substance*, and all men the species *man*, as if to say: If we maintain every genus is a multitude of things that substantially agree, then on the other hand every such multitude will naturally have another one above it, and that one again will have another, and so on to infinity—which is inconsistent.

[172] So it has been shown that universal names do not appear to be universals with respect to their signification of things—whether that signification is of one thing or of a multiple thing. For they signify no universal thing—that is, one predicable of several.

[173] He goes on to argue that they should not be called “universals” with respect to the signification of the understanding either. He shows (sophistically) that this understanding is empty, because it regards the thing otherwise than it is, since this understanding is by way of abstraction. Both he and we have carefully

untied the knot of that sophism well enough above [128–129].

[174] But the other part of the argument, by which he showed that no thing is a universal, he did not think needed to be decided, because it was *not* sophistical. There he takes ‘thing’ in the sense of “*thing*,” not in the sense of “*word*.” For a common word, although it is so to speak essentially one thing in itself, nevertheless is “common” by naming in virtue of its appellating many things. It is predicable of several things according to this appellation, not according to its essence.

[175] Yet the multitude of the things themselves is the cause of the universality of the name. For as we remarked above [159], there is no universal that does not contain many things. But the universality a thing confers on a word the thing does not have in itself. For surely the word does not have signification by virtue of the thing. And a name is judged to be appellative *in accordance with* the multitude of things, even though we do not say *things* signify or are appellative.

## 17. Ethics, or Know Thyself

[Book I]

[1] We call “morals” the mind’s vices or virtues that make us disposed to bad or good deeds.

[2] Not only are there the mind’s vices or goods, but also the body’s. For example, weakness of the body or the strength we call vigor, sluggardness or nimbleness, lameness or walking erect, blindness or sight. That is why when we said “vices” we prefixed the words “the mind’s,” in order to exclude such bodily vices. Now these vices (that is, the mind’s) are contrary to virtues.

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For example, injustice to justice, laziness to perseverance, immoderateness to moderation.

### On Mental Vice Relevant to Morals

[3] But there are also some vices or goods of the mind that are unconnected to morals and don’t make a human life deserving of censure or praise. For example, mental obtuseness or a quick wit, being forgetful or having a good memory, ignorance or knowledge. Since all these things turn up among reprobates and good people alike, they are irrelevant to the make-up of morals and don’t make a life shameful or respectable. Thus when we said “the mind’s vices” above [(1)], we were right to add, in order to exclude such

morally irrelevant vices, the words “that make us disposed to bad deeds”—that is, they incline the will to something that isn’t properly to be done or renounced at all.

### What Difference Is There between a Sin and a Vice Inclining One to Evil?

[4] This kind of mental vice isn’t the same as a sin. And a sin isn’t the same as a bad action. For instance, being hot-tempered—that is, disposed or easily given to the turmoil that is anger—is a vice. It inclines the mind to doing something impulsively and irrationally that isn’t fit to be done at all. Now this vice is in the soul in such a way that the soul is easily given to getting angry even when it isn’t being moved to anger, just as the lameness whereby a person is called “lame” is in him even when he isn’t limping around. For the vice is present even when the action is absent.

[5] So also the body’s very nature or structure makes many people prone to wantonness, just as it does to anger. But they don’t sin by the fact that they are like this. Rather they get from it material for a fight, so that victorious over themselves through the virtue of moderation they might obtain a crown. Thus Solomon says, “The long-suffering man is better than the mighty man, and the one who rules his mind than the capturer of cities.” For religion doesn’t think it shameful to be defeated by a human being, but by a vice. The former surely happens to good people too, but in the latter we depart from goods.

[6] In recommending this victory to us, the Apostle says, “No one will be crowned unless he struggles according to the Law.” Struggles, I say, in resisting not people so much as vices, lest they drag us away to improper consent. They don’t stop assaulting us, even if people do stop, so that the vices’ attack against us is more dangerous the more it is repeated, and victory is more glorious the more difficult it is. But no matter how much people influence us, they force nothing shameful on our life unless, having so to speak been *turned* into vices for us, they subject us to shameful consent the way vices do. There is no risk to true liberty while others rule the body; we don’t run into any abominable slavery as long as the mind is free. For it

isn’t shameful to serve a human being but to serve a vice, and it isn’t bodily slavery that disfigures the soul but submission to vices. For whatever is common to good and bad people equally is irrelevant to virtue or vice.

### What Is Mental Vice, and What Is Properly Called “Sin”?

[7] So it is vice that makes us disposed to sin—that is, we are inclined to consent to what is inappropriate, so that we do it or renounce it. This consent is what we properly call “sin,” the fault of the soul whereby it merits damnation or is held guilty before God. For what is this consent but scorn for God and an affront against him? God cannot be offended by injury but he can by scorn. For he is the ultimate power, not diminished by any injury but wreaking vengeance on scorn for him.

[8] Thus our sin is scorn for the creator, and to sin is to scorn the creator—not to do for his sake what we believe we ought to do for his sake, or not to renounce for his sake what we believe ought to be renounced. And so when we define sin negatively, saying it is *not* doing or *not* renouncing what is appropriate, we show clearly that there is no substance to a sin; it consists of non-being rather than of being. It is as if we define shadows by saying they are the absence of light where light did have being.

[9] But perhaps you will say that *willing* a bad deed is also a sin; it renders us guilty before God, just as *willing* a good deed makes us just. As a result, in the same way as there is virtue in a good will so there is sin in a bad will, and there is sin not only in non-being but also in being, just as with virtue.<sup>1</sup> For just as by willing to do what we believe pleases God we do please him, so by willing to do what we believe displeases God we do displease him, and appear to affront or scorn him.

[10] But I say that if we look more closely, we have to view this matter quite otherwise than it appears. For

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1. The point is that while some sins (e.g., sins of omission) are non-beings, others (e.g., certain acts of will) are beings.

sometimes we sin *without* any bad will. And when a bad will is curbed without being extinguished, it wins the palm-branch of victory for those resisting it, and provides the material for a fight and a crown of glory. It shouldn't itself be called a "sin" but a kind of illness that is now necessary.

[11] Look, here is some innocent person. His cruel master is so enraged with fury at him that with bared blade he hunts him down to kill him. The innocent man flees him for a long time, and avoids his own murder as long as he can. Finally, under duress and against his will, he kills his master in order not to be killed by him.

[12] Whoever you are, tell me what bad will he had in doing this deed! If he wanted to flee death, he also wanted to save his own life. But was this willing a bad one?

[13] You will say: It isn't *this* will, I think, that is bad, but the will he had for killing the master who was hunting him down.

[14] I reply: You speak well and astutely, if you can point to a will in what you are saying. But, as was already said [11], it was against his will and under duress that he did what kept his life intact as long as possible. Also, he knew danger would threaten his own life as a result of this slaying. How then did he *willingly* do what he did with this danger even to his own life?

[15] If you reply that this too was done because of a willing, since obviously he was brought to this point by willing to escape death, not by willing to kill his master, we aren't contesting that. But as was already said, this willing isn't to be condemned as bad. As you say, through it he wanted to escape death, not to kill his master. Yet he did wrong in consenting (even though he was under duress from the fear of death) to an unjust slaying he should have borne rather than inflicted. He certainly took up the sword on his own; he didn't have it entrusted to him by some power.

[16] Hence Truth says, "Everyone who takes up the sword will perish by the sword." "Who," he says, "takes up the sword" out of presumptuousness, not someone to whom it was entrusted for the sake of administering punishment. "Will perish by the sword"—that is, brings upon himself damnation and the slaying of his own soul by this foolhardiness. And so, as was said, he

wanted to escape death, not to kill his master. But because he consented to a killing he shouldn't have consented to, his unjust consent that preceded the killing was a sin.

[17] Now if perhaps someone says this person wanted to slay his master for the purpose of escaping death, he cannot without qualification infer from this that he wanted to kill him. It is as if I tell someone, "I want you to have my cap, for the purpose of your giving me fifty cents," or "I cheerfully want it to become yours for that price." I don't therefore grant that I want it to be yours. And if someone confined in jail wants to put his son there instead of himself, so that he might look for his own ransom, do we therefore grant without qualification that he wants to send his son to jail—an event he is forced to accept, with great tears and many groans?

[18] Surely a so called "willing" like this, one that consists of great mental sorrow, isn't to be called a "willing" but instead a "suffering." To say he "wants" one thing because of another is like saying he tolerates what he doesn't want because of something else he does desire. So too a sick person is said to "want" to be cauterized or to be operated on in order to be cured. And the martyrs "wanted" to suffer in order to reach Christ, or Christ himself "wanted" to suffer that we might be saved by his suffering. But we aren't thereby forced to grant without qualification that they wanted this. For there cannot be a "suffering" at all except where something happens against one's will; no one "suffers" when he accomplishes his will and when what happens delights him. Surely the Apostle who says, "I long to be dissolved and to be with Christ"—that is, to die in order to reach him—elsewhere comments, "We do not want to be disrobed but to be clothed over, so that what is mortal be absorbed by life."

[19] Blessed Augustine also mentions this view, stated by the Lord where he says to Peter, "You will hold out your hands, and someone else will gird you and lead you where you do not want to go." In accordance with human nature's assumed<sup>2</sup> infirmity, the

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2. "Assumed" here and later in the paragraph is a technical term from the theology of the Incarnation, in which the second person of the Trinity, in addition to the divine

Lord also says to the Father: “If it is possible, let this chalice pass from me. Yet not as I will, but as you do.” Surely his soul was naturally terrified at the great suffering of his death, and what he knew would be a penalty couldn’t be a matter of “willing” for him. Even though elsewhere it is written about him, “He was offered up because he himself willed it,” either this has to be taken in accordance with the nature of divinity,<sup>3</sup> the will of which included the assumed man’s suffering, or else “willed it” is here used in the sense of “arranged it,” in accordance with the Psalmist’s statement, “He has done whatever he willed.”

[20] Hence it is plain that sin is sometimes committed without any bad will at all, so that it is clear from this that willing isn’t said to be what sin is.

[21] Of course, you will say, this holds where we sin under duress, but it doesn’t hold where we sin willingly. For example, if we want to commit some deed we know shouldn’t be committed by us. In that case, surely, the bad willing and the sin appear to be the same. For example, someone sees a woman and falls into lust. His mind is stirred by the pleasure of the flesh, with the result that he is set on fire for the shamefulness of sex. So, you say, what else is this willing and shameful desire but sin?

[22] I reply: What if this willing is curbed by the virtue of moderation but not extinguished, stays for the fight, holds out for the struggle, and doesn’t give up even when defeated? For where is the fight if the material for the fight is absent? Where does the great reward come from if there is nothing serious we put up with? When the struggle has passed, there is no fighting left but only the receiving of the reward. We struggle by fighting here in order that, triumphant in the struggle, we might receive a crown elsewhere. But to have a fight it’s proper to have an enemy who resists, not one who gives up altogether. Now this enemy is our bad will, the one we triumph over when we subject it to the divine will. But we don’t entirely extin-

guish it, so that we always have a will we might strive against.

[23] For what great deed do we do for God’s sake if we don’t put up with anything opposed to our willing but instead accomplish what we will? Indeed who thanks us if, in what we say we are doing for his sake, we are accomplishing our own will?

[24] Rather, you will say, what do we merit before God from what we do, either willingly or unwillingly?

[25] I reply: Nothing, of course, since in giving out rewards he takes account of the mind rather than the action. The action doesn’t add anything to the merit, whether it springs from good or bad willing, as we shall show later on [30, 35–48].

[26] But when we prefer his will to ours, so that we follow his rather than ours, we do obtain great merit before him, according to the perfection of Truth, “I did not come to do my will but his who sent me.” In encouraging us to do this, he says “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, indeed even his own soul, he is not worthy of me.” That is, unless he refuses their suggestions or his own will and submits himself entirely to my commands. Therefore, if we are ordered to hate our father but not kill him, so too for our will; the order is that we not follow it, not that we destroy it entirely.

[27] For he who says, “Do not pursue your lusts, and turn away from your will,” commanded us not to *satisfy* our lusts, but not to do without them altogether. For satisfying them is wicked, but going without them is impossible in our feeble state. And so it isn’t the lusting after a woman but the consenting to the lust that is the sin. It isn’t the will to have sex with her that is damnable but the will’s consent.

[28] Let’s look at gluttony with respect to what we said about wantonness. Someone is going by another person’s garden and on seeing the delicious fruits falls to craving them. But he doesn’t consent to his craving so that he takes something away from there by theft or plunder, although his mind has been inflamed to a great desire by the deliciousness of the food. Now where there is desire, no doubt there is will. So he desires to eat the other person’s fruit, and he doesn’t doubt there is pleasure in eating it. Indeed he is driven by the very nature of his feeble state to desire what he

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nature it already had, “assumed” — that is, took on — a human nature in becoming the man Jesus.

3. That is, the “willing” refers to the *divine* will in Jesus, not his human will.

may not take without its owner's knowledge and permission. He curbs his desire; he doesn't destroy it. But because he isn't drawn into consent, he doesn't fall into sin.

[29] What is the point of this? In brief, to make it clear that in such cases too the sin isn't said to be the willing itself or the desire to do what isn't allowed, but rather the consent, as we said [7]. Now we consent to what isn't allowed when we don't draw back from committing it and are wholly ready to carry it out should the opportunity arise.

[30] So whoever is found in this condition has incurred complete guilt. Adding on the performance of the deed doesn't add anything to increase the sin. Instead, for God, someone who tries as hard as he can to go through with it is just as guilty as one who does go through with it insofar as he is able. It is just as if he too had been apprehended in the very deed, as blessed Augustine remarks.

[31] But although the willing isn't the sin and sometimes we even commit sins *against* our will, as we said [11, 14], nevertheless some people say every sin is "voluntary." In so doing they find a kind of difference between the sin and the willing. For one thing is called the "will," and another thing is called "voluntary"; that is, the will is other than what is committed *by* the will. But if we call a sin what we have said above is properly called a sin [7–8]—namely scorn for God, consenting to what we believe should be renounced for his sake—then how do we say the sin is "voluntary"? That is, how do we say we *want* to scorn God (which is what sinning is), or to grow worse or to be made deserving of damnation? For although we might want to do what we know ought to be punished, or that whereby we might be deserving of punishment, nevertheless we don't want to be punished. In this respect we are plainly being unfair, because we want to do what is unfair but don't want to yield to the fairness<sup>4</sup> of a penalty that is just. The penalty, which is just, displeases; the action, which is unjust, pleases.

4. There is a wordplay here that is hard to translate satisfactorily. *Iniquum* = wicked, but etymologically = unequal, hence unjust, *unfair*. It is therefore opposed to *aequitas* = equality, hence equity, justices, *fairness*.

[32] Often too it comes about that although, attracted by her appearance, we want to have sex with someone we know is married, nevertheless we wouldn't want to commit adultery with her; we would want her *not* to be married. Conversely, there are many who for the sake of their own fame yearn more for the wives of powerful men, *because* they are the wives of such men, than they would if the same women were unmarried. They are more eager to commit adultery than fornication, to deviate more rather than less.

[33] There are also people who entirely regret being drawn into consenting to lust or into an evil will, and are compelled by the flesh's weakness to want what they don't *want* to want at all.

[34] Therefore, I really don't see how this consent that we don't want is going to be called "voluntary" so that, following some people as was said [31], we call *every* sin "voluntary"—unless we understand the "voluntary" as merely excluding the necessary (since no sin is inevitable), or call the "voluntary" whatever arises from some will (for although he who killed his master under duress didn't have a will for killing, nevertheless he committed it from *some* will, since he wanted to escape or put off death).

[35] Some people may be more than a little upset because they hear us say [30] that doing the sin doesn't add anything to the guilt or to the damnation before God. For they object that in acting out a sin there follows a kind of pleasure that increases the sin, as in sex or in the eating we talked about [28].

[36] It wouldn't be absurd of them to say this, if they proved that this kind of bodily pleasure is a sin and that no one can commit anything like that without sinning. If they actually accept that, then surely it is illicit for *anyone* to have this bodily pleasure. Hence not even married couples are exempt from sin when they are brought together by this bodily pleasure that is permitted to them, and neither is one who enjoys a delicious meal of his own fruit. All sick people too would be at fault who favor sweeter foods for refreshment, in order to recuperate from their illness. They surely don't take these foods *without* pleasure; otherwise if they took them they wouldn't help.

[37] Finally, even the Lord, the creator of foods as well as of our bodies, wouldn't be without fault if he inserted into those foods flavors such as would neces-

sarily force those who eat them into sin by their pleasure in them. For why would he make such foods for our eating, or permit us to eat them, if it were impossible for us to eat them without sin? And how can sin be said to be committed in doing what is permitted?

[38] For if what were at one time illegal and prohibited deeds are later permitted and so legalized, they are committed now without any sin at all. For example, eating the flesh of pigs and many other actions once prohibited to the Jews but now permitted to us. So when we see even Jews who have been converted to Christ freely eating the kinds of foods the Law had prohibited, how do we defend them as without fault except by maintaining that this is now permitted to them by God?

[39] Hence if in such eating, formerly prohibited to them but now permitted, the permission itself excuses the sin and takes away scorn for God, who can say anyone sins in doing what divine permission has made legal for him? Therefore, if having sex with one's wife or eating delicious food has been permitted to us from the first day of our creation, which was lived without sin in paradise, who will argue that we have sinned if we don't go beyond the bounds of permission?

[40] But again, they say sex in marriage and the eating of delicious food are only permitted in such a way that the pleasure itself is *not* permitted. Rather, they should be done entirely *without* pleasure. But surely if this is so, then they were permitted to be done in a way such that they cannot be done at all. An authorization that permitted their being done in a way that they certainly *cannot* be done is unreasonable.

[41] Furthermore, why did the Law at one time urge marriage so that each one would leave behind his seed in Israel, or why did the Apostle require married couples to fulfill their duty to one another, if these things cannot be done without sin? Why does he talk about "duty" here, where already there is necessarily sin? How is anyone supposed to be required to do what will offend God by sinning?

[42] In my judgment, it is plain from these considerations that no natural bodily pleasure is to be counted as a sin. It isn't to be regarded as a fault that we take pleasure in what is such that, when it has occurred, pleasure is necessarily felt. For example, if someone forces someone in religious orders, bound by chains, to

lie among women, and he is led into pleasure—but not into consent—by the bed's softness and the touch of the women around him, who can venture to call this pleasure nature has made necessary a "sin"?

[43] Now suppose you object that, as it appears to some people, even bodily pleasure in lawful sex is regarded as a sin. For David says, "For behold, I was conceived in iniquities." And when the Apostle said, "Come back together again, that Satan not tempt you because of your lack of self-restraint," he adds, "Now I say this as an indulgence, not as a commandment." These texts seem to bind us, more by authority than by reason, to grant that bodily pleasure is itself a sin. For it is well known that David wasn't conceived in fornication but in marriage. And indulgence—that is, forgiving, as they say—doesn't occur where fault is completely missing.

[44] But as far as appears to me, the fact that David says he had been conceived in iniquities, or "sins," and didn't specify whose, refers to the general curse of original sin, the sin whereby everyone is made subject to damnation by the fault of his own parents. This accords with what is written elsewhere, "No one is clean of stain if his life is on earth, not even the day-old infant." For as blessed Jerome has remarked, and as plain reason has it, the soul lacks sin as long as it is in infancy. Therefore, if it is clean of sin, how is it unclean with the stain of sin, unless it's because the former is to be understood with respect to fault, the latter with respect to punishment?

[45] Surely one who doesn't yet perceive by reason what he ought to do doesn't have any fault because of scorn for God. Yet he isn't immune to the stain of his earlier parents' sin, from which he already incurs punishment even if not fault; he preserves in his punishment what they committed in their fault. Thus when David says he was conceived in iniquities or sins, he perceived that he was subject to the general pronouncement of damnation from the fault of his parents. And he referred these offenses not so much to his immediate parents as to earlier ones.

[46] Now what the Apostle called "indulging" isn't to be taken, as they wish it to be, in the sense that he called forgiving a sin "indulging" in the sense of "allowing." Surely his expression, "as an authorization, not as compulsory," is as if he had said "by way of

allowing, not by coercing.” For if a married couple wishes, and they have decided by mutual consent, they can completely abstain from carnal practice; they are not to be forced into it by a commandment. But if they haven’t decided this, they have the “indulgence” —that is, they are allowed—to turn away from the more perfect life to the practice of a more lenient life. Therefore, the Apostle in this passage didn’t understand “indulging” as forgiving a sin, but as the authorization of a more lenient life in order to avoid fornication, with the result that the inferior life would prevent a great amount of sin, and is less in merits so that it not become greater in sins.

[47] We have brought up these matters so that no one, perhaps wanting every pleasure of the flesh to be a sin, would say that sin itself is increased by the action when one extends the mind’s consent to the point of performing the deed, so that one is defiled not only by consent to shamefulness but also by the stains of the act. As if what occurred outside in the body could defile the soul!

[48] Therefore, any kind of carrying out of deeds is irrelevant to increasing a sin. Nothing taints the soul but what belongs to it, namely the consent that we’ve said is alone the sin, not the will preceding it or the subsequent doing of the deed. For even if we want or do what is improper, we don’t thereby sin, since these things frequently occur without sin, just as, conversely, consent occurs without these things. We have already shown this in part: the point about the will without consent, in the example of the man who fell into lust for a woman he saw, or for someone else’s fruit, yet wasn’t enticed to consent [21–28]; the point about bad consent without a bad will, in the example of the person who killed his master unwillingly [11–17].

[49] Now as for things that ought not to be done, I don’t think it escapes anyone how often they *are* done without sin, for example when they are committed through force or ignorance. For instance, if a woman subjected to force has sex with someone else’s husband, or if a man somehow deceived sleeps with a woman he thought was his wife, or if by mistake he kills someone he believed *should* be killed by him in his role as a judge. So it isn’t a sin to lust after someone else’s wife, or to have sex with her; the sin is rather to *consent* to this lust or to this action.

[50] Indeed the Law calls this *consent* to lust “lust” when it says, “Thou shalt not lust.”<sup>5</sup> For it isn’t the *lust* that had to be prohibited (which we cannot avoid and wherein we do not sin, as was said [27]), but rather the assent to it. The Lord’s words too, “He who shall look at a woman in order to lust after her,” have to be understood in this way: he who shall look at her in order to fall into *consent* to lust “has already committed adultery in his heart,” even if he hasn’t committed adultery in deed. That is, he already has the guilt for the sin, even if he is still lacking the performance of it.

[51] If we look carefully, wherever deeds appear to be included under a command or prohibition, they are to be referred more to the will<sup>6</sup> or the consent to the deeds than to the deeds themselves. Otherwise, nothing relevant to merit would come under the scope of a command. For things less in our power are less worth commanding. There are surely many things we are prevented from doing, but we always have will and consent within our power of choosing.

[52] Look, the Lord says “Thou shalt not kill,” “Thou shalt not bear false witness.” If we take these at face value, as being only about the deed, guilt isn’t proscribed at all. Neither is fault prohibited, but only the action associated with the fault. For it isn’t a sin to kill a human being or to have sex with someone else’s wife. These acts can be committed sometimes without sin. If this kind of prohibition is taken at face value, as being about the deed, then he who *wants* to bear false witness, or even he who *consents* to saying it, as long as he *doesn’t* say it and keeps quiet for whatever reason, doesn’t become guilty before the Law. For it wasn’t stated that we should not *want* to bear false witness, or not *agree* to bearing it, but only that we should not bear it.

[53] Or again, when the Law forbids us from taking our sisters in marriage, or from joining together with them, there is no one who can keep this com-

5. Lust = *concupisces*. The usual translation here is “covet,” which is broader than sexual lust. But Abelard has hitherto been using the word in primarily sexual contexts.

6. The occurrence of this word here is surprising. Abelard has been at pains to *distinguish* the will from the consent to it.

mandment, since often someone cannot recognize his sisters—no one, I say, if the prohibition is made with respect to the act rather than to the consent. So when someone out of ignorance accidentally takes his sister in marriage, does he break the commandment because he does what the Law forbade him to do?

[54] You will say he doesn't break it, because he didn't *consent* to breaking it insofar as he acted unknowingly. Therefore, just as he who does what is forbidden isn't to be called a lawbreaker, but rather he who consents to what is agreed to be forbidden, so neither is the prohibition to be taken with respect to the deed, but with respect to the consent. Thus, when it says "Do not do this or that," it's like saying "Do not *consent* to doing this or that"—as if it said "Do not knowingly venture to do this."

[55] Blessed Augustine too thought about this closely and reduced every command or prohibition to charity or greed rather than to deeds. He says, "The Law commands nothing but charity, and forbids nothing but greed." Hence too the Apostle says, "All the law is fulfilled in one statement: You shall love your neighbor as yourself." And again, "The fulfillment of the Law is love."

[56] Surely it has no bearing on merit whether you give alms to one in need. Charity may make you prepared to give alms and your will may be ready, although the means are absent and the power to do so doesn't remain in you, no matter what chance event it is that impedes you. Surely it is plain that deeds appropriately done or not are equally carried out by good people as by bad. The intention alone separates the two cases.

[57] Indeed, as the aforesaid Doctor<sup>7</sup> remarks, in the same deed in which we see God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, we also see Judas the traitor. When the Father handed over the Son and the Son handed himself over, as the Apostle mentions, and Judas handed over his master, certainly the handing over of the Son was done by God the Father; it was also done by the Son, and it was done by the traitor. There-

fore, the traitor did what God did too. But did he do *well* to do it? For even if it was good, it was not at any rate done well, or something that ought to have been beneficial to him. For God doesn't think about the things that are done but rather in what mind they are done. The merit or praiseworthiness of the doer doesn't consist in the deed but in the intention.

[58] Often in fact the same thing is done by different people, through the justice of one and the viciousness of the other. For example, if two people hang a criminal, one out of a zeal for justice and the other out of hatred springing from an old feud, then although the hanging is the same action, and although they certainly do what is good to be done<sup>8</sup> and what justice demands, nevertheless through the difference in their intention the same thing is done by different people, one badly and the other well.

[59] Finally, who doesn't know that the Devil himself does nothing but what he is permitted to do by God, when he either punishes an unjust person deservedly or else is allowed to afflict a just person, either to purify him or else to offer an example of patience? But because it is at the instigation of his own viciousness that he does what God permits him to do, his power is said to be good or even just, while his will is always unjust. The former he gets from God; the latter he has from himself.

[60] Also, who among the elect can be the equal of the hypocrites in matters pertaining to deeds? Who puts up with or does so many things from the love of God as they do from greed for human praise? Finally, who doesn't know that sometimes things God forbids to be done are rightly performed anyway, or *should* be done, just as sometimes, contrariwise, he commands some things that nevertheless aren't fit to be done? For look, we know that when he was curing illnesses, some of his miracles he forbade to be revealed, as an example of humility, so that no one would crave fame from perhaps having a similar grace bestowed on himself. Yet nonetheless, those who received the benefits didn't

7. "Doctor" literally means "teacher." Here Abelard is referring to Augustine (see 55), who was often referred to as one of the "Doctors of the Church."

8. The construction is awkward in English, but Abelard is carefully avoiding the active voice here; he conspicuously does *not* say it is "good to do it." So too in [61]–[62], [65]–[66].

stop publicizing them for the honor of him who both did them and forbade their being revealed. It is written of those people, “As much as he commanded them not to tell, so much more did they proclaim it,” etc.

[61] Will you judge such people guilty of breaking the law? They acted contrary to the command they received, and even did so knowingly. What will excuse them from lawbreaking except the fact that nothing they decided to do to honor the one who gave the command did they do out of scorn for him? Tell me, please, did Christ command what should not have been commanded? Or did they reject a command that should have been kept? What wasn’t good to be done was nevertheless good to be commanded.

[62] No doubt you’ll find fault with the Lord even in the case of Abraham. He first commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son, but afterwards prevented it himself. Did God not do *well* to command to be done what wasn’t good to be done? For if it *was* good, why was it forbidden later on? But if the same thing was both good to be commanded and good to be forbidden (for God neither permits anything to happen nor consents to do it without reasonable cause), you see that only the intention of the commandment excuses God, not the doing of the deed. He did well to command what wasn’t good to be done. For God didn’t intend this or command it to be done in order that Abraham would *really* sacrifice his son, but in order that his obedience and the steadfastness of his faith or of his love for him might be sorely tried and left as an example to us.

[63] Surely the Lord himself plainly acknowledged this later on, when he said, “I have recognized now that you fear the Lord”—as if he had said openly, “What you have shown yourself prepared to do, this I commanded of you, so that I might make others know what I myself had known about you before the ages.”

[64] Thus, this intention of God’s was right, in the case of a deed that was *not* right. So too his prohibition was right in the matters we mentioned [60]. He forbade them not in order that the prohibition be observed but in order that examples of shunning empty glory might be given to us invalids.

[65] So God commanded what wasn’t good to be done, just as conversely he forbade what *was* good to be done. And as in the former case [62] the intention

excuses him, so too in the latter [60] it excuses those who didn’t fulfill the commandment in deed. They surely knew he hadn’t commanded it for the sake of the commandment’s being kept, but in order that the abovementioned example be set out. Keeping the will of the order-giver, they didn’t scorn him whose will they understood they weren’t going against.

[66] Therefore, if we think of deeds rather than of the intention, we will see not only that sometimes one *wills* something to be done contrary to God’s command, but even that it is done, and done knowingly, without any of the guilt belonging to sin. When the intention of the one to whom the command is given doesn’t depart from the will of the command-giver, the will or the action isn’t to be called “bad” just because it doesn’t keep God’s command in deed. For just as the intention of the order-giver excuses him who commands to be done what nevertheless isn’t fit to be done, so too the intention of charity excuses him to whom the command is given.

[67] To gather all that has been said into one short conclusion, there are four things we have set out above in order that we might carefully distinguish them from one another: (a) the mental vice that makes us disposed to sin [2–7]; after that (b) the sin itself, which we have located in consent to evil or in scorn for God [8]; then (c) the will for evil [9–34]; and (d) the doing of the evil [35–66]. Now just as willing isn’t the same as accomplishing the will, so sinning isn’t the same as carrying out the sin. The former is to be taken as the mind’s consent by which we sin, the latter as the result of the doing, when we accomplish in deed what we have consented to earlier.

[68] Thus, when we say sin or temptation comes about in three ways—by suggestion, pleasure and consent—it is to be understood that we are often seduced into doing sin by these three things, as happened with our first parents. For the Devil’s persuading came first, when he promised immortality would come from tasting of the forbidden tree. Pleasure followed when the woman, seeing the fine wood and understanding it was sweet to eat,<sup>9</sup> was set on fire with a craving for it

9. Presumably Eve thought it would be sweet to eat the *fruit*, not the wood.

by the pleasure she believed she would take from the food. Although to keep the commandment she should have curbed her craving, she was drawn into sin by her consenting to it. And while she should have corrected the sin by repenting, to merit forgiveness, in the end she brought it to completion in her deed. And so she progressed in three phases to performing the sin.

[69] So too we often reach the point, not of sinning but of *performing* the sin, by these same steps: (a) by suggestion, at the instigation of someone who urges us from outside to do something improper. But if we know it is pleasurable to do it, then (b) even before it is done our mind is carried away by the pleasure of the deed, and in the thought itself we are tempted by pleasure. When (c) we approve of this pleasure by consent, we sin. By these three steps, we finally reach the point of performing the sin.

[70] There are some people who want the suggestion of the flesh, even if a suggesting *person* is absent, to be included under the name “suggestion.” For example when a woman is seen, if someone falls into lust for her. But actually, it seems that this “suggestion” ought to be called nothing but pleasure. In fact this pleasure, which comes about necessarily so to speak, and others like it that we remarked above [42] are *not* a sin, the Apostle calls “human temptation” when he says: “Let temptation not grab hold of you, unless it is human temptation. Now God is faithful. He will not allow you to be tempted more than you are able to bear. Rather along with the temptation he will also make a way out for you, so that you can withstand it.”

[71] Now temptation in general is said to be any inclination of the mind to doing something improper, whether that inclination is a will or a consent. But a temptation without which human frailty is now<sup>10</sup> hardly or never able to go on is called “human.” For example, carnal lust or desiring delicious food. The one who said, “Release me from my needs, Lord” asked to be freed from them—that is, from these temptations of lusts that now come about so to speak naturally and necessarily, so that they not draw me into consent, or so that I will lack them entirely when this life full of temptations is over.

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10. That is, now after the Fall of Adam.

[72] Therefore, the Apostle’s statement, “Let temptation not grab hold of you, unless it is a human temptation,” is much like saying, “If the mind is inclined by a pleasure that is a ‘human’ temptation, as we have called it, let it not lead the mind as far as the consent sin consists of.” He says, as if someone had asked what power of ours enables us to resist these lusts: “God is faithful. He will not allow you to be tempted.” It is as if he had said, “Rather than trusting in ourselves, we should place our confidence in him who promises us aid and is truthful in all his promises.” This is what it is for him to be faithful, so that faith in him is to be extended in all matters. If we do this, he doesn’t allow us to be tempted more than we are able to bear, since he so tempers this human temptation with his mercy that it doesn’t pressure us into sin more than we can endure by resisting it.

[73] But more than that, he then turns this temptation itself into an opportunity for us, when he exercises us by it so that thereafter it can be less hard on us when it occurs, and so that even now we may fear less the assault of an enemy we have already conquered and know how to endure. Surely, every fight we haven’t yet been through is harder to withstand and is feared more. But when it comes to be routine for the victors, its strength and terror alike disappear. . . .

### Why God Is Called the Examiner of the Heart and Reins

[85] Therefore, God has been called the “tester of the heart and reins”—that is, the examiner of the intentions or consents stemming from there—with respect to the two things we’ve just mentioned: lust of the flesh and lust of the soul. But we, who aren’t in a position to discriminate or decide this, turn our judgment mostly to the deeds. We don’t punish the faults so much as the deeds, and are eager to punish so much what it is in someone that injures his soul as what can injure others, so that we prevent public damages more than correcting individual ones, according to what the Lord said to Peter, “If your brother shall sin against you, reproach him between you and him only.”

[86] What is “shall sin against you”? Is it, so to speak, “*not* against someone else,” so that we ought to

correct or punish harms inflicted on us more than on others? Far from it. “If he shall sin against you,” the Lord says, as when your brother openly does something whereby he can corrupt you by example. For he sins in himself alone, so to speak, when his hidden fault makes him alone guilty and does not in itself draw others into guilt by example. In fact even if there are no people who imitate his action or even know about it, nevertheless the action itself more than the mind’s fault should be rebuked before people, because it was able to make the greater and more ruinous offense come about by example than could a fault lying hidden in the mind. For everything that can contribute to common ruin or to public disadvantage is to be punished with the greater rebuke. What causes greater offense deserves a heavier penalty among us, and the greater scandal for people incurs the greater punishment among people—even if a slighter fault preceded it.

[87] Indeed, let us assume someone has corrupted a woman by having sex with her in a church. When it has been brought to the ears of the people, they are upset not so much by the violation of the woman, a true temple of God, as by the breach of the corporeal temple, even though it is more serious to exploit a woman than mere walls and to bring harm to a human being than to a place. Yet we punish house-burnings with a greater penalty than we do for carrying out fornication, when before God the latter is regarded as much more serious than the former.

[88] These things are done not so much out of duty to justice as out of the proper balance needed for its administration, so that, as we said, in preventing public injuries we have regard for general expediency. Hence we often punish the least sins with greater penalties, not paying so much attention with the fairness of justice to what fault preceded as thinking with the discretion of foresight how great a disadvantage can come from them if they are punished mildly. So, saving the mind’s faults for divine judgment, with our own judgment we pursue their results, which are ours to judge. In such cases we pay more attention to administering—that is, to the standpoint of foresight we mentioned—than to pure fairness.

[89] But God arranges everyone’s penalty according to the extent of the fault. Those who scorn him

equally are punished afterwards with an equal penalty, no matter what their circumstances or profession. For if a monk and a layman come to consent equally to fornication, and in addition the mind of the layman is so on fire that if he were a monk, he wouldn’t out of reverence for God refrain from this shamefulness either, then he deserves the same penalty as the monk does.

[90] This is what should be maintained too in the case of two persons, one of whom, sinning openly, scandalizes many people and corrupts them by his example, while the other, since he sins secretly, harms himself alone. For if he who sins secretly has the same purpose as the other, and the same scorn for God, so that the fact that he doesn’t corrupt others comes about more by chance than by his giving up something for God’s sake (he doesn’t restrain himself for God’s sake),<sup>11</sup> then he is surely bound by an equal guilt before God. Indeed God pays attention only to the mind in rewarding good or evil, not to the results of the deeds. He doesn’t think about what *arises* from our fault or from our good will, but judges the mind itself in its intention’s purpose, not in the result of the outward deed. In fact deeds, which we said above [6] are equally common to reprobates and to the elect, are in themselves all indifferent. They are not to be called good or bad, except according to the intention of the doer—that is to say, not because it is good or bad for them to be done, but because they are well or badly done, that is, done with the intention whereby they are done properly, or not. For, as blessed Augustine remarks, it is good for evil to exist, since God uses even it well, and doesn’t permit it to exist otherwise, although nevertheless it itself isn’t good at all.

[91] So when we call a person’s intention good and his deed good, we are distinguishing two things, the intention and the deed, but we are talking about *one* goodness—that of the intention. For example, if we say “good person” and “good person’s son,” we represent two people, certainly, but not two goodnesses. Therefore, just as (a) a person is called good from his own goodness, but when “good person’s son” is said,

11. The passage from “so that” to the end of the parentheses is very obscure and syntactically awkward in the Latin. My translation is conjectural.

the son isn't thereby shown to have anything good in him, so too (b) one's intention is called good in itself, but his deed isn't called good *from itself*, but rather because it proceeds from a good intention. So the goodness whereby both the intention and the doing are called good is one, just as there is one goodness by which a good person and a good person's son are so called, or one goodness by which a good person and a person's good will are so called.

[92] So let those accustomed to object that acting on an intention is worth rewarding too, or brings about some increase in the reward, realize that their objection is futile. Two things are good, they say, the good intention and the result arising from the good intention. And good conjoined to good ought to be worth something more than each of them alone.

[93] I reply to them that if we assume the whole to be worth more than each of its parts, are we for that reason forced to grant that it is worth a greater reward? Certainly not. For there are many things, both animate and inanimate, such that a group of them is useful for more things than is each one of the things included in that group. For look, an ox joined with another ox or with a horse, or a piece of wood joined with a piece of wood or with iron, is surely a good thing. And the grouping of them is worth more than each of the parts, although the combination doesn't have any more reward.

[94] That's so in fact, you will say, because they aren't such that they can deserve merit, since they are lacking in reason.

[95] But does our deed have reason so that it can deserve merit?

[96] Not at all, you will say. But yet the deed is said to deserve merit because it makes *us* deserve merit—that is, be worthy of reward, or at least of a greater one.

[97] But surely we've denied that above [56]. And in addition to what we've said, understand *why* it is to be denied: There are two people with the same plan of building homes for the poor. One of them accomplishes the performance of his devotion. But the other has the money he's prepared stolen from him violently and isn't allowed to finish what he proposed, being prevented by no fault of his own but hindered only by that violence. Could what is enacted externally lessen his merit before God? Or could another person's mal-

ice make him who did as much as he could for God's sake less acceptable to God?

[98] If these things could be so, a large amount of money could make anyone better and more worthy—that is, if it itself could bring about merit or an increase of merit. People could become better the richer they were, since out of the bountifulness of their riches they could add more in deeds to their devotion.

[99] But to think this, that wealth is able to contribute something to true happiness or to the soul's worthiness, or to remove something from the merits of the poor, is sheer craziness. If however the possession of things cannot bring about a better soul, surely it cannot make it dearer to God or earn anything of merit in happiness.

## On the Reward for External Deeds

[100] Nevertheless, we aren't denying that in this life something is awarded for these good or bad deeds, in order that we may be further encouraged to good deeds or kept from bad ones by present repayment as profit or penalty, and in order that some people should take their examples from others in doing things that are proper or shunning those that are improper. . . .

## That a Deed Is Good by Means of a Good Intention

[106] Indeed we call an intention good (that is, right) in itself. We don't however say that a "doing" takes on any good *in itself*, but that it proceeds from a good intention. Hence even if the same thing is done by the same person at different times, nevertheless because of the diversity of the intention, his doing it is called now good, now bad. So it appears to shift between good and bad, just as the proposition "Socrates is sitting" (or the understanding of it) shifts between true and false according as Socrates is now sitting, now standing. Aristotle says this alteration, the shift between true and false, occurs in these cases not in such a way that the things that shift between true and false take on anything in their changing, but rather that the subject thing, namely, Socrates, is in himself moved from sitting to standing or conversely.

### On What Basis Should an Intention Be Called Good?

[107] Now there are people who suppose an intention is good or right whenever someone believes that he is acting well and that what he is doing pleases God. For instance, even those who persecuted the martyrs, about whom Truth says in the Gospel, “The hour is coming when everyone who slays you will suppose he is offering obedience to God.” In fact, the Apostle pities such people’s ignorance when he says, “I testify for them that they have an ardor for God, but not one in accordance with knowledge.” That is, they have a great fervor and desire to do what they believe pleases God. But because they are deceived in this zeal or eagerness of the mind, their intention is mistaken and their heart’s eye is not simple in such a way that it could see clearly—that is, keep itself from error.

[108] So when the Lord distinguished deeds according to whether their intention is right or not right, he was careful to call the mind’s eye (that is, its intention) “simple” and so to speak pure of dirt so it can see clearly, or conversely “cloudy.” He said, “If your eye is simple, your whole body will be shining.” That is, if the intention is right, the whole mass of deeds arising from it—which, like corporeal things, can be seen—will be worthy of light, that is, will be good. So too the other way around.

[109] Thus an intention isn’t to be called good because it *appears* good, but more than that, because it *is* such as it is considered to be—that is, when if one believes that what he is aiming at is pleasing to God, he is in addition not deceived in his evaluation. Otherwise the infidels themselves would also have good deeds, just as we do, since they too believe no less than we do that through their deeds they are saved or are pleasing to God.

# ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY

Islam, like Judaism and Christianity, is a religion of a Book and a Tradition, though it is closer to Judaism in that it is primarily a religion of law. The Book on which Islam rests is the Qur'ān, the *sunnah* (literally, custom), the Tradition. Containing narratives, admonitions, doctrines, and moral and ritual precepts, the Qur'ān (according to Muslim belief) is the Word of God, revealed to Mohammed, the last and most important of a series of prophets and apostles that, beginning with Adam, includes Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. Of Qur'ānic doctrines, the absolute unity of God and the mission of Mohammed are the most basic. The *sunnah* consists of brief stories recounting deeds and utterances of Mohammed that have as their purpose legal and doctrinal instruction supplementary to that contained in the Qur'ān. The individual story is called a *hadīth* (narrative), but this term is also applied to the *sunnah* as a whole. Qur'ān and *sunnah* provide the basis for *fiqh*, the science of jurisprudence, and for *sharī'ah*, the Law by which Muslims govern their day-to-day life.

Whereas Judaism and Christianity began as religions of small groups, Islam, almost from its beginnings, developed as the religion of an expanding empire. Mohammed died in A.D. 632 and in less than a hundred years, military conquests had expanded the Islamic world from India in the East, through North Africa, to

Spain in the West. These expansions brought a variety of religious and intellectual communities under Muslim rule and as a result Islam was confronted by the theologies of Judaism, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism; by Indian thought; and by Greek and Hellenistic learning. Theology, apologetics, and philosophy began to flourish. The encounter of Islamic religion and Greek philosophy produced Islamic philosophy, which R. H. Walzer<sup>1</sup> has felicitously described as

a “productive assimilation” of Greek thought by open-minded and far-sighted representatives of a very different tradition and thus a serious attempt to make this foreign element an integral part of Islamic tradition.

Muslims now used philosophical concepts and arguments for the interpretation of Qur'ānic doctrines; they preserved, commented on, criticized and developed the teachings of Plato, Aristotle, Neoplatonists, and others; and in general, they inquired about the relation of Islamic doctrines to Greek philosophical notions.

Central to the development of Islamic philosophy were the Arabic translations of works originally written

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1. *Greek into Arabic*, Oxford, 1962, p. 11.

in Greek. Eastern Christians had preserved the Greek philosophical and scientific traditions, and at the time of the Muslim conquests there were centers of Greek learning in Mesopotamia, Syria, and Egypt. The translators, most of whom were Nestorian and Jacobite Christians, began their activities during the early Abbasid period (c.800), and they continued for about two hundred years. Though some of these translations were made directly from the Greek, most of them passed through an intermediate Syriac version. After some pioneering efforts that proved to be sporadic and not completely satisfactory, the translators hit their stride under al-Ma'mūn (reigned 813–833) and his successors al-Mu'tasim (reigned 833–842) and al-Mutawakkil (reigned 847–861). In 830, al-Ma'mūn established the "House of Wisdom" (*Bayt al-Hikmah*) consisting of a library and an academy, and housing a staff of translators. The most important translators of this period were Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq (809–873) and his son Ishāq. Ḥunayn, who knew Greek, carefully collected manuscripts in order to establish from them critical texts. It appears that Ḥunayn translated many works into Syriac and that these, in turn, were translated into Arabic by Ishāq and other members of his staff. Another school of translators, primarily interested in mathematical and astronomical works, was centered at Ḥarrān. The head of this school of heathen Sabians was Thābit ibn Qurrah (c.836–901). In the tenth century still another school of translators arose, this time among the Jacobites. Not knowing Greek, these translators worked from earlier Syriac versions and they drew upon the Arabic translations of their predecessors. The best known members of this group were Abū Bishr Mattā, a Nestorian, and Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī (893–974), a Jacobite. The Arabic translations were in general very accurate, the translators preferring literalness to elegance of style.

The works translated during this period seem to have been those studied in the late Hellenistic schools. Of the works of Aristotle, all seem to have been translated with the exception of the *Dialogues* and the *Politics*. Together with these works there were translated the writings of his commentators, among them those of Alexander of Aphrodisias, Themistius, and Theophrastus. So much were these commentators

part of the Aristotelian tradition that, at times, their views are cited in the name of Aristotle. Of Platonic works there were translations of the *Timaeus*, *Republic*, and *Laws* and, in addition, the *Phaedo* and *Crito* were known. It is quite likely that, as our knowledge increases, translations of other dialogues will come to light. Neoplatonism was represented by a number of works, the most famous of which were the *Theology of Aristotle* and the *Liber de causis*. Though these works were ascribed to Aristotle, the first consisted, in fact, of excerpts from Plotinus' *Enneads*, while the second was taken from Proclus' *Elements of Theology*. The attribution of these works to Aristotle is not too surprising considering that in the Hellenistic schools the teachings of Plato and Aristotle were often considered as being ultimately one—a view that some of the Muslim Aristotelians accepted later on. To this impressive list of philosophical works there must be added translations of works of Galen and of hermetic and pseudo-Empedoclean writings. In this connection it should not be forgotten that the Arabic translations served to transmit Greek learning to the Christian and Jewish worlds.

Though philosophical discussions—primarily about determinism and human freedom—formed part of the controversies among early Islamic sects, Islamic philosophy proper may be said to have had its beginnings with the dialectical theologians, the Mutakallimūn. Divided into groups, of which the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites were the most important, the Mutakallimūn were characterized by their use of philosophical arguments for the explication of scriptural notions and for the resolution of difficulties occasioned by apparent inconsistencies in scriptural texts. Hence, more interested in the exegetical uses of philosophical arguments than in the construction of philosophical systems, they drew upon Platonic, Aristotelian, neoplatonic, Stoic, and Epicurean notions as the need arose, as a result of which their philosophical views had an eclectic character.

The Mu'tazilites seem to have had their origin, toward the end of the eighth century, in discussion groups that met in Basrah and Bagdad to discover how Greek philosophical thought may be of help in the solution of certain religious problems. Though it was

customary at one time to describe them as the “free-thinkers of Islam,” their position is now understood in more moderate terms. In fact, Mu‘tazilite doctrines became the official creed during the reign of al-Ma‘mūn and the affirmation of some of them was required for holding public office. Of the five basic Mu‘tazilite doctrines, three were primarily theological, but two—divine unity and justice—were of philosophical interest. Investigations concerning the unity of God were marked by an attempt to show how God can be said to be one and yet be described by many attributes, while inquiries into divine justice had as their goal to show how God can be said to be omnipotent and yet the human will can be held to be free. From their interest in these two issues, the Mu‘tazilites were also called “the men of unity and justice.” In addition, the Mu‘tazilites were known for their proofs of the creation of the world—proofs for which they were indebted to earlier Christian Neoplatonists. The Mu‘tazilites had followers among the Jews, though their influence on Christian thought was indirect.

Like the Mu‘tazilites, the Ash‘arites sought philosophical clarification of Qur’anic doctrines, though their views were closer to Islamic orthodox thought. Founded by al-Ash‘ari (873–935), who was a Mu‘tazilite at one time, they emphasized the omnipotence of God, meaning thereby that God is the direct cause of everything that happens in the world. In accordance with this opinion they denied the existence of secondary causes, and the only answer they admitted to the question “Why did this happen?” was “God willed it.” Though they were prepared to recognize a certain order and regularity in the phenomena of nature, they refused to ascribe these to necessary laws, holding instead that this apparent regularity is the result of “custom” (*‘adah*). Similarly, their understanding of divine omnipotence led them to deny the freedom of the human will, though, at the same time, they attempted to develop a doctrine of human responsibility. To accomplish this, they formulated the doctrine of “acquisition” (*kasb*) according to which, though God determines the outcome of human actions, man can decide to act willingly or with reservation. It is for this mental state that God justly rewards or punishes man. Interesting to note, the Ash‘arites did not find any fol-

lowers among the Jews, and their influence on Christian thinkers was, once again, indirect.

Islamic thought became more strictly philosophical in the Platonic-neoplatonic and Aristotelian (*falsafah*) traditions. Since the Muslims often gained their knowledge of Plato’s views through neoplatonic sources, they made no sharp distinction between the views of Plato and those of his neoplatonic followers. Similarly, since the Aristotelian teachings that the Muslims knew were transmitted through the Hellenistic schools, their Aristotelianism was intermingled with neoplatonic teachings. Hence, an inquiry into the degree of neoplatonic influences forms a special problem in the study of Muslim Aristotelianism. Through Platonic-neoplatonic writings, of which the *Theology of Aristotle* and the *Liber de causis* have already been mentioned, Muslims became familiar with such typical doctrines as: that God is best conceived as the One, that He is most properly described by negative attributes, that the world came into being through emanation, that in the emanative process the Logos serves as intermediary between God and the world, that the soul is a substance, and that the final act of understanding is a kind of “illumination.” The latter doctrine became especially important for the philosophical explanation of the experience of the prophets. Platonism was also central to Muslim political thought. In the absence of Aristotle’s *Politics* (whether by accident or design), Muslim thinkers based their political doctrines on Plato’s *Republic* and *Laws*. The Platonic political tradition yielded the description of the ideal state that came to be identified with the state founded by Islam, the division of the citizens into distinct classes, and the image of the philosopher-king who was identified with the prophet or *imām* (religious leader). Aristotelianism, on the other hand, made its primary contribution through its contention that the world is best studied through a plurality of sciences and through its logical teachings. In logic, Aristotelianism contributed such typical notions as substance and accident, properties, the syllogism in its various forms; in physics: matter and form, the four causes, the various changes, time, place, the prime mover; in psychology: the soul and its faculties, the different intellects; and in metaphysics: being, essence and existence, potentiality and

actuality, the incorporeal intelligences, and the description of God. In ethics, there was much common ground between the Platonic and Aristotelian traditions in such doctrines as: that virtue requires control of the passions and that the contemplative life is the highest good for man.

The first Aristotelian is generally held to be Abū Yūsuf Ya‘aqūb ibn Ishāq al-Kindī (c.801–866). Called the “Philosopher of the Arabs,” he was active in Baghdad at the courts of al-Ma‘mūn and al-Mu‘taṣim, having been, in fact, the tutor of the latter’s son. Over 350 treatises are ascribed to him, but only some sixty to seventy appear to have survived [see N. Rescher, *Al-Kindī: An Annotated Bibliography* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1965)]. As an Aristotelian he advocated the independent study of philosophy and he had a major interest in the sciences, though he also wrote on metaphysics and logic. But Mu‘tazilite and neoplatonic doctrines also influenced his thought. In psychology, he developed a doctrine of the four intellects—an issue that became a commonplace among the subsequent Aristotelians. However, he deviated from the Aristotelian scheme, coming thereby closer to religious teachings, in holding that the world and, with it, time and motion had a beginning.

The next significant philosopher was Abū Bakr ibn Muḥammad ibn Zakarīyā al-Rāzī (d. 923 or 932), who was known among the Latins as Razes the great physician. A rather independent spirit, he defended Plato against Aristotle who, to his mind, had corrupted philosophy. He denied that philosophy and religion can be reconciled and he saw no need for prophets, holding that the human intellect, properly used, is quite adequate for all human needs. Philosophy, for him, was not a discipline restricted to a chosen few; all men, so he held, can benefit from philosophical studies. In his physical teachings he was an atomist, but he held with some of the interpreters of the *Timaeus* that the world was created from an eternal, pre-existing matter. He also taught that there are five ultimate substances—not one—which are God, soul, matter, space, and time. It can readily be seen why his views earned him the displeasure of his contemporaries who branded him a heretic.

Aristotelianism in the East continued with al-Rāzī’s contemporary al-Fārābī (870–930) and reached its

high point with Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna) (980–1037). These philosophers, together with al-Ghazālī (1058–1111), the great critic of the Aristotelians, will be discussed in later sections. A number of lesser philosophers were at work in the Islamic East, but, though they are interesting in their own right, they have no direct bearing on the contents of this volume. Only the Sincere Brethren or Brethren of Purity (*Ikhwān al-Ṣafā*) need to be mentioned. Active in the second half of the tenth century, they produced about fifty “Letters,” which were an encyclopedia of the philosophical sciences. Their exposition was semipopular, and they attempted to strike a middle ground between orthodoxy and the Aristotelians. Though a variety of philosophical influences are at work, the collection has a neoplatonic orientation.

After having reached its highpoint in the East with Ibn Sīnā, Islamic philosophy began to shift to Spain and North Africa in the West. In its beginnings in that region, philosophy was heavily neoplatonic, though this Neoplatonism was modified by pseudo-Empedoclean writings. Under the influence of the latter, Ibn Masarraḥ (883–931), who is said to have introduced philosophy into Spain, modified the typical neoplatonic doctrine of emanation by holding that first matter emanated directly from God and by placing first matter high in the emanationist scheme. This doctrine was accepted by Ibn Gabirol (see page 351). Aristotelianism proper developed in the West during the twelfth century, partially because Almohad rulers were generally sympathetic to philosophical speculations. In Spain, it should be noted, the influence of al-Fārābī was stronger than that of Ibn Sīnā, and it became the tendency of Spanish Aristotelianism (especially in the person of Ibn Rushd) to cleanse Aristotle’s doctrines of their neoplatonic accretions. The first important Aristotelian in the West was Ibn Bājja (c. 1070–1138), the Avempace of the Latins. His works, most of which are lost, seem to have included commentaries on Aristotle, but among those that have survived (not all complete) there are *The Regimen of the Solitary* and *Conjunction of the Intellect with Man*. As the title of the former work indicates, Ibn Bājja was at variance with the general trend of Islamic political philosophy in holding that human happiness is best attained in separation from the state. Ibn Bājja’s doctrine of soli-

tary contemplation influenced Ibn Ṭufayl (1100–1184), the next in the line of Spanish Aristotelians. In *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān*, a historical romance, Ibn Ṭufayl tells the story of a child who, having been cast ashore on an uninhabited island, develops a contemplative philosophy of his own as he grows up. When later circumstances make it possible for Ḥayy to return to civilization, he attempts to convert men to the philosophical outlook he has developed. When he is unsuccessful, he returns to his island, spending the rest of his days in contemplation. Islamic Aristotelianism reached its climax in Spain with Ibn Rushd (Averroes), the great commentator on Aristotle's works. But Ibn Rushd also marked the virtual end of Aristotelianism in the Islamic world. Deprived of followers among Muslims, he gained expositors and disciples among

Jews and Christians. Much of the continuation of Islamic philosophy must be seen in terms of its influence on these two traditions.

In this volume, the Mu'tazilites are represented in the Jewish philosophy section by Saadia Gaon, a Jewish exponent of their views. No separate selection is devoted to the Ash'arites, but their views are discussed incidentally by some of the Muslim and Jewish Aristotelians who criticized their position. Neoplatonism is once again represented in the Jewish philosophy section, its exponent being Ibn Gabirol. The prevailing number of the selections in the section on Islamic philosophy are taken from the major Aristotelians—al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, and Ibn Rushd, while al-Ghazālī exemplifies the reaction to this movement.

## Al-Fārābī, c.870–950

Though Muslim Aristotelianism can be said to have begun with al-Kindī (see page 218), al-Fārābī was the first major representative of this philosophical group. Known as “the second teacher” (Aristotle was the first), al-Fārābī commented on many of Aristotle’s works, wrote expositions of Platonic and Aristotelian doctrines, and, in addition, composed a number of independent works. Varied as his philosophical interests were, he was especially praised for his works on logic, and his political theories became perhaps his most distinctive contribution to Muslim and Jewish thought. Among his Muslim successors there was hardly anyone who was not influenced by his teachings, and several Jewish thinkers, Maimonides in particular, held him in high esteem. The Christian world knew him through Latin translations of some of his works, but for it his political writings held little interest and, in general, he was overshadowed by Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd.

The complexion and intention of al-Fārābī’s thought is not easily determined. It is clear enough that he was one of those philosophers who believed in the essential unity of Plato and Aristotle (though that this was his real view has recently been challenged), and it is equally clear that in logic, natural philosophy, and ethics he followed Aristotle and his commentators; in politics, Plato; and in metaphysics, Aristotelian and neoplatonic teachings. How exactly these elements serve to make up his thought is less easily determined. Difficulties arise because there are contradictions in his views and because works formerly attributed to him have been shown not to be his. There have been interpreters who have seen in him someone who earnestly attempted to harmonize Islamic doctrines with philosophical teachings, while others have found

him to be someone committed to philosophy, but for whom religion had largely a political use.

God, for al-Fārābī, is identical with the neoplatonic One and at the same time with Aristotle’s divine thought thinking itself. Besides being one, God is knowing, true, and living, but in God all these attributes are identical with His essence. God is incorporeal, pure intellect, and the creator of everything that exists.

To explain the origin of the world, al-Fārābī turns to the neoplatonic doctrine of emanation. God contemplates Himself and from this contemplation there issues forth from Him an intellect, which is the first emanation. From this intellect there emanate successively nine further intellects, the last of which is the so-called Agent Intellect. To each intellect belongs a celestial sphere, though the intellect exists in separation from its sphere. Invoking neoplatonic cosmological doctrines, al-Fārābī identifies each of the first nine spheres with a celestial body. In descending order the spheres are: the first all-encompassing sphere, the sphere of the fixed stars, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the Sun, Venus, Mercury, and the Moon. The Agent Intellect governs the sublunar sphere, which is the sphere of generation and corruption. Within the sublunar sphere, intellectual, animate, and natural powers are at work, and everything within it is composed of matter and form. Though it has been held that emanation, for al-Fārābī, is voluntary and takes place in time, it seems more likely that emanation, for him, is necessary and eternal.

One of the more fully developed aspects of al-Fārābī’s philosophy of nature is his doctrine of the intellect. In the third book of the *De anima* Aristotle had

described how the mind knows, but his account was rather enigmatic. The ancient commentators had tried to make Aristotle's teachings more specific and, prior to al-Fārābī, al-Kindī had written on the intellect. Drawing on these predecessors, al-Fārābī gave the Aristotelian doctrines an interpretation of his own. Examining Aristotle and his commentators, he concluded that in discussing the intellect Aristotle speaks of it in four senses. First there is that faculty of the human soul which has the ability to think, and this is the intellect in potentiality. It seems that al-Fārābī followed Alexander of Aphrodisias in considering this intellect as a power within the body.<sup>1</sup> When the intellect abstracts the intelligibles from substances within the material world, it becomes an intellect in actuality. The intellect in actuality, in turn, can think the intelligibles within it and, thus, itself; and when it does this, it becomes the acquired intellect. Finally, as any change, thinking requires an efficient cause, and this is the Agent Intellect. As has already been noted, the Agent Intellect is the lowest of the self-existent intellects.

Closely connected with his psychology is al-Fārābī's account of prophecy. The prophet is not merely someone arbitrarily selected by God for his prophetic office, but someone possessed of all human perfections. Not only must the prophet possess a healthy constitution, moral virtues, and intellectual perfection, but he must also have a well-developed faculty of imagination. Once these perfections have been attained, the prophet assumes a twofold role. As philosopher, his acquired intellect will be in contact with the Agent Intellect from which it receives a kind of illumination. Al-Fārābī insists that the prophetic intellect will never become identical with the Agent Intellect, but at the same time he admits that the Agent Intellect is a kind of form for the acquired intellect of the prophet. But besides being an accomplished philosopher, the prophet is also a statesman. As a statesman, he cares for the common good, governing the state in accordance with just laws. Since, as statesman, the prophet must address the masses who can only understand

truths presented in metaphorical form, he requires a well-developed imagination in order to be able to persuade them. Maimonides later on was to base his theory of prophecy on al-Fārābī's.

Al-Fārābī's doctrine of the intellect is also important for his account of human immortality. With other Muslim Aristotelians he considered the Qur'ān's physical description of the afterlife as an accommodation to the understanding of the masses, but at the same time he does not seem to have denied human immortality altogether. It appears to have been his view that the acquired intellect of those chosen few who have actualized their intellectual faculty will survive death and that this incorporeal immortality is individual.<sup>2</sup>

In his political philosophy al-Fārābī is the disciple of Plato, though Aristotelian influences are not missing. Man, according to al-Fārābī, is political by nature, and he attains his happiness within the state. The ideal state, as Plato had taught, consists of the orderly arrangement of its citizens, each one fulfilling the task for which he is best fitted. Men by nature are unequal, but al-Fārābī interprets this doctrine in the light of Aristotelian logical distinctions. The intellectual elite that governs the state consists of those who can understand demonstrations, while the masses are those who only understand through various arguments of persuasion. As the world in its totality requires a first principle that is one, so the state requires a single ruler. He is the prophet, also called philosopher, legislator, and *imām* (leader). Yet having described the ideal state, al-Fārābī divides it into three kinds and, in addition, he analyzes a variety of states that are defective.

It is in al-Fārābī's political doctrines that philosophy and religion finally meet. For it is the prophet who is the founder of the good state required as a prerequisite for human perfection, and it is the prophet who transmits to the masses philosophical truth in symbolic form. Philosophy contains the final truth, but religion contains its image.

Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī was born c.870 in the district of the city of Fārāb (Turkestan), of Turkish descent. He studied first in Khurāsān and later in Bagdad, where he came in contact with Christian Aristotelians. One

1. Cf. F. Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1958), p. 21.

2. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 25.

of his teachers was the Nestorian Christian Yūḥannā ibn Haylān, who was versed in the teachings of the school of Alexandria, and another, the translator and commentator Bishr Mattā ibn Yūnus. In 942 he accepted an invitation to the court of Sayf al-Dawlah, and he spent most of the remainder of his life at Aleppo. He is said to have lived a modest and ascetic life and to have been a man of mystical inclination. He died about 950.

Over one hundred works have been ascribed to al-Fārābī, but many of these are no longer extant. He seems to have commented on many of Aristotle's works, but most of these commentaries are now lost. In addition to a number of logical works, there should be mentioned his treatises *Concerning the Intellect* (*Fī al-'Aql*), *The Enumeration of the Sciences* (*Iḥṣā' al-'Ulūm*), *About the Scope of Aristotle's "Metaphysics"* (*Fī Aghrād Mā Ba'd al-Ṭabī'ah*), *The Harmony between the Views*

*of the Divine Plato and Aristotle* (*Al-Jam' bayan Ra'yay al-Ḥakīmayn Aflātūn al-Ilāhī wa-Aristūṭālīs*), *On the Vacuum* (*Fī al-Khalā'*), a book in three parts consisting of *The Attainment of Happiness* (*Fī Taḥṣīl al-Sa'ādah*), a political work, and *The Philosophy of Plato* (*Falsafat Aflātun*) and *Philosophy of Aristotle* (*Falsafat Aristūṭālīs*). His political works include *The Political Regime* (*Al-Siyāsah al-Madaniyyah*), *The Opinions of the People of the Virtuous City* (*Fī Ārā' al-Madīnah al-Fāḍilah*), *Epitome of Plato's "Laws,"* and *Aphorisms of the Statesman* (*Fuṣūḥ al-Madani*). *The Seals of Wisdom* (*Fuṣūḥ al-Ḥikam*) is probably by Ibn Sīnā, and it has been questioned whether *The Main Questions* (*'Uyūn al-Masā'il*) is by al-Fārābī.

In *The Principles of Existing Things*, al-Fārābī explains the basic metaphysics of the First Cause and secondary causes, form and matter, and possibility and necessity.

## 18. The Principles of Existing Things

### [Part One]

[1] The principles by which the six types of bodies and accidents subsist are divided into six major levels, each one comprising a single kind. The First Cause is in the first level. The secondary causes are in the second. The Active Intellect is in the third. The soul is in the fourth. Form is in the fifth. Matter is in the sixth. In the first level there cannot be many but rather only a single one. In each of the other grades, there are many. The first three levels (namely, the First Cause, the secondary causes, and the Active Intellect) are neither bodies nor are they in bodies. The second three levels (namely, soul, form, and matter) are in bodies, although they themselves are not bodies. There are six genera of bodies: celestial bodies, rational animals, nonrational animals, plants, minerals, and the four elements. The composite whole of these six genera of bodies is the universe.

[2] With regard to the First, one should be convinced that it is the divinity and the proximate cause of the existence of the secondary causes and the Active Intellect. The secondary causes are the causes of the existence of the celestial bodies, since it is out of them that the substances of these bodies come, and the existence of each one of the celestial bodies is a necessary consequence of them. The highest level of the secondary causes necessarily entails the existence of the first heaven; and the lowest level of the secondary causes necessarily entails the existence of the orbit containing the Moon. The secondary causes in between these two necessarily entail the existence of each of the spheres in between these two spheres. The number of secondary causes equals the number of celestial bodies. One ought to call the secondary causes “spiritual beings,” “angels,” and similar names.

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[3] The function of the Active Intellect is to watch over the rational animal and endeavor to have him reach the highest level of perfection that man can reach, namely, ultimate happiness, which is for man to arrive at the level of the Active Intellect. The way that occurs is by attaining separation from bodies, without needing anything below in order to subsist (whether it be body or matter or accident), and by remaining in that state of perfection forever. Although the Active Intellect itself is singular, its rank nonetheless accommodates whatever part of the rational animal is freed of matter and attains happiness. The Active Intellect ought to be called the “protective spirit” and the “holy spirit”—since it is given names similar to these two—and its rank ought to be called “the heavenly kingdom” and other such names.

[4] At the level of the soul, the principles are many. Some are the souls of celestial bodies, some are the souls of rational animals, and some are the souls of non-rational animals. The rational animal possesses the faculties of reason, appetite, imagination, and sensory perception.

[5] The faculty of reason is what enables man to acquire the sciences and technical disciplines, to discern the difference between virtuous and vicious actions and ethical dispositions, to deliberate on what he should and should not do, and moreover to perceive what is beneficial and what harmful, what is pleasurable and what painful. The faculty of reason is divided into the theoretical and the practical [faculties], and the practical [faculty] is divided into vocational and deliberative [faculties]. The theoretical faculty is what allows man to gain knowledge of anything that he does not act upon in any way, whereas the practical faculty is what allows man to gain knowledge of anything that man does act upon through his volition. The vocational faculty is what allows man to acquire crafts and vocations, while the deliberative faculty is what allows him to think and reflect on any of the things that he should or should not do. The faculty of appetite allows man to seek out or flee from something, to desire something or be repulsed by it, and to prefer

something or avoid it; it is also the faculty that occasions hatred, love, amity, enmity, fear, security, anger, satisfaction, cruelty, mercy, and all the other accidental affections of the soul.

[6] The faculty of the imagination stores impressions of the objects of the senses once they are no longer present to sensory perception. It combines and separates [the impressions] while one is awake and asleep such that some are true and others false. It also perceives what is beneficial and what is harmful, what is pleasurable and what is painful, but not what are virtuous and vicious actions and dispositions.

[7] What the faculty of sensory perception does is obvious. It perceives the objects of the five senses (as commonly accepted by all) and what is pleasurable and what is painful, but it does not discern the difference between what is harmful and what is pleasurable, nor what is virtuous and what vicious.

[8] The nonrational animal includes those that have the three faculties other than that of reason, with the faculty of imagination in [those animals] functioning in place of the faculty of reason in rational animals. Others have the faculties of sense perception and appetite only.

[9] The souls of the celestial bodies belong to a species different from the souls [of rational and non-rational animals], entirely separate from them in their substances. The celestial souls have substance by virtue of [this difference in species], and they move in circular fashion by virtue of their [souls]. In terms of their existence they are nobler, more perfect, and more excellent than the souls of the species of animal that we have. [This is] because they are in no way and at no time in potentiality. On the contrary, they are always in actuality, due to the fact that the objects of their intellect are present in them from the very beginning, and they are always intellecting what they intellect. Our souls, on the other hand, are at first in potentiality and then later in actuality. [This is] because, at first, they are [simply] configured to receive and prepared to intellect the intelligibles, and [only] later do the intelligibles come to be in them, at which point they become actual. The celestial souls have neither sensory perception nor imagination; rather, they have only the soul that intellects, which in some sense is congeneric with the rational soul [in humans]. It is

by virtue of their substances that the celestial souls intellect the intelligibles, which substances are separate from matter. Each of their souls intellects the First, and itself, and whichever secondary cause that gave it its substance.

[10] The celestial souls definitely do not intellect the majority of the intelligibles that humans intellect from things in matter because they are far too high in rank by virtue of their substance to intellect the intelligibles that are below them. The First intellects Itself, which, in a certain way, is all of the existents; for when It intellects Itself, It intellects, in a certain way, all of the existents, because it is only out of Its existence that every other existent receives its existence. Each of the secondary causes intellects itself and the First.

[11] The Active Intellect both intellects the First, all of the secondary causes, and itself, as well as makes intelligibles of things that are not in themselves intelligibles. Things that are intelligibles in themselves are separate from material bodies and do not subsist in any matter whatsoever. These are the intelligibles by virtue of their substances. These substances both intellect *and* are intellected, for they intellect on account of the fact that they are intellected, what is intelligible about them being the very thing that intellects. The other intelligibles are not like that, because neither the stone nor the plant, for example, is an intelligible, and it is certainly not the case that whatever is intellected of them is also what intellects. Nothing that is a body or that is in a body is an intelligible by virtue of its substance, and the substance of none of them is at the rank of an actual intellect. The Active Intellect is what makes them actual intelligibles and makes some of them actual intellects by raising them from their level of existence to a level higher than the one given them by nature. For example, the rational faculty, by virtue of which man is man, is not in its substance an actual intellect and was not given by nature to be an actual intellect; instead, the Active Intellect causes it to become an actual intellect and makes everything else an actual intelligible for the rational faculty. Once the rational faculty becomes an actual intellect, that intellect (which is now actual) comes to resemble the separate things, by intellecting itself as actually an intellect, and what is intellected of it is the very thing that is intellecting, at which point

it is a substance that intellects by virtue of being an intelligible, which in turn is due to the fact that it is intellecting. At that point, the thing that intellects, the thing that is intellected, and the act of intellecting is one and the same thing. It is as a result of this that it arrives at the rank of the Active Intellect. Once man arrives at this rank, his happiness is perfect.

[12] The relation of the Active Intellect to man is like that of the Sun to vision. The Sun gives light to vision, and by the light acquired from the Sun, vision actually sees, when before it had only the potential to see. By that light, vision sees the Sun itself, which is the cause of its actually seeing, and furthermore actually sees the colors that previously were [only] potentially the objects of vision. The vision that was potential thereby becomes actual. In the same manner, the Active Intellect provides man with something that it imprints in his rational faculty. The relation of that thing to the rational soul is like that of light to vision. It is by reason of this thing that the rational soul intellects the Active Intellect, that the things that are potentially intelligible become actually intelligible, and that man, who was potentially an intellect, becomes actually and perfectly an intellect, until he all but reaches the rank of the Active Intellect. So [man] becomes an intellect *per se* after he was not, and an intelligible *per se* after he was not, and a divine [substance] after being a material one. This is what the Active Intellect does, and this is why it is called the Active Intellect.

[13] Form is in the corporeal substance the way the shape of the bed is in the bed, matter being like the wood of the bed. The form is that by virtue of which the substance that can be corporeal becomes an actual substance. The matter is that by virtue of which it is potentially a substance. For the bed is potentially a bed due to the fact that it is wood, whereas it becomes an actual bed once its shape occurs in the wood. Form subsists through matter, and matter is a subject for bearing forms. Forms do not subsist by themselves, as they need a subject in order to exist, and their subject is matter, whereas matter exists only for the sake of forms. It would seem that the existence of forms is the primary aim, but since they subsist only in a given subject, matter was made a subject to bear forms. For this reason, as long as forms do not exist, the existence of matter is in vain. But none of the natural beings is in

vain. Therefore, prime matter cannot exist devoid of a given form. Matter, then, is a principle and cause solely by way of being the subject for bearing the form; it is not an agent, nor an end, nor something that can exist independently of some form. Matter and form are both called “nature,” although form is more aptly named such. By way of example, vision is a substance, the body of the eye is its matter, the potentiality by which it sees is its form, and by virtue of them both combined, vision is vision in actuality. This is the same for all other natural bodies.

[14] In the case of souls,<sup>1</sup> as long as they do not seek perfection and undertake activities to that end, they remain but potentialities and configurations, in a state of preparation to receive the imprints of things. Examples of this are vision before it sees and receives the imprints of visible objects, and the faculty of imagination before it receives the imprints of objects of the imagination, and reason before it receives the imprints of the intelligibles (that is, forms). Once the imprints are actually in them—I mean the imprints of objects of the senses in the faculty of sensory perception, the objects of the imagination in the faculty of imagination, and the imprints of the intelligibles in the faculty of reason—the forms become distinct from what they were. Now, while the imprints present in the prior configurations are like forms in matters, they are definitely not called forms, unless equivocally. Those most unlike forms are the imprints of the intelligibles present in the rational, for they are almost completely separate from matter, and their manner of existing in the faculty is extremely unlike the existence of forms in matter. In the case of the actual intellect’s becoming like the Active Intellect, the intellect is not a form nor even *like* a form. Despite this fact, one group calls all noncorporeal substances “forms” equally by homonymy and divides them into those that are separate from matter by not needing it and by being free of it, and those that are not separate from matter (which are the forms we discussed), but the latter is a category of forms only by homonymy.

[15] There are different orders of forms that require matter to subsist. The lowest order contains the forms

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1. I.e., in the case of souls considered as forms.

of the four elements, that is, four different forms in different matters, though the species of the four matters is one and the same; for the matter of fire can itself bear the form of air and the other elements. The remaining orders, arrayed in ascending rank, contain the forms of bodies that come to be out of the blend and mixture of the elements. The forms of mineral bodies are above the order of elemental forms. The forms of plants in all their differences are above the order of mineral forms. The forms of the species of nonrational animals in all their differences are above the plant forms. Finally, the forms of the rational animals—that is, the natural configurations that rational animals have by virtue of being rational animals—are above the forms of nonrational animals.

[16] Form and prime matter are the most deficient of the principles in terms of existence, because in order to exist and subsist they each need the other. Form can subsist only in matter; and matter, in substance and nature, exists for the sake of form, and *that* it exists is that it bears forms. As long as form does not exist, matter does not exist, since *this* particular matter does not in fact have a form in itself at all. Therefore, for it to exist devoid of form is vain, and no natural thing can be vain. Equally, as long as matter does not exist, form does not exist, on account of the fact that form requires a subject in order to subsist. Next, both form and matter have a deficiency and a perfection that are proper to it and not the other, as follows. It is by virtue of its form that the body has its more perfect state of being, that is to say, its actual existence, whereas it is by virtue of its matter that the body has its more deficient state of being, that is to say, its potential existence. The form exists neither because through it the matter exists, nor because it was created for the sake of matter, whereas matter exists for the sake of the form (I mean in order that the form subsist by it). This is how form is superior to matter. Matter is superior to form by virtue of the fact that it does not require a subject in order for it to exist, whereas form does. Matter has neither a contrary to it nor a privation that would be its opposite, whereas form does have a privation or a contrary. Anything that has a privation or a contrary cannot exist forever. Forms are similar to accidents in that they both need a subject in order to subsist, but forms are different from accidents by the fact that the

subjects of accidents are not made so that accidents would exist or in order to bear the accidents, whereas the subjects of forms (that is, matters) were made solely for the purpose of bearing forms. Matter is a subject for contrary forms, that is, it is receptive to the form and to the contrary, or privation, of that form. Matter transfers from one form to another, always without lagging and without any one form being more appropriate than its contrary; rather, matter receives all contraries equally.

[17] In the case of the noncorporeal substances, none of the deficiency characteristic of form and matter attaches to them. Each one of them exists not in a subject. The existence of each one of them is not for the sake of something else, whether that be as matter, or as the instrument of something else, or as something that serves something else, or by needing to be replenished by an existence it would receive in the future by its action on something else, or by being acted upon by something else. Moreover, there is no contrary to any one of them, nor any privation opposing any one of them. These more properly deserve to be [called] substances than form and matter. Now, even though none of these deficiencies attach to the secondary causes and Active Intellect below the First, they are nonetheless not entirely free of another type of deficiency. [This is] because their substances derive from something else, and their existence is consequential to the existence of something else. The perfection of their substances does not extend so far that in themselves they do not need to receive existence from something else; it is rather the case that their existence is bestowed on them by something more perfect in existence than they are. This is a deficiency common to all existents other than the First.

[18] In addition to this, none of the secondary causes or the Active Intellect is capable of acquiring the splendor and adornment of existence, not to mention the joy, pleasure, and beauty of such only by intellecting itself alone; instead, it needs to intellect, in addition to itself, another being more perfect and magnificent than itself. In this respect then, there is a certain multiplicity in the very being of each of them, since anything that intellects some other given thing does itself, in a certain manner, become that other thing while simultaneously being its own proper self.

It is as though the excellence of its being is completed only through the support of a certain multiplicity, but it is also that very multiplicity in what makes the thing a substance that is a deficiency in terms of that thing's existence. However, it is no part of their nature to gain the splendor, beauty, and adornment of existence by intellecting anything existing below them, or anything that comes to be out of each one of them, or anything that is consequential to the existence of each of the existing beings; none of that is associated with any one of them or inheres in any one of them. Furthermore, in order to come to be out of something else, none of them stands in need of any instrument or other circumstance, except its very being and substance. In point of fact, on its own it is capable of bringing something *else* into being without seeking the help of any instrument or circumstance beyond its own substance.

[19] The souls of the celestial bodies are completely free from the aspects of the deficiency found in form and matter, except that they are [also] in subjects. In this respect they resemble the forms, although their subjects are not matters; instead, each of them is proper to one subject that cannot be a subject of any else. In this respect, [the souls of the celestial bodies] are different from form. Although they have all aspects of the deficiency found in the secondary causes, the multiplicity whereby they are substances is significantly greater than the multiplicity whereby the secondary causes are substances; for they attain the beauty and joy [of existence] only in as much as they intellect themselves, the secondary causes, and the First. Next, a consequence of the existence whereby they are substances is that they bring into existence other beings external to their substances, though they are also incapable of bestowing existence on something else without an instrument or any other circumstance belonging to them. In both cases, then, [the souls of the celestial bodies] need other things external to themselves (by "both cases" I mean their subsistence and their providing other things with existence), whereas the secondary causes are entirely free of the need for anything external to themselves in both cases. Nevertheless, [the souls of the celestial bodies] certainly do not receive the splendor and beauty of existence either by intellecting the beings below them or by virtue of

their existence being limited to them without any existence issuing from it to another.

[20] In the case of the souls that are in animals, once their faculties of sensory perception and imagination reach a perfection through the appearance in them of the imprints of sensible and imaginable objects, a certain resemblance to the separate things comes about in them. When the rational part of the soul is perfected and it then becomes an actual intellect, it very much resembles the separate things, except that it receives perfection, actuality, and the splendor, adornment, and beauty of existence only by intellecting not just the things above it in rank but also the things below it in rank, making the multiplicity in what affords its substance very great. Moreover, its existence is limited to itself alone and is not bestowed on anything other than it when it achieves complete separation from all other parts of the soul. Once it separates from the appetitive, imaginative, and sensing faculties, it receives existence from something else. It would appear that anything something else might acquire from it serves the sole purpose of making it itself more perfect in existence by virtue of doing that, so once it separates from the corporeal instrument, it can have no effect on anything else and continues to be restricted in its existence. Apparently, it is not a part of its substance to bestow existence on something else; instead, it suffices that its existence in its substance be preserved forever and that it be a cause among the causes—a final cause, that is, *not* an efficient one.

[21] In the First there is no deficiency in any way whatsoever. There can be no existence more perfect and superior than Its existence. There can be no existence prior to It nor at a rank equivalent to It that is not Its own existence exclusively. Therefore, the bestowal of existence [on It] from anything other than and prior to It is as equally unlikely as the possibility that such bestowal would come from anything less perfect than It. Thus, It is also completely different in Its substance from everything other than it. The existence that It has cannot belong to more than one, because there cannot be a difference between whatever has this existence and something else that has the very same existence. If there is a difference, then that difference would itself be something other than what they have in common, in which case what makes the

one different from the other would be one part of what sustains both of their existences, [and what they share in common would be another part]. Then, each of them would be divisible in definition, in which case each one of the two parts that each of them has would be a cause for its subsistence. Then it would not be First; instead, there would be an existent that is prior to it that sustains it. That is an absurdity, since *It* is First. And, as long as there is no difference between the two, they cannot be multiple, neither two, nor more.

[22] Moreover, if it were possible for something other than the [First] to have the very same existence [It has], then it would be possible for there to be an existence outside of Its existence, which It would not possess alone and which would be at the same rank. Then Its existence would be less than whatever had both existences together, and then there would be a deficiency in Its existence, because the complete is that outside of which nothing exists that it could have. Then, Its existence cannot belong to anything else outside of Itself, and therefore It cannot have any contrary whatsoever, because the existence of the contrary of something is at the same rank as its existence. But there can be no existence at the same rank that It does not possess alone, as otherwise, Its existence would be deficient.

[23] Moreover, the perfection of the existence of anything that has a contrary is through the absence of that contrary, because something that has a contrary can exist at the same time as its contrary only if it is preserved by things outside and things external to its being and substance; for there is no way that the substance of one of the two contraries is sufficient to preserve itself against its contrary. It necessarily follows from this that the First would have some cause by which It exists. Therefore, [that cause] could not be at the same rank as [the First]; instead, [the cause] alone would be unique. So [the First] is one in this regard.

[24] Next, It cannot be divided essentially in definition—I mean, It cannot be divided into things through which It would subsist—because each part of the definition that would explain what It is could not designate each part of what makes It subsist. [The reason for this is] that in such cases, the parts by which something subsists are the causes of its existence, in the sense that the factors designated by the parts of the definition are causes for the existence of the defined

thing, the way that matter and form are causes for the existence of the thing constituted of them. That is not possible for It, since It is First. Since It cannot be divided in this manner, it is even less likely that It could be divided by quantity and the other manners of division. So It is also one in this other respect.

[25] In light of this, Its existence, by which It is distinguished from all other beings, also cannot be other than that by which It is an existent in Itself. Therefore, Its distinction from everything else is through a unity that is Its being. One of the meanings of “unity” is the proper existence by which every existent is distinguished from another, and it is by virtue of this that each existent is called “one,” in the sense that it has an existence proper to it alone, and this particular connotation [of the term “unity”] goes along with existence. In this respect, the First is also One, and more deserving of that name and connotation than anything else.

[26] Because [the First] does not have matter nor is [in matter] in any way, It is an intellect in Its substance, because it is matter that prevents something from being an intellect and from actually intellecting. It is [also] an intelligible by virtue of being an intellect; for the one whose identity is intellect is likewise an intelligible to that one whose identity is intellect. It has absolutely no need for anything outside of Itself to intellect It in order to be an intelligible. On the contrary, It Itself intellects Itself and, by intellecting Itself, It is an intellect and, by Its intellecting Itself, It is an intelligible. Thus, in order to be an intellect and something that intellects, It has absolutely no need to receive any other being or thing outside of Itself. On the contrary, It is an intellect and something that intellects by virtue of intellecting Itself; for the thing that intellects is the very thing that is intellectured.

[27] This is equally the case with [the First’s] being a “knower.” To be a knower, It has absolutely no need outside of Itself for any other thing from which It would receive excellence by knowing it; nor does It need to know any other being in order to be known. On the contrary, It is sufficient in Its substance to be knower and known. Its knowing Itself is not different from Its substance; for knower, known, and knowing are one being and one substance.

[28] The same is the case with [the First’s] being “wise,” for wisdom is intellecting the perfect thing by

the perfect knowledge. By virtue of intellecting and knowing Itself, It knows the perfect thing by the perfect knowledge. Perfect knowledge is the complete knowledge that always belongs to what is always eternal. Likewise, [the First] is wise not by a knowledge that It receives through knowing something outside of Itself. On the contrary, It is sufficient in Itself to be wise in knowing Itself.

[29] The beauty, splendor, and adornment of every being is to exist as perfect and to reach its final perfection. Now, since the existence of the First is the most perfect existence, Its beauty surpasses that of every beautiful being, as does the adornment and splendor It has in Its substance and being. [All of] that It has in Itself and by virtue of intellecting Itself.

[30] Now, since pleasure, happiness, delight, and joy result all the more by perceiving the most beautiful by means of the most accurate perception, and since [the First] is the most beautiful absolutely and the most splendid and most adorned, and Its perception of Itself is the most accurate perception and perfect knowledge, the pleasure that the First enjoys is a pleasure the real nature of which we cannot understand and the massive extent of which we cannot grasp but by reference and in relation to the minuscule pleasure we have when we suppose that we have perceived what we take to be most beautiful and splendid by means of some accurate act of perception, whether that be through sensory perception, imagination, or the intellect. Since in this state we experience a pleasure that we suppose surpasses all others in sheer extent, and we experience the ultimate degree of happiness in ourselves as a result, then to compare the knowledge and perception [that the First has] of what is most perfect and beautiful to our knowledge and perception of what [we take to be] the most perfect and most splendid, is to compare Its delight, pleasure, and joy in Itself to the pleasure, delight, and joy we have in ourselves. But since there is no way to relate our perception to Its perception, nor our knowledge to Its knowledge—though if there is some relation, it is minuscule—there is then no way to relate our pleasure, delight, and joy in ourselves to that of the First. Even if there is some relation, it is incredibly minuscule; for how could there be any relation between a minuscule part and something that has no temporal

measure, between something deficient in so many ways to something of the utmost perfection? Since It takes greater pleasure, joy, and happiness in Itself, and so loves and desires Itself all the more, it is obvious that the relation between the First's necessary desire, love, and adoration of Itself to our own desire and pleasure of the perfection of ourselves is like the relation of Its excellence and perfection to our own excellence and the perfection we adore of ourselves.<sup>2</sup> [In the case of the First], lover and beloved are one and the same, and what desires and what is desired are one and the same, so It is the First Beloved and the First Desired.

[31] Since the existence that belongs to the First is due to Itself, it necessarily follows that naturally existing things—that is, those things not due to human choice—derive from It whatever existence they have (some types of which are available to sensory perception, while others are knowable through demonstration). The existence of anything derived from It is by way of a bestowal that comes to be for the sake of the existence of something else and by the existence of something else being bestowed from Its existence. In this respect, the existence of anything derived from It is not a cause for It in any way whatsoever, nor is it a final cause for Its existence, nor does it provide It some sort of perfection, the way that such does with the majority of things that we bring about; for in our case we are disposed to bring many things into being where those things are final causes for the sake of which we exist, and many of those final causes afford us some perfection that we did not have before.

[32] The aim of the existence of the First is not the existence of the other things, such that those would be the final causes of Its existence, since then there would be a cause apart from Itself for Its existence. It is also not the case that in providing existence It gains another perfection apart from what It is or Its own Perfection the way that one who gives money or something else to another gains pleasure, honor, status, or some other good or perfection as recompense, in which case the

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2. In other words, since the First's perfection is greater than the perfection of humans, and one loves the perfection in a thing, the love It has for Itself is greater than the love humans have of themselves.

existence of the other is a cause of some good he acquires and a [state of] being he did not have. It is absurd for any of these things to apply to the First, because they would preclude Its being the First and necessarily entail the priority of something other than It and make that a cause of Its existence. On the contrary, it is on account of It and as a consequence and result of Its substance that anything other than It derives existence from It. Therefore, the existence It has through which It bestows existence on [everything] else is in Its substance. The existence It has through which It is in Itself a substance is that very existence that It has through which everything else derives existence from It. [The First] is not divisible into two things, one through which Its essence is substance, and another through which something else comes to exist from It. [The First] also does not need anything other than Its very being and substance to bestow the existence of something else from Its existence, the way that we and many other agents do. Its existence through which It bestows the existence of something else is not more perfect than the existence It has through which It is substance. Therefore, although the existence of what derives existence from It is not temporally posterior to It, it is certainly so in every other way.

[33] The terms that should be employed for [the First] are the terms that designate those existents among us that are perfect and excellent without, however, any of those terms designating the excellence and perfection that the First has in the way that those terms customarily designate such existents among us. On the contrary, they should designate the perfection that is specific to It in Its substance. Moreover, the types of perfections that different terms customarily designate are multiple, but one absolutely should not thereby suppose that the types of perfection that It has that are so designated by multiple terms are multiple species into which It could be divided and through the aggregate total of which It would have substance. On the contrary, those terms, though multiple, should designate a single substance, a single absolutely indivisible existence. Finally, whenever such a term is conventionally agreed to designate an excellence and perfection outside of the substance of such an existent among us, that term when employed for the First ought to be made to designate an excellence and per-

fection in Its very substance. For example, “beautiful” is used to designate a perfection of color, shape, or position *pertaining to* many a thing but not *in the substance of* that thing.

[34] The terms that designate the perfection and excellence pertaining to things among us include the following. There are terms that designate what belongs to something in itself, not as something relating to something else, like “existent,” “one,” and other such terms. There are terms that designate what belongs to something in relation to something external to it, like “just” and “generous.” With respect to the things among us, these terms designate an excellence and a perfection of a part of the thing that is the relation it has to another thing apart from it, such that this relation constitutes a part of the whole of what that term designates, and in that excellence and that perfection subsisting through something being related to something else. Now, whenever these terms are made to apply to the First and intended to designate the relation that It has to something else through the existence bestowed from It, the relation should not be thought to constitute a part of Its perfection as designated by that term, nor in the sense that the perfection subsists through that relation. Instead, that term should be thought of as designating Its substance and Its perfection, whereas the relation should be viewed as a result and consequence of that perfection, in the sense that the relation subsists by virtue of Its substance and the perfection belonging to It, where the relation is viewed as necessarily resulting from and consequential to what has the substance so described.

[35] Homonymous terms that apply to the First and something else include those that apply generally to all existing beings and those that are homonyms for some of them. In the case of many homonyms applied to It and something else, such a term designates *Its* perfection primarily and something else secondarily, according to its order of existence from the First. For example, the terms “existent” and “one” primarily designate that by virtue of which the First is substance, and then secondarily anything else on the strength of the fact that its substance derives from the First, that its existence is acquired and received from the First.

[36] In the case of many homonyms that designate the substance and existence of the First, if they desig-

nate something else, they designate whatever one imagines to be similar, whether very much so or just a little, to the First Existence. Now, these terms are applied to the First in the most prior and true manner and to anything else only by posteriority, but it is not unacceptable if our application of these terms to the First came after our application of them to something else—for clearly our application of many of them to the First is only by way of transferring them from something else to It and after we had applied them to something else for a time—because it is impossible for what is prior by nature and existence to be posterior in time and for any deficiency to be associated with what is prior.

[37] Now, since we have numerous terms that designate particular perfections commonly accepted by us, and many of them we use simply to designate those perfections as particular perfections and not as species of perfection, clearly the most excellent perfection of them all is necessarily most deserving of that term. Every perfection among existing beings that we perceive to be more complete we consider more worthy of the term [perfection], until we arrive at the knowledge of what constitutes the upper limit of that perfection and we naturally call It, that is, the First, by that term, and we then rank all other beings according to their relation to that term from the First. Examples of [such terms] are “existent” and “one.” [We also have] other terms that designate one species of perfection to the exclusion of another. Such species include whatever is in the substance of the First in the most excellent manner that the species can be, and is so elevated in the estimation to the highest level of perfection of that species that absolutely no deficiency remains. Examples of such terms are “knowledge,” “intellect,” and “wisdom.” With such terms, it necessarily follows that the term for that species is most appropriately and truly applied to [the First]. In the case of any species of perfection that is associated with a deficiency and a certain diminution of existence, and whose separation from what is associated with it would eliminate its substance completely, the term for that species of perfection should not be applied [to the First]. Since this is the case, it is as inappropriate as applying terms that designate diminished existence [to the First].

[38] After the First Cause, there are the secondary causes and the Active Intellect. The secondary causes

are ranked in order of existence, besides which each of them not only has an existence through which it is a substance in itself but also an existence proper to it that is the very same existence from which it bestows the existence of another thing. They do not require anything else apart from themselves in order for something else to exist from them or to bestow the existence of something else from their existence, whereas all of them derive their existence from the First. Each one of them intellects the First and itself, since none of them is capable in itself of finding joy in itself by itself alone; instead, it finds joy in itself by intellecting the First while intellecting itself. The relation of the excellence of the First to the excellence of [a given secondary cause, *x*] is commensurate with the joy that *x* takes in intellecting the First in relation to the joy *x* takes in intellecting itself. Equally, the comparison of the pleasure it finds in itself by intellecting the First to the pleasure it finds in itself through intellecting itself is commensurate with the additional excellence of the First in relation to the excellence of itself. So too in the case of its delight through itself and its desire of itself where the object of love and the object of delight it has initially is what it intellects of the First and secondarily what it intellects of itself. The First, then, in relation to these is again the First Beloved and the First Desired.

[39] All of these [secondary causes] are divisible in a certain way. The perfection and deficiency in each of them, and [consequently] what each of them should be called, is easy following this model, when we apply that to what was said about the First. Each of these secondary causes has received from the outset the complete measure of the existence it has, and there is no remaining existence due it that might come to it in the future and toward which it would strive, besides what was provided it at the outset. Consequently, they have not been set in motion and do not strive toward anything whatsoever, but each one does bestow the existence of each heaven from its existence. So there follows from the first of them the existence of the first heaven all the way down to the last heaven containing the Moon. The substance of each heaven is composed of two things: of a subject and of a soul. Despite the fact that the soul that is in each of them is something existing in a subject, it is the parts of the soul that is an

actual intellect in that it intellects itself, intellects the other [secondary cause] from which it derives its existence, and intellects the First.

[40] 'The substances of the celestial bodies are divided, in as much as they are substances, into many things. They are in the first rank of the ranks of beings that are deficient, due to the fact that the thing<sup>3</sup> by virtue of which they are actually substances requires a certain subject. Thus they resemble the substances that are composed of matter and form. Moreover, they are insufficient in their substances for anything else to come about from them. The degree of their perfection and excellence certainly does not reach the point that any effect on another would issue from them unless something external to their substances and to the things that constitute their substances comes about for them. The thing external to what constitutes their substances [and] part of the existents is quantity or quality or other such categories. As a result of that each of these substances possesses determinate size, shape, other determinate qualities, and the rest of the categories that necessarily result from these. Each of them, however, possesses only the most excellent of these [categories]. Subsequent to that, they possess the place most excellent for them, since it follows necessarily that every body is delimited by a determinate place. These substances have also received already nearly all of their existence, with but a little of it remaining, since they are not such as to receive it entirely all at once from the outset; rather, there is always a little more for them in the future. Thus they strive to acquire it, and they acquire it only by eternal motion. Therefore, they are in motion eternally and without interruption. They are in motion toward and strive for the best of their existence. As regards what is most noble and what most approximates the most noble in terms of their existence, that is what they have received in full from the outset. The subject of each one cannot receive another form different from the one present in it from the very outset. Consequently, their substances have no contraries.

[41] 'The existents below the celestial bodies are at the lowest degree of deficiency in terms of existence,

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3. I.e., the soul.

because they did not receive fully at the outset all of what constitutes their substance. Instead, the substances that they received are merely in a state of remote potentiality, not actuality, since they received only their prime matter. Consequently, they forever move toward the form that will give them substance. Prime matter can potentially be all of the substances under heaven. In a certain respect, then, they are substances in potentiality that are always in motion toward becoming substance in actuality. Their posteriority and diminished existence is of such a degree that they are incapable of even undertaking on their own behalf any effort to acquire their self-perfection in the absence of an external mover. What sets them in motion from without is the celestial body and its parts and then the Active Intellect; for both of these together perfect the existence of things below the celestial body.

[42] 'The substance, nature, and activity of the celestial body is such that there immediately follows from it the existence of prime matter. It then gives prime matter whichever of the forms that is in its nature, possibility, and predisposition to receive. The Active Intellect is disposed in its nature and substance to examine everything that the celestial body prepares and gives, and whatever is receptive in one way to being freed and separated from matter, it frees from matter and privation, as a result of which [that thing] comes to be closest in rank to it. [This means] that the intelligibles that are potential become actual intelligibles, and, as a result of that, the intellect that was a potential intellect becomes an actual intellect. Humans alone can become like that, and this is the ultimate happiness, that is, the most excellent perfection that humans can reach. It is as a result of the agency of [the celestial body and the active intellect] that the existence of the things that came after<sup>4</sup> is rendered perfect, and their emergence into existence is made requisite by virtue of the ways through which they are brought into existence as well as by virtue of the ways through which they can have eternal existence.

[43] 'The celestial bodies are numerous. They move variously in circular fashion around the Earth.

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4. I.e., the existence of the human souls, which came after the existence of the celestial bodies and the Active Intellect.

All are connected to the power of the first heaven, which is one, and consequently they all move by virtue of the motion of the first heaven. They have other powers by virtue of which they are distinct from one another and because of which their motions differ. A necessary result of the power common to the whole celestial body is the existence of the prime matter common to everything below the heaven, and a necessary result of the things by virtue of which [the celestial bodies] are distinct from one another is the existence of many different forms in prime matter. As a consequence of their different positions in relation to one another and to the Earth, they are made to approach something sometimes and recede from it at others, to be in conjunction with one another sometimes and to be in opposition at others, to be visible sometimes and occluded at others, to happen to speed up sometimes and to slow down at others. These contrary features are not attributable to their substances but to their positions relative to one another, to the Earth, or to both.

[44] It is a necessary result of these contrary features that are a consequence of their relative positions, that contrary forms come to be in prime matter, and contrary accidents and alterations come to be in the bodies below the celestial body. This is the first cause for the contraries found in prime matter and in the bodies below the heaven. [This is so] because contrary things exist in matter either on account of contrary things or on account of one thing that has no contrary in its essence and substance. Matter can be in contrary states and relations, and while the celestial bodies are not themselves subject to contrariety in their substances, their relations to prime matter are contrary relations, since they are in contrary states relative to it. So it is through prime matter and the contrary forms necessarily existing that possibly existing things come together.

[45] Possibly existing things are the latterly existing things that are most deficient in terms of existence. They are a mix of existence and nonexistence because, between what cannot not exist and what cannot exist—which two are the absolute extremes—there is something for which the opposite of both holds true, that is, the thing that can exist and can not exist. This is what is a mix of existence and nonexistence, namely, the ex-

istent to which nonexistence is opposed but with which a certain privation is associated, privation being the nonexistence of what can exist.

[46] Now, since the “possibly existent” is one of the two modes of the existent, and “possible existence” is one of the two modes of existence, the First Cause, whose existence in Its substance bestows the existence not only of what cannot not exist but also of what can not exist, is such that there is no mode of existence but that It gives it. The nature of the possibly existent is such that it simply cannot have a single determinate existence; rather, it can exist as *F* and not, and it can exist as *x* and its opposite. Its actuality with respect to both of the opposing existences is one and the same, and its being *this* existent is no more likely than its being the opposite of *this* existent—“opposite” here is either a privation or a contrary or both of them together. Therefore, it necessarily follows that existents opposing one another can exist. This can happen in only three ways: either at two different times; or at one time from two different perspectives; or there are two things each one of which exists as an opposite of the other. A single thing can be two mutually opposing existents only in two ways: either at two different times, or from two different perspectives.

[47] It is only through contrary forms that there are mutually opposing existents. The occurrence of something as one of two contraries is its settled existence. What allows for the two contrary existences is matter. So it is through matter that the existence the thing will have is unsettled, whereas it is through form that its existence will be settled. [The thing], then, has two existences: a settled existence through one thing and an unsettled existence through another thing. Therefore, its existence by virtue of its matter is to be at one time *this* and at another time not-*this*, and its existence by virtue of its form is to be *this* only and not its opposite. It necessarily follows, then, that it is given two existences, one when considered with respect to *this* at one time, and one with respect to not-*this* at another.

[48] The “possible” can be viewed in two ways. One is what is possible to be *x* and to be not-*x*—this is matter. The other is what is possible to exist per se and to not exist—this is the composite of matter and form. The possibly existing things have the following orders. The lowest order comprises what has not had any settled

existence, not even through one of two contraries—this is prime matter. The second order comprises those things that have settled existence by virtue of contraries occurring in prime matter—these are the elements. When these come to have particular forms, they thereby acquire the possibility of being other equally contrary existences, in which case they become matters for additional forms, until, when they come to have those secondary forms also, they thereby come to have the possibility of being again still other contrary existences by virtue of still other contrary forms, in which case those also become matters for still other forms until, when they come to have those forms also, they thereby come to have the possibility of being again still other contrary existences, in which case they become matters for still other forms. It continues like this until it reaches forms by virtue of which the existents that are becoming settled *cannot* become matters for still other forms. The forms of those existents, then, are those of each form that preceded. These last existents are the most noble of the possibly existing things, while prime matter is the lowest of the possibly existing things.

[49] The existents falling between these two also have an order. Everything closer to prime matter is more debased and everything closer to the form of the forms is nobler. Prime matter exists to belong to something else, having absolutely no existence on its own. Consequently, when that for the sake of which it was brought into being does not exist, neither does it. For this reason, when one of these forms does not exist, it does not exist. Thus, it is impossible for prime matter to exist separate from a given form at any time at all. In the case of the existents whose form is the form of the forms, they exist always for the sake of themselves, and it is impossible that through their forms they would be brought into being for the sake of anything else—I mean so that something else could have substance through them and that they would be matters for something else.

[50] In the case of the intermediate existents, they are brought into being sometimes for their own sake and sometimes for the sake of something else. Next, each one of them has adaptive and reticent [qualities] through its matter, and adaptive and reticent [quali-

ties] through its form.<sup>5</sup> What it has by virtue of its matter is that it will become something else contrary to the existence that it has; what it has by virtue of its form is that it remain in the existence it has and not cease. When there are two contrary reticent [qualities], the state of equilibrium is that [the existent] receive each of its two measures in full, existing for a time as one particular thing, then being finished, and existing for a time as something contrary to the first existence, remaining that way for a time and then being finished, and existing as something else contrary to the former, and so on forever. Furthermore, the matter of each of these contrary existents is the matter of its opposite, so with each of them there is something that belongs to another and something that belongs to itself, since they share in common their primary matters. Thus, it is almost as though, from this perspective, each one has an adaptive [quality] each of which ought to go to one from the other. The state of equilibrium in that is clear: what each one has should belong to the other so that both receive their full measure.

[51] Now, since the possible existents are not sufficient in themselves to strive on their own behalf for their remaining existence—not only have they received just prime matter, but also once they come to be they are incapable of maintaining their existences for themselves and, moreover, when the fair measure of their existence is with their opposite they cannot on their own strive to claim their full worth—it necessarily follows that each has an external agent that sets it in motion and directs it toward what it is due and to what will maintain the existence it has. The primary agent

5. We speculate that *ḥaqq wa-istīāl* translates the Greek *euorizon kai dusorizon* (“easily determined and difficultly determined”) from Aristotle’s *Meteorology* (4.1, 378b24, and 4.3 and 4), whose context loosely follows the context that al-Fārābī presents in our text. In the *Meteorology* Aristotle distinguished between active powers, hot and cold, and passive powers, moist and dry. The active powers are associated with the form and the passive powers with the matter. He further divides these powers into powers that are determined easily—hot and moist—and powers that are determined with difficulty, which by implication (but left unstated by Aristotle) would be cold and dry.

that directs them toward their forms, and maintains it for them once they have it, is the celestial body and its parts. It does that in the following ways. One, it sets each one of them in motion, without intermediary or instrument, toward the form by virtue of which each exists. Two, it gives matter the potential whereby on its own it can undertake to move toward the form by virtue of which it exists. Three, it provides a certain thing with a potential whereby that thing can set something else in motion toward the form by virtue of which that other thing exists. Four, it gives a certain thing a potential whereby that thing can provide something else with a potential through which it sets in motion that other as a particular matter moving toward the form whose nature is to exist in the matter. In this, it will have set matter in motion by means of two things. Equally, it may set matter in motion through three things and more in this sequence.

[52] Likewise, it gives each possible existent the means to maintain its existence, either by providing, along with the form by virtue of which it exists, some other potential, or by putting the means for maintaining its existence in another body apart from it, in which case its existence is maintained by that other body that was made for this one. That other body is the servant of this one in maintaining its existence for it. The maintenance of its existence is either through one body serving it or through the help of numerous bodies disposed to facilitate the maintenance of its existence. In addition to that, many bodies have associated with them another potential through which they can make out of matter things similar to themselves by giving them forms similar to their own.

[53] Often the agent finds these matters to contain forms that are contrary to the forms toward which the agent is accustomed to set them in motion, in which case another potential is needed to eliminate those contrary forms. Also, since it is certainly not impossible for something else to act on it the way it acts on something else in order to try to eradicate it the way it eradicates something else, it follows that there is another potential in these [matters] to resist the contrary that seeks to destroy it. The thing by which it eliminates something else and detaches it from the form through which it exists may be a potential in itself con-

nected to the form through which it exists, but often that potential is in another body apart from it, in which case that potential is either an instrument or servant for it in extracting the matter disposed to it from the contraries of that body. An example of this is vipers, for this species is an instrument or servant of the elements in extracting from other animals the matters for the elements.<sup>6</sup> Likewise, the potential through which it produces out of matters something similar to itself in species may be connected to its form in one body, or it may be in another body apart from itself, like the sperm of the male animal, for it serves as its instrument. These potentials are also forms in the bodies to which these potentials belong, but there are things similar to these belonging to others—I mean that they are brought into being as instruments or servants for something else. When these instruments are connected to the forms in a single body, they are inseparable instruments, and when they are in other bodies they are separate instruments.

[54] Each of these existents has a reticent quality by virtue of its matter and a reticent quality by virtue of its form. The reticent quality that is through its matter is an existence contrary to the one it has. The reticent quality through its forms is the existence it has either on its own account, or on account of something else, or the reticent quality it has through its form is that it have something else—I mean to have something else brought into being for it—or that it have a type of unity that combines both, that is, that it be for its own sake for the sake of something else, in which case part of it will be for its own sake and part will be used for the sake of something else. That which is for the sake of something else by virtue of its form is either its matter, or an instrument or servant for it. That which has something else brought into being for it has it brought into being for it either as matter or an instrument or servant of it.

[55] The first thing to come into existence from the celestial bodies and the differences in their motions is the elements, then the minerals, then the plants, then the nonrational animals, and finally the rational ani-

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6. See par. 64 for further details.

mal, with the individuals of each species coming into being with modes of the powers too numerous to count. Now these powers that are put in each species are not sufficient in themselves to act and maintain the existence [of their species], unless the celestial bodies, again through the types of their motions, aid one another and prevent one another from acting in such an alternate and sequential fashion that when one aids another against its contrary for a time, it then prevents it at another time by aiding its contrary, for example, by a certain increase in heat or coldness or a decrease of one or the other in something that acts or is affected by heat or coldness, for they sometimes increase one and sometimes decrease it. As for the bodies below [the celestial bodies], due to the fact that they share in common prime matter and much of their proximate matters and because some have forms similar to some and contrary to others, some of them aid one another and hinder others, whether for the most part, or rarely, or equally, depending on the similarity or contrariety of their powers; for the contrary one hinders and the similar one aids, and these actions come together and combine in the possible existents, and from them diverse mixtures come to be.

[56] Once [the mixtures] combine, however, they move into a combination, a harmonious balance, and a just distribution through which each existent receives the fair measure of existence naturally allotted to it, commensurate with either its matter, or its form, or both. The measure commensurate with its form is either for the sake of itself, or something else, or both. With the rational animal, however, the measure it receives according to its form is not for the sake of any other species, neither as matter, nor as instrument, nor servant. [In general, however], each of the existents [below the celestial bodies receives a measure] by virtue of its form, either for the sake of something else only, or through a combination of existence for its own sake and existence for the sake of something else, although it would be just that it receive each of its two measures in full. All of these things occur either equally, or for the most part, or but rarely. Whatever is generated but rarely is a necessarily unavoidable feature of the nature of the possible existent and introduces nothing strange. In this manner and by this process, the possible existents are so equitably regu-

lated and ordered that each one receives the measure of existence commensurate with its reticent quality.

[57] The activities of the celestial bodies are sometimes contrary to the powers of acting and maintaining that the possible existents have received, in which case the possible existents are not affected by those actions. Equally, however, the celestial bodies may prevent one possible existent from acting on another, when one is weaker than the other. Thus, the possible existents that have such powers of action may not act, either because of their weakness, or because contrary actions prevent them, or because the power of their contraries is too great, or because their contraries are aided by something external to them but with similar forms, or because another contrary thing opposes the action of the agent from another direction. In the case of the celestial bodies, they sometimes do not have an effect on [the sublunar world], and no action of theirs that is directed at the subjects below them may result, but not on account of any feebleness in them, but rather because their subjects are prevented from receiving their actions, or because one of the possible existents acts as an agent to help and strengthen their subjects [against the action]; for the possible existents are able to produce actions both contrary or similar to the celestial beings—whether or not the celestial beings, after giving them those powers, aid or oppose them—as long as they received their powers at the outset and refrained from acting on others.

[58] These bodies that are possible existents by nature include the following categories: what exists for its own sake and is not employed in any other thing, not even for a given action to issue from it; what is prepared to produce a given action, either in itself or in something else; and what is prepared to receive the action of something else. The type that is brought into being for its own sake and for nothing else whatsoever may produce a particular action as a bestowal of its existence on something else. For all of these, once they exist in such a way that there can issue from them whatever can issue from them without anything of their own opposing it, that state of their being is their final perfection. (An example of this is the state of vision when it sees.) When they are in a certain state of existence such that nothing more can issue from them as a result of that state without their being moved to an existence

more perfect than what they have now, then that state is their first perfection. An example of this is the relation between the sleeping writer in terms of writing and his state when awake, or like the relation between his state with regard to writing when he is exhausted and resting and his state with regard to it when he is actually writing. Whenever something is at its final perfection and that thing is such that a given action can issue from it, its action is not delayed and comes out of it instantaneously. The action of something at its final perfection is delayed only by something apart from itself hindering it, like, for instance, sunlight being blocked from something hidden by a wall. Things that are separate from matter are in their substances at their final perfection from the very beginning and cannot be divided into two states, one in which it would be at its first perfection, the other in which it would be at its final perfection. Because they have neither contraries nor subjects, there is nothing to hinder them in any way. Therefore, their actions are not delayed.

[59] The celestial bodies are, in their substances, always in a state of final perfection. What first issues from them are their actual sizes, magnitudes, the configurations of their relative distances from one another, and everything else they possess that is not subject to change. What next issues from them are their motions, which come out of their final perfections and in which they have no contraries and no external opposites. Therefore, their motions are never interrupted, not even for an instant.

[60] The possibly existing bodies are sometimes in their first perfections and sometimes in their final perfections. Because there is a contrary to each one of them, their actions can be delayed for both of these reasons or for one; for the writer does not produce an action either because he is sleeping, or engaged in something else, or because the various elements involved in writing are not called to his attention at that time, or because everything involved is completely present but there is an external obstacle. The aim of the existence of all these is to be in their final perfections. The final perfection of anything that is in its first perfection by nature and not by force is obtained from [nature] only because there is either an unimpeded way to [the final perfection] or because there is something to aid it, for instance, the animal sleeps or rests

from action after being exhausted, whereby it recovers the power to act.

[61] Moreover, the deficiency of these [possibly existing bodies] is of such a degree that they are incapable of achieving their [final] perfections through their substances alone, without other [modes of existence] from the rest of the categories external to their substances, and that is by having size, shape, position, and the rest of the categories, such as being hard or soft, hot or cold, etc. Now, the individuals arrayed under many of these species subsist on the basis of similar parts, but their shapes are indeterminate, for example, the elements and the mineral bodies, whose shapes depend on the chance action of their efficient cause or on the shapes of things that contain them. Equally, the magnitudes of their sizes are indeterminate, though they do not have an infinite [variety of] sizes. Their parts are sometimes combined and sometimes separated; there are some that become continuous [bodies] when [their parts] are combined in one place, and others whose [parts] come into contact only and do not become continuous. The separation and combination [of their parts] does not occur in a set order but in a chance manner depending on the agent that combines and separates them. Consequently, the individuals under each of these species are distinct from one another not by necessity but rather by chance, because their perfections result regardless of whatever state these accidents in them happen to be. So these things [all] have equal possibility.

[62] In the case of plants and animals, however, the individuals under each species are distinct from one another by nature, and each is singular through an existence that does not belong to another. Thus, their individuals have number by nature. Each one of them is a composite of dissimilar parts of determinate number, and each part has determined size, shape, quality, position, and level. As we have stated, the genera of possibly existing things have different levels of existence, the lowest helping the highest in the possible existence of each one. The elements aid the others through all of their parts in three ways: as matter, and by being servants and instruments. The mineral bodies aid the remainder, but not in every one of their species nor through every manner of help; rather one species [aids] as matter, another species by being servant to it (for

example, mountains with respect to the generation of water's trickling down from springs), and another species by being instruments. The species of plants often aid animals in these three ways, and so too the non-rational animals aid the rational animal in these three ways; for some of them help as matter, some by being servants, and others by being instruments.

[63] With the rational animal, however, since there is no species of possible beings more noble than it, it provides none of the three types of help to anything nobler than it. [This is so] because, by virtue of reason<sup>7</sup> it does not serve as matter for anything whatsoever, whether above or below it, nor as instrument for anything other than it at all, nor by virtue of nature is it servant to anything else. As for whether it aids anything else in as much as it is rational, then it is by virtue of reason and volition, not by virtue of nature, that it aids other possible beings, and the individuals of its species aid one another (let us postpone talk of that now); for the actions of [the rational animal] might accidentally serve the purposes of many other natural things—namely, directing the flow of water, cultivating trees, planting seeds, breeding and herding animals—but it is not by virtue of nature that [any rational animal] serves a species other than its own, nor does it possess by nature anything through which another species may be served, nor are any of them by nature an instrument for another species. In the category of help from the noblest genera of possible things to the lowest, however, as we said, no rational animal serves or aids any lesser species, where that would be by virtue of its form. This is what should be understood when we talk about species helping other species.

[64] With the nonrational animal, in as much as it is an animal, it is not matter for anything lesser than it; for none of them, by virtue of its form, is matter for plants. It is not impossible, however, for it to help by being a servant or instrument. In fact, some animals are brought into being by nature to serve the elements by dissolving things distantly removed from them [in

composition] into [the elements]; for example, poisonous animals that by nature are enemies of other species of animal, like the viper that serves the elements through its poison by breaking down species of animals into [the elements]. A similar example is the poison in plants and, [in this case], they are poisons relatively, so that species aids two things. One should know that predatory animals are not like vipers, because the poison of vipers is not fit to be nutritious to other animals; on the contrary, [vipers] are hostile by nature to all species of animals in as much as they seek to destroy them. Predatory animals, on the other hand, instinctively kill not because of a natural enmity but because they seek nutrition. Vipers are not like that. [Finally], in the case of mineral bodies, in as much as they are such, they are not matter for the elements, but they do aid them by being their instrument, the way the mountain aids in the generation of water.

[65] [For the purposes of survival], the species of plants and animals include the following types. There are those species that cannot obtain what they need to survive unless they all come together as a group of individuals. There are other species in which each individual might achieve what is necessary for survival even if some individuals remain apart, but they will not collectively arrive at what is best for them unless they all come together as a group. In other species, every individual might achieve in full both what is necessary for survival as well as what is best, even if some individuals remain apart from the others, although if they do come together as a group, no individual prevents another from having what it has. In other species, if they come together as a group, they do hinder one another from obtaining either what is necessary to survival or what is best, and consequently in some species of animals the individuals always stay away from one another even for procreation (for instance, many species of sea animals). In other species, the individuals do not keep apart from one another except for procreation. Finally, with other species the individuals never keep apart in anything, like ants and bees and many others, like the birds that feed and fly together in flocks.

7. *Nuṭq* (literally, the power of speech).

# Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), 980–1037

Of the Aristotelians in the Islamic East Ibn Sīnā was easily the most important, and even in the Islamic West only Ibn Rushd was his equal. Physician, scientist, man of affairs, and philosopher, he formulated a distinctive kind of Aristotelianism which is characterized by a strong reliance on neoplatonic notions. A number of his most important doctrines have a naturalistic coloring, but at the same time a certain religious feeling—possibly even mystical inclination—is not lacking from his thought. Al-Ghazālī (see page 265) branded a number of his doctrines as incompatible with Islamic beliefs, while Ibn Rushd (see page 285) charged him with having surrendered to theological considerations on certain crucial philosophical points. The Islamic West came to prefer a more rigorous, less neoplatonic kind of Aristotelianism, but in the Islamic East Ibn Sīnā remained the favorite well into the seventeenth century. In the Christian world his teachings were well known. Etienne Gilson has argued that they provided the decisive philosophical influence during the first half of the thirteenth century and, according to the same scholar, they were blended with Augustinian notions to yield an “Avicennizing Augustinianism.” Albertus Magnus, Roger Bacon, Thomas Aquinas, and Duns Scotus were scholastics influenced by him in varying degrees. Jewish philosophers knew and used his teachings, but Maimonides considered them inferior to those of al-Fārābī, and in the post-Maimonidean period Ibn Rushd became, next to Maimonides, the decisive philosophical influence.

Ibn Sīnā wrote on all the branches of Aristotelian philosophy, but in a sense he was first and foremost a metaphysician. Describing his particular kind of metaphysics, Afman writes: “If it be said that the central el-

ement of Platonic metaphysics is the theory of Ideas, and that of the Aristotelian is the doctrine of potentiality and actuality, that of the Avicennian is the study of being as being.”<sup>1</sup> “Being,” according to Ibn Sīnā, is the first concept acquired by the mind and, though the world provides a clue to it, introspection is quite adequate for its discovery. The famous argument of the “flying man” is among those advanced for this view. Let us imagine, this argument proceeds, a grown man, created suddenly, possessing all his powers. Let us imagine further that his eyes are covered, that he is suspended in empty space, and that his limbs are separated so that they do not touch each other. A man of this description would have no sensory experience of the world, nor of his body and its parts, but he would know that he exists. It follows then, that, given a thinking mind, knowledge of “being” and (important for psychology) awareness of “self” are given concurrently with it. Ibn Sīnā’s “flying man” found an echo in Descartes’ statement “I think, therefore I am.”

The knowledge of “being” is immediate and no other notion is prior to it. Hence “being” is not a species which can be defined, nor is it a genus. Yet certain distinctions are given concomitant with it. One such is that between essence and existence. Examining the world, the mind discovers substances in which essence and existence are combined, but, at the same time, it can think essences without having the simultaneous judgment that these essences exist other than in it. In fact, the mind can think essences that do not now

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1. S. M. Afman, *Avicenna, His Life and Works* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1958), p. 108.

exist and even essences that can never exist. The question “what is it?” differs from “does it exist?” and it follows that essence and existence are ontologically distinct. Existence, according to Ibn Sīnā, is super-added to essence or, in alternative language, it is its accident. Whether Ibn Sīnā derived this and the following distinction from al-Fārābī or from an even earlier source, they became associated with his name.

Another distinction concurrent with “being” is that between necessary and possible existence. Something is said to be necessary if from the assumption of its nonexistence an impossibility will follow, while something is said to be possible if no impossibility will follow, whether it is assumed to exist or not to exist. Necessary being is subdivided into what is necessary through itself and what is necessary through another. Something possible requires a necessary cause for its existence and so does what is necessary through another. Only something necessary through itself exists without a cause. These metaphysical distinctions lead to Ibn Sīnā’s famous proof for the existence of God, according to which the possible beings in the world ultimately require, in order to exist, a being necessary through itself. Maimonides and Aquinas (see page 469) accepted this proof by Ibn Sīnā, while Ibn Rushd rejected it.

In his description of the attributes of God, Ibn Sīnā is generally considered the champion of negative attribution. But as H. A. Wolfson has shown, his position is more complex. Certain attributes, such as “substance” and “one,” are to be interpreted as negations; others, such as “first,” “powerful,” and “living” as relations in the sense of actions; and still others, such as “willing” and “generous” as both negations and relations. In His relation to the world God is its creator. Following al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā identifies creation with the neoplatonic notion of emanation. Possessed of fullness of being, God, thinking Himself, produces a first intelligence. Considered in itself, this intelligence is possible; considered in respect to God, it is necessary. In God, thinker, thinking, and thought are one, while in the first intelligence they are distinct. From the first intelligence there emanates a second intelligence together with the soul and body of the all-encompassing sphere which this intelligence controls. When the first intelligence thinks of God, its neces-

sary source, the second intelligence proceeds from it; when it thinks of itself as necessary through its cause, it produces the soul of the all-encompassing sphere; and when it thinks of itself as possible, it gives rise to the body of that sphere. In similar fashion there arise successively the intelligences, souls, and bodies of the remaining eight celestial spheres, the process coming to an end with the tenth intelligence, which governs the sublunar sphere. As Giver of Forms, this intelligence provides sublunar matter with its forms, while as Agent Intellect it produces knowledge in the human mind. Creation, then, is the bestowing of existence on a possible world by God, its necessary cause. God, according to Ibn Sīnā, is contemporaneous with the world, and He produces it out of the necessity of His own nature. There seems to be little doubt that Ibn Sīnā considered this doctrine a legitimate interpretation of the Qur’ānic notion of creation. However, al-Ghazālī rejected it as contrary to Qur’ānic teachings, while Ibn Rushd saw in it a concession to theological considerations. Ibn Sīnā’s account of creation as the bestowing of existence yields a distinction between two kinds of efficient causes. One of these is a metaphysical efficient cause which, synchronous with what it causes, bestows existence; the other is a physical efficient cause which, temporally prior to what it causes, produces change and motion.

Ibn Sīnā describes the world in Aristotelian terms, but at the same time he introduces modifications of his own. Among typical Avicennian doctrines are his definition of the “corporeal form” as a form having a predisposition for receiving the three dimensions and his contention that the celestial substances are composed of a soul inhering in the celestial body and an intelligence existing in separation from it. Both of these doctrines were criticized by Ibn Rushd (see page 285) later on. It also appears that Ibn Sīnā subscribed to the doctrine of the “multiplicity of forms” according to which lower forms remain in the presence of forms that are higher.

In his conception of the human soul Ibn Sīnā combined Aristotelian with Platonic notions. With the Aristotelians he held that the soul comes into being with its body and that, in respect to its operations, it is the body’s form; but with the Platonists he affirmed the substantiality of the individual soul. Immortality, for

him, consists of the continuous existence of the actualized human mind, and immortality is individual. He interprets the Qur'ānic notion of the resurrection of the body figuratively, considering it an accommodation to the understanding of the masses. His theory of knowledge is that of the Muslim Aristotelians, modified by a kind of doctrine of "illumination." Human knowledge begins with the perception of the senses, proceeds from there to the imagination, then to the faculty of estimation, and, through the causal action of the Agent Intellect, is acquired by the mind. Within the mind four stages of intellection or four kinds of mind may be discerned. As a faculty capable of receiving knowledge, the human mind is the "material" or "possible intellect"; as possessing knowledge which is not actually thought, it is the "habitual intellect"; as thinking in actuality, it is the "actual intellect"; and as receiving forms from the Agent Intellect, it is the "acquired intellect." Though, according to this scheme, knowledge has its origin in sense perception, all the stages of cognition prior to the "acquired intellect" are only preparatory, true knowledge consisting of the radiation of forms by the Agent Intellect into the human mind. Most men acquire knowledge in the manner described, but there are singular individuals who can gain the influence of the Agent Intellect intuitively without much preparation. This intuition becomes important for Ibn Sīnā's doctrine of prophetic inspiration. For though he agrees with other Muslim philosophers in considering the prophet as legislator and governor of men (see page 217), he emphasizes the importance of the knowledge gained by prophetic intuition. In some of his later works, Ibn Sīnā turns to a description of mystical teachings, analyzing the stages of the mystic's path and the journey of the soul toward God. It is clear that he is primarily interested in mystical speculation rather than in ascetic and devotional practices. However, interpreters disagree about the relation of these mystical doctrines to the remainder of his thought.

Abū 'Alī al-Ḥuṣayn ibn Sīnā was born in 980 in Afshana, in what is now part of Uzbekistan. His father was the governor of the district, but while Ibn Sīnā was still a child the family moved to Bukhāra. There he received his education and spent the first period of his life. His studies began with the Qur'ān and Arabic lit-

erature, continued with Islamic law, logic, and mathematics, and then turned to the natural sciences and metaphysics. Unusually gifted, Ibn Sīnā quickly surpassed his teachers and gained much of this knowledge on his own. Next he taught himself medicine, becoming an accomplished physician by the time he was sixteen. During the next eighteen months he reviewed and expanded his knowledge of philosophy, being so zealous in his studies that he did not get a full night's sleep during all this time. Though by now he was an accomplished philosopher, the content of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* still escaped him. He read the work forty times, but not until a bookseller provided him with a copy of al-Fārābī's *On the Objects of Metaphysics* did the content of the work become clear. When Ibn Sīnā's medical skills helped to cure Nūḥ ibn Maṣṣūr, the Sāmānid sultan of Bukhāra, that ruler enrolled him in his service and made available to him his rich library containing many works that Ibn Sīnā had never seen.

His patron died in 997 and with the end of the Sāmānid dynasty in 999 Ibn Sīnā's fortune began to change. For reasons possibly religious he was forced to leave Bukhāra, and he spent the remainder of his life at the courts of various provincial rulers in the eastern part of the Caliphate of Baghdad, becoming involved in their politics and their wars. After prolonged wanderings he settled at Raiy where he entered the service of the Buyid rulers al-Saiyida and her son Majd al-Dawlah. Becoming involved in the conflicts of the dynasty he shifted his allegiance to Shams al-Dawlah, Majd al-Dawlah's brother, and from about 1015 to 1022 he was at his court at Hamadhan. During this period Shams al-Dawlah twice appointed him as his vizier. When Shams al-Dawlah died during a military campaign, his son Tāj al-Mulk wanted to continue Ibn Sīnā in his office, but Ibn Sīnā declined, entering into secret negotiations with 'Alā al-Dawlah, the ruler of Isfahan. When Ibn Sīnā's plans became known, he was imprisoned, but he finally succeeded in fleeing to Isfahan. There he spent the remainder of his life, declining a political post that he was offered. He died in 1037.

Though busy with professional duties, Ibn Sīnā was an extremely productive author. Over two hundred works have been attributed to him, and of these

probably about one hundred are his. His most important medical work was the *Canon (al-Qanūn)*, which in its Latin translation became the standard medical work in Europe until the seventeenth century. In philosophy, his major work was *The Cure (al-Shifāʾ)*, a magisterial summa of logic, physics, mathematics, and metaphysics. In this work Ibn Sīnā set down the parts of those sciences that he believed to be sound, without disputing with opponents. Through Latin translations of portions of his work Ibn Sīnā's views became known to the Christian world. Christian philosophers also knew his teachings through al-Ghazālī's summary in his *The Opinions of the Philosophers* (see page 265). An abbreviated version of *The Cure* is contained in his *Salvation (al-Najāt)*. Among his other works are *On Definitions (Fī al-Ḥudūd)*, *Instructions and Remarks (al-Ishārāt wa-al-Tanbīhāt)*, *On Love (Fī al-'Ishq)*, *On Prayer (Fī al-Ṣalāt)*, *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān*, and *Logic of the Orientals (Mantiq al-Mashriqīyīn)*. We have a biography, part of which Ibn Sīnā dictated to his disciple al-Jūzjānī and which the disciple completed on his own. Though most of Ibn Sīnā's works were written in Arabic, he is also the author of works in Persian.

In reading the following selections it should be kept in mind that Ibn Sīnā is a skillful dialectician who with great subtlety investigates the implications of certain fundamental notions and who at the same time probes their relation to related notions. In the metaphysical selections his arguments sound rather verbal at times and he appears to be primarily interested in logical distinctions, but these distinctions, it must be recalled, are for him metaphysical. Characteristic of his method is the use of hypothetical, disjunctive arguments.

The first selections, from *The Salvation*, "Metaphysics," Book 2, explore the metaphysics of possibility and necessity and then turn to a proof that the existence of possible beings requires the existence of a necessary being. The Necessary Existent must be simple, a requirement that poses difficulties for understanding the Necessary Existent's knowledge of beings that are subject to change; Ibn Sīnā explores these difficulties with considerable subtlety. There follows a selection from *The Cure*, "Metaphysics," Book 6, devoted to a discussion of causality. Enumerating the four Aristotelian causes—form, matter, agent, and

purpose—Ibn Sīnā distinguishes carefully between a metaphysical agent cause that bestows existence and a natural agent cause that produces motion. Two of the causes, the form and the matter, enter the subsistence of that of which they are causes, while two others, the purpose and the agent, do not. In addition, matter, considered as substratum, does not enter the subsistence of that of which it is a cause. If matter is distinguished from the substratum, the causes are five; if the two are considered as one, the causes are four. Strictly speaking, matter is the principle of that which is composed of matter and form, and so is form. The form is the formal cause of the composite, not of matter.

The metaphysical agent is ontologically distinct from that which it causes, and even if the two happen to exist in the same substratum, such as the nature of wood in wood, the distinction is maintained. An agent can be such that it bestows existence only at some time, and in that case the agent requires some other cause that makes it to be an agent. Now, when an agent produces something, three aspects of this process can be distinguished. There is the "existence" that comes to be, there is the "non-existence" that preceded, and there is the attribute of "existence after non-existence." Of these three properties only "existence" comes from a cause. "Non-existence" is the result of the absence of a cause, while "existence after non-existence" cannot come from a cause at all. Developing his notion of causality further, Ibn Sīnā shows next that something not only requires a cause in order to receive existence, but also in order to continue in existence. For if it would not require a cause for the continuation of its existence, then the existence which it receives must be either necessary existence or possible existence. In the latter case, the necessity of its continued existence belongs to it either through a condition which is its coming into being, or an attribute of the quiddity which comes into being, or some attribute separate from it. Each one of these alternatives is shown to be false, and hence continuation of existence requires a cause. Next Ibn Sīnā shows once again that only the existence of something has a cause, not the fact that it "exists after it did not exist." Hence the bestowing of existence does not necessarily take place in time. Since ordinary people are unaware of the distinction between a metaphysical and a physical

acting cause, they believe that the action of every agent must take place in time. But acting in time is only accidental to an agent.

Ibn Sīnā now turns to a difficulty occasioned by the observation that something produced by an agent continues to exist after the agent has ceased to act. From this observation it again seems to follow that something caused does not require an agent for the continuation of its existence. However, a careful analysis shows that the agent that ceases to act is not the real agent, but there exists an agent that continues to act even after the apparent agent ceases. For example, the builder is not the real cause for the production of the building; the real cause is the nature of the building materials, which makes them stay together. This nature is produced by the Giver of Forms. Now causes are divisible into supporting and preparatory causes, which are accidental, and causes that are essential. The series of accidental causes must be infinite, the series of essential causes finite. An infinite series of accidental causes is possible because of motion. Of

the essential causes, that which exists eternally and bestows existence eternally, thereby preventing non-existence, is the best. This cause is God, and His eternally bestowing existence is creation. If the term “coming into being” is applied in the sense that the cause is simultaneous with that which it causes, then everything other than God comes into being. However, if the term is limited to temporal coming into being, then coming into being must be distinguished from being caused. Ibn Sīnā concludes by affirming that an agent that acts only accidentally requires a matter in which it acts and that an agent acts at times through itself, at times through a power.

The third selection, taken from *The Salvation*, “Psychology,” 6 deals with aspects of the Avicennian doctrine of the soul. Ibn Sīnā first shows that the soul which is the substratum for the intelligibles is not corporeal, then that it comes into being with the body, and, finally, that it is immortal. In the final selection, taken from *The Cure*, “The Soul,” 5, Ibn Sīnā presents a version of his celebrated “flying man” argument.

## 19. *The Salvation, “Metaphysics”*

### Second Treatise

#### 1. Explaining the Senses of Necessary and Possible

[1] The necessarily existent is the existent, which when posited as not existing, an absurdity results. The possibly existent is the one that, when posited as either existing or not existing, no absurdity results. The necessarily existent is the existence that *must be*, whereas the possibly existent is the one that has no “must” about it in any way, whether in terms of its existence or nonexistence. (This is what we mean by “possibly existent” in this context, although “possibly existent” sometimes means “in potency,” and “possible” is sometimes said of anything that in fact exists, as has been detailed in logic.)

[2] Next, the necessarily existent may exist through itself or not through itself. What is necessarily existent through itself is that which is owing to itself, not to any other thing, that is, [not to another] thing that, positing its nonexistence, results in an absurdity. The necessarily existent not through itself is that which becomes necessarily existent if something other than it is set down. For example, four exists necessarily not through itself but only when positing two plus two; and burning exists necessarily not through itself but only when positing contact between the natural active power and the natural passive power; I mean, what causes burning and what is burned.

#### 2. The Necessary through Itself Cannot Be Necessary through Another, and the Necessary through Another Is What Is Possible

[1] One thing cannot exist simultaneously as necessary through itself and necessary through another. For if the other is removed or its existence not considered,

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it must be the case that either the necessity of its existence remains unchanged, and so the necessity of its existence is not through another, or the necessity of its existence does not remain, and so the necessity of its existence is not through itself.

[2] Whatever exists necessarily through another exists possibly in itself. [This is] because the necessity of the existence of whatever exists necessarily through another is a consequence of a given association and relation, but consideration of the association and relation is different from consideration of the thing itself that has an association and relation. Thus, it is only by considering this association that the necessity of the existence can be determined.

[3] In terms of the thing itself on its own, it is something that must exist necessarily, possibly or impossible. Now it cannot be something that must exist impossible, because anything whose existence is impossible through itself is neither through itself nor through another. Nor is it something that must exist necessarily, for we have already said that whatever exists necessarily through itself simply cannot have the necessity of its existence through another. So it remains that with respect to the thing itself, it exists possibly; with respect to introducing the association with that other, it exists necessarily; and with respect to disrupting the association with that other, it exists impossible. It itself, however—in itself without condition—exists possibly.

#### 3. Whatever Is Not Necessary Does Not Exist

[1] It is now clear that what exists necessarily through another exists possibly through itself. This is convertible. Thus, everything existing possibly in itself—if indeed its existence has occurred—exists necessarily through another. [This follows] because either it in fact has actual existence or it does not. It is absurd, however, that it not in fact have actual existence [when it indeed exists], otherwise its existence would be impossible. So it remains that it in fact has actual existence. In that case, its existence is either necessary

or not necessary. If its existence is not necessary, and so it is still possible existence, then its existence is not distinguished from its nonexistence and there is no difference between this state in it and the first state. [This follows] because before existing it was possible existence, and its present state is the same as it was. If one posits that a new state comes to be, then concerning that state the question stands, namely, does it exist possibly or necessarily?

[2] If it is possible, and that state before was itself also possible, then nothing new came to be, whereas if the existence [of the new state] is necessary and it is made necessary for the first [possible existent], then the existence of a state has been made necessary for this first. But that [new] state is nothing other than the emergence [of the thing] into existence, so [it is] its emergence into existence that is necessary.

[3] Finally, the existence of whatever exists possibly is either through itself or through some given cause. If it is through itself, then it itself exists necessarily not possibly. If it is through a cause, then either its existence is necessary together with the existence of the cause, or it would stay the way it was before the existence of the cause, which is absurd. It must be the case, then, that its existence is together with the existence of the cause. So, whatever exists possibly through itself exists necessarily through another.

#### 4. The Necessary Existent's Perfection and Unity and That Two Things Inseparable with Respect to Existence Are Equivalent with Respect to It and So Both Have an External Cause

[1] A single necessary existent can neither come to be from two, nor is there multiplicity in the necessary existent in any way. There cannot be two things, where this one is not that one, and that one is not this one, and each one is necessary through itself and through the other. [This is so since] (1) it has already been made clear that the necessary existent through itself is not through another. [This also follows since] (2) neither one of them can exist necessarily through the other, such that *x* exists necessarily through *y* and not through itself, and *y* exists necessarily through *x* and not through itself, and yet their totality is a single necessary existent. [That is so] because considering them

as two entities is different from considering them as two *relata*. [In the latter case] each one of them has a necessary existence that is not through itself, and so each one of them exists possibly in itself. Now everything that exists possibly in itself has a cause for its existence that is prior to it, because every cause is prior to the effect with respect to its own existence, even if it is not [prior] with respect to time. Thus, in itself, each one of [the *relata*] has another thing by means of which it subsists, which is prior to it itself; however, according to what we described, neither of them itself is prior to the other. So, then, both have causes external to them and prior to them. Therefore, each one's necessary existence is not derived from the other, but rather from the external cause that occasions the attachment between them.

[2] Again, in the case of anything that is necessary through another, its very existence is posterior to the existence of that other and is dependent upon it. It is, then, impossible for one entity *x*, to depend for its existence upon another entity *y*, where *y* exists through *x*. It would be as though it depends for its existence on its very own existence! In summary form, when *y* is necessary through *x*, *x* is prior to [*y*, which is] prior to [*x*], and [*x*] dependent upon [*y*, which is] dependent upon [*x*]. So the existence of both is absurd.

[3] <So, on the one hand, if *x* has its own existence through itself, then it has no need for the other, *y*. On the other hand, if *x* does not exist until *y* exists, and *y* exists only after *x* exists, then the existence of *x* is dependent upon something that exists after its very own existence, and so its existence is absurd.>

#### 5. On the Simplicity of the Necessary

[1] We also say it cannot be the case that the necessary existent has principles that are gathered together and the necessary existent is constituted of them. [In other words], it has neither quantitative parts nor the parts of a definition and account, whether they are like the matter and form, or in any other way as the parts of the account explaining the sense of its name, where each one of them would indicate something that is different essentially from the other with respect to the existence. That is because with anything described thus, each of its parts is neither the same as any other part

nor the same as the composite. So either each of its two parts, for instance, can exist independently, but the composite cannot exist apart from them, and so the composite would not exist necessarily. Or one of them can [exist necessarily], but the composite cannot exist apart from it, and then neither the composite nor the other parts can exist independently, and so again [the necessary existent] would not exist necessarily. But it is precisely the necessary existent that can exist necessarily! If those parts cannot exist separately from the whole, and the whole cannot exist separately from the parts, but the existence of each one is attached to another and neither is essentially prior, then none of it exists necessarily. I have already explained this, that is, the parts are essentially prior to the whole, and so the cause necessitating existence would first necessitate the parts and then the whole, and none of them would exist necessarily. We cannot say that the whole is essentially prior to the parts, and so it is either later or simultaneous—how could it be?!—since then it would not exist necessarily.

[2] From this it has become clear that what exists necessarily is not a body, nor any matter of a body, nor a form of a body, nor an intelligible matter of an intelligible form, nor an intelligible form in an intelligible matter, nor divisible—whether in quantity, principles, or account—and so it is one from these three perspectives.

## 12. The Proof of the Necessarily Existent

[1] Undoubtedly there is existence, and all existence is either necessary or possible. If it is necessary, then in fact there is a necessarily existent being, which is what is sought. If it is possible, then we will show that the existence of the possible terminates in a necessarily existent being. Before that, however, we will advance some premises.<sup>1</sup>

[2] These include that at any one and the same time there cannot be for anything that is possible [in] itself a cause that is itself possible *ad infinitum*. This is because all of them exist either all together or they do not.

1. Only one is advanced here, but additional ones are advanced in the next chapter.

If they do not exist all together but rather one after another, there is no infinite at one and the same time—but let us defer discussion of this for now. As for their existing all together, and none is a necessarily existing being, then either the totality, insofar as it is that totality, whether finite or infinite, exists necessarily through itself or possibly in itself. If, on the one hand, the totality exists necessarily through itself, but each one of its members is something possible, then what exists necessarily subsists by means of things that exist possibly, which is absurd. On the other hand, if the totality is something existing possibly in itself, then the totality needs for existence something that provides existence, which will be either external or internal to the totality.

[3] If it is something internal to it, then one of its members is something existing necessarily, but each one of them exists possibly—so this is a contradiction. Or it is something existing possibly and so is a cause of the totality's existence, but a cause of the totality is primarily a cause of the existence of its members, of which it is one. Thus, it would be a cause of its own existence, which is impossible. Despite this impossibility, if it is correct, it is in a certain way the very thing that is sought; for anything that is sufficient to necessitate itself is something existing necessarily, but it was [assumed] not to exist necessarily, so this is a contradiction.

[4] The remaining option is that [what gives existence to the totality] is external to it, but it cannot be a possible cause, since we included every cause existing possibly in this totality. So since [the cause] is external to it, it also is something existing necessarily in itself. Thus, things existing possibly terminate in a cause existing necessarily, in which case not every [effect] that exists as something possible will have simultaneously with it a cause that exists as something possible, and so an infinite number of causes existing at a single time is impossible.

## 13. That Possibly Existents Cannot Be Causes of One Another in a Circular Fashion at One and the Same Time If They Are Finite

[1] Furthermore, the causes cannot be finite in number when each of them exists possibly in itself but is necessary through another to the point that one reaches the other circularly.

[2] So let us advance another premise. To set down a finite number of possible existents, each one of which is a cause of the others in a circle, is as absurd and obvious as the first problem. Particular to it, however, is that each one of them would be a cause and an effect of its own existence, where *x* comes into existence from *y* only after *y* itself comes into existence, but anything whose existence depends on the existence of what exists only after its own later existence cannot exist.

[3] Any case of two *relata*, however, is not like this. For the two exist simultaneously, and the existence of one of them is not dependent such that it must be after the existence of the other. Rather, the cause productive of them and necessitating them produces them both simultaneously. If one of them has a priority and the other a posteriority, like father and son, and if its priority is not with respect to the relation, then its priority is with respect to existence itself. However, the two are simultaneous with respect to the relation that is present after the occurrence of the thing. If the father's existence were to depend on the son's existence and the son's existence were to depend on the father's existence, and moreover the two were not simultaneous but one of them is essentially after, then neither one of them would exist. The absurdity is not that the existence of what is simultaneous with a thing is a condition for the thing's existence; rather, the absurdity is that it is an existence from and after that thing.

#### 18. How the Necessary Existent through Itself Intellects Itself and Things

[1] It is absolutely inconceivable that the Necessary Existent would intellect things by way of things. Otherwise, (1) It would subsist inasmuch as it intellects—and so It would subsist by means of the things; or (2) Its intellecting would be accidental to It—and so It would not exist necessarily in every way. This is absurd, since if there were no external things, [the Necessary Existent] would not exist unless It had a state resulting not from Itself but from another, in which case the other would have an effect on It. The axioms set down earlier invalidate this and anything like it.

[2] Now, because [the Necessary Existent] is a principle of all existence (as we will explain), It intellects

by way of Itself anything of which it is a principle, and It is a principle of both existents that are complete in themselves, as well as those things that are subject to generation and corruption, as species first, and, by way of that, as individuals.

[3] In another way, however, It cannot be something intellecting, at a given time and at the level of the individual, these things that change, as they are changing, inasmuch as they are things changing; instead, It intellects them in another manner that we will explain. For It could not be the case that at one time It intellects one of them as an existing, not a non-existent thing, and at another time intellects it as a non-existent thing, where each of these is a unique form for the intellect and neither form remains with the other, [since] then the Necessary Existent would Itself be subject to change.

[4] Moreover, if the things subject to corruption can be intellected as abstracted essence and as an unindividuated thing following from that, then they cannot be intellected as corruptible. If they can be perceived as something joined to matter and material accidents, and a given moment, and individuated, then they are not objects of the intellect but rather of the senses and the imaginative faculty. We have already explained in other books that we perceive any form derived from the senses as an object of the senses, and we imagine any form derived from the imagery only through a particular organ.

[5] The assertion that the Necessary Existent has multiple acts of intellecting is just as faulty as the assertion that It has multiple acts. In point of fact, the Necessary Existent intellects everything only universally, but nevertheless no individual thing escapes Its notice: "not even the weight of a dust speck, whether in the heavens or on Earth, escapes His notice."<sup>2</sup> This is one of those wonders that require a subtle genius to understand.

#### 19. How the Necessary Existent Intellects Things

[1] In answer to how this is possible, it is because when [the Necessary Existent] intellects Itself, and It

2. A quotation from the Qur'ān, 10:61 and 37:11.

intellects that It is the principle of everything that exists, It intellects the first principles of existent things as well as whatever is engendered out of them. Now nothing comes to exist unless it has already become in one respect necessary by reason of some cause—we have already explained this<sup>3</sup>—and then these causes interact with one another until particular things come to exist as a result.

[2] The First [i.e., the Necessary Existent] knows the causes and the things coinciding with them and so necessarily knows what they result in, the times between them, and their recurrences. Since It cannot know *this* or *that*,<sup>4</sup> It is aware of particular things insofar as they are universal—I mean inasmuch as they have attributes. If [those attributes] are unique to [one particular thing] as an individual, and so bear relation to an individual time or an individual state, then, if that state were to be understood as those attributes, it would be on par with [those attributes];<sup>5</sup> however, since [the state] is attributable to principles, the species of each one of which is confined to its one individual, the [species] would be attributable to an individual thing.

[3] Now we have already said that as a result of such attribution, we can provide the individuals with a description and a characterization limited to them. So if that individual is one of those things that, in the intellect, is also individual, then the intellect has a way of arriving at that described thing, that is, the individual alone in its species, unique of its kind, like the sphere of the Sun, for example, or Jupiter. When its [species] is distributed among individuals, however, the intellect has no way to describe that thing until it has been pointed out.

[4] To begin with what you have learned, which we will reiterate, we say this is similar to the fact that, since you know all the heavenly motions, you know each eclipse and each particular conjunction and opposition, but in a universal way. [That follows] because you say about a given eclipse that there will be

an eclipse after the time of such and such a planet's northerly motion from such and such a place by such and such a degree, when part of the Moon comes to be in opposition to such and such a planet, when such and such a period of time elapses between [this eclipse] and a similar eclipse previous or later to it, and that account is so similar for those two other eclipses<sup>6</sup> that not a single accidental aspect of those eclipses remains unknown to you. However, you know it as a universal due to the fact that this account can apply to many eclipses, each one of which is the same as that one, but arguably it is only that single eclipse itself that you know. This does not dispel the universality, however, if you recall what we said before.

[5] Despite all of this, however, you may not be able to judge that this eclipse exists or does not exist *at this instant*, unless you recognize the particulars of the motions by sensory observation and you know the period of time between this observed eclipse and that eclipse. This is not the same as your recognizing that among motions there is one particular motion matching the description of what you observed, and that there is such and such a difference between it and the other eclipse. You may be able to know that according to this kind of knowledge [i.e., universally], but not know it in relation to a given moment, and so you ask whether it exists [at that given moment]. Instead, you have to have obtained by sensory observation something physically identifiable [in space and time] in order for you to know the present occurrence of that eclipse.

[6] If there is something that prevents calling this a recognition of the particular from its universal, [we] will not fight it, since our present aim concerns something else, namely, indicating how you know and perceive particular things in a way that changes the knower, and how you know and perceive in a way that does not change the knower. For when (1) you know eclipses as something understood as a universal, or as existing always, or (2) your knowledge is not of eclipses taken absolutely but of every eclipse that comes to be and then whether that eclipse exists or not, neither in-

3. *The Salvation*, "Metaphysics," 2.3.

4. That is, the things to which one can physically point.

5. That is, it would be an individual state, or a state belonging to an individual.

6. That is, the one before and the one after it.

roduces any change in you. For in the two states<sup>7</sup> your knowledge is the same, namely, that there is an eclipse with certain characteristics after such and such an eclipse or after the Sun is in such and such a house of the zodiac and at such and such an alignment, where such and such is after it, and after it is such and such. This act of intellecting on your part is consistent, before that eclipse, while it is occurring, and afterwards. If you introduce time into that, however, then at one given moment you know that this eclipse does not exist, and then at another given moment you know that it does exist, in which case your knowledge of the former [state, i.e., the eclipse's nonexistence] does not remain when the eclipse exists; rather, a different knowledge comes about after the change we just indicated. At the moment the [eclipse] passes, you cannot be what you were before the passing. This is because you are temporal and exist at a present moment.

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7. Not the two states of existing or not existing, but of knowing eclipses absolutely or in terms of *every* eclipse (with the additional conditions listed).

[7] As for the First [i.e., the Necessary Existent], Who does not enter into any time and its status, it is completely inconceivable to apply to Him any status concerning this time or that time, as being in it or as a new temporal status or temporal knowledge being applied to it. Know that you came to perceive particular eclipses only because you fully comprehended its causes and everything concerning the heavens. When full comprehension takes place about all of the causes in things and their existence, there is a transference [of that full comprehension] from those to all of the effects.

[8] We will explain this further through an investigation added to our earlier explanation, so that you will know how we know what is unseen. From these two explanations, you will know how the First knows everything from Itself on account of the fact that It is a principle of a thing that in turn is a principle of one or more things that have a state and motion that are such and such, and that what results from them is such, down to the very last difference after which one cannot differentiate further, and then according to the combination that follows that differentiation with the inevitability of corruption following generation. These things are the keys to what is unseen.

## 20. The Cure, "Metaphysics"

### Sixth Treatise

#### Chapter I. The Division of Causes and Their Dispositions

We have spoken about the nature of substances and accidents, and about the relation of priority and pos-

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Translated for this volume by Arthur Hyman from *Ibn Sīnā, Al-Shifā, al-Ilāhiyyāt*, ed. G. C. Anawati and Sa'īd Zayid (Cairo: Organisation Générale des Imprimeries Gouvernementales, 1960).

teriority in them, and about the knowledge of the agreement between definitions and the things defined, universal as well as particular. It is fitting that we speak now about cause and that which is caused, since they are also among the consequences which belong to that which exists insofar as it exists.

The causes, as you have heard, are: form, element [matter], agent, and purpose. We say: By the formal cause we have in mind the cause which is part of the subsistence of something, through which the thing is what it is in actuality. By the elemental [cause we have in mind] the cause which is part of the subsistence of

something, through which the thing is what it is in potentiality and in which there rests the potentiality of its existence. By the agent [we have in mind] the cause which bestows existence separate from itself, that is, its essence is not, according to the first intention, an underlying subject for that which receives from it the existence of something which is formed by it, so that it is in itself the potentiality of its existence [that is, the existence which it bestows] only accidentally. And with that it is necessary that that existence is not from its [that is, the cause's] disposition insofar as it is an agent [in the sense of a principle of motion], but if [existence] is [from it], it must be according to some other relation. The reason is that the metaphysicians do not intend by the agent the principle of movement only, as do the natural philosophers, but also the principle of existence and that which bestows [existence], such as the creator of the world. But the natural acting cause does not bestow existence as distinguished from movement according to one of the kinds of motion, but that which bestows existence in the case of natural things is the principle of motion. By the final [cause] we intend the cause because of which the existence of something separate from it comes to be.

It is clear that there is no cause besides these. We say: The cause of something must either enter its subsistence and be part of its existence, or it must not. Now if it enters its subsistence and is part of its existence, then it is either that part from whose existence alone it would not follow for this thing that it exists in actuality, but only that it exists in potentiality, and this is called *hyle* [that is, matter]. Or it is the part whose existence makes it exist in actuality, and this is the form. However, if [the cause] is not part of its existence, then it is either that for the sake of which [it exists], or it is not. Now if it is that for the sake of which [the thing exists], then it is the purpose; and if it is not that for the sake of which [the thing exists], then the existence [of the thing] must proceed from it in such a way that it [the cause] exists in it only accidentally, and this is the agent; or its existence must come from it in such a way that it exists in it, and this is also its element or its substratum.

Hence the principles in their totality are in one respect five, and in another respect four. For if you con-

sider the element which is a recipient and which is not part of the thing as different from the element which is a part, then there are five. But if you consider both of them [the substratum and matter] as one thing, inasmuch as they agree in the notion of potentiality and predisposition, then there are four. Now, you must not consider the element in the sense of the recipient which is a part [that is, matter] as a principle for the form, but [as a principle] for the composite. The recipient is a principle only accidentally, since it is first constituted in actuality by the form; however, its essence considered in respect to itself alone, exists in potentiality. And something which exists in potentiality, insofar as it exists in potentiality, can by no means be a principle. But it is only a principle by accident. Now an accident requires that there exists something in actuality which is a subject for it [and] then it becomes the cause for its subsistence, whether the accident is inseparable (and in that case [the subject] is prior according to essence), or whether it is separable (and in that case it is prior according to essence and according to time). These are the kinds of causes. If the substratum is the cause for an accident which it establishes, then it is not a cause in the same manner in which the substratum is a cause for the composite, but in some other manner.

Now if the form is the cause for the matter which it establishes, then it is not [a cause] in the same manner in which the form is a cause for the composite, even though both agree in that each one of them is the cause for something whose essence is not separate from it. For even if they agree in that, still in one of the two cases the cause [the form] does not bestow upon the other its existence, but something else bestows existence, but it exists in it. However, in the second case, the cause existing in it is the proximate principle for bestowing upon that which is caused its existence in actuality, yet not by itself alone, but only with a partner and a cause which makes this cause, I have in mind, the form, to exist and it causes the other to exist through it. And [the form] together with its partner is an intermediate [cause] for bestowing upon that its existence in actuality. Thus the form is for matter as an acting principle [such that] if it exists in actuality, it would come from it alone. And it appears that the

form is part of the acting cause, such as one of the two movers of a ship, as will be explained later. As for the form, it is a formal cause for that which is composed of it and of matter, and the form is the form of matter, but it is not the formal cause of matter.

The agent bestows upon some other thing an existence which does not belong to the other through itself. And that existence proceeds from that which is the agent insofar as the essence of this agent is not the recipient for the form of that existence and [insofar] as it is not united with it as something united which enters into it. But each one of these two essences [the cause and that which is caused] exists apart from the other and there does not exist in one of them a potentiality for receiving the other. Yet it is not farfetched that the agent brings into existence that which is caused [in the place] where it [the agent] is and insofar as it is joined to its essence. Thus the nature which is in the wood is a principle which is an agent for motion, for the motion comes to be in the matter in which the nature exists and where its essence is. However, the two are not combined in such a way that one of them is part of the existence of the other or that it is matter for it, but the two essences are distinguished according to their true natures, even though they have a common subject. And it happens to an agent that it is not an agent at some time and that that which it causes is not caused, but that that which is caused by it does not exist. Hence there occur to the agent causes through which it becomes an agent in actuality. (We have spoken of this in what preceded.) Thus it becomes an agent and there comes to be from it the existence of the thing after it did not exist. Now "existence" belongs to that thing and "that it did not exist" belongs to that thing. However, "that it did not exist" does not belong to it from an agent, nor "that it exists after it did not exist"; only its existence belongs to it from an agent. Hence if non-existence would belong to the thing through its essence, it would follow that its existence would come to be "after it did not exist" and it would become "existing after it did not exist."

Now existence is that which comes to the thing itself through the agent. But the existence which belongs to the thing belongs to it only because some other thing exists in its plenitude, from which [plenitude] it

follows necessarily that the other has existence from the existence which it [the cause] has essentially. However, "that it did not exist" does not come from a cause which produces it. For its being non-existent goes back to some cause which is the non-existence of its cause. Further, its "coming into existence after non-existence" is something which does not come from a cause, since it is absolutely impossible that its existence comes to be except after non-existence. But that which is impossible does not have a cause. Thus it is possible that its existence occurs or that it does not occur, and hence its existence has a cause. And it is possible that its non-existence occurs or does not occur, and hence its non-existence can have a cause. However, its "coming into existence after it did not exist" does not have a cause.

Someone may object: It is likewise possible that its "existence after its non-existence" can occur or can not occur [and hence this can also have a cause]. We answer: If you have in mind its existence insofar as it is its existence, then non-existence does not enter it, for its very existence is not necessary, that is, it is possible, and hence it is not not-necessary insofar as "it is after non-existence." But as for the not-necessary, its existence is that which happens now and which [previously] did not exist. However, if you have in mind its existence insofar as it is considered as "existing after it did not exist," then its existence is considered "after it did not exist." In that case its existence is considered "after non-existence" and its existence is considered not as existing simply, even though it exists after it did not exist and came to be after it did not exist. Existence in this sense does not have a cause, nor is there a cause for its "coming into existence after it did not exist," even if there exists a cause for the existence which it has after non-existence, insofar as it is its existence. And it is true that its existence can occur or not occur after actual non-existence. But it is not true that its "existence after non-existence" insofar as it is "existence after non-existence" can be "existence after non-existence" or can not be "existence after non-existence." Indeed, unless it does not exist at all, it exists in relation to existence.

Perhaps someone is of the opinion that the agent and the cause are only required in order that some-

thing has existence after it did not exist and that, once the thing exists and the cause is missing, the thing exists as self-sufficient. And he who is of this opinion thinks that something only needs a cause for its coming into being and that, once it has come into being and exists, it can do without the cause. According to this opinion, causes are causes for coming into being only, and they exist prior to the thing, not simultaneously with it. But he who holds this opinion thinks something absurd. For the existence after coming into being must be either [I] necessary existence or [II] not necessary existence. Now if it is [I] necessary existence, then [Ia] its necessity belongs to that quiddity (to the essence of that quiddity) in such a way that that quiddity requires necessary existence and in that case it is impossible that it comes to be. Or [Ib] necessity belongs to it through a condition and that condition is either [Ib1] coming into being, or [Ib2] one of the attributes of that quiddity, or [Ib3] something separate. Now [Ib1] the necessity of its existence cannot come from its coming into being, since the existence of coming into being itself is not necessary through itself. How then can the existence of something else be necessary through it? Further, coming into being ceases and how can there be with its non-existence a cause for the necessary existence of something else? Unless one were to say that coming into being is not the cause, but the cause is the existence of something to which coming into being has occurred. But this would be one of the attributes which belong to the thing which has come into being. Thus necessity falls under the second group of the divisions [namely, that it occurs through an attribute].

We say: [Ib2a] These attributes must belong to the quiddity insofar as it is a quiddity, not insofar as it came into being. It follows then that that which necessarily belongs to it, necessarily belongs to the quiddity. And necessary existence belongs necessarily to the quiddity. Or [Ib2b] these attributes come into being together with the existence [of the quiddity]. In this case the statement concerning the necessity of its existence is like the statement concerning the first case [that is, something necessary cannot come into being]. Now if there exists an unlimited number of attributes, all of them possessing this attribute, then all of them would

be things whose existence is possible, not necessary through themselves. Or they lead to an attribute which is necessary through some separate thing. The first division establishes that all the attributes are things whose existence is possible through themselves. Now it is clear that that whose existence is possible through itself, exists through another, and hence the totality of the attributes is necessary through something else existing apart. The second division requires that the existence of that which comes into being only remains as existence through a cause from the outside and this is the cause.

You already know that “coming into being” has no meaning except “existence after it did not exist.” Thus there is here “existence” and “existence after it did not exist.” Now the cause which brings something into being has no influence and effect insofar as the thing does not exist, but its influence and effect extends only insofar as existence proceeds from it. Then it is accidental that it is that thing at that time, “after it did not exist.” And the accident which occurs in the production of something has no entrance into the subsistence of the thing and, hence, the preceding non-existence has no entrance insofar as the existence which comes into being has a cause, but that kind of existence, insofar as it belongs to that kind of quiddities, requires that it has a cause, even if it continues and remains. Because of this you cannot say: Something produces the existence of the thing insofar as it “exists after it did not exist,” for this is not within its province; but in the case of some of the things which exist it is absolutely necessary that they do not exist after non-existence, while in the case of others it is absolutely necessary that they exist after non-existence.

Now existence insofar as it is the existence of this quiddity can be from a cause, while the attribute of this existence, namely that it “exists after it did not exist,” cannot be from a cause. And insofar as its existence comes into being, that is, insofar as the existence which belongs to it is described as one which “exists after non-existence,” the thing does not, in truth, have a cause. But it has a cause insofar as existence belongs to the quiddity. And the case is the reverse of what they [the *Mutakallimūn*] think, but the

cause belongs to the existence alone. If it happens that non-existence precedes it, then the thing comes into being, but if it does not happen that [non-existence precedes it], then it does not come into being, [even though it is caused].

The agent which [ordinary] people call an agent is not truly a cause insofar as they posit it as an agent. For they posit it as an agent insofar as it must be affirmed concerning it that it was not [previously] an agent. However, it is not an agent insofar as it is a cause; but insofar as it is a cause something is necessary with it. It is an agent insofar as it is considered in respect to that which it produces and concurrently in respect to that which it does not produce. Thus if the cause is considered in respect to that which is bestowed by it concurrently with that which is not bestowed by it, then it is called an agent. Therefore everything which [ordinary people] call an agent has as its condition that it is necessarily at some time not an agent. In that case there is an act of will or a compulsion or there occurs to it some state which did not exist [previously]. When this additional thing is joined to it, then its essence together with that which is adjoined becomes a cause in actuality, after it had been devoid of that. Hence, according to their opinion, it is an agent insofar as it is a cause in actuality after it had been a cause in potentiality, not insofar as it is a cause in actuality in an absolute manner.

Everything which they call an agent must also be something which they call passive. They do not free the agent from there being attached to it something of the state of coming into being, because of which there proceeds from it its existence after it did not exist. It is clear then that the existence of the quiddity depends on something else insofar as it is the existence of that quiddity, not insofar as it exists after it did not exist. And that existence is caused in this manner as long as it exists. Likewise it is caused as dependent on something else. Thus it is clear that that which is caused requires something which bestows existence to it because of existence itself essentially. But that it comes into being and that which is like it are things which happen to it accidentally. That which is caused requires something which bestows existence upon it continuously, as long as it continues as existing.

Chapter 2. The Solution of the Question Which Arises Concerning the Opinion of the True Philosophers [Who Maintain] That Every Cause Exists Simultaneously with That Which Is Caused by It, and the Verification of the Discourse Concerning the Acting Cause.

The question of the opponents arises from the fact that the son remains after the father, and the building remains after the builder, and the heat remains after the fire. The reason for this question is the confusion which results from the ignorance of what a cause really is. For the builder, and the father, and the fire are not really causes for the subsistence of the things which they cause. The builder who produces that [building] is not the cause of the subsistence of that building; [he is] not even [the cause] for its existence.

Now the motion of the builder is the cause of some other motion. Thereafter his rest, and his ceasing from motion or the non-existence of his motion, and his moving away after that motion are the cause for the end of that motion. And that very moving away and the end of that motion are the cause of some coming together [namely the coming together of the materials], and that coming together is the cause of a certain shape [namely, the shape of the building]. Each one of these is a cause, and it and that which is caused by it exist simultaneously.

[Likewise] the father is the cause of the movement of the semen. And when the motion of the semen comes to an end in the manner mentioned, it [the cessation of motion] is the cause of [the semen's] arrival in its proper place. Then its arrival in its proper place is the cause of the thing. However, that the semen receives the form "animal" and that it remains an animal has some other cause. Since this is so, every cause exists simultaneously with that which is caused by it.

Similarly, fire is a cause for the heating of the element water. And heating is the cause of the destruction of the predisposition which water possesses in actuality for the reception or preservation of the form "water." This or some other thing is the cause of the coming to be of the perfect predisposition (according to a similar state) for the reception of its contrary, namely the form "fire." But the causes which provide

for the elements their form are the cause of the form “fire.” These are the incorporeal [substances].

Hence causes which are truly causes exist simultaneously with the things caused. But causes which precede the things caused are causes either accidentally or as supporting. Because of this it must be believed that the cause of the shape of the building is the coming together [of its materials] and [that] the cause of that is the natures of the things which come together and their remaining together as they were put together. The cause of that [in turn] is the incorporeal cause which produces the natures. [Similarly,] the cause of the child is the coming together of its form with its matter through the cause which bestows the forms. [Likewise] the cause of fire is the cause which bestows the forms and simultaneously the cessation of the perfect predisposition for that which is contrary to those forms. Thus we find that causes are simultaneous with the things caused.

If we shall show in our discussion which follows that the causes are finite, we ascribe this only to these causes [that is those which are truly causes, namely essential causes] and we do not deny that there can be an infinite number of supporting and preparatory causes, one prior to the other. On the contrary, that is absolutely necessary. For everything which comes into being becomes necessary after it was not necessary through the necessity of its cause, as we have explained. Its cause, in turn, is also something which is necessary. And it follows in the case of particular things, that the preceding things [causes] through which it is necessary that the causes which exist in actuality are causes in actuality, are infinite. Therefore the question “from what?” concerning it does not come to an end at all.

However, the question here is about the following [difficulty]: If [the series of causes] is infinite, then [I] each of these causes must exist for an instant and there follow successive instants between which there is no time. This is impossible. Or [II] [each cause] must remain for some time. In this case, the necessary action of that cause must exist throughout all of that time, not throughout a part [an instant] of it. In turn, the notion which bestows necessity upon the necessity of that cause must also exist during that time. Then our discussion concerning that which bestows necessity upon

its necessity is like our discussion concerning it. Hence an infinity of causes would exist simultaneously.

But this is what we deny. We say [as answer to this objection]: If motion did not exist, this question would necessarily arise. But it is motion that [keeps] something from remaining in the same state. And it is not something which moves from one state to the next in one instant after another which is joined to it and touches it, but [it moves] according to continuity. And the essence of the cause does not necessitate the existence of that which is caused, but its generation according to some relation. The cause of that relation is either the motion, or motion is the partner of its cause or that through which the cause is a cause in actuality. Hence the cause does not continue in existence according to one state, nor does its existence cease or come into being in one instant. Thus it follows that motion is the cause which preserves or is common to the order of causes, and through it the difficulties are resolved. And we shall explain this in its proper place further on. Thus it is clear and certain that the essential causes of something, through which the essence of the thing exists in actuality, must exist simultaneously with that which they cause and they do not precede it in existence in such a way that they cease to exist when that which is caused comes into being, for the latter is only possible for causes that are not essential or not proximate. But that the causes which are not essential and not proximate go to infinity is not impossible; on the contrary it is necessary.

Since this has been established, then, when something through its essence is continuously the cause for the existence of some other thing, the cause belongs to it continuously as long as its essence continues to exist. If the cause exists continuously [eternally], then that which is caused exists continuously. A cause of this kind is [a cause] in the highest degree, for it prevents absolutely the non-existence of something and it is that which provides the perfect existence for something. This is the meaning of that which is called “creation” by the philosophers, namely, the bringing into existence of something after absolute non-existence. And it belongs to that which is caused, through itself, that it is non-existing, while it belongs to it through a cause that it is existing. That which belongs to something through itself is, in thought, prior according to

essence not according to time to that which comes from another. Thus everything which is caused is existing after non-existing according to a priority which is according to essence.

If one applies the term "that which comes into being" to everything which possesses existence after non-existence, even if posteriority does not exist according to time, then everything caused comes into being. If, however, one does not apply [the term in this sense], but holds that it is a condition for that which comes into being that there exists a time and a moment which is prior to it and which ceases with its coming after it, then its posteriority is the kind of posteriority which does not exist simultaneously with priority, but it is separate from it in respect to existence, inasmuch as it is temporal. In this case, not everything which is caused comes into being, but only that caused whose existence is preceded by time, and its existence is undoubtedly preceded by motion and alteration, as you know. But we do not quarrel about names.

Now, that which comes into being in the sense which does not require time, must have its existence after absolute non-existence, or it must have its existence after non-existence which is not absolute, but after non-existence of a particular contrary in an existing matter, as you know. If its existence takes place after absolute non-existence, then its procession is from a cause [and] that procession is creation. This is the most excellent kind of giving existence, since non-being is absolutely impossible, and existence has power over it. If, however, non-being occurs in such a way that it precedes existence, then the coming into being of the thing is impossible unless it comes from matter and in that case matter has power over its coming into being; I have in mind, that the existence of something which is from something else is weaker, falls short, and is secondary.

There are people who do not posit everything having this attribute as created. But they say: Let us imagine that something has existence from a first cause through the intermediacy of an intermediate acting

cause and that it does not come from matter and that non-existence has no power over it. But its existence comes from a cause that is truly first after some other existence which is adjoined to it. In this case its coming into being is not from absolute non-being, but from some being which is not material. Then again there are people who posit creation for every formal existence, however it may be. And the material existence is described [by them] in its relation to the cause by the term "generation," even if matter does not precede it.

We do not at all quarrel about these names, inasmuch as these notions are distinct. We find that some of the things which have existence from a cause exist continuously without matter, and others with matter; some exist through an intermediate cause, others without an intermediate cause. It is proper that everything which does not exist through a preceding matter should not be called generated, but created, and that we posit as the most excellent of that which is called created that which does not come to be from the first cause through an intermediate cause, be it material, or acting, or some other.

We return to our discussion and say: The agent which is an agent accidentally must have matter in which it acts, since everything which comes into being requires, as you know, matter. Sometimes the agent acts suddenly, and sometimes it acts through movement, as a result of which it is a principle of motion. When the natural philosophers call the agent the principle of motion, they have in mind by this the four [kinds of] motion. They are complaisant in this place and they posit generation and corruption as a motion. Now at times the agent acts through itself, at times through a power. That which acts through itself is like heat which would act if it would exist as separated. In that case there would proceed from it what proceeds because it is heat alone. But that which acts through a power is like fire which acts through its heat. We have enumerated the kinds of potentialities in another place.

## 21. *The Salvation, “Psychology”*

### Sixth Treatise

#### Chapter 9. The Substratum of Rational Concepts Is Immaterial

We further maintain that the substance which is the substratum of the intelligibles is neither itself a body nor does it subsist in a body in such a way as to be in any sense a faculty residing in, or a form of, that body. If the substratum of the intelligibles were a body or a magnitude of some kind, then that body which is the substratum of the forms would be either indivisible or divisible. Let us first examine whether such a substratum can have a part that is not further divisible. I think this is absurd, since a point is some sort of a limit and its position cannot be distinguished from the line or the magnitude of which it is the limit. Thus if anything were to be imprinted on it, it must be imprinted on a part of that line. If, however, the point does not exist separately but is an essential part of what is in itself a quantity, one can say that, in some sense, anything which inheres in that quantity (i.e. the line) of which the point is the limit, must also inhere in that point and thus become accidentally quantified by it. When this happens it also remains accidentally limited by that point. If the point were separate and could receive something, it would be an independent self-subsisting entity and would have two sides: one side contiguous with the line from which it is distinguished and another side opposite to it. It would then be separate from the line which would have a limit other than the point touching it. Then that point and not this one would be the limit of the line, and we should have the same problem repeated *ad infinitum*. It would follow from this that the finite or infinite repetition of points produces a line, a view which we have elsewhere shown to be absurd. It is clear, therefore, that the points are not synthesized into a line by being put to-

gether. It is also clear that the point has no particular and distinct position. We might, however, allude to a part of the arguments already given to show the absurdity of this view, and say: either

[1] A certain given point which is in the middle of two other points separates them, so that they do not meet. If so, then with primary rational intuition it follows that each of the two is particularized by a special part of the middle point which it touches, and thus the middle point would be divided. This is absurd. Or

[2] The middle part does not prevent the two side-points from touching. The rational form would then inhere in all the points at once, and all the points (interpenetrating as they are, on this supposition) would be like one single point. But we have already supposed this point to be separate from the line, and therefore the line being separate from it has a limit other than the point by which limit it is separated from the point in question. Thus that point (which separates the line from the point in question) would have a different position from this point. But we have already supposed that all the points have one common position. This is a contradiction. The view that the substratum of the intelligibles is some indivisible part of the body is therefore false.

The remaining solution is that the substratum of the intelligibles (if their substratum is a body) is something divisible. Let us suppose an intelligible form in something divisible. A form thus supposed to subsist in something somehow divisible would itself be accidentally divisible. Then the two parts of the form would be either similar or dissimilar. If they are similar, then why is their synthesis something different from them? For the whole, as such, is different from the part. For if the parts are exactly similar, the only difference their total-ity would make is an increase in quantity or in number and not in form. But if so, then the intelligible form would be a certain shape or number. No intelligible form, however, has shape or number, otherwise the form would be representational and not intelligible. The following is a still clearer argument. It is not possible to say that the concept of each of the two parts is

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exactly the same as that of the whole, for, if the second part does not enter into the concept of the whole, it is necessary that at the outset we should reserve the concept of the whole for the first part only and not for both. But if it enters into the concept of the whole, it is obvious that either of these two parts alone cannot indicate exactly the concept of the complete whole.

If, on the other hand, the two parts of the form are dissimilar, let us see in what sense an intelligible form can have such parts. These dissimilar parts can only be the parts of definition, viz. genera and differentiae. From this many absurdities would necessarily follow; for example, every part of the body is also potentially divisible *ad infinitum*, so that the genera and differentiae must also be potentially infinite. But it has been established that the genera and essential differentiae of a single thing are not potentially infinite. Furthermore, it is not the supposition of division which produces distinction between the genus and the differentiae; if there were a genus and a differentia necessitating a distinction in the substratum, the division would certainly not depend on supposition. It would necessarily follow that the genera and differentiae would be actually infinite, too. It has been established that the genera and differentiae and parts of definition of a single thing are, in all respects, finite. If they were actually infinite, they could not have come together in the body in this form, for it would necessarily entail a single body being actually divisible *ad infinitum*.

Again, let us suppose that the division takes place in a certain way and has placed genus on one side and differentia on the other. If this manner of division is changed it would place half-genus plus half-differentia on the one side and the other halves on the other. Or genus and differentia would exchange places, so that in our supposition or imagination the position of genus and differentia would revolve, and each of them would move in any direction according to the will of an external person. But this is not the end, for we can go on introducing a new division within a division *ad infinitum*.

Again, not every intelligible is divisible into simpler intelligibles, for certain intelligibles are the simplest and serve as principles for other compound ones. They have no genera and differentiae, nor are they divisible in quantity or concept. It is not possible, then,

that the supposed parts of the form should be dissimilar in such a way that each one of them is, in concept, different from the whole and the whole is made up of their aggregate.

If, then, the intelligible form is indivisible, and it does not inhere in an indivisible part of a magnitude, and, at the same time, there must be something in us which receives it, it is clear that the substratum of the intelligibles is a substance which is not a body, nor a bodily faculty such as might be subject to the accidents of the body, e.g. division with all the absurdities it involves.

#### Another Argument

We can prove this in another way by saying that it is the rational faculty itself which abstracts the intelligibles from a definite quantity, place, position, and all the other categories. Let us examine this form itself which is abstracted from position and ask how this has been effected. Is this abstraction with reference to the knowing subject? I.e. is this intelligible abstracted from position in its external existence or in its conceptual existence in the intellect? It is absurd that it should be so in its external existence, so that the only alternative is that it is abstracted from position and place in its existence in the intellect. Thus, when the intelligible form comes to exist in the intellect, it does not possess a position whereby it might be indicated and so divided or subjected to similar processes; therefore it cannot be in a body. Again, when the unitary, indivisible forms of things which are conceptually indivisible are imprinted on a divisible matter having dimensions, then either none of the supposed parts has any relation to the unitary intelligible which is indivisible and abstract from matter, or each and every one of the supposed parts has relation to it, or some parts have such a relation while others do not. If none of the parts has relation to it, then the whole (composed as it is of the parts) cannot possibly have any relation to it either. If some parts have a relation to it, and the others do not, then the parts which have no relation to this intelligible do not enter into its concept at all. But if every supposed part has some relation to it, then either it is related to the intelligible as a whole or to a part of it. If every supposed part of the matter in which the intelligible

inheres has a relation to the whole of the intelligible, then the parts are not parts of the intelligible, but each is independently an intelligible itself; indeed, it would be the intelligible itself. In this case the intelligible would be actually intelligible an infinite number of times in a single moment. If every part has a different relation to this entity, then the entity as an intelligible must be conceptually divisible. This is a contradiction, for we have already supposed it to be indivisible. If the relation of each part is to a different part of the intelligible entity, its divisibility is all the more obvious, except that it is inconceivable. It is clear from this that the forms imprinted on matter are only the exterior forms of particular divisible entities and every part of the former is actually or potentially related to every part of the latter. Also, even a thing which is multiple as regards its parts of definition is a unity when regarded as a whole. This unity is indivisible. So how can this unity, as such, be imprinted on something divisible? Otherwise, the absurdity we have mentioned in the case of the indivisible intelligible would arise.

Again, we have established that the supposed intelligibles which it is the function of the rational faculty actually to know one by one are potentially infinite. It is also certain that the substratum of something which can encompass infinite things cannot be a body nor a faculty in a body. This has been demonstrated in Aristotle's *Physics*. It is quite impossible, then, that the entity which receives intelligibles should be inherent in a body, or that its action should be in a body or through a body.

#### Chapter 12. Concerning the Temporal Origin of the Soul

We say that human souls are of the same species and concept. If they existed before the body, they would either be multiple entities or one single entity. But it is impossible for them to be either the one or the other, as will be shown later; therefore it is impossible for them to exist before the body. We now begin with the explanation of the impossibility of its numerical multiplicity and say that the mutual difference of the souls before [their attachment to] bodies is either due to their quiddity and form; or to the element and matter which is multiple in space, a particular part of which

each matter occupies; or to the various times peculiar to every soul when it becomes existent in its matter; or to the causes which divide their matter. But their difference is not due to their quiddity or form, since their form is one; therefore their difference is due to the recipient of the quiddity or to the body to which the quiddity is specifically related. Before its attachment to the body the soul is quiddity pure and simple; thus it is impossible for one soul to be numerically different from another, or for the quiddity to admit of essential differentiation. This holds absolutely true in all cases; for the multiplicity of the species of those things whose essences are pure concepts is only due to the substrata which receive them and to what is affected by them, or due only to their times. But when they are absolutely separate, i.e. when the categories we have enumerated are not applicable to them, they cannot be diverse. It is therefore impossible for them to have any kind of diversity or multiplicity among them. Thus it is untrue that before they enter bodies souls have numerically different essences.

I say that it is also impossible for souls to have numerically one essence, for when two bodies come into existence two souls also come into existence in them. Then either—

- (1) these two souls are two parts of the same single soul, in which case one single thing which does not possess any magnitude and bulk would be potentially divisible.

This is manifestly absurd according to the principles established in physics. Or—

- (2) a soul which is numerically one would be in two bodies.

This also does not require much effort to refute.

It is thus proved that the soul comes into existence whenever a body does so fit to be used by it. The body which thus comes into being is the kingdom and instrument of the soul. In the very disposition of the substance of the soul which comes into existence together with a certain body—a body, that is to say, with the appropriate qualities to make it suitable to receive the soul which takes its origin from the first principles—there is a natural yearning to occupy itself with that

body, to use it, control it, and be attracted by it. This yearning binds the soul specially to this body, and turns it away from other bodies different from it in nature so that the soul does not contact them except through it. Thus when the principle of its individualization, namely, its peculiar dispositions, occurs to it, it becomes an individual. These dispositions determine its attachment to that particular body and form the relationship of their mutual suitability, although this relationship and its condition may be obscure to us. The soul achieves its first entelechy through the body; its subsequent development, however, does not depend on the body but on its own nature.

But after their separation from their bodies the souls remain individual owing to the different matters in which they had been, and owing to the times of their birth and their different dispositions due to their bodies which necessarily differ because of their peculiar conditions.

### Chapter 13. The Soul Does Not Die with the Death of the Body; It Is Incorruptible.

We say that the soul does not die with the death of the body and is absolutely incorruptible. As for the former proposition, this is because everything which is corrupted with the corruption of something else is in some way attached to it. And anything which in some way is attached to something else is either coexistent with it or posterior to it in existence or prior to it, this priority being essential and not temporal. If, then, the soul is so attached to the body that it is coexistent with it, and this is not accidental but pertains to its essence, then they are essentially interdependent. Then neither the soul nor the body would be a substance; but in fact they are substances. And if this is an accidental and not an essential attachment, then, with the corruption of the one term only the accidental relationship of the other term will be annulled, but its being will not be corrupted with its corruption. If the soul is so attached to the body that it is posterior to it in existence, then, in that case, the body will be the cause of the soul's existence. Now the causes are four; so either the body is the efficient cause of the soul and gives it existence, or it is its receptive and material cause—maybe by way of composition as the elements are for

the body or by way of simplicity as bronze is for the statue—or the body is the soul's formal or final cause. But the body cannot be the soul's efficient cause, for body, as such, does not act; it acts only through its faculties. If it were to act through its essence, not through its faculties, every body would act in the same way. Again, the bodily faculties are all of them either accidents or material forms, and it is impossible that either accidents or forms subsisting in matter should produce the being of a self-subsisting entity independent of matter or that of an absolute substance. Nor is it possible that the body should be the receptive and material cause of the soul, for we have clearly shown and proved that the soul is in no way imprinted in the body. The body, then, is not 'informed' with the form of the soul, either by way of simplicity or composition so that certain parts of the body are composed and mixed together in a certain way and then the soul is imprinted in them. It is also impossible that the body should be the formal or the final cause of the soul, for the reverse is the more plausible case.

Thus the attachment of the soul to the body is not the attachment of an effect to a necessary cause. The truth is that the body and the temperament are an accidental cause of the soul, for when the matter of a body suitable to become the instrument of the soul and its proper subject comes into existence, the separate causes bring into being the individual soul, and that is how the soul originates from them. This is because it is impossible to bring arbitrarily into being different souls without any specific cause. Besides, the soul does not admit of numerical multiplicity, as we have shown. Again, whenever a new thing comes into being, it must be preceded by a matter which is prepared to receive it or to have a relationship with it, as has been shown in the other sciences. Again, if an individual soul were to come into being without an instrument through which it acts and attains perfection, its being would be purposeless; but there is nothing purposeless in nature. In truth, when the suitability and preparation for such a relationship exist in the instrument, it becomes necessary that such a thing as a soul should originate from the separate causes.

But if the existence of one thing necessitates the existence of another, the corruption of the former does not necessarily entail that of the latter. This happens

only where its very being subsists through or in that thing. Many things originating from other things survive the latter's corruption; when their being does not subsist in them, and especially when they owe their existence to something other than what was merely preparatory for the emanation of their being. And the being of the soul does in fact emanate from something different from the body and bodily functions, as we have shown; its source of emanation must be something different from the body. Thus when the soul owes its being to that other thing and only the time of its realization to the body, its being would be independent of the body which is only its accidental cause; it cannot then be said that they have a mutual relationship which would necessitate the body preceding the soul as its necessary cause.

Let us turn to the third division which we mentioned in the beginning, namely, that the attachment of the soul to the body might be in the sense that the soul is prior to the body in existence. Now in that case the priority will be either temporal as well as essential, and so the soul's being could not possibly be attached to the body since it precedes the body in time, or the priority will be only essential and not temporal, for in time the soul will not be separate from the body. This sort of priority means that when the prior entity comes into existence, the being of the posterior entity must follow from it. Then the prior entity cannot exist, if the posterior is supposed to be non-existent. I do not say that the supposition of the non-existence of the posterior necessitates the non-existence of the prior, but that the posterior cannot be non-existent except when first something has naturally happened to the prior which has made it non-existent, too. Thus it is not the supposition of the non-existence of the posterior entity which necessitates the non-existence of the prior, but the supposition of the non-existence of the prior itself, for the posterior can be supposed to be non-existent only after the prior itself has ceased to exist. This being so, it follows that the cause of non-existence must occur in the substance of the soul necessitating the body's corruption along with it, and that the body cannot be corrupted through a cause special to itself. But in fact the corruption of the body does take place through a cause special to itself, namely, through changes in its composition and its temperament. Thus

it is false to hold that the soul is attached to the body as essentially prior to it, and that at the same time the body is indeed corrupted through a cause in itself; so no such relationship subsists between the two.

This being so, all the forms of attachment between the body and the soul have proved to be false and it only remains that the soul, in its being, has no relationship with the body but is related with other principles which are not subject to change or corruption.

As for the proposition that the soul does not admit of corruption at all, I say that there is another conclusive reason for the immortality of the soul. Everything which might be corrupted through some cause has in itself the potentiality of corruption and, before corruption, has the actuality of persistence. But it is absurd that a single thing in the same sense should possess both, the potentiality of corruption and the actuality of persistence; its potentiality of corruption cannot be due to its actual persistence, for the concept of potentiality is contrary to that of actuality. Also, the relation of this potentiality is opposed to the relation of this actuality, for the one is related with corruption, the other with persistence. These two concepts, then, are attributable to two different factors in the concrete thing. Hence we say that the actuality of persistence and the potentiality of corruption may be combined in composite things and in such simple things as subsist in composite ones. But these two concepts cannot come together in simple things whose essence is separate. I say in another absolute sense that these two concepts cannot exist together in a simple thing whose essence is unitary. This is because everything which persists and has the potentiality of corruption also has the potentiality of persistence, since its persistence is not necessary. When it is not necessary, it is possible; and possibility is of the nature of potentiality. Thus the potentiality of persistence is in its very substance. But, of course, it is clear that the actuality of persistence of a thing is not the same as its potentiality of persistence. Thus its actuality of persistence is a fact which happens to the body which has the potentiality of persistence. Therefore that potentiality does not belong to something actual but to something of which actual existence is only an accident and does not constitute its real essence. From this it necessarily follows that its being is composed of a factor the possession of which

gives actual existence to it (this factor is the form in every concrete existent), and another factor which attains this actual existence but which in itself has only the potentiality of existence (and this factor is the matter in the concrete existent).

So if the soul is absolutely simple and is not divisible into matter and form, it will not admit of corruption. But if it is composite, let us leave the composite and consider only the substance which is its matter. We say: either that matter will continue to be divisible and so the same analysis will go on being applied to it and we shall then have a regress *ad infinitum*, which is absurd; or this substance and base will never cease to exist. But if so, then our present discourse is devoted to this factor which is the base and origin (i.e. the substance) and not to the composite thing which is composed of this factor and some other. So it is clear that everything which is simple and not composite, or which is the origin and base (i.e. the substance) of the composite thing, cannot in itself possess both the actuality of persistence and the potentiality of corruption. If it has the potentiality of corruption, it cannot possibly have the actuality of persistence, and if it has the actuality of persistence and existence, it cannot have the potentiality of corruption. Obviously, then, the substance of the soul does not have the potential-

ity of corruption. Of those things which come to be and are corrupted, the corruptible is only the concrete composite. The potentiality of corruption and of persistence at the same time does not belong to something which gives unity to the composite, but to the matter which potentially admits of both contraries. So the corruptible composite as such possesses neither the potentiality of persistence nor that of corruption, let alone both. As to the matter itself, it either has persistence not due to any potentiality, which gives it the capacity for persistence—as some people think—or it has persistence through a potentiality which gives it persistence, but does not have the potentiality of corruption; this latter being something which it acquires. The potentiality of corruption of simple entities which subsist in matter is due to matter and is not in their own substance. The argument which proves that everything which comes to exist passes away on account of the finitude of the potentialities of persistence and corruption is relevant only to those whose being is composed of matter and form. Matter has the potentiality that this form may persist in it, and at the same time the potentiality that this form may cease to exist in it. It is then obvious that the soul is absolutely incorruptible. This is the point which we wanted to make, and this is what we wanted to prove.

## 22. The Cure, “The Soul”

### Fifth Treatise

#### A Verification of the True Account of the Soul

[. . .] [1] It has become clear from what we have stated<sup>1</sup> that the different actions of the soul are attributable to

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1. “The Soul,” I.5.

different faculties, and that each faculty, as such,<sup>2</sup> is like that only inasmuch as the first action that belongs to it issues from it. So the irascible faculty is not affected by pleasures nor is the appetitive faculty affected by pains. The faculty of perception does not suffer the effects that these two suffer, and nothing about these two, as such,<sup>3</sup> is receptive to the percepti-

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2. That is, different from another faculty.

3. That is, different from the perceptible faculty.

ble form and is informed by it.<sup>4</sup> This being an established fact, we say that these faculties must have a nexus that joins them all together and to which they are bound as a group, where the relation of that nexus to these faculties is the same as the relation of the common sense to the individual senses that are [like] nurslings. [There must be such a nexus], for we are certain that these faculties distract one another (as you have learned from what preceded).<sup>5</sup> If there were no such nexus employing these [faculties], such that [the nexus] would be distracted by one of them away from another, thus not employing the latter or managing it, then it would not be the case that one prevents another from its activity in some way nor is diverted from [its own activity]. [This is so] because when one faculty has no connection with another faculty, the activity of the first does not prevent the second from performing its own activity since the instrument is not common [to both], the location is not common, and there is nothing else in common to unite them. Now how can this be when we see that the act of sensing excites desire, but the appetitive faculty is not affected by the sensible object as a sensible object? If it is affected but not inasmuch as [the object] is a sensible object, then the affection cannot be attributable to the desire for that sensible object, so it would have to be [attributable to] what is doing the sensing. The two faculties, however, certainly cannot be a single faculty, and so the two faculties clearly belong to one thing. This is why we correctly say: “When we sense, we desire,” and “When we saw such-and-such, we became angry.”

[2] Now this single thing with respect to which these faculties are joined as a whole is the thing that each of us sees as himself such that he says truly: “When we sense, we desire.” This thing cannot be a body [for the following reasons]. First, it does not necessarily follow from being a body as such that it is a gathering place for these faculties. If that were the case, that would belong to every body rather than to some thing *by means of which* [every body] comes to be such, since that thing is what primarily does the gathering together, that is, it is the perfection of the

body inasmuch as it is a gathering place, and it is something other than the body. So the gathering place, then, is something that is not a body, that is, [it is] the soul.

[3] Second, it has already been made clear that these faculties include what cannot be a corporeal thing residing in a body.<sup>6</sup> So this could raise the following doubt: if it is conceivable for these faculties to belong to a single thing despite the fact that they are not gathered together in it—since some do not inhere in bodies and others do—and, as corollary to their individual distinctions, they cannot have a single description that can be related to one thing, then why is that not the case now when all of them can be related to a body or a corporeal part? We say in response: Because this thing—the one that is not a body—can be a source of the faculties, and so some of them spread out from it to the instrument [i.e., the body], others are proper to itself, but all of them are traced back to it in a particular manner. The ones gathered together in the [bodily] instrument at a particular originating point are gathered in the instrument by that originating point when it spreads out from the thing [i.e., the soul] that is sufficient in itself without the instrument (. . .).<sup>7</sup> All of these faculties, however, cannot spread out from the body, for the relation of these faculties to the body is not by way of spreading out [from it] but by way of [its] receiving [them]. Spreading out can occur as a departure of the flow from the source, but receiving cannot occur in such a manner.

[4] Third, such a body<sup>8</sup> is either (a) the whole body or (b) it is not the whole body. If (a) it is the whole body, then if it lost some part of itself, what we perceive to be us would not exist. It is not like that, however; for I would be myself even if I did not know that I have a hand or a leg or some other bodily member (as was stated earlier in other places).<sup>9</sup> I suppose instead that they are my appendages, and I believe that they are in-

4. See “The Soul,” I.5, pars. 8–9.

5. *Ibid.*, V.3, par. 2.

6. See “The Soul,” V.2.

7. Omitted here is a reference to further treatment of this later in the chapter.

8. That is, the body that is posited as being “the thing that each of us sees as himself,” par. 2.

9. See “The Soul,” I.1, par. 7.

struments of mine that I use to fulfill certain needs. Were it not for those needs, I would have no use for them. I would also be myself when they did not exist. Let us return to what was stated earlier on our part. We say: If a human were created in a single instant such that his limbs were separated from one another and he could not see them, and it happened that he could not feel them and they did not touch one another and he could not hear a single sound, he would not know that any of his organs exist, but he would know that he exists as uniquely a single thing despite not knowing everything else. However, what is unknown is not the same as what is known! These bodily members that we have are really only just like clothes that, because they have always been associated with us, we have come to think of as parts of ourselves. When we imagine our selves, we do not imagine them bare; rather, we imagine [our selves] to have enveloping bodies. The reason for that is the permanent association [of the two]. The fact, however, is that we have become accustomed to stripping off and discarding clothes in a way we are not accustomed to doing with the bodily members, and so our belief that these are parts of us is more firmly entrenched than our belief that our garments are parts of us.

[5] If it is (b) that such a body is not the whole body but rather one specific bodily organ, then that organ would be the thing that I believe to be me—unless what is intended in my believing that it is me is not that organ, even if it must have that organ.<sup>10</sup> If, however, what that organ is, namely, its being a heart, a brain, or some other organ or organs with this description, is identical to it or its totality is identical to the thing that I perceive to be myself, then my perception that I am must be my perception of that thing. But one thing from a single perspective cannot be both what is perceived and other than what is perceived.<sup>11</sup> The situation is not like that anyway; for it is rather by sensing, listening, and experiential knowledge that I know that I have a heart and a brain, not because I know that I am I. Thus, that organ on its own

would not be the thing that I perceive to be me essentially but only me accidentally, whereas the aim in knowing about myself that I am me (that is, the aim that I intend when I say "I sensed, I intellected, I acted, and I, as something different than these descriptions, joined them together") is what I call "I."

[6] Now, if someone said, "You also do not know that [the 'I'] is a soul," I would say that I *always* know it as the thing intended by what I call the "soul." I might not know it by the term "soul," but once I understand what I mean by soul, I understand that it is that thing and that it is what uses [bodily] instruments such as the motive and perceptive faculties. It is only as long as I do not understand the meaning of "soul" that I do not recognize [that]. That is not the case with the heart or the brain; for I may understand what is meant by "heart" and "brain," but I do not know that [they are the "I"]. When I mean by "soul" that it is the thing that is the principle of these motions and perceptions that I have and is what these [motions and perceptions] are traced back to in this whole, I recognize that either it is in actual fact the "I" or it is the "I" as something using this body. Then, it would be as though I now am unable to distinguish the perception of me as distinct from the mixed perception that there is something that uses the body, and that there is something that is joined with the body.

[7] As for whether it is a body or not a body, in my opinion it is by no means necessary that it be a body, nor that it appear to me in imagined form as any body whatsoever. Instead, its imagined form appears to me to be precisely *without* any corporeality. So I will have understood some part of the aspect of its not being a body when I do *not* understand it to have any corporeality at the very same time that I understand [what it is]. Then, when I undertake an independent verification, the more I add corporeality to this thing that is the principle of these acts, the less conceivable it will be for that thing to be a body. How much more fitting it would be for its first representation in my soul to be something that is different from these exterior aspects, and I am then misled by the association with bodily instruments, the sensory observation of those, and the issuance of actions from them, and I believe that [those exterior aspects] are like parts of me. It is not when an error has been made about something that a judgment

10. If it is the latter, then the organ would be just part, albeit an essential one, of what is identified as the self.

11. That is, what would be doing the perceiving.

must pertain to it, but rather when the judgment pertains to what it is that has to be intellected. And it is not when I am investigating whether it exists and whether it is not a body that I am wholly ignorant of [these questions], but rather when I neglect [to consider these questions]. It is often the case that knowledge about something is close at hand but one overlooks it, and it becomes the very thing that is unknown and is investigated at the greatest remove. Sometimes

knowledge that is close at hand is like the reminder, and despite the least amount of effort it was like something overlooked, and so awareness does not turn to pursue it because it weakly understands it, in which case one needs to take a remote position in relation to it. From [all of] this, it has become clear that these faculties have a gathering place to which all of them can be traced back, and that it is not a body, regardless of whether it is or is not joined with the body.

# Al-Ghazālī, c.1055–1111

The growth of Aristotelianism in the Islamic East brought in its wake a critical reaction for which the most articulate spokesman was al-Ghazālī. Jurist and theologian of Ash'arite persuasion (see page 217), al-Ghazālī is in some ways reminiscent of Augustine. Like the Christian saint he had a skeptical streak within his nature, sampled a number of theological and philosophical positions, and left an autobiographical record of his spiritual quests. But whereas Augustine remained faithful to philosophy throughout his life, al-Ghazālī in the end became a mystic.

Al-Ghazālī is of special philosophical interest for his detailed refutation of certain Aristotelian doctrines, as formulated by al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā. To combat the Aristotelians, he first composed a summary of their views entitled *The Intentions (Opinions) of the Philosophers (Maqāsid al-Falāsifah)*. So impartial was this summary that Christian scholastics, who knew no other work of his prior to the fourteenth century, considered him an adherent of Ibn Sīnā's views. This preliminary study was followed by *The Incoherence of the Philosophers (Tahāfut al-Falāsifah)*, a work containing the actual refutation. Ibn Rushd in *The Incoherence of "The Incoherence"* was to state the case for the philosophers later on.

Al-Ghazālī's critique was not simply a pietistic attack on the study of philosophy, but a reasoned attempt to show what philosophy could do and what it could not do. Though there was a period during which he was an outright skeptic, he later gained the conviction that the complete rejection of philosophy was unwarranted. As many another philosopher of a skeptical bent of mind, al-Ghazālī had high regard for mathematics, parts of natural philosophy, and, espe-

cially, logic. Indeed, he advocated the application of Aristotelian logical methods to the solution of problems in Islamic theology. But when it came to metaphysics, he was of the opinion that the philosophers had not made good their claims.

In *The Incoherence* al-Ghazālī examined twenty propositions which, to his mind, the Aristotelians had not demonstrated. Though he was largely interested in refuting the proofs of the Aristotelians on philosophical grounds, he could not help but state that many of their propositions were contrary to religious teachings. The affirmation of three of them, he held, make one an infidel, while the affirmation of the rest place one in the somewhat less severe category of heretic.

The three propositions that al-Ghazālī found particularly objectionable illustrate aptly the tension existing between Islamic beliefs and Aristotelian teachings. Though the Aristotelians had claimed that their opinions were legitimate interpretations of Islamic doctrines, al-Ghazālī considered them as merely verbal, holding that they were, in fact, contrary to Islamic beliefs. The first such doctrine was the philosophers' denial of bodily resurrection. To be sure, the philosophers had admitted some form of spiritual immortality to which resurrection symbolically referred, but, according to al-Ghazālī, Islam required the literal affirmation of the doctrine which the philosophers seemed to deny. Similarly, the Aristotelians appeared to hold that God knows only universals. This to al-Ghazālī amounted to a denial of the religious meaning of individual providence. And finally, he considered the philosophers' identification of creation with emanation as equivalent to the belief that the world is eternal.

As part of his critique al-Ghazālī scrutinized a number of philosophical concepts, primary among them that of cause and effect. Relying on the Ash‘arite notion that God’s omnipotence requires that He be the only causal agent, he reduced all effects within the world to the direct causal action of God. Though secondary causes seem to be at work, one can at best speak of simultaneity between them and their effects, but any necessary connection between them must be denied. In fact, God is able to produce any effect without an intermediate cause at all. Al-Ghazālī’s denial of necessary causal connections within the world places him within a line of skeptical thinkers of whom perhaps the best known is Hume. It seems likely that Nicholas of Autrecourt, who has been called “the medieval Hume” (see page 650), was influenced by al-Ghazālī’s views.<sup>1</sup>

Abū Hāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī was born in Tūs, Persia (near the modern Meshed) in 1055 or 1056. Orphaned at an early age, he was educated first in his native city and then in Jurjān. In 1077 he went to Nishapur, seat of an important school, where he studied with al-Juwaynī, the great theologian of the age. After his teacher’s death in 1085, he was invited by Nizām al-Mulk, the powerful vizier of two Seljuk sultans, who received the young scholar with great respect. In 1091 his patron appointed al-Ghazālī to the Nizāmiyyāh school in Bagdad, one of the most distinguished academic positions of the day. In addition, al-Ghazālī gained great influence in government circles. Though details are lacking, this seems to have been the time during which he went through the extreme skeptical phase mentioned before. However, he overcame it “by a light which God most high cast into [his] breast.” A popular lecturer who attracted over three hundred students, al-Ghazālī spent the first years in Bagdad in the private study of philosophy and in reflection upon what he had learned. It was probably at the end of this period that he wrote the two books mentioned above.

Al-Ghazālī underwent a spiritual crisis in 1095 when, because of a nervous ailment, he found it phys-

ically impossible to lecture. After some months of indecision, he finally decided to leave Bagdad. Al-Ghazālī attributes this decision to a concern for the welfare of his soul, but modern scholars have suggested that the reasons were perhaps political. Early biographical sources state that he spent the next eleven years in Syria, but it seems more likely that he spent part of the time in Damascus and part in other places. In leaving Bagdad al-Ghazālī gave up his prominent position and his wealth and he became a poor Sūfī (mystic) who spent his time in meditation and spiritual exercises. In 1105–1106, the son of Nizām al-Mulk, his former benefactor, prevailed upon him to teach again, and he accepted a position at Nishapur. However, toward the end of his life he retired to his native Tūs, where he opened a kind of monastery in which he taught Sūfism. He died in 1111.

Bibliographers attribute over four hundred works to al-Ghazālī. Even if one allows for duplications of titles and false attributions, it can be seen that he was an extremely productive author. His works deal with Islamic law, theology, philosophy, polemics, and the beliefs and practices of Sūfism. Besides the two works described before, his autobiographical *The Deliverance from Error* (*al-Munqidh min al-Dalāl*) and his monumental theological work *The Revival of the Religious Sciences* (*Ihya’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*) should be mentioned.

The two selections in this volume are drawn from *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*. The first examines the philosophical notion that the world has always existed—a teaching invariably, if somewhat misleadingly, known as “the doctrine of the eternity of the world.” (The word ‘eternity’ can in theory be misleading because it is also used to refer to the divine mode of existence that does not involve succession in any way. The ‘eternity’ referred to in the expression “eternity of the world,” by contrast, involves infinite successive duration.) Al-Ghazālī sets forth what he takes to be the strongest philosophical argument in favor of the eternity of the world and then offers his detailed rebuttal.

The second selection is taken from the final section of *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, in which al-Ghazālī discusses the natural sciences. Having enumerated the eight kinds of natural sciences and their seven subdivisions, he goes on to state that the reli-

1. See S. Van den Bergh, tr., *Averroes: Tahafut al-Tahafut*, 2 vols. (London: Luzac, 1954), Vol. I, XXX.

gious Law does not require a believer to disagree with the findings of these sciences except on four points that the philosophers affirm: (1) the connection between cause and effect is a necessary connection, (2) human souls are self-subsistent substances which, after death, exist in separation from the body, (3) the human soul cannot cease to exist, and (4) the denial of the resurrection of the body.

This selection is devoted to the first of these topics. Al-Ghazālī presents the position of the philosophers, together with supporting arguments, under three headings and then goes on to counter each one with arguments of his own. It is noteworthy that al-

Ghazālī is not a radical voluntarist who holds that God can do anything he pleases. In fact, in the selection, he attacks certain Mutakallimūn for defending this view, maintaining instead that God cannot do anything that is logically impossible. He further holds that God governs the world according to a certain order, but this order is not necessary and God can circumvent it whenever He wishes. Somewhat more technically, it seems to be his view that possibility and necessary causality are incompatible and that something possible can only become actual through a voluntary cause. Necessity is limited to logical relations.

## 23. *The Incoherence of the Philosophers,* On the Eternity of the World

[1] *Differentiating the Received View.* The philosophers differ concerning the world's eternity, but the opinion upon which the majority of them, modern and ancient, have settled is to claim that it is eternal. It has never ceased existing together with God (exalted is He!) but is His effect and is concurrent with Him, not being temporally posterior to Him but [exists together with God] in the way that the effect is concurrent with the cause, such as light is concurrent with the Sun. Also the Creator is prior to it like the cause is prior to the effect, namely, essentially prior and prior in rank but not in time.

[2] That the world is generated and created in time is referenced in Plato.<sup>1</sup> Some of the [philosophers] subsequently interpreted away his [literal] words, denying that he believed in the world's temporal creation.

[3] At the end of Galen's life, in the book titled *What Galen Believes to Be Opinion*, he reached a deadlock on this problem, not knowing whether the world is eternal or temporally created. He may have shown that it could not be known—not because of a

deficiency on his part, but owing to the inherent difficulty of this problem itself for [human] intellects. This, however, is something of a deviation from the standard view of all of them, which is simply that [the world] is eternal, and in general that it is wholly inconceivable that something temporal should proceed immediately from something eternal.

[4] *The Presentation of Their Proofs.* If I were to digress to describe what has been conveyed in order to exhibit their evidence and what has been mentioned in rejecting it, I would fill many pages on this problem; however, there is no good in lengthening the discussion. So let us omit their proofs that are arbitrary or weak fancy, which any one with reason can easily resolve, and limit ourselves to presenting [the proofs] that leave a strong impression on the mind and that can give rise to doubt even for those of outstanding reason; for by the most feeble [of proofs] one can produce doubt in the weak.

[5] [. . .] [*Their Strongest Proof.*] They claim that the procession of the temporal from the eternal is absolutely impossible. [That is] because when we posit the eternal but not, for example, the world's proceeding from it, then it does not proceed precisely, because there is no selectively determining factor for the [world's] existence, but rather the world's existence would be a pure possibility. So if [the world] temporally comes to be after that, then a selectively determining factor must either come to be anew or not. On the one hand, if a selectively determining factor does not come to be anew, then the world remains purely possible just as it was before. On the other hand, if a selectively determining factor comes to be anew, then who is the creator of that selectively determining factor, and why did it temporally create now and not earlier? The question concerning the temporal creation of the selectively determining factor still stands.

[6] In brief, when the states of the eternal are similar, then either nothing exists from it or [something]

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1. Al-Ghazālī is referring to the creation account presented in Plato's *Timaeus*. Within the ancient and medieval worlds there was a debate about what Plato's true position was. Speusippus and Xenocrates, Plato's successors at the Academy, thought that Plato's eternal *demiurge*, or God, was causally, but not temporally, prior to creation. The Middle Platonists Plutarch and Atticus in contrast maintained that Plato thought that the world was created at some first moment in time. The great Neoplatonist Proclus criticized this latter interpretation of Plato in a work *On the Eternity of the World*, which was in its turn criticized by the later Neoplatonist John Philoponus in his *Against Proclus*. Both works were available in Arabic translation.

exists perpetually, for it is impossible to distinguish the state of refraining from the state of commencing.

[7] Its independent verification is to ask, "Why did [the Creator] not temporally create the world before [the moment] of its creation?" It can neither be attributed to His inability to create temporally nor to the impossibility of the temporal creation. Indeed, that would lead either to a change in the Eternal from being unable [to create] to having the power [to create], or to the world's changing from being impossible to being possible, both of which are absurd. It cannot be said that there had been no previous wish and thereafter a wish came to be anew. Also it cannot be attributed to lacking an instrument, which thereafter came to exist. In fact, the nearest one can imagine is to say, "[The Creator] did not will its existence," in which case it must be said, "[The world's] existence came to be because He came to will its existence after not willing [it]." In that case the will would have been temporally created, but its temporal creation in Him is absurd, because He is not that in which temporally occurring things inhere, and [the will's] temporal creation is neither in Him nor makes Him One Who wills.

[8] Let us set aside speculating about the substrate of [the will's] creation. Does not the difficulty concerning the origin of [the will's] creation still stand, namely, from whence is it created and why was it created now but not earlier? Was its being created now not due to God? If there can be a temporal event without a creator, then let the world be a temporal event that does not have a Maker, otherwise what is the difference between one temporal event and another? Also, if it is created by a creation of God, then why did He create now and not earlier? Was it because of an absence of an instrument or power or intent or nature? But then why, if that [absence] is replaced with existence, was it created? The very same difficulty returns! Or is it owing to the absence of the will? But then the will would need a will and likewise the first will, [resulting] in an infinite regress.

[9] Thus, it has been independently verified by absolute argumentation that the procession of the temporal from the eternal without the change of something pertaining to the eternal, whether a power, instrument, moment, intent, or nature, is absurd. To assign a change of state [to the eternal] is impossible,

because that temporal change would be like any other, the whole of which is absurd. Inasmuch as the world exists and its temporal creation is impossible, its eternity is necessarily established.

[10] This is the most imaginative of their proofs. In general, their discussion concerning the rest of the metaphysical problems is poorer than their discussion concerning this problem, since here they exploit certain sorts of imagination that they cannot in the others. Because of that we have treated this problem, the strongest of their proofs, first.

[11] The refutation comes from two fronts.

[12] The first of them is to ask, By what means would you [philosophers] censure one who says, "The world is temporally created by means of an eternal will that made necessary [the world's] existence at the moment at which it came to exist; [the world's] nonexistence continued to the limit up to which it continued, and the existence began from whence it began; before the existence it was not something willed and so owing to that was not created, but at the moment at which it was created, it was willed by the eternal will and so owing to that was created"? What precludes this belief and would render it absurd?

[13] It might be said that this is self-evidently absurd, because the temporal is something necessitated and caused. Just as it is impossible that there is something temporal without a cause and what necessitates it, [so likewise] it is impossible that what necessitates should exist, having been complete in the conditions, principles, and causes for its necessitating, such that no awaited thing remains at all, but then what is necessitated is delayed. Quite the contrary, the existence of what is necessitated is necessary when there is the realization of what necessitates with the completion of its conditions. The absurdity of its delay is tantamount to the impossibility that the temporally necessitated exists without what necessitates [it].

[14] Before the world's existence, the one who wills, the will, and its relation to the one who wills [all] existed, and neither did the one who wills, nor the will, nor some relation that did not belong to the will come to be anew, for all of that is to change. So [the rebuttal continues], how did that which is willed come to be anew, and what prevented [its] coming to be anew earlier? The new state is no different from

the previous state with respect to some factor, state of affairs, state, or relation. In fact, the states of affairs were just the same as they were [before]. Therefore, what is willed would not have existed but would have remained the same as it was. But [on the present view] the willed object comes to exist! What is this, but the most extreme absurdity?!

[15] The impossibility of this type is not only in what necessitates and what is necessitated necessarily and essentially, [continue the philosophers], but also in the customary and conventional; for if a man were to pronounce [the legal declaration] divorcing his wife and the separation were not to occur immediately, then it is inconceivable that it would occur later, because the pronouncement is made a cause of the [divorced] status by convention and accepted practice. So the delay of the effect is unintelligible unless the divorce is linked with the coming of tomorrow or the entrance into the house, and so it does not occur immediately. It will occur, however, with the coming of tomorrow or the entrance into the house, for he has made it a cause in relation to some awaited thing. So since it, that is, tomorrow or the entrance, is not present at the moment, the occurrence of what is necessitated [must] await the presence of what is not present. So what is necessitated does not occur unless something has come to be anew, namely, the entrance or the presence of tomorrow. Even if he were to want to delay what necessarily results from the [legal] declaration without [making it] conditional on an event that is not [presently] occurring, it would be unintelligible, despite the fact that it is conventional and that he makes the choice with respect to the details of the convention. So if we cannot posit this [delay] by our own desire, nor make it intelligible, then how can we make it intelligible with respect to essential, intellectual, and necessary necessitations?

[16] Concerning customary things, what occurs by means of our intention is not delayed after there is the intention along with the intention to do it, except by some obstacle. So if the intent and power are realized and the obstacles removed, then the delay of what is intended is unintelligible. The former is conceivable only in the case of resolve, because the resolve is insufficient for the action's existence. In fact, the resolve to write does not occasion writing so long as there is

not also a renewal of the intention, that is, the renewal of the state to act reemerges in the human [at the time he does write].

[17] If the eternal will has the same status as our intention to act, then, unless there is an obstacle, it is inconceivable that what is intended should be delayed and that the intention should be earlier [than the act]. So an intention today to carry through [with some action] tomorrow is intelligible only by way of resolve. If the eternal will has the same status as our resolve, then that [alone] is insufficient for the occurrence of what is resolved; rather, at the time that [what is resolved] is made to exist, there is inevitably a new intentional reemergence, in which there is an admission that the Eternal changes. Moreover, the very same difficulty remains concerning why that emergence or intention or will (or whatever you want to call it) was created now and not earlier. So it still remains [that] a temporal event is either without a cause or there is an infinite regress.

[18] The gist of the discussion reduces to the necessitating thing's existing with the conditions for [the necessitated effect] completed and no anticipated thing remaining, and yet what is necessitated is delayed, and delayed for a period of time whose beginning the imagination cannot even fathom—indeed, a thousand years would not even be a drop in the bucket—and then all of a sudden the necessitated thing pops up without anything's coming to be anew or some condition being realized. This is simply absurd!

[19] The response is to ask whether it is through the necessity of reason or inference that you [philosophers] know that an eternal will that is related to a certain thing's temporal creation (whatever that thing should be) is impossible? According to your own logical terminology, do you know the connection between these two terms [i.e., "eternal Will" and "temporal creation"] through a middle term, or without a middle term? If, on the one hand, you maintain that there is a middle term, which is the way of inference, then it must be made obvious. If, on the other hand, you maintain that that [connection] is known necessarily, then how is it that those at odds with you do not share your view about its being known [necessarily]? [And why is it not the case that] no land contains the school of thought that believes in the world's temporal cre-

ation by an eternal will, when [in fact] there are innumerable [lands whose people believe in creation]? Undoubtedly they do not stubbornly disregard [their] intellects while possessing the knowledge. Thus, it is incumbent [upon you] to construct a logical demonstration that shows the impossibility of that, since in all of what you have stated [you have shown] only improbability and analogy with our resolve and will. On the one hand, [the analogy] is imperfect; for the eternal will is not analogous with temporal intentions. On the other hand, probability taken simply is not enough [to show that the world is eternal] without a demonstration.

[20] It might be said, "We do know by the necessity of reason that what necessitates with the completion of its conditions is inconceivable without there being what is necessitated, and the one who allows [otherwise] is showing contempt for the necessity of reason."

[21] We ask, What is the difference between you and your opponents when they say to you that we necessarily know the inconsistency of the claim, "A single entity knows all the universals without that [knowledge] requiring multiplicity, and without the knowledge being something additional to the entity, and without the knowledge being made multiple despite the multiplicity of objects known"? This is your position concerning God's reality, but with respect to us and to what we understand, it is inconsistent in the extreme! But you will say, "Eternal knowledge is not to be compared with temporal [knowledge]." Now there is a group among you who was aware of the inconsistency of the above and so said that God only knows Himself, in which case He is what intellects, the intellection and the object of intellection, and the whole is one. What if one should say that the unification of intellection, what intellects, and the object of intellection is necessarily impossible, since it is necessarily absurd to suppose that the world's Maker does not know what He makes? If the Eternal knows only Himself (may He be greatly exalted above your claim and the claim of all those who distort the truth), then He simply will not know what He makes.

[22] In fact, we would not be overstepping the requirements of this question to ask by what means would you censure your opponents should they say that the world's eternity is absurd, because it comes

down to affirming an infinite number of rotations of the celestial sphere, whose units are innumerable, while simultaneously [affirming that those units are divisible into] sixths, fourths, and halves? For the sphere of the Sun completes its rotation in one year, whereas it takes the sphere of Saturn thirty years; thus Saturn's rotations are three-tenths those of the Sun. Also Jupiter's rotations are one-half of one-sixth [i.e., one-twelfth] those of the Sun, for it completes a rotation in twelve years. Moreover, Saturn's number of rotations would be infinite, just as is the Sun's; nevertheless, [Saturn's] would be three-tenths [of the Sun's]. In fact, the infinite number of rotations of the sphere of the fixed stars, which takes thirty-six thousand years to complete a single rotation, would be equal to the infinite number of the Sun's eastward motions, which are [completed] in but a day and night. Should one say that this is something whose impossibility is known necessarily, how would you dispose of his claim?

[23] Indeed, one might ask whether the number of these rotations is even, odd, both even and odd, or neither even nor odd. If you say either that they are both even and odd or that they are neither even nor odd, the falsity [of this claim] is known necessarily. If you say that they are even, in which case the even would become odd by one unit, then how could what is infinite be lacking one unit? If you say that they are odd, in which case the odd would become even by one unit, then how could it lack that single unit by which it would become even? Thus, the claim that [the number of rotations] is neither even nor odd becomes incumbent upon you. If it is said that even and odd are attributed only to the finite but are not attributed to the infinite, we reply that a totality composed of units that has a sixth and tenth, as previously mentioned, and yet even and odd is not attributed to it, is known to be false necessarily without reflection. So by what means do you disassociate yourselves from this?

[24] [The philosopher] might say that the locus of the error is in your claim that [the heavenly rotations] are a totality composed of units; for these rotations are nonexistent. [They are] either past, and so they no longer exist, or future, and so they do not yet exist, whereas "totality" indicates presently existing things, but in this case there is nothing existing [such as to be a totality].

[25] We say that number divides into the even and odd, and it is impossible that what is numbered should lie outside of [this division], regardless of whether it is something that continues to exist or perishes. So when we posit a number of horses, we must believe that [the number] is either even or odd, regardless of whether we suppose [the horses] to be existing or nonexistent. If they cease to exist after existing, this proposition does not change.

[26] Moreover, we say to them that it is not impossible according to your own principles that there are presently existing things that are individuals varying in description and [yet] are infinite, namely, the human souls separated from the body by death, in which case they will exist without even and odd being attributed to them. So by what means do you censure the one who says that the falsity of this is recognized necessarily just as you claimed that the eternal will's association with creating temporally is necessarily false? This opinion concerning the soul is the one that Ibn Sīnā chose and perhaps is Aristotle's position as well.

[27] It might be said that the truth lies with Plato's opinion, namely, that the soul is eternal and one and divided only with relation to bodies, but when they are separated from [the bodies], they return to their source and are united.<sup>2</sup> We say that this is most atrocious, most repugnant, and most deserving of being believed to be contrary to the necessity of reason. For we ask: Is Zayd's soul the very same soul as 'Amr's or is it different? If it is the very same one, then it is necessarily false, for everyone is aware of himself and knows that he is not some other individual. If it were the very same, then the two would be the same with respect to the things they know, which are essential attributes of the souls, entering along with the souls into every relation. If you say [Zayd's and 'Amr's souls] are different and divided only by the association with bodies, we say that the division of the individual who has no magnitude with respect to bulk and quantitative magnitude is absurd by the necessity of the intellect. So how will the individual [soul] become two—in fact a thousand—and thereafter return and become one!?

2. See Plato, *Meno* 81a–e; *Phaedo* 81e–82b; and *Republic* 617d–621d.

Indeed, this is intelligible concerning what has bulk or quantity, such as the water of the sea, which divides into streamlets and rivers and then returns to the sea, but as for what has no quantity, how could it be divided!?

[28] The whole of our intention is to make clear that [the philosophers] have neither undermined the belief of those who oppose them concerning the eternal will's relation to creating temporally, except by the pretension of necessity, nor have they disposed of the one who invokes necessity against them in those issues that are opposed to their belief, from which there is no escape.

[29] It might be, [the philosopher complains], that this turns against you in that God was able to create the world before He did by a year or several years owing to His infinite power. It is as if He bided His time, not creating, and then created. Is the [temporal] extent of [His] refraining either finite or infinite? If you say, on the one hand, that it is finite, the existence of the Creator goes back to the finite beginning. On the other hand, if you say that it is infinite, then there would have been a period during which an infinite number of possibilities had elapsed.

[30] We say that in our opinion duration and time are created, and we shall explain the true nature of the answer to this when we dispose of their second proof.<sup>3</sup>

[31] If [the philosopher] asks by what means would you deny one who refrains from invoking necessity and proves [the impossibility of an eternal will's temporally creating the world] in another way, namely, that moments of time are indiscernible with respect to the possibility that the will has a preference for [one of] them [over the others]. So what is it that distin-

3. The philosophers' second argument for the eternity of the world and al-Ghazālī's refutation of it are not translated here; however, the philosophers' argument is much like that outlined in the immediately preceding paragraph, 29. Al-Ghazālī's response was to say that since time is among the things that God creates, it is inappropriate to ask about the time when God was not creating. The philosophers have been misled by the estimative faculty, continued al-Ghazālī, into assuming that since one can imagine something only as existing in time, whatever exists must be in time.

guished one determinate moment of time from what was before or after it, when it is not absurd that what is willed should be earlier and later? In fact, with respect to white and black and motion and rest, you [theologians] yourselves say that the white is temporally created by the eternal will, but the substrate is [just as] receptive to black [as] it is to receiving white. So why does the eternal will prefer white over black? What is it that distinguished one of the two possibilities from the other with respect to the will's having a preference for it? We [philosophers] know necessarily that something cannot be distinguished from its like except by some specific property. Now if [some specific property] were possible, then the temporal creation of the world would be possible. [In fact], however, the possibility [of the world's] existing is just like the possibility [of its] not existing, and the aspect of existing, which is like the aspect of not existing with respect to possibility, would be specified without any specific property. If you [theologians] say that it is the will that specifies, then the question arises about the will's specifying: "Why did it specify [it]?" If you say that why-questions do not apply to the eternal, then let the world be eternal and do not seek its Maker and cause, because why-questions do not apply to the eternal.

[32] Next, [continues the philosopher's objection], if one allows that it is by chance that the eternal [will] specified one of the two possibilities, then it is at the pinnacle of improbability to say that the world is specified by some specific design when it could have been according to some other design instead of [the one it in fact has], and so its occurring as such would be said to be by chance. Just as you said that the will specified one moment to the exclusion of another, it [would have specified] one design to the exclusion of another by chance. If you say this question is not necessary because it arises for whatever He wills and refers to whatever He has power over, we say, "No! Quite the contrary, this question is necessary because it does refer to any moment and is necessary for whoever differs from us concerning [whether there is] any power over [something]."

[33] We respond that the world came to exist when it did and according to the description [with] which it came to exist and in the place in which it came to exist only by will. The will is an attribute whose charac-

ter is to distinguish something from its like. If this were not its character, then one would settle content with the power; however, since the power's relation to two contraries is equal, and there must be something that specifies one thing from its like, it is said that, in addition to power, the Eternal has an attribute whose character is to specify one thing from its like. So asking, "Why did the will specify one of two things?" is just like asking, "Why does knowledge require comprehending the object of knowledge as it is?" The answer is because knowledge is equivalent to an attribute whose character is this, and so in similar fashion the will is equivalent to an attribute whose character is this. In fact, its very essence is to distinguish one thing from its like.

[34] [The philosopher] might say that affirming an attribute whose character is to distinguish one thing from its like is unintelligible. Nay, it is outright contradictory; for the sense of one's being like [the other] is that it cannot be distinguished from [the other], whereas the sense of being distinguished is that it is not like [the other]. One should not erroneously suppose that two black things in two locations are like one another in every respect, since this one is in one location while that one is in another location, and this is necessarily the distinction. Nor are two black things at two moments in time in a single location like one another absolutely, since this one is separate from that one with respect to the moment of time. So how can one be indiscernible from [the other] in every respect!? When we say two black things are similar to one another, by [being similar to one another] we mean with respect to the blackness as something related to the two, specifically [as something black] not absolutely. Otherwise, if the location and time were one [and the same] and nothing different remained, then neither two black things nor their being two would be intelligible at all. This is independently verified [in] that the expression "will" is a metaphorical expression derived from our will, but it is inconceivable of us that we distinguish one from its like. Quite the contrary, if immediately before a thirsty person there were two glasses of water indiscernible in every respect in relation to his desire, he would not be able to take one of the two; rather, he would take only what seems to him superior or easier to lay hold of or nearer to his right

side (if his habit is to move the right hand) or some other such cause, whether hidden or obvious, otherwise distinguishing one thing from its like is altogether inconceivable.

[35] The response comes from two fronts.

[36] The first concerns [the philosopher's] claim that this is inconceivable. Do you recognize it as something necessary or as an inference? It is impossible to invoke either one of these. Also your likening [the eternal will] with our will is an imperfect analogy comparable to the analogy concerning knowledge. God's knowledge is distinct from our knowledge with respect to the issues that we have established. So why would the distinction with respect to [our and the eternal] will be improbable? In fact, it is just like one who says that it is unintelligible that there is a being who exists neither outside the world nor inside of it, nor is connected nor disconnected [from it], [simply] because we do not intellectually grasp it regarding ourselves. [The philosopher] may respond that the former is the work of your estimative faculty, whereas intellectual proof has led those who are intellectually endowed to affirm the latter. So by what means do you [philosophers] deny whoever says that intellectual proof leads to affirming an attribute of God (may He be exalted!) whose character is to distinguish one thing from its like? If the name "will" does not correspond with [this attribute], then give it some other name; for there is no quibble over names, and we have used it only on the sanction of the divine law. Otherwise "will" is something imposed by language in order to designate whatever concerns an object of wish, whereas with respect to God there is no object of wish. Only the meaning is intended, not the utterance.

[37] Moreover, we do not concede that regarding ourselves that is inconceivable.<sup>4</sup> So [let] us posit two indiscernible dates immediately before someone who is hungrily looking at them but is incapable of taking both. He will take one of them necessarily through an attribute whose character is to specify one thing from its like. Everything you mentioned concerning specifications of superiority, proximity, or facility of access,

4. I.e., it is not inconceivable that the human will can distinguish indiscernibles.

we determine, by supposition, to be absent, but the possibility of taking remains. You have two options: either (1) to say that the indiscernibility in relation to his desires is wholly inconceivable, which is fatuous given that the supposition [of the date's indiscernibility] is possible; or (2) to say that when the indiscernibility is supposed, the hungrily longing man would always remain undecided, staring at the two [dates] but not taking either of them simply by willing, but choosing to stand aloof from the desire, which is also absurd, whose falsity is known necessarily. Thus, anyone investigating the true nature of voluntary action, whether directly or indirectly, must affirm an attribute whose character is to specify one thing from its like.

[38] The second manner of objection is for us to say that in your own school of thought you do not dispense with specifying one thing from another; for [according to you], the world came to exist from its necessitating cause according to some specified design similar to its opposite. So why was it specified with some aspects [and not others], when there is no difference in the impossibility of distinguishing one thing from its like, whether with respect to [voluntary] action or what is entailed naturally or by necessity?

[39] You might say that the world's universal order cannot but be according to the manner that came to exist. If the world were either smaller or bigger than what it presently is, then this order would not be complete, and the same is said of the number of the celestial spheres and planets. You maintain that the large is different from the small, and that the many are distinct from the few concerning what is willed of it, and so they are not alike. Quite the contrary, [the philosopher continues], these are different, except that the human [cognitive] faculty is too weak to grasp the aspects of wisdom concerning their magnitudes and their differentiations. The wisdom is grasped only concerning some of them, such as the wisdom concerning the inclination of the sphere of the Zodiac from the equator, and the wisdom concerning the apogee and the eccentric sphere. Frequently, the underlying reason is not grasped concerning them, but their differing is recognized. It is not unlikely that one thing is distinguished from its opposite because of the thing's relation to the order. Moments of time, however, are absolutely similar vis-à-vis possibility and order, and one

cannot claim that if [the world] were created after or before it was by one instant that the order would be inconceivable; for the similarity of the [temporal] states is known necessarily.

[40] We say that even though we could oppose you in a similar way with respect to the [temporal] states—since there are those who said that [God] created [the world] at the moment that was most suitable for its creation—we shall nonetheless not content ourselves with this comparison. Instead, on the basis of your own principle, we shall require you to specify [one thing from its like] in two situations concerning which no difference can be assigned. One is the difference of direction of the motion of the [celestial spheres], and the other is assigning the position of the pole with respect to the motion along the [Zodiacal] belt [i.e., ecliptic motion].

[41] The illustration of the pole is that the heaven is a sphere rotating around two poles as if the two remained fixed. The sphere of the heavens is something whose parts are similar (for it is simple) and especially the outermost celestial sphere, which is the ninth (for it is wholly without stars). Also, [these spheres] are moved<sup>5</sup> around a northern and southern pole. Now we say that there are no two points among the points, which in [the philosophers'] opinion are infinite, that cannot be conceived as being the pole. So why have the northern and southern points been assigned to be poles and to remain fixed? Why does the line of the [Zodiacal] belt not pass through the two points [and continue on] until the pole returns to two opposite points on the [Zodiacal] belt? If there is a wisdom concerning the magnitude of the heavens' largeness and its shape, then what is it that distinguishes the location of one pole from another so that the one was assigned to be a pole and not any of the other parts and points, when all the points are alike and all the parts of the sphere are indiscernible? From this there is no escape.

[42] [The philosopher] might say that perhaps the position that corresponds with the point of the pole is

distinct from the others by a special property that accords with its being a location for the pole so that it remains fixed. So it is as if [the position of the pole] does not move from its place, space, position (or whatever names are applied to it), whereas the celestial sphere's remaining positions do exchange their position relative to the Earth and the [other] spheres by rotating. Now the pole's position remains fixed, and so perhaps that position was worthier of remaining the fixed position than the others.

[43] We respond that in this there is an open acknowledgment of the natural dissimilarity of the parts of the first sphere, and that [the first sphere] is not something whose parts are similar, which is contrary to your own principle, since one [of the principles] by which you proved that the heavens are necessarily spherically shaped is that the naturally simple is something similar [throughout] without dissimilarity. Now the simplest figure is the sphere (for the quadrangle, hexagon, and the like require projecting angles and their dissimilarities, which only results from something in addition to the simple nature). Even though [your response] is contrary to your own standard view, it still does not ward off the necessary consequences following from it; for the question concerning that special property arises, since [there is still the question of] whether the rest of the parts are susceptible to that special property or not. If, on the one hand, [the philosophers] say, "Yes," then why does the special property specify one from among the similar things? If, on the other hand, they say, "That [special property] is only with respect to that position, and none of the others is susceptible to it," we say that the remaining parts, inasmuch as they are a body receptive to the forms, are necessarily similar. That position [of the pole] is no more deserving of that special property [than the others] by simply being either a body or a heaven. Indeed, this sense is common to all the rest of the parts of the heaven. Inevitably, [God's] specifying it is either by fiat or an attribute whose character is to specify one thing from its like. Otherwise it is just as proper for [the theologians] to claim that the [temporal] states are indiscernible with respect to the susceptibility of the world's occurring at [one of] them as it is for their opponent [to claim] that the parts of the heaven are indiscernible with respect to the susceptibility of the

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5. The text's specific claim that there are two things moved probably refers to what has an apparent westward motion, namely, the outermost sphere, and what has an apparent eastward motion, namely, the rest of the spheres.

thing (*ma'nā*), on account of which the position's remaining fixed is more fitting than the position's changing. From this there is no escape.

[44] The second necessity is to assign a direction to the celestial spheres' motion; some of [the spheres] move from east to west, whereas others move in just the opposite direction, despite the indiscernibility of directions. What is their cause, when the indiscernibility of directions is just like the indiscernibility of moments of times and are without difference?

[45] It might be said that if everything were to rotate in one direction, then neither would the relative positions of [the stars and planets] vary, nor would the stars' relations [to one another] as trine, sextine, in conjunction,<sup>6</sup> and the like come to be. Instead, everything would have a single relative position that never varies, but these relations are the principle of coming to be in the world.

[46] We say that we are not clinging to [the position] that the difference of the motion's direction does not exist. Quite the contrary, we say that the outermost celestial sphere is moved from east to west and that which is below it [is moved] in the opposite direction. Now whatever can cause it to happen in this way can cause it to happen in the opposite way, namely, that the outermost celestial [sphere could] be moved from east to west and the opposite for what is below it, in which case there would be the dissimilarities. The motion's direction, setting aside its rotating and being opposite, is indiscernible. So why is one direction distinguished from another that is its like?

[47] If they say, "The two directions are opposites and contrary so how could they be indiscernible?" we say that this is just like one who says that priority and posteriority with respect to the world's existence are contraries, and so how can one invoke their similarity? They allege, however, that one knows the similarities of moments of time by relation to possible existence and to any benefit supposedly thought to exist. But in like fashion one knows the indiscernibility of the

spaces, positions, places, and directions by the relation to the motion's susceptibility and any benefit that is associated with it. So if they are allowed to invoke difference despite this similarity, their opponents are allowed to invoke difference concerning [temporal] states and design as well.

[48] The second objection against the principle of their proof is to say that you [philosophers] regard the temporal creation of a temporal event from an eternal improbable, and yet you [must] inevitably admit it; for there are temporal events in the world and they have causes, but if temporal events were based on temporal events infinitely, there would be an absurdity, which is simply not a belief of an intelligent person. If [an infinite causal chain] were possible, then you could dispense with admitting a Maker and establishing a necessary existence as the basis of the possibles. When temporal events have a limit at which their causal chain terminates such that that limit is the eternal, then, according to [the philosophers' own] principle, the possibility of a temporal event's proceeding from an eternal is inevitable.

[49] It might be said, "We do not find a temporal event's proceeding from an eternal improbable. What we in fact find improbable is that a first temporal event should proceed from an eternal, since there is no difference between the very moment of the creation and what was before it with respect to selectively determining the aspect of existence, which does not [differ] inasmuch as it is a present moment, an instrument, a condition, a nature, a wish, or any other cause. When the event is not the first, it is permitted that it proceeds from [an eternal] when there is the creation of some other thing, such as the preparedness of the receiving substrate and the presence of the fitting moment, and whatever is analogous to this.

[50] We say that the problem concerning the occurrence of the preparedness, the presence of the moment, and whatever is renewed, still stands: either there is an infinite causal regress or it terminates in an eternal from which the first temporal event results.

[51] It might be said that the matter's receptivity to forms, accidents, and qualities is not at all something temporally coming to be. The qualities that temporally come to be are the motion of the celestial

6. That is to say, when the aspect of two bodies is 120 degrees, 60 degrees, or 180 degrees between each other, respectively.

spheres, I mean the rotation, and the renewal of their relational attributes such as being trine, sextine, and quadrate,<sup>7</sup> that is, the relation of some of the parts of the celestial sphere, stars, and planets to one another, and the relation of some of them to the Earth. Examples are the occurrence of ascending and descending, passing from the highest point of elevation, remoteness from the Earth by the star or planet's being at apogee as well as proximity by its being at perigee, and its inclination away from some celestial or terrestrial zones by their being in the north and south. This relation [of the heavenly bodies] follows necessarily because of the rotation, and so the rotation necessitates it. As for the temporal events encompassed within the sublunar realm, namely, by the appearance of generation and corruption, mixing and separating, as well as the alteration of one attribute for another in the elements, all of those are temporal events depending upon one another in an extended ordering of differences. In the end, however, the principles of their causes terminate at the celestial rotation and the stars and planets' relation to one another and to the Earth.

[52] From all of that, [claims the philosopher], it results that the perpetual, eternal rotation is the reason for all temporal events. The movers of the heavens' rotation are the souls of the heavens; for they are alive in a way comparable to our souls in relation to our bodies, but their souls are eternal. So of course the rotation that they necessitate is also eternal. Since the states of the soul are uniform because [the soul] is eternal, the states of the motions are also uniform, that is, they rotate eternally.

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7. That is to say, when the aspect of two bodies is 120 degrees, 60 degrees, or 90 degrees between each other, respectively.

[53] Thus, [continues the philosopher], it is inconceivable that the temporal proceeds from the eternal, except through an intermediate everlasting rotation that is similar to the eternal in one way; for it is perpetually everlasting. In another way, however, [the rotation] is similar to the temporal; for each of its posited parts was temporally created after they were not. So inasmuch as [the rotation] is temporal through its parts and relations, then it is the principle of temporal events, whereas inasmuch as it is everlasting, similar to the states [of the soul], it proceeds from an eternal soul. So, if there are temporal events in the world, there is inevitably rotation, but there are temporal events in the world, and so everlasting rotation is established.

[54] [In response] we say that this lengthy [discourse] does not improve your situation; for the rotation that is the basis [of all temporal events] is either temporal or eternal. If it is eternal, then how does it become a principle for the first temporal events? If it is temporal, then it depends on another temporal event, and there will be an [infinite] causal chain. You maintain that in one respect it is similar to the eternal and in another respect it is similar to the temporal; for it is permanent [and] renewed, that is, it is permanently renewed and renewed permanently. But we ask, "Is it a principle of temporal events insofar as it is permanent or insofar as it is renewed?" If it is insofar as it is permanent, then how is it that something [that exists] at some moments and not others proceeds from something permanent that has similar states? If it is insofar as it is renewed, then what is the cause of its renewal in itself? It would need another cause, and there would be an [infinite] causal chain. This was [our] goal, to establish the necessity [of a temporal event's proceeding from an eternal].

## 24. *The Incoherence of the Philosophers,* Concerning the Natural Sciences

### First Question

The connection between what is customarily believed to be a cause and what is believed to be an effect is not necessary, according to our opinion; but each of the two [namely, cause and effect] is independent of the other.<sup>1</sup> The affirmation of one does not imply the affirmation of the other, nor does the denial of one imply the denial of the other; the existence of one does not necessitate the existence of the other, nor does the non-existence of one necessitate the non-existence of the other. [Take] for example: quenching thirst and drinking, satisfying hunger and eating, burning and contact with fire, light and sunrise, death and decapitation, healing and drinking medicine, relaxing the bowels and taking a purgative and so forth for all the things which are observed to be connected in medicine, astronomy, the arts, and the crafts—indeed the connection of these occurs because the decree of God preceded their being created in this sequence, not because the existence [of this connection] is necessary in itself, not receptive of separation. On the contrary, it is within the power [of God] to create satisfying hunger without eating, to create death without decapitation, to let life continue even if decapitation occurs, and so forth for all connections. The philosophers, however, deny the possibility of this and affirm its impossibility.

Since the investigation of these limitless cases would take too long, let us consider one example, namely, the burning of cotton when it is in contact with fire. We consider it possible that there should be contact between the two without burning and we [also] consider it possible that cotton should be turned into ashes without [having] contact with fire. [The philosophers] deny the possibility of this.

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Translated for this volume by Arthur Hyman from al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfot al-Falāsifat*, ed. M. Bouyges, S.J. (Beyrouth: Imprimerie Catholique, 1927).

1. Literally, this is not that and that not this.

The discussion of this question has three points:

*The first point:* The opponent asserts that the acting cause of burning is fire exclusively and that fire acts by nature not by choice, so that fire, when brought in contact with a subject receptive of it, cannot refrain from acting according to its nature.

This is what we deny. On the contrary, we say that it is God Who, either through the intermediation of angels or without any intermediation, is the acting cause of burning by creating blackness in the cotton, dividing it into its parts, making it burn, or [turning it into] ashes. Fire, however, is inanimate and does not have any action.

What is the proof [of the opponent] that fire is the acting cause? He has no other proof except the observation that burning occurs when there is contact with fire. However, observation only proves that one occurs together with the other, but it does not prove that one occurs through [the agency of] the other. Indeed, there is no other cause but [God]. There is no disagreement [between us and the philosophers<sup>2</sup> concerning the fact] that the introduction of the spirit and of the apprehensive and motive faculties into the semen of animals does not proceed from the natures contained [in the qualities of] heat, cold, moisture, and dryness, or that the father is not the acting cause of his son by depositing the semen into the womb, or that the father

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2. Al-Ghazālī now invokes an argument of the philosophers in order to undermine their position. The philosophers, whose primary spokesman, for al-Ghazālī, is Ibn Sīnā, had maintained that the causal interaction of inanimate bodies does not require extraneous acting causes but that the introduction of the various faculties into animals does. These extraneous causes, according to the philosophers, are the incorporeal intelligences whom they identified with the angels of Scripture. The lowest of these intelligences, the Agent Intellect, was, according to Ibn Sīnā, the “Giver of Forms.” The incorporeal intelligences ultimately depend on God.

is not the acting cause of the son's life, sight, hearing and any of the other faculties which the son has. While it is well known that [these faculties] exist in the father, we do not say that they exist in the son through [the agency] of the father. On the contrary, their existence comes from the First One [God] either without any intermediation or through the intermediation of the angels that are appointed over the things that come to be. This is the argument that the philosophers who speak about the Artisan [God] are unable to answer; and our discussion is with them. It is clear then that the existence [of one thing] together with another does not prove that the existence [of the second] is through [the agency of the first].

We shall make this clear by means of an example. [Let us suppose that] there is a blind man whose eyes are covered by a membrane and who has never heard from anyone about the difference between night and day. If now the membrane is removed from his eyes while it is day, his eyelids are open, and he sees colors, he will think that the opening of his sight is the acting cause of the perception of the forms of colors that has occurred to his eyes. And he will think [further] that as long as his sight is sound and open, the obstruction removed, and the colored object present, it will undoubtedly be necessary that he sees. He will not understand that he cannot see [under these conditions] until the sun sets and the air is dark. Then he will know that the light of the sun is the cause of the impression of colors on his sight. On what evidence does [our] opponent believe that there exist causes in the principles of existence<sup>3</sup> from which there proceed these events when there is contact between them, unless it is that [these events] are constant, not non-existent, and that they are not bodies in motion that disappear? If [these events] would cease to exist or disappear, we would apprehend that they are separable and we would understand that there is a cause beyond our observation. There is no exception to this according to the arguments based on the principles [of the philosophers].<sup>4</sup>

3. In the principles of natural substances.

4. By holding that the incorporeal intelligences, particularly the Giver of Forms, are acting causes in the sub-

For this reason the true philosophers agreed that these accidents and things which come to be, that occur when there is contact between bodies and, in general, when there is a change in their relation, proceed from the Giver of Forms, who is an angel or angels, so that they say that the impression of the forms of colors on the eye occurs through the Giver of Forms, and that sunrise, a sound pupil, and the colored body are only preparatory and preliminary for the subject's reception of these forms. They applied this [explanation] to everything that comes to be. Through this argument is refuted the claim of those who assert that fire is the acting cause of burning, bread the acting cause of satisfying hunger, medicine the acting cause of health, and so forth for other causes.

*The second point:* There is [an opponent] who admits that the things that come to be proceed from the principles of the things that come to be,<sup>5</sup> but that the predisposition [in the affected subject] for receiving the forms occurs through causes that are observed and present. They hold, however, that the principles from which proceed the things that come to be act by necessity and nature, not by way of deliberation and choice, as, for example, the procession of light from the sun. The subjects [which receive these forms] differ in respect to receptivity in accordance with the differences in their predispositions. [For example,] a polished body receives the rays of the sun and reflects them, so that another place is illumined by them, while an opaque body does not receive them [in such a manner]. Air does not prevent the penetration of sunlight, while a stone does. Some things become soft through the sun, while others become hard. Some things, like the fuller's garment, become white, others, like the fuller's face, become black. [In all these cases] the principle is one, but the effects are different because of a difference in the subject's predispositions.

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lunar world, the philosophers are forced to admit that in the case of sublunar substances there is no necessary connection between cause and effect. While the drift of the passage is clear, its final section is somewhat obscure.

5. That is, the incorporeal intelligences, particularly the Giver of Forms. The Abrahamic miracle mentioned further on is recorded in the Qur'ān.

Thus there is no obstacle or incapacity in the principles of existence with respect to that which proceeds from them, but any shortcoming comes from the recipient subjects. If this is the case, and we posit fire and its properties and we [also] posit two similar pieces of cotton that are in contact with the fire in the same way, how can we conceive that one will burn, while the other will not? There is no choice [in this situation]. From this perspective [the proponents of this view] deny that Abraham was thrown into the fire without being burned, while the fire remained fire. They hold that this [occurrence] would only be possible if heat would be denied of fire, in which case fire would cease being fire, or through a change in the essence of Abraham [through which] his body would be changed into stone or into something on which fire has no effect. Neither of these alternatives is possible.

The answer to this opinion is *twofold*:

*First*: we say that we do not admit that [these] principles<sup>6</sup> do not act by choice, nor that God does not act by will. We have already refuted their claim concerning this in the question on the creation of the world.<sup>7</sup> If it is affirmed that the acting cause [God] creates burning through His will, when cotton and fire are in contact, then it is possible, according to reason, that He may not create burning when contact [between cotton and fire] exists.

[The opponent] could reply: this opinion leads to the perpetration of abominable impossibilities. For if you deny the necessary connection between effects and causes and attribute [the effects] to the will of their Creator, and [maintain] that the will does not have a particular well-defined pattern, but that it is possible that it may vary and change, each one of us would have to consider it possible that there might be in his presence wild beasts, raging fires, high mountains, armed enemies, which he will not see, since God did not create sight in him. And someone who has left a book in his house might find, upon returning home, that [the book] has been changed into a handsome, intelligent, and efficient young slave or into an animal. Or if he left a young slave at home, he might find that

he was changed into a dog, or having left ashes he might find them changed into musk, or a stone changed into gold, or gold into a stone. If he were asked about any of these things, he could properly answer: I do not know what is now in my house. The only thing I know is that I left a book in my house, but perhaps by now it has turned into a horse which dirties my library with its urine and excrement, and I have left in my house a jar of water which, perhaps, has changed into an apple tree. For God has power over everything. It is not necessary that a horse should be created from semen, nor is it necessary that a tree should be created from a seed. On the contrary, it is not necessary that it should be created from anything. Perhaps [God] created things which never existed before. Indeed, if someone sees a man whom he has never seen until now and he is asked: “has this man been born?” he might hesitate and answer: “perhaps he was one of the fruits in the market which was changed into a man and he is that man. God has the power over everything that is possible and [the occurrence of] this is possible. There is no escape from hesitation concerning this.” One can go to any length in conceiving [objections] of this kind, but this much [discussion] is sufficient.

In answer to this argument we say: if it could be shown that the existence of the possible [implies] that knowledge of its non-existence cannot be created for man, these absurdities will necessarily follow. But we are not in doubt about the cases that you have described. Indeed, God has created within us knowledge that he will not bring about everything that is possible, and we do not assert that everything possible will necessarily come to be. On the contrary, [we have asserted that] they are possible [whereby we mean that] they may happen or they may not happen. But if something happens habitually time after time, its [habitual] course will be firmly rooted in our minds in accordance with the habitual past occurrence in such a way that it cannot be removed from [the mind]. However, it is possible that a certain prophet may know, in the manner mentioned by [the philosophers],<sup>8</sup> that

6. The principles of existence.

7. See selection 23.

8. Al-Ghazālī reports in the section preceding this selection that the philosophers admit that foreknowledge of the future is possible.

someone will not return from his journey tomorrow. Even though his return is possible, [the prophet] knows that this possibility will not be realized. Even if you consider an ordinary man and you are aware that he does not know any of these strange things nor can he apprehend the intelligible unless he is taught them, yet it cannot be denied that his soul and estimative faculties have the ability to apprehend what the prophets apprehend, insofar as [the prophets] are aware of the possibility of this event, knowing at the same time that this possibility will not be realized. If God interrupts the habitual occurrence by producing [this unusual event], then at the time when the habitual occurrence is interrupted, He removes the knowledge [of the habitual occurrence] from [their] hearts and He does not create it. Nothing prevents us from affirming that, while something is possible for God's power, He knows through His eternal knowledge that He will not do it, even though it is possible at a certain time, and that He will create for us the knowledge that He will not do it at that time. And the statement of the philosophers is nothing but pure abomination.

The *second answer* [to the objection of the opponents] in which there is found an escape from the abominations [of the philosophers]: We admit that fire is created [by God] in such a manner that it will burn two similar pieces of cotton brought in contact with it, and [fire] does not differentiate between them if they are similar in every respect. Yet in spite of this, we consider it possible that a prophet is thrown into fire, yet is not burned, either because the property of fire is altered or because the property of the prophet is altered. [We explain this by affirming] that there comes to be from God or the angels a property in the fire which limits the heat of the fire to its own body, so that it will not pass over [to the body of the prophet]. Heat remains with the fire and fire retains its own form and true nature, yet its heat and effect do not pass over [to something else]. Or there comes to be in the body of the person [the prophet], a property which, while not keeping the body from being flesh and bone, keeps it from the effect of fire. [For example,] we see that someone covers himself with talc, sits down in a flaming oven, yet is not affected by it. Whoever has not observed this will deny it. The denial of the opponent

that it is in [God's] power to confer a certain property upon fire or upon [a person's] body which prevents burning, is like the denial of someone who has not observed talc and its effect. In God's power there are strange and wondrous things, not all of which we have observed. How is it proper that we should deny their possibility or affirm their impossibility?

Similarly, the resurrection of the dead and the changing of a staff into a serpent<sup>9</sup> are possible in this way [as can be seen from the fact] that matter can receive every form,<sup>10</sup> so that earth and the other elements can be changed into a plant, a plant, when eaten by an animal, is changed into blood, blood is changed into semen; and semen, when ejaculated in the womb, creates an animal. This, according to the order of habitual occurrences, takes place over a long period of time. But why does [our] opponent deny that it is within God's power that matter should pass through these stages in a period of time shorter than usual? And if a shorter period of time is allowed, there is nothing that keeps it from being the shortest. As a result these powers are speeded up in their actions and through this the miracle of the prophet comes to be.

[Suppose] someone were to ask: does [the miracle] proceed from the soul of the prophet or from some other principles through the instigation of the prophet?<sup>11</sup>

We answer: when you admit that the downfall of rain, thunder, and earthquake occur through the power of the soul of the prophet, does this [miracle] occur through the soul of the prophet or through some other principle? What we say concerning our example is like

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9. This is an allusion to Moses' miracle, which is reported in the *Qur'ān*.

10. Literally, every thing.

11. In the section preceding this selection, al-Ghazālī reported that the philosophers accepted limited miracles. From the observation that the human soul can produce bodily effects, such as salivation when one thinks of something sweet, they go on to argue that the soul of the prophet can produce effects on other corporeal substances as well. For example, through the power of his soul he can produce rain, thunder, and earthquakes. However, these miracles are limited to ordinary natural occurrences, not to such things as turning a staff into a serpent.

what you say concerning yours.<sup>12</sup> According to us as well as according to you, it is best to attribute this to God, either without intermediation or with the intermediation of angels. When the time appropriate for the occurrence of the miracle has arrived, the mind of the prophet turns toward it. The order of the good becomes clear through its appearance, [and the miracle occurs] to preserve the order of the Law. [This need] determines its existence. In itself [the miracle] is possible, but [God's] generosity is the principle through which it comes to be. However, [the miracle] only proceeds from God when necessity determines its existence and good appears in it. And the good only appears in it when the prophet needs it to establish his prophetic office, in order to promulgate the good.<sup>13</sup>

All this is in agreement with what [the philosophers] have said and they must necessarily admit it, inasmuch as they have opened the gate by allowing the prophet a special property which distinguishes him from the customary run of people.<sup>14</sup> The mind cannot grasp the extent of the special property's possibility. There is no need to consider it false if it rests on [reliable] tradition and its truth is verified by the Law. In general, only the semen receives the form of the animal, and the animal faculties come upon it from the angels, who, according to the opinion [of the philosophers], are the principles of existing things; man is created only from the semen of a man and a horse only from the semen of a horse, inasmuch as its coming to be from a horse determines the preponderance of the form of a horse over other forms and it receives the preponderant form only in this way. Likewise barley does

not come from wheat, nor an apple from the seed of a pear. We further see kinds of animals, such as worms, which are generated from dust, and these do not generate other animals at all. Then there are other animals, such as the mouse, the snake, and the scorpion, which are both not generated and generated from other animals, since they can [also] be generated from dust. The predispositions for receiving forms vary through causes hidden from us, and it is not within the power of flesh to know them. Since, according to the opinion [of the philosophers], these forms do not proceed from the angels through desire and through conjecture,<sup>15</sup> but they proceed upon every subject insofar as there exists a receptivity [for these forms] through the existence of a predisposition in this subject. The predispositions differ, and their principles, according to [the opinion of the philosophers], are the configurations of the stars, and the different relations that the upper [celestial] bodies have in their motions. Through this theory the possibility is opened that there may be strange and wondrous things in the principles of these predispositions, so that those who master talismans can use their knowledge of particular properties of mineral substances and their knowledge of the stars to combine celestial powers with particular properties of mineral substances.<sup>16</sup> And they select the figures of these earthly things and by seeking particular celestial powers for them, they can bring about strange things in the world. Sometimes they drive away snakes and scorpions from the city and [sometimes] bugs, and they bring about other things known to them through the science of the talisman.

Since the principles of these predispositions are not firm and we cannot discover their quantity and we have no way of knowing their limit, how can we know that

12. Literally, what we say concerning this is like what you say concerning that.

13. The points of this rather involuted passage are: God produces miracles through His generosity; miracles occur only when they are necessary; miracles occur to authenticate the prophet and confirm the Law.

14. The following argument is designed to show that since the philosophers admit that the prophet can produce "ordinary" miracles, such as rainfall, thunder, and earthquakes, they are obligated to admit that he can also produce such "extraordinary" miracles as the staff's turning into a snake.

15. The forms proceed by necessity, but variations in their effects are determined by a difference in the predispositions of the subjects that receive them.

16. In the section preceding this selection, al-Ghazālī lists the talismanic art as one of the subsidiary natural sciences. He defines it as "the art of combining celestial powers with the powers of some earthly bodies to produce through this combination a power which can effect unusual things in the earthly [sublunar] world."

it is impossible that some bodies should have predispositions, such that these bodies can pass through the phases of the transformation in a shorter time, as a result of which such a body would be disposed to receive a form, for the reception of which it was not predisposed before? This is considered a miracle. The denial of this only betrays a lack of understanding and an unfamiliarity with the upper [celestial] beings and an unawareness of the secrets of God in the created world and in nature. He who has studied the wonders of the sciences will not in any way consider it impossible for the power of God to bring about any of the things which are related concerning prophetic miracles.

If<sup>17</sup> [an opponent] were to say: we agree with you that everything possible is within the power of God and you agree [with us] that everything impossible is not within His power. [We further agree] that there are some things that are known to be impossible, some things that are known to be possible, and some things concerning which the intellect is undecided, affirming neither their impossibility nor their possibility. What, according to [your opinion], is the definition of the impossible? If it is the simultaneous denial and affirmation of the same thing, then say of two things that one is independent of the other,<sup>18</sup> and that the existence of one does not require the existence of the other. And say [further] that God has the power to create will without knowledge of that which is willed and that He can create knowledge without life. [God also] has the power to move the hand of a dead man, make him sit, write volumes with his hand, engage in the sciences, while his eyes are open and his sight is directed toward what is in front of him, even though he does not see, is not alive, does not have any power. [The dead man writes], because God created these ordered actions when he moved his hand; and the motion comes from God. By regarding this as possible the distinction between a voluntary motion and trembling [an involuntary motion] is nullified, and a prudent act will not indicate the knowledge and power of the acting cause. It would be proper to affirm that God has

the power to change genera, to change a substance into an accident, to change knowledge into power, blackness into whiteness, and sound into smell; just as He has the power to change a mineral into an animal, a stone into gold. From [your opinion] there would necessarily follow impossibilities without limit.

The answer: No one [not even God] has power over the impossible.<sup>19</sup> The impossible is: The simultaneous affirmation and denial of something; or the simultaneous affirmation of the particular and the denial of the universal; or the simultaneous affirmation of two things and the denial of one of them.<sup>20</sup> Whatever does not fall under these [three cases] is not impossible, and what is not impossible, can be done. The co-existence of blackness and whiteness is impossible, since from the affirmation that the form of blackness exists in the subject, we understand the denial that the form of whiteness exists in the same subject and the existence of blackness. If the denial of whiteness is understood from the affirmation of blackness, then the simultaneous affirmation and denial of whiteness is impossible. It is [also] impossible that a certain person should be in two places [at the same time], since we understand from his being in the house that he cannot be outside the house; it is impossible that he should be simultaneously outside the house and in the house, since [his being in the house] is understood from the denial that he is outside the house. Likewise, we understand by will the seeking of something known. Now if seeking is supposed, but not knowledge, there cannot be will; for this supposition would contain the denial of what we have understood [by will]. Further, it is impossible that knowledge be created in a mineral, since we understand by mineral that which does not apprehend. If apprehension were created in it, it would be impossible to call it a mineral in the sense in which we understand [this term]; but if [the mineral] would not apprehend, it would be impossible to call the newly created property knowledge, inasmuch as its subject does not apprehend anything through it.

17. The section does not have any superscription, but it contains a discussion of the third point (see p. 278).

18. See note 1.

19. No one can do what is impossible.

20. The three types of impossibilities are: (1) X is Y, X is not Y; (2) some X is Y, no X is Y; (3) X is both Y and Z, X is not Y (or Z).

This is the reason [why the creation of knowledge in minerals] is impossible.

Some of the Mutakallimūn maintain that God has the power to change genera.

We reply that it is unintelligible that something be changed into something else. If, for example, blackness is changed into power, blackness would remain or not remain. If it ceases to exist [that is, if it does not remain], it would not be changed, but it would not exist any more, and something else would exist. If it would exist together with power, it would not be changed, but some other property would be joined to it. If blackness would remain and power would not exist, then [blackness] has not changed [at all], but it remains as it is. But if we say that blood is changed into semen, we mean thereby that one and the same matter divested itself of one form and has taken on another form. As a result, one form ceases to exist while another form comes to be; but the matter remains the same for the two forms that succeed each other in it. When we say that water, when heated, is changed into air, we mean thereby that the matter which had received the form of water divests itself of this form and has received another form; the matter remains common, but the property [form] has been altered. The case is similar, when we say that the staff is changed into a serpent and dust into an animal. [By contrast,] there is no common matter for accident and substance, nor for blackness and power, nor is there a common matter for other genera. For this reason it is impossible that they should be changed into one another.

As for God's moving the hand of the dead man and raising him up in the form of a living [man] who sits, writes in such a way that through the motion of his hand an ordered script comes to be, this is not impossible in itself as long as we ascribe these events to the will of someone who acts by choice; they are only denied because the habitual course [of events] is denied by its rejection. But your assertion that our explanation will lead to the denial that a prudential act indicates the wisdom of the agent is incorrect, since in this case God is the acting cause, and He is prudent as well as the acting cause. To your objection that there would not remain any distinction between trembling [, an involuntary motion,] and a voluntary motion, we reply that we apprehend this distinction through ourselves, since we observe through ourselves a distinction between these two states and we affirm that the distinction between them comes to be through power. We know that one of these two possibles [namely, trembling and voluntary motion] occurs in one state, the other in another state, that is, in one state the movement is produced with power, in another state without power. Now, when we observe someone else and we see many ordered motions, we attain knowledge of the power behind them. God creates these [kinds] of knowledge by means of the habitual course [of events], through which becomes known the existence of one class of possibles. However, the impossibility of the second class is not proved thereby, as has been shown previously.

## Ibn Rushd (Averroes), 1126–1198

Ibn Rushd marked the climax of Muslim Aristotelianism and, at the same time, its virtual end. Historic circumstances deprived him of followers among his own people, but through translations of his works into Latin and Hebrew he found attentive students as well as faithful disciples among Christians and Jews. His incisive commentaries on most of Aristotle's works earned him the title "The Commentator," and his particular kind of Aristotelianism became a well-defined strand in the fabric of later medieval thought.

First and foremost Ibn Rushd was a commentator on Aristotle's works. As such he considered it his primary task to cleanse Aristotle's teachings of the impurities that had resulted from the erroneous interpretation of earlier commentators. His polemic was directed in particular against Ibn Sīnā who, so he thought, had capitulated to theological interests on certain crucial points. Then again, there appeared to be lacunae in Aristotle's works. Ibn Rushd had no doubts that the missing portions had been discussed by Aristotle in works no longer extant, but in his own days what was missing had to be supplied by judicious interpretation. Still further, the dialectical theologians had dealt with philosophical issues in faulty ways and their mistakes had to be corrected. And finally, al-Ghazālī (see page 265) had launched a grand attack on Aristotelianism as a whole, and this attack had to be repulsed.

Ibn Rushd's position is perhaps best characterized by his critique of a certain Avicennian point. Analyzing substances existing within the world, Ibn Sīnā had distinguished between their essence and existence, affirming at the same time that essence is ontologically prior to existence and that existence is something

added to essence (see page 239). Rejecting this Avicennian distinction, Ibn Rushd held that individual substances exist primarily and, though the mind can distinguish between essence and existence in them, ontologically speaking, the two are one. Thus, while for Ibn Sīnā essences were primary, for Ibn Rushd primacy belonged to individual substances.

In his physical teachings Ibn Rushd accepted the Aristotelian picture of the universe with its distinction between a sublunar and translunar world. The sublunar world is subject to generation and corruption, and substances within it are ultimately reducible to the four elements. The four elements, in turn, are composed of first matter and a substantial or elemental form. The translunar world, on the other hand, is eternal, and it consists of celestial spheres, each of which is composed of a celestial body and an immaterial mover. Yet upon this general scheme Ibn Rushd imposed modifications of his own. An example is provided by his doctrine of the corporeal form. To bridge the gap between Aristotle's prime matter (which is a rather enigmatic notion) and the elemental form, interpreters had posited a corporeal form. This form was common to all bodies and, according to some, it was related in some way to the property of dimensionality. Ibn Sīnā had defined the corporeal form as a form having a predisposition for receiving the three dimensions, insisting, however, that this form must differ from three-dimensionality, since form must be in the category of substance, while dimensionality must be in the category of quantity. Ibn Rushd accepted the alternative rejected by Ibn Sīnā, defining the corporeal form as being identical with indeterminate three-dimensionality. Similarly, Ibn Rushd differed from

Ibn Sīnā in his description of the celestial movers. Invoking an analogy between man and the celestial spheres, both philosophers agreed that the celestial movers consist of soul and intellect. But whereas for Ibn Sīnā the celestial soul inhered within the celestial body while the celestial intelligence existed in separation from it, for Ibn Rushd soul and intelligence were but two aspects of the same immaterial celestial mover.

As in physics so in metaphysics, Ibn Rushd offered interpretations of his own. Ibn Sīnā had maintained that metaphysics not only investigates whatever can be known about God but also demonstrates that He exists. In support of this position he had formulated his famous proof of the existence of God, known as the proof from necessity and contingency (see page 240). Taking issue with Ibn Sīnā, Ibn Rushd maintained that physics establishes the existence of the subject matter of metaphysics and that, moreover, Ibn Sīnā's proof is invalid. Ibn Sīnā's proof, he argued, requires that there exist beings possible through themselves and necessary through another; and it can be shown that such beings do not exist. Hence, for Ibn Rushd, only physical proofs, that is those which establish the existence of a prime mover, are valid for demonstrating that God exists.

In describing God and His relation to the world Ibn Rushd turned from the neoplatonic One to Aristotle's divine thought thinking itself. In thinking himself, God also thinks things and events within the world, and this is what is meant by 'providence.' There is evidence that, according to Ibn Rushd, God thinks the things within the world as particulars. But God's knowledge, as he points out, is completely different from that of man. Ibn Rushd similarly turns from neoplatonic teachings in his account of creation. For Neoplatonists and their Muslim followers the major issue was to explain how a multiple world could come to be from an ultimate principle that was unique and simple. The world, they held, came into being through successive emanations such that each principle emanated from one above it in the scale of being. The problem of the one principle and its many effects held little interest for Ibn Rushd and hence he rejected the doctrine of emanation. Creation, for him, meant the

causal structure of the world, not its emanation from a first principle. If things within the world are said to come from a first principle at all, they all must come from that principle without the aid of intermediary beings. To illustrate this point Ibn Rushd compares the world to an army that is directed by a leader. With the rejection of emanation, Ibn Rushd also denied Ibn Sīnā's Giver of Forms, which is the Agent Intellect insofar as it provides forms for sublunar beings. Creation does not take place in time.

His doctrine of the intellect became one of those teachings for which Ibn Rushd was best known. Like earlier Muslims, he tried to give precision to the various intellects of which Aristotle had spoken in the *De anima* or that the commentators had found implied in Aristotle's words. Ibn Rushd agreed with other Muslims in identifying the Agent Intellect, required as an efficient cause for thinking, with the lowest of the intelligences, namely, that which governs the sublunar sphere (see page 220). But in describing the material intellect he formulated a doctrine of his own. Reviewing earlier opinions, he rejected that of Alexander of Aphrodisias, who had identified this intellect with a bodily predisposition, as well as that of Themistius and others, who had identified it with an individual spiritual substance. Ibn Rushd held that the material intellect, like any intellectual principle, must be immaterial and universal, that is, it must be common to all men. This is Ibn Rushd's much-to-be-debated doctrine of the unity of the intellect. It follows from Ibn Rushd's description that when the material intellect becomes actualized, it remains one for all men and that immortality, therefore, is general, not particular. Knowledge becomes particular through phantasms that accompany it in the imagination of everyone who knows. Ibn Rushd identified Aristotle's "passive intellect" with the imagination.

In addition to commenting on Aristotle, Ibn Rushd also wrote on politics and religion, following in the footsteps of al-Fārābī and other Muslim Aristotelians. Here his orientation was Platonic. With other Muslim Aristotelians, he accepted Plato's notion of an ideal state to which he (as they) added that it comes into being through a prophet-legislator. The state is composed of different classes, and the prophetic law must

speak to all. Ibn Rushd undertook to give a more specific description of the classes within the state. Invoking Aristotelian logical principles, he divided the citizens into the rulers, who can follow demonstrations, the masses, who are persuaded by rhetorical arguments, and, between them, the dialectical theologians, who can understand dialectical discussions (see page 292). But whereas al-Fārābī advocated a refinement of popular religious beliefs, Ibn Rushd insisted that each of the three classes must be taught on its own level. General philosophical enlightenment, according to him, is proscribed. From this exposition it follows that truth appears in three forms—demonstrative, dialectical, rhetorical—the last two being primarily the province of religion. Whether Ibn Rushd finally saw all three forms of truth or only the first as productive of ultimate human happiness has been debated by interpreters.

Abū Walīd Muhammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Rushd was born in 1126 in Cordova, son of a distinguished family of jurists. Though it is not known who his teachers were, it is evident from his works that he received thorough training in Islamic law as well as in the philosophical sciences. In 1153 he was in Marrakesh where he was in contact with the first Almohad ruler ‘Abd al-Mu’min, perhaps in connection with a school that the ruler had founded at that time. Of the next period nothing is known but that he composed a book on medicine. In 1168 he was in Marrakesh once again, and at this time Ibn Ṭufayl, vizier and court physician, introduced him to Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf, the son who had succeeded ‘Abd al-Mu’min as ruler. According to one account, the ruler, at a meeting, asked Ibn Rushd what the Aristotelians think about the eternity of the world. Afraid, Ibn Rushd claimed to be not conversant with their teachings. But when the ruler, in conversation with Ibn Ṭufayl, showed that he was acquainted with philosophy and sympathetic to it, Ibn Rushd no longer hesitated to speak. Somewhat later Ibn Ṭufayl transmitted to Ibn Rushd the ruler’s invitation to comment on Aristotle’s works, which he had found rather obscure. In 1169, Ibn Rushd was appointed judge in Seville, and in that year his first commentary on Aristotle appeared. In 1171 he returned to Cordova, where he probably also filled the office of judge. In 1182,

when Ibn Ṭufayl retired, he took his place as court physician to Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf. When in 1184 the ruler died and his son Abū Yūsuf Ya‘qūb took his place, Ibn Rushd retained his post. In 1195, for reasons which are not too clear, Ibn Rushd fell in disgrace and all his works except those of a purely scientific nature were burned. Having been exiled to Lucenna (near Cordova) for a short time, he was restored to grace. He lived in retirement in Marrakesh until his death in 1198.

The majority of Ibn Rushd’s works were commentaries on Aristotle’s writings. These commentaries appeared in three forms—epitomes, intermediate commentaries, and long commentaries. Altogether he wrote thirty-eight commentaries of the various kinds. Of these only twenty-eight are still extant in the original Arabic, thirty-six in Hebrew translations, and thirty-four in Latin translations dating from various times. Besides a number of opuscula dealing with a variety of philosophical issues, among them *De substantia orbis*, he wrote a refutation of al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of “The Incoherence”* (*Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*). Al-Ghazālī (see p. 265) had written a work entitled *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* (*Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*) in which he attacked the opinions of the Muslim Aristotelians, in particular those of Ibn Sīnā. Ibn Rushd’s *Tahāfut* was his reply. In addition there must be mentioned his work on medicine *Kulliyāt* (*Colliget*), his *Commentary on Plato’s ‘Republic,’* and his treatises on religion, chief among them *The Decisive Treatise Determining the Nature of the Connection between Religion and Philosophy* (*Faṣl al-Maqāl*).

It should be added that the Latin world knew Ibn Rushd primarily as interpreter of Aristotle, and his works on religion were either not known at all or were known very late. Small wonder then that Ibn Rushd, for the Latin world, was a naturalistic Aristotelian who advocated the doctrines of the eternity of the world, absence of individual providence, and collective immortality—all doctrines contradictory to principles of Christian faith. It can readily be seen why Christian philosophers saw in him the father of the theory of the double truth, according to which philosophy and religion can stand in contradiction, although, in fact, he never subscribed to this view.

The first selection is *The Decisive Treatise*. It should be noted that this work is written in the form of a legal responsum designed to show that Qur'anic law requires the study of philosophy for those who are fit for it. It should be added that Abū Naṣr is al-Fārābī and Abū Ḥāmid is al-Ghazālī. For a description of the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites the reader is referred

to the introduction to the Islamic section. The translator divided the work into chapters and the superscriptions are his. The remaining selections are taken from the *Long Commentary on "The Soul"* and from *The Incoherence of "The Incoherence."* They concern Ibn Rushd's theory of the intellect, contrasting the material intellect with the Active Intellect.

## 25. The Decisive Treatise

### What Is the Attitude of the Law to Philosophy?

Thus spoke the lawyer, *imām*, judge, and unique scholar, Abul Walid Muhammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Rushd:

[1] Praise be to God with all due praise, and a prayer for Muḥammad His chosen servant and apostle. The purpose of this treatise is to examine, from the standpoint of the study of the Law, whether the study of philosophy and logic is allowed by the Law, or prohibited, or commanded—either by way of recommendation or as obligatory.

#### 1. The Law Makes Philosophic Studies Obligatory

If teleological study of the world is philosophy, and if the Law commands such a study, then the Law commands philosophy.

[2] We say: If the activity of “philosophy” is nothing more than study of existing beings and reflection on them as indications of the Artisan, that is, inasmuch as they are products of art (for beings only indicate the Artisan through our knowledge of the art in them, and the more perfect this knowledge is, the more perfect the knowledge of the Artisan becomes), and if the Law has encouraged and urged reflection on beings, then it is clear that what this name signifies is either obligatory or recommended by the Law.

The Law commands such a study.

[3] That the Law summons to reflection on beings, and the pursuit of knowledge about them, by the intellect is clear from several verses of the Book of God, Blessed and Exalted, such as the saying of the Exalted,

“Reflect, you {who} have vision” (Qur’ān, 59:2): this is textual authority for the obligation to use intellectual reasoning or a combination of intellectual and legal reasoning (7:185). Another example is His saying, “Have they not studied the kingdom of the heavens and the Earth, and whatever things God has created?”: this is a text urging the study of the totality of beings. Again, God the Exalted has taught that one of those whom He singularly honored by his knowledge was Abraham, peace on him, for the Exalted said (6:75), “So we made Abraham see the kingdom of the heavens and the Earth, that he might be . . .” [and so on to the end of the verse]. The Exalted also said (88:17–18), “Do they not observe the camels, how they have been created, and the sky, how it has been raised up?” and He said (3:191), “and they give thought to the creation of the heavens and the Earth,” and so on in countless other verses.

This study must be conducted in the best manner, by demonstrative reasoning.

[4] Since it has now been established that the Law has rendered obligatory the study of beings by the intellect and reflection on them, and since reflection is nothing more than inference and drawing out of the unknown from the known, and since this is reasoning or at any rate done by reasoning, therefore we are under an obligation to carry on our study of beings by intellectual reasoning. It is further evident that this manner of study, to which the Law summons and urges, is the most perfect kind of study using the most perfect kind of reasoning; and this is the kind called “demonstration.”

To master this instrument the religious thinker must make a preliminary study of logic, just as the lawyer must study legal reasoning. This is no more heretical in the one case than in the other. And logic must be learned from the ancient masters, regardless of the fact that they were not Muslims.

[5] The Law, then, has urged us to have demonstrative knowledge of God the Exalted and all the beings of His creation. But it is preferable and even necessary for anyone who wants to understand God

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From *Averroes on the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy*, tr. G. F. Hourani, (London: Luzac and Co., Ltd., 1961). Reprinted by permission of the Gibb Memorial Trust. Footnotes by Jon McGinnis and David C. Reisman, reprinted from *Classical Arabic Philosophy*, tr. Jon McGinnis and David C. Reisman (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2007). Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

the Exalted and the other beings demonstratively to have first understood the kinds of demonstration and their conditions [of validity], and in what respects demonstrative reasoning differs from dialectical, rhetorical, and fallacious reasoning. But this is not possible unless he has previously learned what reasoning as such is, and how many kinds it has, and which of them are valid and which invalid. This in turn is not possible unless he has previously learned the parts of reasoning, of which it is composed, that is, the premises and their kinds. Therefore, he who believes in the Law, and obeys the command to study beings, ought prior to his study to gain a knowledge of these things, which have the same place in theoretical studies as instruments have in practical activities.

[6] For just as the lawyer infers from the Divine command to him to acquire knowledge of the legal categories that he is under obligation to know the various kinds of legal syllogisms, and which are valid and which invalid, in the same way he who would know [God] ought to infer from the command to study beings that he is under obligation to acquire a knowledge of intellectual reasoning and its kinds. Indeed it is more fitting for him to do so, for if the lawyer infers from the saying of the Exalted, “Reflect, you who have vision,” the obligation to acquire a knowledge of legal reasoning, how much more fitting and proper that he who would know God should infer from it the obligation to acquire a knowledge of intellectual reasoning!

[7] It cannot be objected: “This kind of study of intellectual reasoning is a heretical innovation, since it did not exist among the first believers.” For the study of legal reasoning and its kinds is also something that has been discovered since the first believers, yet it is not considered to be a heretical innovation. So the objector should believe the same about the study of intellectual reasoning. (For this there is a reason, which it is not the place to mention here.) But most [masters] of this religion support intellectual reasoning, except a small group of gross literalists who can be refuted by [sacred] texts.

[8] Since it has now been established that there is an obligation of the Law to study intellectual reasoning and its kinds, just as there is an obligation to study legal reasoning, it is clear that if none of our predecessors

had formerly examined intellectual reasoning and its kinds, we should be obliged to undertake such an examination from the beginning, and that each succeeding scholar would have to seek help in that task from his predecessor in order that knowledge of the subject might be completed. For it is difficult or impossible for one man to find out by himself and from the beginning all that he needs of that subject, as it is difficult for one man to discover all the knowledge that he needs of the kinds of legal reasoning; indeed this is even truer of knowledge of intellectual reasoning.

[9] But if someone other than ourselves has already examined that subject, it is clear that we ought to seek help towards our goal from what has been said by such a predecessor on the subject, regardless of whether this other one shares our religion or not. For when a valid sacrifice is performed with a certain instrument, no account is taken, in judging the validity of the sacrifice, of whether the instrument belongs to one who shares our religion or to one who does not, so long as it fulfils the conditions for validity. By “those who do not share our religion,” I refer to those ancients who studied these matters before Islam. So if such is the case, and everything that is required in the study of the subject of intellectual syllogisms has already been examined in the most perfect manner by the ancients, presumably we ought to lay hands on their books in order to study what they said about that subject; and if it is all correct we should accept it from them, while if there is anything incorrect in it, we should draw attention to that.

After logic we must proceed to philosophy proper. Here too we have to learn from our predecessors, just as in mathematics and law. Thus, it is wrong to forbid the study of ancient philosophy. Harm from it is accidental, like harm from taking medicine, drinking water, or studying law.

[10] When we have finished with this sort of study and acquired the instruments by whose aid we are able to reflect on beings and the indications of art in them (for he who does not understand the art does not understand the product of art, and he who does not understand the product of art does not understand the Artisan), then we ought to begin the examination of beings in the order and manner we have learned from the art of demonstrative syllogisms.

[11] And again it is clear that in the study of beings this aim can be fulfilled by us perfectly only through successive examinations of them by one man after another, the later ones seeking the help of the earlier in that task, on the model of what has happened in the mathematical sciences. For if we suppose that the art of geometry did not exist in this age of ours, and likewise the art of astronomy, and a single person wanted to ascertain by himself the sizes of the heavenly bodies, their shapes, and their distances from each other, that would not be possible for him—for example, to know the proportion of the Sun to the Earth or other facts about the sizes of the stars—even though he were the most intelligent of men by nature, unless by a revelation or something resembling revelation. Indeed, if he were told that the Sun is about 150 or 160 times as great as the Earth, he would think this statement madness on the part of the speaker, although this is a fact that has been demonstrated in astronomy so surely that no one who has mastered that science doubts it.

[12] But what calls even more strongly for comparison with the art of mathematics in this respect is the art of the principles of law; and the study of law itself was completed only over a long period of time. And if someone today wanted to find out by himself all the arguments that have been discovered by the theorists of the legal schools on controversial questions, about which debate has taken place between them in most countries of Islam (except the West), he would deserve to be ridiculed, because such a task is impossible for him, apart from the fact that the work has been done already. Moreover, this is a situation that is self-evident not in the scientific arts alone but also in the practical arts; for there is not one of them that a single man can construct by himself. Then how can he do it with the art of arts, philosophy? If this is so, then whenever we find in the works of our predecessors of former nations a theory about beings and a reflection on them conforming to what the conditions of demonstration require, we ought to study what they said about the matter and what they affirmed in their books. And we should accept from them gladly and gratefully whatever in these books accords with the truth, and draw attention to and warn against what does not accord with the truth, at the same time excusing them.

[13] From this it is evident that the study of the books of the ancients is obligatory by Law, since their aim and purpose in their books is just the purpose to which the Law has urged us, and that whoever forbids the study of them to anyone who is fit to study them, that is, anyone who unites two qualities, (1) natural intelligence, and (2) religious integrity and moral virtue, is blocking people from the door by which the Law summons them to knowledge of God, the door of theoretical study that leads to the truest knowledge of Him; and such an act is the extreme of ignorance and estrangement from God the Exalted.

[14] And if someone errs or stumbles in the study of these books owing to a deficiency in his natural capacity, or bad organization of his study of them, or being dominated by his passions, or not finding a teacher to guide him to an understanding of their contents, or a combination of all or more than one of these causes, it does not follow that one should forbid them to anyone who is qualified to study them. For this manner of harm that arises owing to them is something that is attached to them by accident, not by essence; and when a thing is beneficial by its nature and essence, it ought not to be shunned because of something harmful contained in it by accident. This was the thought of the Prophet, peace on him, on the occasion when he ordered a man to give his brother honey to drink for his diarrhea, and the diarrhea increased after he had given him the honey: When the man complained to him about it, he said, “God spoke the truth; it was your brother’s stomach that lied.” We can even say that a man who prevents a qualified person from studying books of philosophy, because some of the most vicious people may be thought to have gone astray through their study of them, is like a man who prevents a thirsty person from drinking cool, fresh water until he dies of thirst, because some people have choked to death on it. For death from water by choking is an accidental matter, but death by thirst is essential and necessary.

[15] Moreover, this accidental effect of this art is a thing that may also occur accidentally from the other arts. To how many lawyers has law been a cause of lack of piety and immersion in this world! Indeed we find most lawyers in this state, although their art by its essence calls for nothing but practical virtue. Thus, it is not strange if the same thing that occurs accidentally

in the art that calls for practical virtue should occur accidentally in the art that calls for intellectual virtue.

For every Muslim the Law has provided a way to truth suitable to his nature, through demonstrative, dialectical, or rhetorical methods.

[16] Since all this is now established, and since we, the Muslim community, hold that this divine religion of ours is true and that it is this religion that incites and summons us to the happiness that consists in the knowledge of God, Mighty and Majestic, and of His creation, that [end] is appointed for every Muslim by the method of assent that his temperament and nature require. For the natures of men are on different levels with respect to [their paths to] assent. One of them comes to assent through demonstration; another comes to assent through dialectical arguments just as firmly as the demonstrative man through demonstration, since his nature does not contain any greater capacity; while another comes to assent through rhetorical arguments, again just as firmly as the demonstrative man through demonstrative arguments.

[17] Thus, since this divine religion of ours has summoned people by these three methods, assent to it has extended to everyone except him who stubbornly denies it with his tongue or him for whom no method of summons to God the Exalted has been appointed in religion owing to his own neglect of such matters. It was for this purpose that the Prophet, peace on him, was sent with a special mission to “the white man and the black man” alike; I mean because his religion embraces all the methods of summons to God the Exalted. This is clearly expressed in the saying of God the Exalted (16:125), “Summon to the way of your Lord by wisdom and by good preaching, and debate with them in the most effective manner.”

## 2. Philosophy Contains Nothing Opposed to Islam

Demonstrative truth and scriptural truth cannot conflict.

[18] Now since this religion is true and summons to the study which leads to knowledge of the Truth, we the Muslim community know definitely that demonstrative study does not lead to [conclusions] conflict-

ing with what Scripture has given us; for truth does not oppose truth but accords with it and bears witness to it.

If the apparent meaning of Scripture conflicts with demonstrative conclusions, it must be interpreted allegorically, that is, metaphorically.

[19] This being so, whenever demonstrative study leads to any manner of knowledge about any being, that being is inevitably either unmentioned or mentioned in Scripture. If it is unmentioned there is no contradiction, and it is in the same case as an act whose category is unmentioned, so that the lawyer has to infer it by reasoning from Scripture. If Scripture speaks about it, the apparent meaning of the words inevitably either accords or conflicts with the conclusions of demonstration about it. If this [apparent meaning] accords, there is no argument. If it conflicts, there is a call for allegorical interpretation of it. The meaning of “allegorical interpretation” is: extension of the significance of an expression from real to metaphorical significance, without forsaking therein the standard metaphorical practices of Arabic, such as calling a thing by the name of something resembling it or a cause or consequence or accompaniment of it, or other things such as are enumerated in accounts of the kinds of metaphorical speech.

If the lawyer can do this, the religious thinker certainly can. Indeed these allegorical interpretations always receive confirmation from the apparent meaning of other passages of Scripture.

[20] Now if the lawyer does this in many decisions of religious law, with how much more right is it done by the possessor of demonstrative knowledge! For the lawyer has at his disposition only reasoning based on opinion, while he who would know [God] [has at his disposition] reasoning based on certainty. So we affirm definitely that whenever the conclusion of a demonstration is in conflict with the apparent meaning of Scripture, that apparent meaning admits of allegorical interpretation according to the rules for such interpretation in Arabic. This proposition is questioned by no Muslim and doubted by no believer. But its certainty is immensely increased for those who have had close dealings with this idea and put it to the test, and made it their aim to reconcile the assertions of intel-

lect and tradition. Indeed, we may say that whenever a statement in Scripture conflicts in its apparent meaning with a conclusion of demonstration, if Scripture is considered carefully and the rest of its contents searched page by page, there will invariably be found among the expressions of Scripture something that in its apparent meaning bears witness to that allegorical interpretation or comes close to bearing witness.

All Muslims accept the principle of allegorical interpretation; they only disagree about the extent of its application.

[21] In the light of this idea, the Muslims are unanimous in holding that it is not obligatory either to take all the expressions of Scripture in their apparent meaning or to extend them all from their apparent meaning by allegorical interpretation. They disagree [only] over which of them should and which should not be so interpreted: the Ash'arites for instance give an allegorical interpretation to the verse about God's directing Himself and the Tradition about His descent, while the Hanbalites take them in their apparent meaning.

The double meaning has been given to suit people's diverse intelligence. The apparent contradictions are meant to stimulate the learned to deeper study.

[22] The reason why we have received a Scripture with both an apparent and an inner meaning lies in the diversity of people's natural capacities and the difference of their innate dispositions with regard to assent. The reason why we have received in Scripture texts whose apparent meanings contradict each other is in order to draw the attention of those who are well grounded in science to the interpretation that reconciles them. This is the idea referred to in the words received from the Exalted (3:7), "He it is who has sent down to you the Book, containing certain verses clear and definite" [and so on], down to the words, "those who are well grounded in science."

In interpreting texts allegorically, we must never violate Islamic consensus when it is certain. But to establish it with certainty with regard to theoretical texts is impossible, because there have always been scholars who would not divulge their interpretation of such texts.

[23] It may be objected: "There are some things in Scripture that the Muslims have unanimously agreed

to take in their apparent meaning, others [that they have agreed] to interpret allegorically, and others about which they have disagreed; is it permissible, then, that demonstration should lead to interpreting allegorically what they have agreed to take in its apparent meaning, or to taking in its apparent meaning what they have agreed to interpret allegorically?" We reply: If unanimous agreement is established by a method that is certain, such [a result] is not sound; but if [the existence of] agreement on those things is a matter of opinion, then it may be sound. This is why Abū Hāmid, Abul-Ma'ālī, and other leaders of thought said that no one should be definitely called an unbeliever for violating unanimity on a point of interpretation in matters like these.

[24] That unanimity on theoretical matters is never determined with certainty, as it can be on practical matters, may be shown to you by the fact that it is not possible for unanimity to be determined on any question at any period unless that period is strictly limited by us, and all the scholars existing in that period are known to us (that is, known as individuals and in their total number), and the doctrine of each of them on the question has been handed down to us on unassailable authority, and, in addition to all this, unless we are sure that the scholars existing at the time were in agreement that there is not both an apparent and an inner meaning in Scripture, that knowledge of any question ought not to be kept secret from anyone, and that there is only one way for people to understand Scripture. But it is recorded in Tradition that many of the first believers used to hold that Scripture has both an apparent and an inner meaning, and that the inner meaning ought not to be learned by anyone who is not a man of learning in this field and who is incapable of understanding it. Thus, for example, Bukhārī reports a saying of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, may God be pleased with him, "Speak to people about what they know. Do you want God and His Prophet to be accused of lying?" Other examples of the same kind are reported about a group of early believers. So how can it possibly be conceived that a unanimous agreement can have been handed down to us about a single theoretical question, when we know definitely that not a single period has been without scholars who held that

there are things in Scripture whose true meaning should not be learned by all people?

[25] The situation is different in practical matters: everyone holds that the truth about these should be disclosed to all people alike, and to establish the occurrence of unanimity about them we consider it sufficient that the question [at issue] should have been widely discussed and that no report of controversy about it should have been handed down to us. This is enough to establish the occurrence of unanimity on matters of practice, but on matters of doctrine the case is different.

Al-Ghazālī's charge of unbelief against al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, for asserting the world's eternity and God's ignorance of particulars and denying bodily resurrection, is only tentative not definite.

[26] You may object: "If we ought not to call a man an unbeliever for violating unanimity in cases of allegorical interpretation, because no unanimity is conceivable in such cases, what do you say about the Muslim philosophers, like Abū Naṣr and Ibn Sīnā? For Abū Ḥāmid {al-Ghazālī} called them both definitely unbelievers in the book of his known as *The Disintegration* [*The Incoherence of the Philosophers*], on three counts: their assertions of the pre-eternity of the world, and that God the Exalted does not know particulars" (may He be Exalted far above that [ignorance]!), "and their allegorical interpretation of the passages concerning the resurrection of bodies and states of existence in the next life."

[27] We answer: it is apparent from what he said on the subject that his calling them both unbelievers on these counts was not definite, since he made it clear in *The Book of Distinction* that calling people unbelievers for violating unanimity can only be tentative.

Such a charge cannot be definite, because there has never been a consensus against allegorical interpretation. The Qur'ān itself indicates that it has inner meanings that it is the special function of the demonstrative class to understand.

[28] Moreover, it is evident from what we have said that a unanimous agreement cannot be established in questions of this kind, because of the reports that many of the early believers of the first generation, as well as others, have said that there are allegorical interpretations that ought not to be expressed except to those

who are qualified to receive allegories. These are "those who are well grounded in science"; for we prefer to place the stop after the words of God the Exalted (3:7) "and those who are well grounded in science," because if the scholars did not understand allegorical interpretation, there would be no superiority in their assent that would oblige them to a belief in Him not found among the unlearned. God has described them as those who believe in Him, and this can only be taken to refer to the belief that is based on demonstration; and this [belief] only occurs together with the science of allegorical interpretation. For the unlearned believers are those whose belief in Him is not based on demonstration; and if this belief that God has attributed to the scholars is peculiar to them, it must come through demonstration, and if it comes through demonstration it only occurs together with the science of allegorical interpretation. For God the Exalted has informed us that those [verses] have an allegorical interpretation that is the truth, and demonstration can only be of the truth. That being the case, it is not possible for general unanimity to be established about allegorical interpretations, which God has made peculiar to scholars. This is self-evident to any fair-minded person.

Besides, al-Ghazālī was mistaken in ascribing to the Peripatetics the opinion that God does not know particulars. Their view is that His knowledge of both particulars and universals differs from ours in being the cause, not an effect, of the object known. They even hold that God sends premonitions in dreams of particular events.

[29] In addition to all this we hold that Abū Ḥāmid was mistaken about the Peripatetic philosophers in ascribing to them the assertion that God, Holy and Exalted, does not know particulars at all. In reality they hold that God the Exalted knows them in a way that is not of the same kind as our way of knowing them. For our knowledge of them is an effect of the object known, originated when it comes into existence and changing when it changes; whereas Glorious God's Knowledge of existence is the opposite of this: it is the cause of the object known, which is existent being. Thus to suppose the two kinds of knowledge similar to each other is to identify the essences and properties of opposite things, and that is the extreme of ignorance.

And if the name of “knowledge” is predicated of both originated and eternal knowledge, it is predicated by sheer homonymy, as many names are predicated of opposite things: for example, *jalal* of great and small, *sarīm* of light and darkness. Thus there exists no definition embracing both kinds of knowledge at once, as the theologians of our time imagine. We have devoted a separate essay to this question, impelled by one of our friends.<sup>1</sup>

[30] But how can anyone imagine that the Peripatetics say that God the Glorious does not know particulars with His eternal Knowledge, when they hold that true visions include premonitions of particular events due to occur in future time, and that this warning foreknowledge comes to people in their sleep from the eternal Knowledge that orders and rules the universe? Moreover, it is not only particulars that they say God does not know in the manner in which we know them but universals as well; for the universals known to us are also effects of the nature of existent being, while with His Knowledge the reverse is true. Thus the conclusion to which demonstration leads is that His Knowledge transcends qualification as “universal” or “particular.” Consequently there is no point in disputing about this question, that is, whether to call them unbelievers or not.

On the question of the world, the ancient philosophers agree with the Ash‘arites that it is originated and coeval with time. The Peripatetics only disagree with the Ash‘arites and the Platonists in holding that past time is infinite. This difference is insufficient to justify a charge of unbelief.

[31] Concerning the question whether the world is pre-eternal or came into existence, the disagreement between the Ash‘arite theologians and the ancient philosophers is in my view almost resolvable into a disagreement about naming, especially in the case of certain of the ancients. For they agree that there are three classes of beings: two extremes and one intermediate between the extremes. They agree also about naming

the extremes; but they disagree about the intermediate class.

[32] [1] One extreme is a being that is brought into existence from something other than itself and by something, that is, by an efficient cause and from some matter; and it, that is, its existence, is preceded by time. This is the status of bodies whose generation is apprehended by sense, for example, the generation of water, air, earth, animals, plants, and so on. All alike, ancients and Ash‘arites, agree in naming this class of beings “originated.” [2] The opposite extreme to this is a being which is not made from or by anything and (is) not preceded by time; and there, too, all members of both schools agree in naming it “pre-eternal.” This being is apprehended by demonstration; it is God, Blessed and Exalted, Who is the Maker, Giver of being and Sustainer of the universe; may He be praised and His Power exalted!

[33] [3] The class of being that is between these two extremes is that which is not made from anything and not preceded by time, but which is brought into existence by something, that is, by an agent. This is the world as a whole. Now they all agree on the presence of these three characters in the world. For the theologians admit that time does not precede it, or rather this is a necessary consequence for them, since time according to them is something that accompanies motion and bodies. They also agree with the ancients in the view that future time is infinite, and likewise future being. They only disagree about past time and past being: the theologians hold that it is finite (this is the doctrine of Plato and his followers), while Aristotle and his school hold that it is infinite, as is the case with future time.

[34] Thus, it is clear that [3] this last being bears a resemblance both to [1] the being that is really generated and to [2] the pre-eternal Being. So those who are more impressed with its resemblance to the pre-eternal than its resemblance to the originated name it “pre-eternal,” while those who are more impressed with its resemblance to the originated name it “originated.” But in truth it is neither really originated nor really pre-eternal, since the really originated is necessarily perishable and the really pre-eternal has no cause. Some—Plato and his followers—name it “originated and coeval with time,” because time according to them is finite in the past.

1. That is, *The Epistle of Dedication (Risālat al-Ihdā’)*; an English translation is available in Averroes, *Decisive Treatise and Epistle Dedicatory*, tr. Charles E. Butterworth (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2002).

[35] Thus, the doctrines about the world are not so very far apart from each other that some of them should be called irreligious and others not. For this to happen, opinions must be divergent in the extreme, that is, contraries such as the theologians suppose to exist on this question; that is, [they hold] that the names “pre-eternity” and “coming into existence” as applied to the world as a whole are contraries. But it is now clear from what we have said that this is not the case.

Anyhow, the apparent meaning of Scripture is that there was a being and time before God created the present being and time. Thus the theologians’ interpretation is allegorical and does not command unanimous agreement.

[36] Over and above all this, these opinions about the world do not conform to the apparent meaning of Scripture. For if the apparent meaning of Scripture is searched, it will be evident from the verses that give us information about the bringing into existence of the world that its form really is originated, but that being itself and time extend continuously at both extremes, that is, without interruption. Thus, the words of God the Exalted (11:7), “He it is Who created the heavens and the Earth in six days, and His throne was on the water,” taken in their apparent meaning imply that there was a being before this present being, namely, the throne and the water, and a time before this time, that is, the one that is joined to the form of this being before this present being, namely, the number of the movement of the celestial sphere. And the words of the Exalted (14:48), “On the day when the Earth shall be changed into other than Earth, and the heavens as well,” also in their apparent meaning imply that there will be a second being after this being. And the words of the Exalted (41:11), “Then He directed Himself towards the sky, and it was smoke,” in their apparent meaning imply that the heavens were created from something.

[37] Thus the theologians too in their statements about the world do not conform to the apparent meaning of Scripture but interpret it allegorically. For it is not stated in Scripture that God was existing with absolutely nothing else: a text to this effect is nowhere to be found. Then how is it conceivable that the theologians’ allegorical interpretation of these verses could

meet with unanimous agreement, when the apparent meaning of Scripture that we have mentioned about the existence of the world has been accepted by a school of philosophers!

On such difficult questions, error committed by a qualified judge of his subject is excused by God, while error by an unqualified person is not excused.

[38] It seems that those who disagree on the interpretation of these difficult questions earn merit if they are in the right and will be excused [by God] if they are in error. For assent to a thing as a result of an indication [of it] arising in the soul is something compulsory, not voluntary: that is, it is not for us [to choose] not to assent or to assent as it is to stand up or not to stand up. And since free choice is a condition of obligation, a man who assents to an error as a result of a consideration that has occurred to him is excused, if he is a scholar. This is why the Prophet, peace on him, said, “If the judge after exerting his mind makes a right decision, he will have a double reward; and if he makes a wrong decision, he will [still] have a single reward.” And what judge is more important than he who makes judgments about being, that it is thus or not thus? These judges are the scholars, specially chosen by God for [the task of] allegorical interpretation, and this error that is forgivable according to the Law is only such error as proceeds from scholars when they study the difficult matters that the Law obliges them to study.

[39] But error proceeding from any other class of people is sheer sin, equally whether it relates to theoretical or to practical matters. For just as the judge who is ignorant of the [Prophet’s] way of life is not excused if he makes an error in judgment, so he who makes judgments about beings without having the proper qualifications for [such] judgments is not excused but is either a sinner or an unbeliever. And if he who would judge what is allowed and forbidden is required to combine in himself the qualifications for exercise of personal judgment, namely, knowledge of the principles [of law] and knowledge of how to draw inferences from those principles by reasoning, how much more properly is he who would make judgments about beings required to be qualified, that is, to know the primary intellectual principle(s) and the way to draw inferences from them!

Texts of Scripture fall into three kinds with respect to the excusability of error. [1] Texts that must be taken in their apparent meaning by everyone. Since the meaning can be understood plainly by demonstrative, dialectical, and rhetorical methods alike, no one is excused for the error of interpreting these texts allegorically. [2] Texts that must be taken in their apparent meaning by the lower classes and interpreted allegorically by the demonstrative class. It is inexcusable for the lower classes to interpret them allegorically or for the demonstrative class to take them in their apparent meaning. [3] Texts whose classification under the previous headings is uncertain. Error in this matter by the demonstrative class is excused.

[40] In general, error about Scripture is of two types: Either error that is excused to one who is a qualified student of that matter in which the error occurs (as the skillful doctor is excused if he commits an error in the art of medicine and the skillful judge if he gives an erroneous judgment), but not excused to one who is not qualified in that subject; or error that is not excused to any person whatever, and that is unbelief if it concerns the principles of religion, or heresy if it concerns something subordinate to the principles.

[41] This [latter] error is that which occurs about [1] matters, knowledge of which is provided by all the different methods of indication, so that knowledge of the matter in question is in this way possible for everyone. Examples are acknowledgment of God, Blessed and Exalted; of the prophetic missions; and of happiness and misery in the next life; for these three principles are attainable by the three classes of indication, by which everyone without exception can come to assent to what he is obliged to know: I mean the rhetorical, dialectical, and demonstrative indications. So whoever denies such a thing, when it is one of the principles of the Law, is an unbeliever who persists in defiance with his tongue though not with his heart, or neglects to expose himself to learning the indication of its truth. For if he belongs to the demonstrative class of men, a way has been provided for him to assent to it, by demonstration; if he belongs to the dialectical class that is convinced by preaching, the way for him is by preaching. With this in view, the Prophet, peace on him, said, "I have been ordered to fight people until they say, 'There is no god but God,' and believe in

me"; he means, by any of the three methods of attaining belief that suits them.

[42] [2] With regard to things that by reason of their recondite character are only knowable by demonstration, God has been gracious to those of His servants who have no access to demonstration, on account of their natures, habits, or lack of facilities for education: He has coined for them images and likenesses of these things, and summoned them to assent to those images, since it is possible for assent to those images to come about through the indications common to all men, that is, the dialectical and rhetorical indications. This is the reason why Scripture is divided into apparent and inner meanings: the apparent meaning consists of those images that are coined to stand for those ideas, while the inner meaning is those ideas [themselves], which are clear only to the demonstrative class. These are the four or five classes of beings mentioned by Abū Ḥāmid in *The Book of Distinction*.<sup>2</sup>

[43] [1] But when it happens, as we said, that we know the thing itself by the three methods, we do not need to coin images of it, and it remains true in its apparent meaning, not admitting allegorical interpretation. If an apparent text of this kind refers to principles, anyone who interprets it allegorically is an unbeliever, for example, anyone who thinks that there is no happiness or misery in the next life, and that the only purpose of this teaching is that men should be safeguarded from each other in their bodily and sensible lives, that it is but a practical device, and that man has no other goal than his sensible existence.

[44] If this is established, it will have become clear to you from what we have said that there are [1] apparent texts of Scripture that it is not permitted to interpret allegorically; to do so on fundamentals is unbelief, on subordinate matters, heresy. There are also [2] apparent texts that have to be interpreted allegorically by men of the demonstrative class; for such men to take them in their apparent meaning is unbelief, while for those who are not of the demonstrative class

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2. The five classes would appear to be (1) the essential, (2) the sensible, (3) the imaginative, (4) the intellectual, and (5) simile; see Butterworth's note in his translation of the *Decisive Treatise*, p. 55, fn. 37.

to interpret them allegorically and take them out of their apparent meaning is unbelief or heresy on their part.

[45] Of this [latter] class are the verse about God's directing Himself and the Tradition about His descent. That is why the Prophet, peace on him, said in the case of the black woman, when she told him that God was in the sky, "Free her, for she is a believer." This was because she was not of the demonstrative class; and the reason for his decision was that the class of people to whom assent comes only through the imagination, that is, who do not assent to a thing except in so far as they can imagine it, find it difficult to assent to the existence of a being that is unrelated to any imaginable thing. This applies as well to those who understand from the relation stated merely [that God has] a place; these are people who have advanced a little in their thought beyond the position of the first class, [by rejecting] belief in corporeality. Thus, the [proper] answer to them with regard to such passages is that they belong to the ambiguous texts, and that the stop is to be placed after the words of God the Exalted (3:7), "And no one knows the interpretation thereof except God." The demonstrative class, while agreeing unanimously that this class of text must be interpreted allegorically, may disagree about the interpretation, according to the level of each one's knowledge of demonstration.

[46] There is also [3] a third class of Scriptural texts falling uncertainly between the other two classes, on which there is doubt. One group of those who devote themselves to theoretical study attach them to the apparent texts that it is not permitted to interpret allegorically, others attach them to the texts with inner meanings that scholars are not permitted to take in their apparent meanings. This [divergence of opinions] is due to the difficulty and ambiguity of this class of text. Anyone who commits an error about this class is excused, I mean any scholar.

The texts about the future life fall into [3], since demonstrative scholars do not agree whether to take them in their apparent meaning or interpret them allegorically. Either is permissible. But it is inexcusable to deny the fact of a future life altogether.

[47] If it is asked, "Since it is clear that scriptural texts in this respect fall into three grades, to which of

these three grades, according to you, do the descriptions of the future life and its states belong?" we reply: The position clearly is that this matter belongs to the class [3] about which there is disagreement. For we find a group of those who claim an affinity with demonstration saying that it is obligatory to take these passages in their apparent meaning, because there is no demonstration leading to the impossibility of the apparent meaning in them—this is the view of the Ash'arites; while another group of those who devote themselves to demonstration interpret these passages allegorically, and these people give the most diverse interpretations of them. In this class must be counted Abū Ḥāmid and many of the Sūfis; some of them combine the two interpretations of the passages, as Abū Ḥāmid does in some of his books.

[48] So it is likely that a scholar who commits an error in this matter is excused, while one who is correct receives thanks or a reward: that is, if he acknowledges the existence [of a future life] and merely gives a certain sort of allegorical interpretation, that is, of the mode of the future life, not of its existence. In this matter only the negation of existence is unbelief, because it concerns one of the principles of religion and one of those points to which assent is attainable through the three methods common to "the white man and the black man."

The unlearned classes must take such texts in their apparent meaning. It is unbelief for the learned to set down allegorical interpretations in popular writings. By doing this {al-}Ghazālī caused confusion among the people. Demonstrative books should be banned to the unqualified but not to the learned.

[49] But anyone who is not a man of learning is obliged to take these passages in their apparent meaning, and allegorical interpretation of them is for him unbelief because it *leads* to unbelief. That is why we hold that, for anyone whose duty it is to believe in the apparent meaning, allegorical interpretation is unbelief, because it leads to unbelief. Anyone of the interpretative class who discloses such [an interpretation] to him is summoning him to unbelief, and he who summons to unbelief is an unbeliever.

[50] Therefore, allegorical interpretations ought to be set down only in demonstrative books, because if they are in demonstrative books they are encountered

by no one but men of the demonstrative class. But if they are set down in other than demonstrative books and one deals with them by poetical, rhetorical, or dialectical methods, as Abū Ḥāmid does, then he commits an offense against the Law and against philosophy, even though the fellow intended nothing but good. For by this procedure he wanted to increase the number of learned men, but in fact he increased the number of the corrupted not of the learned! As a result, one group came to slander philosophy, another to slander religion, and another to reconcile the [first] two [groups]. It seems that this [last] was one of his objects in his books; an indication that he wanted by this [procedure] to arouse minds is that he adhered to no one doctrine in his books but was an Ashʿarite with the Ashʿarites, a Ṣūfī with the Ṣūfīs, and a philosopher with the philosophers, so that he was like the man in the verse:

One day a Yamanī, if I meet a man of Yaman,  
And if I meet a Maʿaddī, I'm an ʿAdnānī.

[51] The *imāms* of the Muslims ought to forbid those of his books that contain learned matter to all save the learned, just as they ought to forbid demonstrative books to those who are not capable of understanding them. But the damage done to people by demonstrative books is lighter, because for the most part only persons of superior natural intelligence become acquainted with demonstrative books, and this class of persons is only misled through lack of practical virtue, unorganized reading, and tackling them without a teacher. On the other hand, their total prohibition obstructs the purpose to which the Law summons, because it is a wrong to the best class of people and the best class of beings. For to do justice to the best class of beings demands that they should be known profoundly, by persons equipped to know them profoundly, and these are the best class of people; and the greater the value of the being, the greater is the injury towards it, which consists of ignorance of it. Thus, the Exalted has said (31:13), "Associating [other gods] with God is indeed a great wrong."

We have only discussed these questions in a popular work because they were already being publicly discussed.

[52] This is as much as we see fit to affirm in this field of study, that is, the correspondence between religion and philosophy and the rules for allegorical interpretation in religion. If it were not for the publicity given to the matter and to these questions that we have discussed, we should not have permitted ourselves to write a word on the subject; and we should not have had to make excuses for doing so to the interpretative scholars, because the proper place to discuss these questions is in demonstrative books. God is the Guide and helps us to follow the right course!

### 3. Philosophical Interpretations of Scripture Should Not Be Taught to the Majority. The Law Provides Other Methods of Instructing Them

The purpose of Scripture is to teach true theoretical and practical science and right practice and attitudes.

[53] You ought to know that the purpose of Scripture is simply to teach true science and right practice. True science is knowledge of God, Blessed and Exalted, and the other beings as they really are, and especially of noble beings, and knowledge of happiness and misery in the next life. Right practice consists in performing the acts that bring happiness and avoiding the acts that bring misery; and it is knowledge of these acts that is called "practical science." They fall into two divisions: (1) outward bodily acts; the science of these is called "jurisprudence," and (2) acts of the soul, such as gratitude, patience, and other moral attitudes that the Law enjoins or forbids; the science of these is called "asceticism" or "the sciences of the future life." To these Abū Ḥāmid turned his attention in his book: as people had given up this sort [of act] and become immersed in the other sort, and as this sort [2] involves the greater fear of God, which is the cause of happiness, he called his book *The Revival of the Sciences of Religion*. But we have digressed from our subject, so let us return to it.

Scripture teaches concepts both directly and by symbols, and uses demonstrative, dialectical, and rhetorical arguments. Dialectical and rhetorical arguments are prevalent, because the main aim of Scripture is to teach the majority. In these arguments, concepts are indicated directly or by symbols, in various combinations in premises and conclusion(s).

[54] We say: The purpose of Scripture is to teach true science and right practice; and teaching is of two classes, [of] concepts and [of] judgments, as the logicians have shown. Now the methods available to men of [arriving at] judgments are three: demonstrative, dialectical, and rhetorical; and the methods of forming concepts are two: either [conceiving] the object itself or [conceiving] a symbol of it. But not everyone has the natural ability to take in demonstrations, or [even] dialectical arguments, let alone demonstrative arguments that are so hard to learn and need so much time [even] for those who are qualified to learn them. Therefore, since it is the purpose of Scripture simply to teach everyone, Scripture has to contain every method of [bringing about] judgments of assent and every method of forming concepts.

[55] Now some of the methods of assent comprehend the majority of people, that is, the occurrence of assent as a result of them [is comprehensive]: these are the rhetorical and the dialectical [methods]—and the rhetorical is more comprehensive than the dialectical. Another method is peculiar to a smaller number of people: this is the demonstrative. Therefore, since the primary purpose of Scripture is to take care of the majority (without neglecting to arouse the elite), the prevailing methods of expression in religion are the common methods by which the majority comes to form concepts and judgments.

[56] These [common] methods in religion are of four classes:

[56.1] One of them occurs where the method is common yet specialized in two respects: that is, where it is certain in its concepts and judgments, in spite of being rhetorical or dialectical. These syllogisms are those whose premises, in spite of being based on accepted ideas or on opinions, are accidentally certain, and whose conclusions are accidentally to be taken in their direct meaning without symbolization. Scriptural texts of this class have no allegorical interpretations, and anyone who denies them or interprets them allegorically is an unbeliever.

[56.2] The second class occurs where the premises, in spite of being based on accepted ideas or on opinions, are certain, and where the con-

clusions are symbols for the things that it was intended to conclude. [Texts of] this [class], that is their conclusions, admit of allegorical interpretation.

[56.3] The third is the reverse of this: it occurs where the conclusions are the very things that it was intended to conclude, while the premises are based on accepted ideas or on opinions without being accidentally certain. [Texts of] this [class] also, that is, their conclusions, do not admit of allegorical interpretation, but their premises may do so.

[56.4] The fourth [class] occurs where the premises are based on accepted ideas or opinions, without being accidentally certain, and where the conclusions are symbols for what it was intended to conclude. In these cases the duty of the elite is to interpret them allegorically, while the duty of the masses is to take them in their apparent meaning.

Where symbols are used, each class of men, demonstrative, dialectical, and rhetorical, must try to understand the inner meaning symbolized or rest content with the apparent meaning, according to their capacities.

[57] In general, everything in these [texts] that admits of allegorical interpretation can only be understood by demonstration. The duty of the elite here is to apply such interpretation; while the duty of the masses is to take them in their apparent meaning in both respects, that is, in concept and judgment, since their natural capacity does not allow more than that.

[58] But there may occur to students of Scripture allegorical interpretations due to the superiority of one of the common methods over another in [bringing about] assent, that is, when the indication contained in the allegorical interpretation is more persuasive than the indication contained in the apparent meaning. Such interpretations are popular; and [the making of them] is possibly a duty, for those powers of theoretical understanding have attained the dialectical level. To this sort belong some of the interpretations of the Ash'arites and Mu'tazilites—though the Mu'tazilites are generally sounder in their statements. The masses, on the other hand, who are incapable of

more than rhetorical arguments, have the duty of taking these [texts] in their apparent meaning, and they are not permitted to know such interpretations at all.

[59] Thus, people in relation to Scripture fall into three classes:

[59.1] One class is these who are not people of interpretation at all: these are the rhetorical class. They are the overwhelming mass, for no man of sound intellect is exempted from this kind of assent.

[59.2] Another class is the people of dialectical interpretation: these are the dialecticians, either by nature alone or by nature and habit.

[59.3] Another class is the people of certain interpretation: these are the demonstrative class, by nature and training, that is, in the art of philosophy. This interpretation ought not to be expressed to the dialectical class, let alone to the masses.

To explain the inner meaning to people unable to understand it is to destroy their belief in the apparent meaning without putting anything in its place. The result is unbelief in learners and teachers. It is best for the learned to profess ignorance, quoting the Qur'ān on the limitation of man's understanding.

[60] When something of these allegorical interpretations is expressed to anyone unfit to receive them—especially demonstrative interpretations, because of their remoteness from common knowledge—both he who expresses it and he to whom it is expressed are led into unbelief. The reason for that [in the case of the latter] is that allegorical interpretation comprises two things, rejection of the apparent meaning and affirmation of the allegorical one; so that if the apparent meaning is rejected in the mind of someone who can only grasp apparent meanings, without the allegorical meaning being affirmed in his mind, the result is unbelief, if it [the text in question] concerns the principles of religion.

[61] Allegorical interpretations, then, ought not to be expressed to the masses nor set down in rhetorical or dialectical books, that is, books containing arguments of these two sorts, as was done by Abū Ḥāmid. They should [not] be expressed to this class; and with

regard to an apparent text, when there is a [self-evident] doubt whether it is apparent to everyone and whether knowledge of its interpretation is impossible for them, they should be told that it is ambiguous and [its meaning] known by no one except God; and that the stop should be put here in the sentence of the Exalted (3:7), “And no one knows the interpretation thereof except God.” The same kind of answer should also be given to a question about abstruse matters, which there is no way for the masses to understand; just as the Exalted has answered in His saying (17:85), “And they will ask you about the Spirit. Say, ‘The Spirit is by the command of my Lord; you have been given only a little knowledge.’”

Certain people have injured the masses particularly, by giving them allegorical interpretations that are false. These people are exactly analogous to bad medical advisers. The true doctor is related to bodily health in the same way as the Legislator to spiritual health, which the Qur'ān teaches us to pursue. The true allegory is “the deposit” mentioned in the Qur'ān.

[62] As for the man who expresses these allegories to unqualified persons, he is an unbeliever on account of his summoning people to unbelief. This is contrary to the summons of the Legislator, especially when they are false allegories concerning the principles of religion, as has happened in the case of a group of people of our time. For we have seen some of them thinking that they were being philosophic and that they perceived, with their remarkable wisdom, things that conflict with Scripture in every respect, that is [in passages] that do not admit of allegorical interpretation; and that it was obligatory to express these things to the masses. But by expressing those false beliefs to the masses, they have been a cause of perdition to the masses and themselves, in this world and the next.

[63] The relation between the aim of these people and the aim of the Legislator [can be illustrated by] a parable of a man who goes to a skillful doctor. [This doctor's] aim is to preserve the health and cure the diseases of all the people by prescribing for them rules that can be commonly accepted about the necessity of using the things that will preserve their health and cure their diseases and avoiding the opposite things. He is unable to make them all doctors, because a doctor is one who knows by demonstrative methods the

things that preserve health and cure disease. Now this [man whom we have mentioned] goes out to the people and tells them, “These methods prescribed by this doctor for you are not right”; and he sets out to discredit them, so that they are rejected by the people. Or he says, “They have allegorical interpretations”; but the people neither understand these nor assent to them in practice. Well, do you think that people in this condition will do any of the things that are useful for preserving health and curing disease, or that this man who has persuaded them to reject what they formerly believed in will now be able to use those [things] with them, I mean for preserving health? No, he will be unable to use those [things] with them, nor will they use them, and so they will all perish.

[64] This [is what will happen] if he expresses to them true allegories about those matters, because of their inability to understand them; let alone if he expresses to them false allegories, because this will lead them to think that there are no such things as health that ought to be preserved and disease that ought to be cured—let alone that there are things that preserve health and cure disease. It is the same when someone expresses allegories to the masses, and to those who are not qualified to understand them, in the sphere of Scripture; thus he makes it appear false and turns people away from it, and he who turns people away from Scripture is an unbeliever.

[65] Indeed this comparison is certain, not poetic, as one might suppose. It presents a true analogy, in that the relation of the doctor to the health of bodies is [the same as] the relation of the Legislator to the health of souls; that is, the doctor is he who seeks to preserve the health of bodies when it exists and to restore it when it is lost, while the Legislator is he who desires this [end] for the health of souls. This health is what is called “fear of God.” The precious Book has told us to seek it by acts conformable to the Law, in several verses. Thus, the Exalted has said (2:183), “Fasting has been prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those who were before you; perhaps you will fear God.” Again the Exalted has said (22:37), “Their flesh and their blood shall not touch God, but your fear shall touch him”; (29:45), “Prayer prevents immorality and transgression”; and other verses to the same effect contained in the precious Book. Through knowledge of

Scripture and practice according to Scripture the Legislator aims solely at this health; and it is from this health that happiness in the future life follows, just as misery in the future life follows from its opposite.

[66] From this it will be clear to you that true allegories ought not to be set down in popular books, let alone false ones. The true allegory is the deposit that man was charged to hold and that he held, and from which all beings shied away, that is, that which is mentioned in the words of the Exalted (33:72), “We offered the deposit to the heavens, the Earth and the mountains,” [and so on to the end of] the verse.

It was due to the wrong use of allegorical interpretation by the Mu’tazilites and Ash’arites that hostile sects arose in Islam.

[67] It was due to allegorical interpretations—especially the false ones—and the supposition that such interpretations of Scripture ought to be expressed to everyone, that the sects of Islam arose, with the result that each one accused the others of unbelief or heresy. Thus the Mu’tazilites interpreted many verses and Traditions allegorically, and expressed their interpretations to the masses, and the Ash’arites did the same, although they used such interpretations less frequently. In consequence they threw people into hatred, mutual detestation, and wars; tore the Scriptures to shreds; and completely divided people.

[68] In addition to all this, in the methods that they followed to establish their interpretations, they neither went along with the masses nor with the elite: not with the masses, because their methods were [more] obscure than the methods common to the majority, and not with the elite, because if these methods are inspected they are found deficient in the conditions [required] for demonstrations, as will be understood after the slightest inspection by anyone acquainted with the conditions of demonstration. Further, many of the principles on which the Ash’arites based their knowledge are sophistical, for they deny many necessary truths, such as the permanence of accidents, the action of things on other things, and the existence of necessary causes for effects, of substantial forms, and of secondary causes.

[69] And their theorists wronged the Muslims in this sense, that a sect of Ash’arites called an unbeliever anyone who did not attain knowledge of the existence

of the Glorious Creator by the methods laid down by them in their books for attaining this knowledge. But in truth it is they who are the unbelievers and in error! From this point they proceeded to disagree, one group saying, "The primary obligation is theoretical study," another group saying, "It is belief"; that is, [this happened] because they did not know which are the methods common to everyone, through whose doors the Law has summoned all people [to enter]; they supposed that there was only one method. Thus they mistook the aim of the Legislator and were both themselves in error and led others into error.

The proper methods for teaching the people are indicated in the Qur'an, as the early Muslims knew. The popular portions of the Book are miraculous in providing for the needs of every class of mind. We intend to make a study of its teachings at the apparent level and thus help to remedy the grievous harm done by ignorant partisans of philosophy and religion.

[70] It may be asked: "If these methods followed by the Ash'arites and other theorists are not the common methods by which the Legislator has aimed to teach the masses, and by which alone it is possible to teach them, then what are those [common] methods in this religion of ours?" We reply: They are exclusively the methods set down in the precious Book. For if the precious Book is inspected, there will be found in it the three methods that are available for all the people, [namely], the common methods for the instruction of the majority of the people and the special method. And if their merits are inspected, it becomes apparent that no better common methods for the instruction of the masses can be found than the methods mentioned in it.

[71] Thus, whoever tampers with them, by making an allegorical interpretation not apparent in itself, or [at least] not more apparent to everyone than they are (and that [greater apparency] is something nonexistent), is rejecting their wisdom and rejecting their intended effects in procuring human happiness. This is very apparent from [a comparison of] the condition of the first believers with the condition of those who came after them. For the first believers arrived at perfect virtue and fear of God only by using these sayings [of Scripture] without interpreting them allegorically; and anyone of them who did find out an allegorical in-

terpretation did not think fit to express it [to others]. But when those who came after them used allegorical interpretation, their fear of God grew less, their dissensions increased, their love for one another was removed, and they became divided into sects.

[72] So whoever wishes to remove this heresy from religion should direct his attention to the precious Book, and glean from it the indications present [in it] concerning everything in turn that it obliges us to believe, and exercise his judgment in looking at its apparent meaning as well as he is able, without interpreting any of it allegorically except where the allegorical meaning is apparent in itself, that is, commonly apparent to everyone. For if the sayings set down in Scripture for the instruction of the people are inspected, it seems that in mastering their meaning one arrives at a point beyond which none but a man of the demonstrative class can extract from their apparent wording a meaning that is not apparent in them. This property is not found in any other sayings.

[73] For those religious sayings in the precious Book that are expressed to everyone have three properties that indicate their miraculous character: (1) There exist none more completely persuasive and convincing to everyone than they. (2) Their meaning admits naturally of mastery, up to a point beyond which their allegorical interpretation (when they are of a kind to have such an interpretation) can only be found out by the demonstrative class. (3) They contain means of drawing the attention of the people of truth to the true allegorical meaning. This [character] is not found in the doctrines of the Ash'arites nor in those of the Mu'tazilites, that is, their interpretations do not admit of mastery nor contain [means of] drawing attention to the truth, nor are they true; and this is why heresies have multiplied.

[74] It is our desire to devote our time to this object and achieve it effectively, and if God grants us a respite of life we shall work steadily towards it in so far as this is made possible for us; and it may be that that work will serve as a starting point for our successors. For our soul is in the utmost sorrow and pain by reason of the evil fancies and perverted beliefs that have infiltrated this religion, and particularly such [afflictions] as have happened to it at the hands of people who claim an affinity with philosophy. For injuries from a friend are

more severe than injuries from an enemy. I refer to the fact that philosophy is the friend and milk-sister of religion; thus injuries from people related to philosophy are the severest injuries [to religion]—apart from the enmity, hatred, and quarrels that such [injuries] stir up between the two, which are companions by nature and lovers by essence and instinct. It has also been injured by a host of ignorant friends who claim an affinity with it: these are the sects that exist within it. But God directs all men aright and helps everyone to love Him; He unites their hearts in the fear of Him, and removes from them hatred and loathing by His grace and His mercy!

[75] Indeed, God has already removed many of these ills, ignorant ideas, and misleading practices by means of this triumphant rule. By it He has opened a way to many benefits, especially to the class of persons who have trodden the path of study and sought to know the truth. This [He has done] by summoning the masses to a middle way of knowing God the Glorious, [a way] that is raised above the low level of the followers of authority but is below the turbulence of the theologians; and by drawing the attention of the elite to their obligation to make a thorough study of the principles of religion. God is the Giver of success and the Guide by His Goodness.

## 26. Long Commentary on “The Soul”

### Book 3

*Text 4.* It is necessary, therefore, that, if [the intellect] understands all things, it be not mixed, as Anaxagoras has said, in order that it may dominate, that is, in order that it may understand. For if [something] were to appear in it, that which appears would prevent something foreign [from appearing in it], since it is something other.

*Commentary.* After [Aristotle] has set down that the material, receiving intellect must belong to the genus of passive powers, and that, in spite of this, it is not altered by the reception [of that which it receives], for it is neither a body nor a power within a body, he provides a demonstration for this [opinion]. And he says: *It is necessary, therefore, that if the intellect understands, etc.* That is, it is necessary, therefore, that if [the intellect] understands all those things that exist

outside the soul, it be described—prior to its understanding—as belonging to the genus of passive, not active, powers, and [it is necessary] that it be not mixed with bodies, that is, that it be neither a body nor a power within a body, be it a natural or animate [power], as Anaxagoras has said. Thereafter [Aristotle] says: *In order that it may understand, etc.* That is, it is necessary that it be not mixed, in order that it may understand all things and receive them. For if it were mixed, then it would be either a body or a power within a body, and if it were one of these, it would have a form proper to itself, which form would prevent it from receiving some foreign form.

This is what he has in mind when he says: *For if something were to appear in it, etc.* That is, if [the passive intellect] were to have a form proper to itself, then that form would prevent it from receiving the various external forms, which are different from it. Thus, one must inquire into those propositions by means of which Aristotle shows these two things about the intellect, namely, [1] that it belongs to the genus of passive powers, and [2] that it is not alterable, since it is neither a body nor a power within a body. For these two [propositions] are the starting point of all those things that are

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Translated for this volume by Arthur Hyman from *Averrois Cordubensis Commentarium Magnum in Aristotelis De Anima Libros*, ed. F. S. Crawford (Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1953).

said about the intellect. As Plato said, the most extensive discussion must take place in the beginning; for the slightest error in the beginning is the cause of the greatest error in the end, as Aristotle says.

We say: That conception by the intellect belongs in some way to a passive power, just as in the case of a sensory power [perception by a sense belongs to a passive power], becomes clear through the following [considerations]. Now, the passive powers are moveable by that to which they are related (*attribuuntur*), while active powers move that to which they are related (*attribuuntur*). And since it is the case that something moves something else only insofar as it exists in actuality and [something] is moved insofar as it exists in potentiality, it follows necessarily that since the forms of things exist in actuality outside the soul, they move the rational soul insofar as it understands them, just as in the case of sensible things it is necessary that they move the senses insofar as they are things existing in actuality and that the senses are moved by them. Therefore, the rational soul must consider the forms (*intentiones*) that are in the imaginative faculty, just as the senses must inspect sensible things. And since it appears that the forms of external things move this power in such a way that the mind abstracts these forms from material things and thereby makes them the first intelligibles in actuality, after they had been intelligibles in potentiality—it appears from this that this soul [the intellect] is [also] active, not [only] passive. For insofar as the intelligibles move [the intellect], it is passive, but insofar as they are moved by it, it is active. For this reason Aristotle states subsequently that it is necessary to posit in the rational soul the following two distinct [powers], namely, an active power and a passive power. And he states clearly that each one of [the rational soul's] parts is neither generable nor corruptible. In the present discussion, however, he begins to describe the nature (*substantiam*) of this passive power, to the extent to which it is necessary in this exposition. Therefore he states that this distinct [power], namely, that which is passive and receptive, exists in the rational faculty.

That the substance that receives these forms cannot be a body or a power in a body becomes clear from the propositions of which Aristotle makes use in this discussion. One of these is that this substance [the ma-

terial intellect] receives all material forms, and this is [something well] known about this intellect. The other is that everything that receives something else must necessarily be devoid of the nature of that which it receives and that its essence (*substantiam*) is not the same in species as the essence (*substantiam*) of that which it receives. For if that which receives is of the same nature as that which is received, then something would receive itself, and that which moves would be the same as that which is moved. Wherefore it is necessary that the sense that receives color lacks color and the sense that receives sound lacks sound. And this proposition is necessarily [true], and there is no doubt about it. From these two propositions it follows that the substance that is called the material intellect does not have any of the material forms in its nature. And since the material forms are either a body or forms in a body, it is evident that the substance that is called the material intellect is not a body or a form in a body. For this reason it is not mixed with matter in any way at all. And you should know that what he states is necessarily [so], [namely,] that, since it [the material intellect] is a substance and since it receives the forms of material things or material [forms], it does not have in itself a material form, that is [it is not] composed of matter and form. Nor is it some one of the material forms, for the material forms are not separable [from bodies]. Nor, again, is it one of the first simple forms, since these are separable [from bodies], but it [the material intellect] does not . . . receive forms except as differentiated and insofar as they are intelligible in potentiality, not in actuality [that is, it must be related to the body in some way]. Therefore it is something different from form and from matter and from that which is composed of these. But whether this substance [the material intellect] has a proper form that is different in its being from the material forms has not yet been explained in this discussion. For the proposition that states that that which receives must be devoid of the nature of that which it receives is understood as referring to the nature of the species, not to the nature of its genus, and even less to [the nature of] something remote, and still less to [the nature of] something which is predicated according to equivocation. Thus we say that in the sense of touch there exists something intermediate

between the two contraries that it perceives, for contraries differ in species from intermediate things. Since this is the disposition of the material intellect, namely, that it is some existing thing, and that it is a power separate from body, and that it has no material form, it is clear that it is not passive [in the sense of be-

ing alterable] (for passive things, that is, things which are alterable, are like material forms), and that it is simple, and separable from body, as Aristotle says. The nature of the material intellect is understood by Aristotle in this manner. We shall speak subsequently about the questions which he raised.

## 27. Long Commentary on “The Soul”

### Book 3, Comment 5

*Text 5 (De anima 3.4, 429a21–24).*

Thus, the [material intellect] will have no nature, except that, namely, what is possible. That which is [part] of the soul that is called “intellect” (and I call “intellect” that by means of which we discriminate and think) is not some being in act before it intellects.

[1] *Commentary.* Since [Aristotle] has explained that the material intellect does not have some material form, he begins to define it in this way. He said that in light of this it has no nature but the nature of the possibility to receive material intelligible forms. He

said, “Thus, [it] . . . will have no nature,” which is to say, therefore that [part] of the soul that is called “the material intellect” has no nature and essence by which it is constituted as material but the nature of possibility, since it is stripped of all material and intelligible forms.

[2] Next he said, “I call ‘intellect’ [that by means of which we discriminate and think].” In other words, I mean by “intellect” here the faculty of the soul that is called “intellect” in the true sense, not the faculty that is called “intellect” in the broad sense, namely, the “imaginative faculty,” in the Greek language [*ymaginatīvam* = Arabic *fanṭāsiyā*], but rather the faculty by which we discriminate theoretical things and think about future things to be done. Thereafter he said, it “is not some being in act before it intellects,” that is, therefore, the definition of the material intellect is that which is potentially all the intentions (*intentio* = *ma‘nā*) of the universal material forms, but it is not any of the beings in act before it itself intellects [any of them].

[3] Since this is the definition of the material intellect, it obviously differs in [Aristotle’s] opinion from prime matter in this respect, that it is potentially all intentions of the material universal forms, whereas prime matter is potentially all of those sensible forms, neither as knowing or comprehending. The reason why this nature discriminates and knows, whereas prime matter neither knows nor discriminates, is because prime matter receives distinct forms, namely, individual and particular [forms], while [the material

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For discussions of many of the topics treated in the following selections, see Richard C. Taylor, “Remarks on *Cogitatio* in Averroes’ *Commentarium Magnum in Aristotelis De anima Libros*,” in *Averroes and the Aristotelian Tradition*, ed. Endress and Aertsen (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 217–255, as well as his “Separate Material Intellect in Averroes’ Mature Philosophy,” in *Words, Texts, and Concepts, Cruising the Mediterranean Sea*, ed. Amzen and Thielmann (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), 289–309.

intellect] receives universal forms. From this it is apparent that this nature is not a particular, neither a body nor a faculty in a body, since if it were, then it would receive the forms as distinct and particular. If this were so, then the forms existing in it would be potentially intelligible, and so [the material intellect] would not discriminate the nature of the forms as forms, in which case it would be a disposition for individual forms, whether incorporeal or corporeal. Thus, if that nature, which is called "intellect," receives forms, necessarily it receives forms by a manner of reception different from that according to which those material things receive forms whose contracting by matter is the determination of the prime matter in them. Thus, it is neither necessary that [the material intellect] belongs to the genus of those material things in which the forms are included nor necessary that it is prime matter itself. Since if it were so, then the reception in these would be generically the same; for a difference of nature in what is received makes for a difference of nature in what is receiving. This, therefore, moved Aristotle to posit that this nature is different from the nature of matter, form, and the nature composed [of matter and form].

[4] Thus, this led Theophrastus, Themistius, and many of the commentators to believe that the material intellect is neither a generable nor a corruptible substance; for every generable and corruptible thing is a this, but it was just demonstrated that this [nature] is not a this, neither a body nor a form in a body. Accordingly, it led them to believe that this is the view of Aristotle; for this account, namely, that [the material] intellect is such, is quite apparent to those who examine Aristotle's demonstration and his words: concerning the demonstration it is as we explained, and it certainly concerns the words because [Aristotle] said that it is impassive, and said that it is separable and simple. These three words ["impassive," "separable," and "simple"] are frequently used by Aristotle concerning [the material intellect], and it is incorrect—nay, it is not even plausible—that someone use them in a demonstrative doctrine concerning what is generated and corrupted.

[5] But they later saw Aristotle say that if there is an intellect in potency, it is necessary that there is also an actual intellect, namely, an agent, that is, that which

draws what is potential from potency into act, and that there is an intellect drawn from potency into act, that is, that [act] which the Active Intellect places into the material intellect as the art puts the forms of its art into the matter used by the artist. Now when they saw this, they were of the opinion that this third intellect, which is the theoretical intellect and which the Active Intellect puts into the receiving material intellect, must be eternal; for when the recipient and agent are eternal, then the effect must necessarily be eternal. Since they believed this, it follows [on their view] that in reality [the theoretical intellect] would be neither the Active Intellect nor the effect, since an agent and effect are understood only in connection with generation in time. Or at the very least it turns out that to say [the Active Intellect] is an "agent" and [the theoretical intellect] an "effect" is merely to speak by analogy, and that the theoretical intellect is nothing other than the perfection of the material intellect by the Active Intellect, such that the theoretical intellect [turns out] to be something composed of the material intellect and the actual intellect. That it seems to be the case that the Active Intellect sometimes intellects when it is joined with us and sometimes does not intellect happens because of a mixing, namely, because of [the Active Intellect's] mixing with the material intellect. It was for this reason only [that they supposed] that Aristotle was forced to posit a material intellect, not because the theoretical intelligibles are generated and made.

[6] They confirmed this by what Aristotle declared, [namely], that the Active Intellect exists in our soul when we seem first to strip forms from the matter and then intellects them, but "to strip" is nothing other than to make them actual intelligibles after they were potential [intelligibles], just as to comprehend them is nothing other than to receive them.

[7] When they saw that this activity that creates and generates the intelligibles is referred to our will and can be augmented in us as an augmentation of the intellect in us, namely, of the theoretical intellect—and it was already declared that the intellect that creates and generates the things that are understandable and intelligible is an Active Intellect—they said that the dispositional intellect is this intellect but that sometimes a deficiency and sometimes an addition

happens to it on account of the mixing. This, therefore, moved Theophrastus, Themistius, and the others to believe this of the theoretical intellect and to say that this was Aristotle's opinion.

[8] The problems concerning this [view] are not few. The first of them is that this position contradicts that which Aristotle puts forth, namely, that the relation of the actual intelligible to the material intellect is like the relation of the sensible object to the one sensing. It also contradicts the truth in itself; for if the intellect's activity of conceptualizing were eternal, then what is conceptualized by the intellect would have to be eternal, for which reason the sensible forms would necessarily be actually intelligible outside of the soul and not at all material, but this is contrary to what is found in these forms.

[9] Also Aristotle openly says in this book that the relation of these rational powers that discriminate the intentions of the imagined forms is like the relation of the senses to the objects of sensation. Thus, the soul intellects nothing without the imagination in the same way that the senses sense nothing without the presence of the sensible.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, if the intentions that the intellect comprehends from the imagined forms were eternal, the intentions of the imaginative powers would be eternal. If these were eternal, then sensations would be eternal; for sensations are related to this faculty just as imaginable intentions are related to the rational faculty. If sensations were eternal, then the sensed things would be eternal, or the sensations would be intentions different from the intentions of things existing outside the soul in matter; for it is impossible to posit that they are the same intentions, sometimes eternal, sometimes corruptible, unless it were possible that the corruptible nature is changed and reverts to the eternal. Thus, if these intentions that are in the soul are of generable and corruptible things, necessarily those also are generable and corruptible. Concerning this there was a lengthy discussion in another place.

[10] This, therefore, is one of the impossibilities that seems to tell against this opinion, namely, the one that we put forth, that is, that the material intellect is

not a power made anew [for each human]. For it is held that it is impossible to imagine in what way the intelligibles will have come into being, while yet this will not have come into being, since whenever the agent and patient are eternal, necessarily the effect is eternal. Also, if we posit that the effect is generated, that is, the dispositional intellect, then how can we say about it that it generates and creates the intelligibles [that are themselves eternal]?

[11] There is also a second, much more difficult problem. It is that if the material intellect is the first perfection of the human that the definition of the soul makes clear, and the theoretical intellect is the final perfection, but the human is something generable and corruptible and is numerically one by means of his final perfection by the intellect, then he is necessarily such through its first perfection; in other words, through the first perfection of the intellect I am other than you and you are other than me. If not, you would be through my being and I through your being, and in general a human would be a being before he was, and thus a human would not be generable and corruptible in that part that is human, but if at all, it will be in that part that is animal. For it is thought that just as if the first perfection is a particular and as many in number as the number of individuals, it is necessary that the final perfection is of this kind [i.e., it is a particular and as many in number as the number of individuals], so also the converse is necessary, namely, that if the final perfection is as many in number as the number of individual humans, necessarily the first perfection is of this manner.

[12] Many other impossibilities follow on this position. Since, if the first perfection of all humans were the same and not as many in number as their number, it would follow that when I would have acquired a particular intelligible, you also would have acquired that same one; whenever I should forget a certain intelligible, you would also. Many other impossibilities follow on this position; for it is thought that there is no difference between either position [i.e., whether first or final perfection] concerning which the impossibilities follow, namely, as a result of our positing that the final and first perfection are of the same kind, that is, not as many in number as the number of the individuals. If we want to avoid all of these impossibilities, it

1. Compare Aristotle, *De anima* 3.7, 16–17.

falls to us to posit that the first perfection is a particular, namely, an individual in matter, numerically as many as the number of individual humans, and is generable and corruptible. It has now been explained on the basis of the reported demonstration of Aristotle that [the material intellect] is not a particular, neither a body nor a power in the body. Therefore, how can we avoid this error and solve this problem?

[13] Alexander relies on this last [line of reasoning]. He says that it belongs more so to physics, namely, the line of reason concluding that the material intellect is a generated power such that what we think about it is correctly believed about the other faculties of the soul, namely, that they are a preparedness made in the body through itself by mixing and combining. He says this is not unbelievable, namely, that from a mixing of the elements such a noble marvel comes to be from the substance of the elements on account of a maximal mixing, even though it is unusual.

[14] He gives as evidence about this that it is possible from this [i.e., a maximal mixing of the elements] that there appears the composition that first occurs in the elements, namely, the composition of the four simple qualities [e.g., hot, cold, wet, and dry], although that composition is minor, it is the cause of maximal mixing, inasmuch as one is fire and the other air.

[15] Since that is so, it is not improbable that owing to the high degree of composition that is in the humans and animals, there comes to be in them powers that are different to such a great extent from the substances of the elements.

[16] He openly and generally proclaims this at the beginning of his book *De anima*, and he prefaced that one considering the soul at first ought to know in advance the wonders of the human body's composition. He also said in the treatise he wrote, *On the Intellect according to the Opinion of Aristotle*, that the material intellect is a power made from a combination. These are his words: "Therefore, when from the body, at any time something is mixed by means of some mixture, something will be generated from the entire mixture such that it is suited to be an instrument of that intellect that is in this mixture. Since it exists in every [human] body and that instrument is also a body, it is called the 'potential intellect' and it is a power made

from the mixture that occurred to the body prepared to receive the actual intellect."<sup>2</sup>

[17] This opinion concerning the substance of the material intellect is at odds with the words of Aristotle and his demonstration: with the words where [Aristotle] says that the material intellect is separable and that it has no corporeal instrument, but that it is simple and impassive, that is, it is unchanging, and where [Aristotle] praises Anaxagoras concerning what he said, namely, that it is not mixed with a body;<sup>3</sup> and certainly [far] from the demonstration as it was understood in that which we have written.

[18] Alexander interprets Aristotle's demonstration by which [Aristotle] concludes that the material intellect is not passive and is not a particular, and is neither a body nor a power in a body, such that he meant the preparedness itself, not the subject of the preparedness. [Alexander] thus says in his book *De anima* that the material intellect is more like the preparedness that is in a tablet on which nothing has been written than a prepared tablet.<sup>4</sup> He says of this preparedness that it can truly be said not to be a particular, neither a body nor a power in a body, and that it is impassive.

[19] There is nothing in what Alexander said; for this is truly said of every preparedness, namely, that it is neither a body nor a particular form in a body. Therefore why did Aristotle take up from among the other instances of preparedness this preparedness that is in the intellect, if he did not intend to demonstrate to us the substance of what is prepared rather than the substance of the preparedness? Quite the contrary, it is impossible to say that preparedness is a substance, given what we said, namely, that the subject of the preparedness is neither a body nor a power in a body. That which Aristotle's demonstration concludes concerns a different meaning than that the preparation is neither a body nor a power in the body.

2. *On the Intellect in Alexandri Aphrodisiensis, Praeter commentaria scripta minor, Commentariá in Aristotelem Graeca*, ed. I. Bruno supplement, par. I, vol. II, 112.10–16.

3. See Aristotle, *De anima* 3.4, 429a18–29.

4. *De anima in Alexandri Aphrodisiensis, Praeter commentaria scripta minor, op. cit.*, 3.12, 84, 24–85, 5.

[20] This is obvious from Aristotle's demonstration; for the proposition claiming that in any recipient there must be nothing existing in act of the received nature, is made clear from the fact that the substance of what is prepared and its nature lack this predicate [i.e., the predicate that is to be received] insofar as it is prepared. For the preparedness is not the recipient; rather, the being of the preparedness is through the recipient just as the being of a proper accident is. Thus once there is the reception, there will be no preparedness, but the recipient will remain. This is obvious and understood by all the commentators on the basis of Aristotle's demonstration.

[21] For something that is neither a body nor a power in a body is said in four different ways, one of which is the subject of the intelligibles and is the material intellect of whose being it was demonstrated what it is. The second is the preparedness itself existing in the matter and is close to the way that it is said that privation absolutely is neither a body nor a power in a body. The third is prime matter, whose being was also demonstrated. The fourth is the abstracted forms whose being has also been demonstrated. All of these are different.

[22] Trying to avoid the obvious errors, namely, from the aforementioned problems, led Alexander to this improbable interpretation. Yet we see that Alexander is supported in this because the first perfection of the intellect should be a generated power concerning the general words mentioned in the definition of the soul, namely, because it is the first perfection of an organic natural body.<sup>5</sup> He says that that definition is true of all the parts of the soul in the same sense. He also gives an additional reason to this: since to say that all the parts of the soul are forms either has one meaning or nearly so, and since the form, inasmuch as it is the end of the one having the form, cannot be separated, necessarily, when the first perfections of the soul are forms, they are not separated. By this it is incoherent that there should be a separate perfection among the first perfections of the soul, as is said of the sailor in connection with the ship,<sup>6</sup> otherwise in general the

part that is called a "perfection" in some will have a different meaning than the meaning that is said of others. Whereas this is what [Alexander] imagined was obvious from the general statement concerning the soul, Aristotle clearly said that it was not obvious concerning all parts of the soul; for to speak of "form" and "first perfection" is to speak equivocally of the rational soul and the other parts of the soul.

[23] Abū Bakr [Ibn Bājja], if taken literally, however, seemed to maintain that the material intellect is an imaginative power as what is prepared for this, namely, the intentions, which in it are actually intelligibles, and that no other power is the subject for the intelligibles besides that power. Abū Bakr, however, seemed to maintain this in order to avoid the impossible consequences of Alexander, namely, that the subject receiving the intelligible forms is (1) a body made of elements, or (2) a power in a body, since consequently, it would be the case either that the being of the forms in the soul would be their being outside of the soul, and so the soul would not be something that can comprehend, or that the intellect would have a corporeal instrument, [but] if the subject for the intelligibles were a power in the body, it would be just like the senses.

[24] Concerning Alexander's opinion, what is more unbelievable is that he said the first [instances of] preparedness for the intelligibles and for the other first perfections of the soul are things made from a combining, not powers made by an extrinsic mover, as is well known from the opinion of Aristotle and all the Peripatetics; for this opinion concerning the comprehending powers of the soul, if we have understood him [correctly], is false. For a discriminating, comprehending power cannot come to be from the substance and nature of the elements, since if it were possible that such powers were to come from their nature without an extrinsic mover, it would be possible that the final perfection, which is the [speculative] intellect, would be something that came to be from the substance of their elements, as, for example, color and flavor came to be. This opinion is similar to the opinion of those denying an efficient cause and who accept only material causes, that is, those who maintain chance. Alexander, however, is well above believing this; however, the problem that con-

5. See Aristotle, *De anima* 2.1, 412a27–28.

6. Compare Aristotle, *De anima* 2.1, 413a8–9.

fronted him concerning the material intellect drove him to this.

[25] 'Therefore, let us return to our [opinion] and say that perhaps these problems are what induced Ibn Bājja to say this regarding the material intellect. However, what follows from it is obviously impossible; for the imagined intentions move the intellect and are not moved. For it is explained that these whose relation to the discriminating rational power is like the relation of the object of sensation to the one sensing are not like that of the one sensing, who is sensed, to a state. If it were to receive the intelligibles, then the thing would receive itself and the mover would be the thing moved. It has already been explained that it is impossible that the material intellect has an actual form, since its substance and nature is that it receives forms inasmuch as they are forms.

[26] Therefore, all the things that can be said about the nature of the material intellect seem to be impossible besides what Aristotle said, to which there also occurs a number of problems. One of which is that theoretical intelligibles are eternal. The second is the strongest of them, namely, that the final perfection in the human [i.e., the theoretical intellect] is as many in number as the number of individual humans, while the first perfection is numerically one for all. The third is a puzzle of Theophrastus, namely, it is necessary to posit that this intellect has no form, but [it is necessary to posit that] it is a certain kind of being, otherwise there is nothing in the subject of that for which there is the preparedness and receptivity; for preparedness and receptivity concern that which is not [yet] found in the subject.<sup>7</sup> Since it is a certain kind of being but does not have the nature of a form, all that remains is that it has the nature of prime matter, which is certainly unbelievable; for prime matter is neither something that comprehends nor discriminates. How can it be said about something whose being is such that it is separate [i.e., capable of independent existence]?

[27] Given all of that, then, it seemed good to me to write down what seems to be the case concerning

this. If that which appears to me [true] is not complete, it will be a foundation for what remains to be completed. Thus, I ask the brothers seeing this work to write down their questions, and perhaps by this [work] the truth concerning this will be found, if I have not yet found it. If I have found it, as I imagine, then it will be clarified by means of those [previously mentioned] problems; for the truth, as Aristotle says, agrees with and bears witness to itself in every way.<sup>8</sup>

[28] The [first] problem asks how the theoretical intelligibles are generable and corruptible, whereas their agent and recipient are eternal, and what need is there to posit an Active Intellect and recipient intellect if there were not some generated thing there. This problem would not occur if there were not something else here that is the cause of their being generated theoretical intelligibles. [The answer] is simply because those intelligibles are constituted of two things: one of which is generated, the other not generated. What is said about this is according to the course of nature; for since conceptualization through the intellect, as Aristotle says,<sup>9</sup> is like perception through the senses, and perception through the senses is perfected through two subjects—one of which is the subject through which the sense becomes actual, that is, the object of sensation outside the soul, whereas the other is the subject through which the sense is an existing form, that is, the first perfection of what senses—it is also necessary that the actual intelligibles should have two subjects—one of which is the subject by which they are actual, namely, the forms that are actual images, whereas the second is that by which the intelligibles are one of the beings in the world, and that is the material intellect. There is no difference in this respect between the sense and the intellect except that the subject of the sense through which it is actual is outside the soul, while the subject of the intellect by which it is actual is within the soul. This is what was said by Aristotle concerning this intellect, as will be seen later.

[29] This subject of the intellect, which in whatever way is that one's mover, is that which Ibn Bājja

7. That is, a subject's being prepared for or receptive to, for example, the form of heat, entails that the form of heat is not already in the subject.

8. See *Prior Analytics* 1.32, 47a5–6.

9. See Aristotle, *De anima* 3.4, 429a13–18.

considered to be the recipient, because he found that sometimes it is a potential intellect and sometimes an actual intellect, where this [disposition] is the disposition of a receiving subject, and he considers [the proposition] convertible.

[30] This relationship is found more perfectly between the subject of vision that moves [the faculty of sight] and the subject of the intellect that moves [the intellect]; for just as the subject of vision, which is color, moves [the faculty of sight] only when through the presence of light it was made actual color after it was in potency, so too the imagined intentions move the material intellect only when the intelligibles are made actual after they were in potency. Because of this it was necessary for Aristotle to posit an Active Intellect, as will be seen later,<sup>10</sup> and it is what draws these intentions from potency into act. Therefore, just as the color that is in potency is not the first perfection of the color that is the perceived intention, rather the subject that is perfected by this color is vision, so too the subject that is perfected by the intelligible object is not the imagined intentions that are potential intelligibles but is the material intellect that is perfected by the intelligibles, and [the material intellect's] relation to [the intelligibles] is just like the relation of the intentions of color to the faculty of vision.

[31] Since all of this is as we have related, it happens that these actual intelligibles, namely, the theoretical intelligibles, are generable and corruptible only on account of the subject through which they are actual [i.e., the forms that are actual images], not on account of the subject through which they are a kind of being, namely, the material intellect.

[32] The second problem—namely, how the material intellect is numerically one in all the individual humans, being neither generable nor corruptible, while the actual intelligibles existing in it, that is, the theoretical intellect, are as many in number as the number of individual humans, being generable and corruptible through the generation and corruption of the individual [humans]—is very difficult and has the greatest ambiguity.

[33] For if we posit that this material intellect is as many in number as the number of individual humans,

it follows that it is a particular, whether a body or a power within a body. Since it would be a particular, it would be an intention intelligible in potency; however, an intention intelligible in potency is a subject that moves the recipient intellect, not a subject that is moved. Therefore, if the receiving subject were posited to be a particular, it would follow that a thing receives itself, as we said, which is impossible.

[34] Besides, if we grant that it does receive itself, it would follow that it receives itself as something distinct, and so the faculty of the intellect would be the same as the faculty of sensation, or there will be no difference between the being of the forms outside and within the soul; for individual, particular matter does not receive the forms except as a this and as individuals. This is one of the things that attest that Aristotle believed that this intellect [i.e., the material intellect] is not an account of an individual.

[35] If we posit that [the material intellect] is not as numerous as the number of individuals [i.e., it is one for all humans], it follows that its relation to all the individuals that come to possess their final perfection in generation would be the same, whence if a certain one of those individuals acquires some intelligible object, that [intelligible] would be acquired by all of them. Since if the conjunction of those individuals is on account of the conjunction of the material intellect with them, just as the conjunction of the human with the sensible intention is on account of the conjunction of the first perfection of the faculty of sensation with that which receives sensible intentions—whereas the conjunction of the material intellect with all the humans actually existing at some time in their final perfection ought to be the same conjunction, since there is nothing that brings about a difference of the relation of the conjunction between the two conjoined things—I say if that is so, then when you acquire some intelligible, necessarily I would acquire that intelligible too, which is absurd.

[36] Regardless of whether you posit that the final perfection generated in every single individual is a subject of this intellect, namely, [the perfection] through which the material intellect is joined and as a result of which [the material intellect] is like a form separated from its subject with which it is conjoined, supposing there is such a thing, or you posit that it is a perfection

10. See *Long Commentary on "The Soul,"* 3.18, 3.

that is either one of the faculties of the soul or one of the faculties of the body, the same absurdity follows.

[37] Thus it should be believed that if there are things that have souls whose first perfection is a substance separated from their subjects, as is considered concerning the celestial bodies, it is impossible to find more than one individual under each one of their species. Since if under these, namely, under each species, there were found more than one individual, for example [more than] one body moved by the same mover, then the being [of the additional individuals] would be useless and superfluous, since their motion would be due to a numerically identical thing, as for example, more than one ship is useless for one sailor at the same time, and similarly more than one tool of the very same kind is useless for the artisan.

[38] This is the sense of what was said at the beginning of [Aristotle's] *On the Heavens and the World*, namely, that if there were another world, there would be another celestial body, but if there were another celestial body, it would have a numerically different mover from the mover of this celestial body.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the mover of the celestial body would be material and as many in number as the number of the celestial bodies, namely, because it is impossible that a numerically single mover is [the mover] of two numerically distinct bodies. Hence, the artisan does not use more than one tool when only a single activity is produced by him. It is generally considered that the impossibilities following upon this position follow upon that which we are positing, namely, that the dispositional intellect is numerically one. Ibn Bājjā had already enumerated many of them in his *Conjunction of the Intellect with Man*. Consequently, how does one resolve this difficult problem?

[39] Let us say, therefore, that obviously a man does not actually intellect except because of the conjunction of the actually intelligible with him. It is also obvious that matter and form are mutually joined to one another such that what is composed of them is a single thing, and particularly the material intellect and the actual intelligible intention; for what is composed from them is not some third thing different from them,

just as is the case with those other things composed of matter and form. Therefore, the conjunction of the intelligible with a human is only possible through a conjunction of one or the other of these two parts with him, namely, the part of it that is like matter and the part of it, namely of the intelligible, that is like form.

[40] Since it has been explained from the aforementioned doubts that it is impossible that the intelligible should be joined with every single human and should be as numerous as their number by means of that part of it that is like matter, namely, the material intellect, it remains that the conjunction of the intelligibles with us humans is through the conjunction of the intelligible intention with us, that is, the imagined intentions, namely, the part of them that is in us in some way like a form. Therefore, to say of the child that he potentially intellects can be understood in two ways, one of which is because the imagined forms that are in him are potentially intelligible, whereas the second is because the material intellect that naturally receives the intelligible of these imagined forms is a potential recipient and potentially conjoined with us.

[41] Therefore, it has been explained that the first perfection of the intellect is different from the other first perfections of the soul's other faculties, and that the term "perfection" is said of them in an equivocal manner, contrary to what Alexander thought. Thus, Aristotle said regarding the definition of the soul, that is, a first perfection of a natural organic body, that it is not yet clear whether a body is perfected by all faculties in the same way, or among [the faculties] there is a certain one by which the body is not perfected, and if it is perfected, it will be in some other way.<sup>12</sup>

[42] The [instances of] preparedness of the intelligibles that are in the imaginative faculty are similar to the [instances of] preparedness that are in the other powers of the soul, namely, the first perfections of the other faculties of the soul. Accordingly, both types of preparedness are generated and corrupted by the generation and corruption of the individual and, in general, are as numerous as their number.

11. See Aristotle, *On the Heavens* 3.8.

12. The reference appears to be to *De anima* 2.2, esp. 413b24–414a4.

[43] They differ in this respect, namely, that the former, that is, the preparedness that is in the imagined intentions, is the preparedness in a mover, insofar as it is a mover, whereas the latter is the preparedness in the recipient and is the preparedness that is in the first perfection of the other parts of the soul.

[44] On account of this similarity between these two types of preparedness, Ibn Bājja thought that there was no preparedness to bring about the intelligible object except the preparedness existing in the imagined intentions. These two types of preparedness, though, are as different as heaven and Earth; for one is the preparedness in a mover, insofar as it is a mover, whereas the other is a preparedness in what is moved, insofar as it is what is moved and a recipient.

[45] Therefore, it should be believed, as had already been provided to us from Aristotle's discussion, that concerning the soul there are two parts of the intellect, one of which is the recipient, whose being has been explained here, and the other that is the agent, that is, that which makes the intentions that are in the imaginative faculty to be actual movers of the material intellect after they were potential movers, as will later appear from Aristotle's discussion. Also [it should be believed] that these two parts are neither generable nor corruptible, and that the agent [intellect] is to the recipient [intellect] as form is to matter, as will be explained later.

[46] Therefore, Themistius believed that we are the Active Intellect and that the theoretical intellect is nothing other than the conjunction of the Active Intellect with the material intellect. It is not as he thought; rather, it should be believed that in the soul there are three parts of the intellect, one of which is the receiving intellect; the second the efficient intellect; and the third is the caused intellect [i.e., the theoretical intellect]. Two of these three are eternal, namely, the Active and recipient intellects, whereas the third is generable and corruptible in one way but eternal in another.

[47] Since on the basis of this discussion we are of the opinion that the material intellect is one for all humans and also that the human species is eternal, as was explained in another place, it is necessary that the material intellect is not stripped of the natural principles common to the entire human species, namely, the pri-

mary propositions and singular concepts common to all; for these intelligibles are one according to the recipient, but many according to the received intention.

[48] Therefore, according to the way that they are one, they are necessarily eternal, since being does not flee from the receiving subject, namely, from the mover, which is the intention of the imagined forms, and there is no impediment there on the part of the recipient. Thus, generation and corruption happen to them only owing to the multiplicity following upon them, not owing to the way that they are one. Hence, when with respect to some individual one of the first intelligibles is corrupted through the corruption of its subject through which it is conjoined with us and actual, then necessarily that intelligible is not corruptible absolutely; rather, it is corruptible with respect to each individual. In this way we can say that the theoretical intellect is one with respect to all [humans].

[49] When these intelligibles are considered as beings absolutely, not with respect to some individual, they are truly said to be eternal, and they are not sometimes intellected, sometimes not, but rather they are always intellected. Their being is like a mean between impermanence and permanence; for they are generable and corruptible insofar as they admit of increase and decrease [in number] as a result of their final perfection, but as they are numerically one, they are eternal.

[50] This will be the case if it is not assumed that the disposition in the final perfection of the human is like a disposition in the intelligibles common to all [humans], namely, that worldly existence is not stripped from such individual existence; for it is not obvious that this is impossible. Nay, one saying this can have a reason that is sufficient and quiets the soul. Since wisdom is in some way proper to humans, just as the arts are in a way proper to humans, it is thought impossible that all habitation should be adverse to philosophy, just as it is believed impossible that it should be adverse to natural arts; for if some part [of the world], such as the northern quarter, is free of them, namely, the arts, then other quarters would not be without them, since it is clear that habitation is possible in the southern part just as in the northern.

[51] Perhaps, therefore, philosophy is found in the greater portion of a place [i.e., the world] at all times,

just as one human is found [to come] from another and a horse from another. Thus the theoretical intellect is neither generable nor corruptible according to this way.

[52] In general, just as it is concerning the Active Intellect that creates the intelligibles, so likewise it is concerning the discriminating [and] receiving intellect; for just as the Active Intellect absolutely never rests from generating and creating—although it ceases to do this, namely, generate a certain subject—such is it concerning the distinguishing intellect.

[53] Aristotle indicated this at the beginning of this book, when he said, "To conceptualize through the intellect and to speculate are different such that something else within is corrupted, whereas [the intellect] in itself has no corruption."<sup>13</sup> He intends by "something else" the human imagined forms. By "to conceptualize through the intellect," he intends the receptivity that is always in the material intellect, concerning which he meant to raise doubts in this [book, namely, Book III] and that book [namely, Book I], when he said, "We do not remember because that one is not passive, whereas the passive intellect is corruptible but without this nothing intellects,"<sup>14</sup> where he means by "passive intellect" the imaginative faculty, as explained later. In general, this account appeared improbable, namely, that the soul, that is to say the theoretical intellect, is immortal.

[54] Whence Plato said that the universals are neither generable nor corruptible and that they exist outside of the mind. The account is true in this way [that we have explained], but taken literally is false, which is the way Aristotle worked to refute in the *Metaphysics*. In general this account of the soul is the true part in the probable propositions that grant that the soul is both, namely, mortal and immortal; for it is absurd that probable things are wholly false. The ancients defended this, and all laws agree in presenting that.

[55] The third problem, that is, how the material intellect is some kind of being but is neither one of the material forms nor also is prime matter, is resolved thus. It must be believed that this [intellect] is a fourth

genus; for just as the sensible is divided into form and matter, thus the intelligible must be divided into the counterparts of these two, namely, into something like the form and something like the matter. This is necessary in every intelligence separate [from matter] that intellects another, otherwise there would be no multiplicity among the separate forms. It has already been explained in First Philosophy<sup>15</sup> that the only form free of potentiality absolutely is the First Form that intellects nothing outside of Itself, and indeed Its existence is Its essence, whereas the other forms are in some way distinguished with respect to essence and existence. If there were not this genus of beings that we know with respect to the science of the soul, we could not intellect the multiplicity among things separate [from matter], just as if we were not to know the nature of the intellect here, we could not intellect that the moving powers separate [from matter] ought to be intellects.

[56] This has escaped many moderns to the point that they have denied what Aristotle says in the eleventh book [our modern Book 12, i.e., *Lambda*] of the *Metaphysics*, that necessarily the separate forms moving the heavenly bodies are as [many as] the number of the celestial bodies. Thus, a knowledge of the soul is necessary for a knowledge of First Philosophy. That receiving intellect necessarily intellects the actual intellect; for since it intellects the material forms, it is more fitting that it intellects the immaterial forms and that which it intellects of the separate forms, for example of the Active Intellect, does not impede its intellecting the material forms.

[57] The proposition claiming that the recipient ought to have nothing in act of that which it receives, however, is not said absolutely but conditionally, namely, it is not necessary that the recipient be altogether something that is not in act; rather, it is not actually something of that which it receives, as we said before. Indeed, you ought to know that the relation of the Active Intellect to this intellect is the relation of light to the transparent, while the relation of the material forms to [the material intellect] is the relation of colors to the transparent; for just as light is the perfection of the transparent, so the Active Intellect is the

13. See *De anima* 1.4, 408b24–25.

14. See *De anima* 1.4, esp. 408b27–30.

15. Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 12.7.

perfection of the material intellect. Just as the transparent is neither moved by color nor receives it except when it is illuminated, likewise this [material] intellect does not receive the intelligibles that are here unless it is perfected and illuminated by this [Active] Intellect. Just as light makes potential color to be actual such that it can move the transparent, so the Active Intellect makes the intentions in potency actually intelligible such that the material intellect receives them. This, therefore, is what one must understand about the material intellect and the Active Intellect.

[58] When the material intellect is joined [with the Active Intellect] as perfected by the Active Intellect, then we are joined with the Active Intellect. This disposition is called “acquisition” and the “acquired intellect,” as will be seen later. All the problems entailed by our positing that the intellect is one and many are resolved through the way we have posited the essence of the material intellect. On the one hand, since if the intelligible object in me and in you were one in every way, it would follow that when I know some intelligible that you also know it, as well as many other impossibilities. On the other hand, if we assume that they are many, it follows that the intelligible object in me and in you would be one in species but two in number, and thus the intelligible object will have an intelligible object, and so on to infinity. So it will be impossible that a student learn from the teacher, unless the knowledge that is in the teacher were a power generating and creating the knowledge that is in the student, according to the way that this fire generates another similar to it in species, which is absurd. The fact that what is known is the same in this way in the teacher and in the student made Plato believe that learning was remembering. Thus since we posit that the intelligible object that is in me and in you is many with respect to the subject as what is actual, namely, the imagined forms, while it is one with respect to the subject through which it is an existing intellect, that is, the material intellect, these problems are solved perfectly.

[59] The manner by which Ibn Bājja thought to resolve the puzzles arising about the intellect’s being one and many, namely, the way he gave in his *Conjunction of the Intellect with Man*, is not a way suited to resolving that problem. For when he worked to re-

solve this problem, the intellect that he demonstrates in that epistle to be one turns out to be different from the intellect that he also demonstrated there to be many, since the intellect that he demonstrated to be one is the Active Intellect inasmuch as it is necessarily the form of the theoretical intellect, whereas the intellect he demonstrated to be many is the theoretical intellect itself. Here, though, the term, namely, “intellect,” is used equivocally of the theoretical intellect and the Active Intellect.

[60] Thus, if that which is understood concerning the term “intellect” in the two opposing discussions—namely, one concluding that there are many, the other that the intellect is one—is not equivocal in meaning, then that which he gave afterwards concerning this, namely, that the Active Intellect is one while the theoretical intellect is many, does not resolve this problem. If that which is understood in those two opposing discussions about this term “intellect” equivocates, then the doubt will be sophistical, not a matter of serious dispute, and thus it should be believed that the problems that that man gave in that epistle are not resolved except in this way, if those doubts are not sophistical but matters of serious dispute. In that way [that we have given], the problem about which there is doubt regarding the material intellect, whether it is extrinsic or joined, is resolved. [. . .]

### Book III, Comments 18–20

*Text 18 (De anima 3.5, 430a14–17).*

Therefore it is necessary that there is an intellect in [the soul] that is an intellect insofar as it becomes every thing, and an intellect that is an intellect insofar as it makes it to intellect every thing, and an intellect insofar as it intellects every thing, like a disposition that is like light; for light in a certain way makes potential colors actual colors.<sup>16</sup>

16. It should be noted that in Aristotle’s original Greek he mentions only two aspects: (1) that which becomes all things, and (2) that which makes the other all things.

[1] *Commentary*. When these three differences are found necessarily in the part of the soul that is called "intellect," there must be in it the part insofar as it is affected by every manner of likeness and receptivity. Also in it is a second part called "intellect" insofar as it makes this potential intellect to intellect every thing; for the cause through which it makes the potential intellect to intellect all things is nothing other than the reason why it is actual, since this, because it is actual, is the cause such that it actually intellects all things. There is also in it a third part called "intellect" insofar as it makes every potential intelligible to be actual.

[2] He said, "Therefore it is necessary [that there is an intellect in the soul that is an intellect insofar as it becomes every thing]," and meant by that the material intellect. This, therefore, is its aforementioned description. Next he said, "and an intellect that is an intellect insofar as it makes *it* to intellect every thing," and he meant by that that which comes to be, which is in a positive state. The pronoun "it" can be referred to the material intellect, as we said, as well as to the intellecting human. It should be added to the discussion "insofar as it makes it to intellect every thing *as a result of itself and when it wants*"; for this is the definition of a state, namely, that the one having a state understands by means of it that which is proper to him *as a result of himself and when he wants* without its needing anything extrinsic in relation to this. Thereafter he said, "and an intellect insofar as it intellects [every thing]," meaning by this the Active Intellect. Concerning his claim, "it intellects every thing, [and is] like a certain disposition," he means that it makes every potentially intelligible thing actually intelligible after it was potential, as a state and form do.

[3] Next he said, "like light; [for light in a certain way makes potential colors actual colors]." Now he gives the way according to which one must posit the Active Intellect in the soul. For we cannot say that the relation of the Active Intellect in the soul to the generated intellect is like the relation of art to the artifact in all ways; for art imposes the form on the entire matter without anything existing of the form's account being in the matter before the art makes it. It is not such with respect to the intellect, since if it were such with respect to the intellect, then a human would not need either sense or imagination in grasping intelligibles.

Quite the contrary, the intelligibles would come from the Active Intellect to the material intellect without the material intellect needing to observe sensible forms. Nor can we say that the imagined intentions alone move the material intellect and draw it out of potency into act, since if that were so, then there would be no difference between the universal and the individual, and thus the intellect would belong to the genus of the imaginative power. Whence, since, as we have posited, the relation of the imagined intentions to the material intellect is like the relation of the sensibles to the senses (as Aristotle later says),<sup>17</sup> it is necessary to posit that there is another mover, who makes [the imagined intentions] move the material intellect into act, which is nothing other than to make them actual intelligibles by abstracting them from matter.

[4] Because this account, which requires positing an Active Intellect different from the material [intellect] and from the forms of things that the material intellect grasps, is similar to the account by means of which vision needs light, since the agent and recipient are different from light, he was content to make known this manner [by which the Active Intellect is related to the soul] by this example. It is as though, he says, the manner requiring us to posit an Active Intellect is the same as that by which vision needs light. For just as vision is only moved by colors when they are in act—which is only completed by the presence of light, since it is [light] itself that draws them from potency into act—so likewise the imagined intentions only move the material intellect when they become intelligible in act, which is only perfected by the presence of something that is an actual intellect. It was necessary to attribute these two acts to the soul in us, namely, to be receptive to the intelligible and to make it (although the agent and recipient are eternal substances) because these two actions are reduced to our will, namely, to abstract intelligibles and to intellect them. For, on the one hand, "to abstract" is nothing other than to make the imagined intentions actually intelligible after they were potentially [intelligible], while, on the other hand, "to intellect" is nothing other than to receive these intentions. For since we

17. See *De anima* 3.7–8, 431a14–432a14.

found that the same thing, namely, the imagined intentions, is brought in its very being from one order to another, we said that this must be due to an agent and recipient cause. Accordingly, the recipient is the material [cause], and the agent is the efficient [cause].

[5] When we have found that we act through these two powers of the intellect when we want, and nothing acts except through its form, then it was necessary to attribute to us these two powers of the intellect. The intellect [whose activity] is to abstract and create the intelligible must be prior to the intellect in us [whose activity] is to receive it. Alexander [of Aphrodisias] said that it is more correct to describe the intellect that is in us by its active power not by [its] passive [power], since passivity and receptivity are common to intellects, senses, and discriminating faculties, whereas activity is proper to [the intellect], and it is better that a thing be described by its activity. I say: This would not be necessary in every way unless the term “passivity” were said univocally with respect to them, but in fact it is only said equivocally.

[6] All the things said by Aristotle about this are such that the universals have no being outside the soul, which is what Plato maintained, since if they were such, there would be no need to posit an Active Intellect.

*Text 19 (De anima 3.5, 430a17–20).*

This intellect is also separate, neither mixed nor passible, and in its own substance it is activity. For the agent is always nobler than the patient, and the principle is nobler than the matter. Also actual knowledge is always identical with its object.

[1] *Commentary.* Having explained that there is a second kind of intellect, that is, the Active Intellect, [Aristotle] begins to make a comparison between it and the material [intellect]. He said, “That intellect is also [separate, neither mixed nor passible].” That is to say, this intellect also is separate, just like the material [intellect], and also is impassible and not mixed, just like that one. When he had related those things that [the Active Intellect] has in common with the material intellect, he gave the disposition proper to the Active

Intellect, and said, “in its substance it is activity,” that is, in it there is no potency for something like the potency to receive forms that is in the receiving intellect; for the Active Intellect intellects nothing as a result of those things that are here [below]. It was necessary that the Active Intellect be separate and impassible and not mixed insofar as it actualizes all intelligible forms. If therefore it were mixed, it would not make all forms. [We saw that] the material intellect, which insofar as it actualizes all intelligible forms receives all forms, was necessarily separate and not mixed too (since if it were not separate, it would have this particular form and then one of two [possibilities] would be necessary: either (1) it would receive itself, in which case the mover in it would be what is moved, or (2) it would not receive all the species of forms). In the same way, if the Active Intellect were mixed with matter, it would necessarily either intellect and create itself or it would not create all forms. Thus, what is the difference between these two demonstrations on close inspection of them? They are very similar. It is amazing how everyone concedes that this demonstration is true, namely, the demonstration concerning the Active Intellect, but does not agree with respect to the demonstration concerning the material intellect, even though they are very similar so that it is necessary for one who concedes the one to concede the other. We can know that the material intellect must be unmixed from its judging and comprehending; for since we judge through [the material intellect] itself an infinite number of things in relation to a universal proposition, but clearly the judging faculties of the soul, that is, individual [faculties] mixed [with the body], judge only a finite [number of] intentions, it follows from the conversion of the opposite that that which does not judge [only] a finite [number] of intentions must not be a faculty of the soul mixed [with body]. When we have added to this that the material intellect judges an infinite [number of] things not acquired by sensation and that it does not judge [only] a finite [number of] intentions, it follows that it is not a power mixed [with body]. Ibn Bājja, however, seems to concede that this proposition is true in the *Epistle of Farewell*, namely, that the faculty through which, by means of a universal judgment, we judge is infinite, but he thought that this power is the Active Intellect, if we take his words there

at face value. It is not so; for judgment and discrimination are not attributed to us save on account of the material intellect. Ibn Sīnā certainly used this proposition, and it is true in itself.

[2] Having related that the Active Intellect is different from the material intellect in this respect that the agent is always pure activity, whereas the material [intellect] is either [active or passive] because of the things that are here, he gave the final cause with respect to this and said, "For the agent is always nobler than the patient." That is to say, the former in its substance is always activity, whereas the latter is found in either disposition. It has already been explained that the relation of the Active Intellect to the patient intellect is just like the relation of the principle that in some way produces motion to the moved matter. The agent, however, is always nobler than the patient, and the principle is nobler than the matter. Therefore, according to Aristotle it should be believed that the last of the separate intellects in the order is this material intellect; for its activity is less than their activities, since its activity seems to be more a passivity than an activity. It is only in this sense that the [material] intellect differs from the Active Intellect, not because of anything else. Since just as we know that there is a multitude of separate intellects only on account of the diversity of their activities, so also we know the difference between that material intellect and the Active Intellect only on account of the diversity of their activities. Just as it happens to the Active Intellect to sometimes act on things existing here and sometimes not, so also it happens to the [material intellect] to sometimes judge things existing here and sometimes not; but they differ only in this respect, namely, that the judgment is something at the apex of the perfection of the one who judges, whereas the activity is not in that way at the apex of the perfection of the agent. Therefore, consider this: that there is a difference between these two intellects, and if it were not this, there would be no difference between them. (O Alexander, if Aristotle were to believe that the term "material intellect" signifies nothing but a preparedness, then how could he have made this comparison between it and the Active Intellect, namely, in providing those things with respect to which they agree and those things with respect to which they differ?)

[3] Thereafter, [Aristotle] said, "Also actual knowledge is always identical with its object," and indicated, so I think, something proper to the Active Intellect in which it differs from the material [intellect], namely, that in the Active Intellect actual knowledge is the same as the object known, but it is not so in the material intellect, since [the material intellect's] intelligible is not things that are in themselves an intellect. Having explained that [the Active Intellect's] substance is its activity, he gives the cause concerning this, which follows next.

*Text 20 (De anima 3.5, 430a20–25).*

What is in potency is temporally prior in the individual; however, absolutely it is not, not even temporally. It is not sometimes intellecting and sometimes not intellecting. When separated, it is what it is alone, and this alone is forever immortal. We do not remember, because this one is impassible, whereas the intellect that is passible is corruptible. Without this nothing is intellecting.

[1] *Commentary.* This passage can be understood in three ways: one of which is according to the opinion of Alexander [of Aphrodisias]; the second according to the opinion of Themistius and other commentators; and the third according to the opinion that we have related, which is the most literal. According to the opinion of Alexander, it can be understood that [Aristotle] meant the potential intellect to be a preparedness existing in the human composite, namely, that a potential and preparedness in the human to receive the intelligible in respect to every single individual is temporally prior to the Active Intellect; however, absolutely the Active Intellect is prior. When he said, "It is not sometimes intellecting and sometimes not intellecting," he means the Active Intellect. When he said, "When separated, it is what it is alone, not mortal," he means that this Intellect, when it is joined to us and by means of which we intellect other beings insofar as it is a form for us, then this alone among the parts of the intellect is immortal. Next he said, "We do not remember, [because this one is impassible, whereas the intellect that is passible is

corruptible. Without this nothing is understood].” This is a problem about the Active Intellect insofar as it is joined with us and by means of it we intellect; for someone can say that when we intellect by means of something eternal, necessarily by means of this we intellect after death just as before. [Alexander] said in response that intellect is joined with us only through the mediation of the being of the generable and corruptible material intellect in us, but since this intellect is corrupted in us, we do not remember. Therefore Alexander might understand this passage in this way, although we have not seen his commentary on this passage.

[2] Themistius, on the other hand, understands by “potential intellect” the separate material intellect whose being has been demonstrated. By the intellect of which [Aristotle] made a comparison with this one, [Themistius] intends the Active Intellect insofar as it is conjoined with the potential intellect, which in fact is the theoretical intellect on [Themistius’] view. When he said, “It is not sometimes intellecting and sometimes not intellecting,” he understands the Active Intellect as what does not touch the material intellect. When he said, “When separated, it is what it is alone, not mortal,” he meant the Active Intellect insofar as it is a form for the material intellect, this is the theoretical intellect in his view. That problem, namely, when he said, “We do not remember,” concerns the Active Intellect insofar as it touches the material intellect, that is, it [concerns] the theoretical intellect; for he says that it is improbable that this doubt [raised] by Aristotle concerns the intellect except as the Active Intellect is a form for us. For he said that by assuming that the Active Intellect is eternal, whereas the theoretical intellect is not, this question does not follow, namely, why we do not remember after death what we intellect in life. It is just as he said; for to assume that that problem is about the Active Intellect insofar as it is acquired, as Alexander says, is improbable. For the knowledge existing in us in a state of acquisition is said equivocally in connection with knowledge existing by nature and knowledge existing by instruction. Therefore, this question, so it seems, concerns only the knowledge existing by nature; for this question is impossible if it is not about the eternal cogni-

tion existing in us, whether by nature, as Themistius says, or by the intellect<sup>18</sup> acquired last. Thus, since Themistius believes that this problem is about the theoretical intellect, but the beginning of Aristotle’s discussion concerns the Active Intellect, [Themistius] therefore believed that the theoretical intellect is for Aristotle the Active [Intellect] insofar as it touches the material intellect.

[3] In support of all this there is what [Aristotle] said in the first chapter about the theoretical intellect;<sup>19</sup> for there [Aristotle] raised the same question as here and resolved it with the same answer. He said in the first book: “The intellect appears to be a certain substance existing in itself and does not seem to be corrupted. Since if it were corrupted, then this would be greater with the weariness of old age.” Afterwards he gave the way by means of which it is possible that the intellect is incorruptible, while [the activity of] intellecting in itself will be corruptible. He said, “To conceptualize by the intellect and to speculate are different, such that something else within is corrupted, whereas in itself it has no such occurrence; however, discriminating and loving are not of [the intellect’s] being, but of that one which has this, inasmuch as it has it. Thus also, since that one is corrupted, we neither remember nor love.”<sup>20</sup> Therefore, Themistius says that [Aristotle’s] account in that chapter in which he said, “The intellect, however, seems to be a certain substance existing in the thing and not corrupted,” is the same as that about which he spoke here: “When separated, it is what it is alone, forever immortal.” What he said here, “We do not remember, because this one is impassible, whereas the intellect that is passible is corruptible and without this nothing is intellectured,” is the same as that which he said there, namely, “To conceptualize by the intellect and to speculate are different . . .” Because of this [Themistius] says that here [Aristotle] intended by “passive intellect” a concupiscent part of the soul; for that part seems to have a cer-

18. *Intellectum* might alternatively be understood as “intelligible.”

19. *De anima* 1.4.

20. *De anima* 1.4, 408b24–28.

tain rationality, since it listens to that part that looks to the rational soul.

[4] Since we think that Alexander's and Themistius' opinions are impossible, and we find that Aristotle's literal account is according to our interpretation, we believe that Aristotle's opinion is the one we have stated, and it is true in itself. Since his words in this passage are clear, it is explained thus. When he said, "This intellect is also separate, impassible and not mixed," he is speaking of the Active Intellect. We cannot say otherwise, but this particle "also" indicates that another intellect is impassible and not mixed. Similarly, the comparison between them is obviously between the Active Intellect and the material intellect inasmuch as the material intellect has in common with the Active [Intellect] many of these dispositions. In this Themistius agrees with us and Alexander differs from us.

[5] When [Aristotle] said, "What is in potency is temporally prior in the individual," it can be understood in the same way by the three opinions. For according to Themistius' and our opinion, the potential intellect is conjoined with us prior to the Active Intellect, while according to Alexander the potential intellect will be prior in us according to being or generation but not conjunction. When he said, "However, absolutely it is not, not even temporally," he speaks of the potential intellect. Since when it is received absolutely, not with respect to an individual, then it will not be prior to the Active Intellect in some manner of priority, but posterior to it in every way. This account agrees with either opinion, namely, saying that the potential intellect is generable or not generable. When he said, "It is not sometimes intellecting and sometimes not," it is impossible that that statement be understood according to its obvious [sense] or according to either Themistius or Alexander, since this phrase "it is," when he said, "*It is* not sometimes intellecting and sometimes not," refers back to the Active Intellect according to them. But Themistius, as we said, is of the opinion that the Active Intellect is the theoretical intellect insofar as it touches the material intellect, whereas Alexander is of the opinion that the dispositional intellect, that is, the theoretical intellect, is different from the Active

Intellect. The latter ought to be believed; for the art is different from the thing made by the art, and the agent is different from the activity. According to what appears to us, however, that statement is according to its obvious [sense], that is, the phrase "it is" will be related to the closest antecedent, namely, the material intellect when taken absolutely, not with respect to an individual. For it does not happen to the intellect, which is called "material," according to what we said, that it sometimes intellects and sometimes does not, except in relation to the imagined forms existing in each individual, not in relation to the species; for example, it does not happen to it that it sometimes intellects the intelligible "horse" and sometimes does not, except in relation to Socrates and Plato, whereas absolutely and in relation to the [human] species it always intellects this universal, unless the human species as a whole were to pass away, which is impossible. The advantage of this account will be that it is according to [the text's] obvious [sense]. When he said, "However, absolutely it is not, not even temporally," he means that the potential intellect—not when it is taken in relation to some individual, but absolutely and in relation to any individual—is not found at certain times intellecting and at certain times not, but it is always found intellecting, just as the Active Intellect—when it was not taken with respect to some individual—is not found sometimes intellecting and sometimes not but is always found intellecting when taken absolutely; for the manner of the two intellects' actions is the same. Accordingly, when he said, "When separated, it is what it is alone, immortal," he means: when it is separated in this way, from this way only is it immortal, not in the [way] it is taken with respect to the individual. [In light of this], his statement in which he says, "We do not remember, etc." will be according to its obvious [sense]; for against this opinion the problem arises perfectly. For he asks: Since the common intelligibles are neither generated nor corrupted on this account, why after death do we not remember the knowledge had in this life? It is answered: Because memory comes through the passive perceiving faculties. There are three faculties that are described in *On Sense and Sensibilia*, namely, imagination, cognition,

and memory.<sup>21</sup> Those three faculties are in the human in order to present the form of an imagined thing when the sensation is absent. Thus, it was said there that since these three faculties mutually help one another, they might represent the individual thing as it is in its being, although we are not sensing it. Here he intended by “passive intelligible” the forms of imagination inasmuch as the cognitive faculty proper to the human acts on them; for this faculty is a certain rationality, and its action is nothing other than to place the intention of the form of the imagination with its individual in the memory or to distinguish the [intention] from the [individual] in the form-bearing [faculty] and imagination. Clearly the intellect that is called “material” receives the imagined intentions after this [activity of] distinguishing. Thus, this passive faculty is necessarily in the form-bearing [faculty]. Hence, he correctly said, “We do not remember, because this one is impassible, whereas the intellect that is passible is corruptible. Without this it intellects nothing.” That is to say, without the imaginative and cognitive faculty the intellect that is called “material” intellects nothing; for these faculties are like things that prepare the material of the art to receive the activity of the art. This, then, is one interpretation.

[6] It can also be interpreted in another way, which is that when he said, “it is not sometimes intellecting and sometimes not,” he means: when [the material intellect] is not taken insofar as it intellects and is informed by generable and corruptible material forms, but is taken absolutely and as what intellects separate forms free from matter, then it is not found sometimes intellecting and sometimes not. Instead, it is found in the same form, for example, in the way in which [the material intellect] intellects the Active Intellect, whose relation to it is, as we have said, like that of light to the transparent; for having explained that this potential intellect is eternal and naturally perfected by material forms, it ought to be believed that it is worthier when it is naturally perfected by nonmaterial forms that are in themselves intelligible. However, it is not initially joined with us as a result of this way, but

later when the generation of the dispositional intellect is perfected, as we will explain later. According to this interpretation, when he said, “When separated, it is what it is alone,” he is indicating the material intellect insofar as it is perfected by the Active Intellect when it is joined with us in this way, and so is separated and perhaps indicates the material intellect in its first conjunction with us, namely, the conjunction that is by nature. [Aristotle] adopts [this view] by [using] this particle “alone,” indicating the corruption of the dispositional intellect from the perspective of which it is corruptible.

[7] Generally, when someone considers closely the material intellect together with the Active Intellect, they appear to be two in one way but one in another way. They are two through the diversity of their activity—since the activity of the Active Intellect is to generate, whereas the former’s is to be informed—whereas they are one because the material intellect is perfected by the Active Intellect and intellects it. For this reason we say that the intellect is conjoined with us, appearing in it two powers, one of which is active while the other belongs to the genus of passive powers. Alexander nicely likened that to fire; for fire naturally alters every body through the power existing in it, yet nonetheless together with this it is acted upon in whatever way by that which it alters, namely, it is likened to it in a certain sense of similarity, that is, it acquires from it a lesser fiery form through the fiery form [causing] the alteration.<sup>22</sup> For this disposition is very similar to the disposition of the Active Intellect in connection with the passive intellect and the intellect that it generates; for it makes these things in one way, but receives them in another way. Accordingly, the statement in which he said, “We do not remember, etc.” is a solution to the question that made the ancient commentators believe that the dispositional intellect is eternal, and made Alexander believe that the material intellect is generable and corruptible concerning which it was said: How are the things understood by us not eternal, given that the intellect and recipient

21. The reference in fact does not appear to be to Aristotle’s *On Sense and Sensibilia*, but to his *On Memory* 1.

22. In Alexander’s *De intellectu* 111.19ff., he says that fire consumes matter but is also nourished by the matter and so is acted on insofar as it is nourished.

are eternal? It is as if he says in response that the cause of this is because the material intellect intellects nothing without the passive intellect, even though there is both the agent and recipient, just as there is no perception of colors, even though there is both light and vision, unless there is the colored object. Thus, according to whichever of these interpretations it is said, it will be literal, agreeing with Aristotle's words and his demonstrations without any contradiction or departure from the obvious sense of his discussion.

[8] Equivocal terms are thus used correctly in a doctrine only if they, although diverse [in meaning], nonetheless agree in all the things (*intentio = ma'nā*) of which they can be said. That to which [Aristotle] referred in another translation in place of his saying, "because this one is impassible, whereas the intellect that is passible is corruptible," demonstrates that here he intended by "passive intellect" the human imaginative faculty; for he says in that [other] translation: "That which led us to say that this intellect neither alters nor is acted upon is that the imagination is a passive intellect and is corrupted, but the intellect does not perceive and understand anything without imagination." Therefore, this term "intellect" accordingly is said in this book in four ways: it is said of the material intellect, the dispositional intellect, the Active Intellect, and the imaginative faculty. You should know that there is no difference according to the interpretation of Themistius and the ancient commentators and the opinion of Plato in this respect, that the intelligibles existing in us are eternal and that to learn is remembering. Plato says that these intelligibles are sometimes in us, sometimes not, because the subject is sometimes prepared to receive them, sometimes not, but they in themselves are after we receive [them] just as before [we receive them], and just as they are outside the soul so are they also within the soul.

[9] Themistius, however, says that this, namely, that [the intelligibles in us] are sometimes joined, sometimes not, happens to them because of the nature of the recipient; for he is of the opinion that the Active Intellect is not naturally conjoined with us at first except insofar as it touches the material intellect. Thus, on the basis of this, deficiency happens to it, since conjunction with the intentions of the imagination is in one way like receptivity and in another way like activ-

ity. Thus, the intelligibles are in it in a disposition different from its being in the Active Intellect. The presumption in understanding this opinion is that the reason moving Aristotle to posit that there is a material intellect is not because there is a created intellect here. Quite the contrary, the reason for this is either because (1) when the intellects that are in us are found to be according to dispositions incompatible with simple intellects, it is said that that intellect that is in us is composed of that which is in act, namely, the Active Intellect, and that which is in potency; or because (2) its conjunction, according to this opinion, is similar to generation and, as it were, it is made similar to the agent and the patient, namely in its conjunction with the intentions of the imagination. Therefore, according to this opinion the agent, patient, and effect are the same, and it is indicated by these three states through the diversity that happens to it.

[10] We, however, are of the opinion that [nothing] moved [Aristotle] to posit the Active Intellect except for the fact that the theoretical intelligibles are generated according to the manner that we mentioned. Thus consider this closely, since there is a difference between the three opinions, namely Plato's, Themistius', and our opinion. On Themistius' interpretation there is no need of these intelligibles if not for positing the material intellect alone or the material intellect and the Active Intellect according to the way of similarity; for where there is no true generation, there is no agent. We agree with Alexander in the way of positing the Active Intellect, but we differ from him with respect to the nature of the material intellect. We differ from Themistius with respect to the nature of the dispositional intellect and in the manner of positing the Active Intellect. Also in a certain way we agree with Alexander with respect to the nature of the dispositional intellect, but in another way we disagree. Therefore, these are the three differences by which the opinions attributed to Aristotle are divided. You ought to know that use and training are the causes of that which appears concerning the power of the Active Intellect that is in us to abstract and the [power of] the material intellect to receive. They are, I say, causes because of the state existing through use and training in the passive and corruptible intellect, which Aristotle calls "passive," and he openly said that it is corrupted.

Otherwise, it would happen that the power in us making the intelligibles would be material and likewise a passive power. Thus, on this issue no one can think by this [line of reasoning] that the material intellect is mixed with the body; for what is said by one who believes that [the material intellect] is mixed [with the body] in response to this discussion [of ours] concerning the Active Intellect, we will say in response [to what he says] concerning the material intellect. It is by means of this intellect, which Aristotle calls “passive,” that humans differ with respect to the four virtues mentioned in the *Topics*, which al-Fārābī enumerates

in the [*Sophistical*] *Refutations*.<sup>23</sup> By means of this intellect man differs from other animals, otherwise it would then be necessary for there to be the conjunction of Active Intellect and the recipient intellect with [other] animals in the same way. Certainly the operative intellect differs from the theoretical [intellect] through the diversity of preparedness existing in this intellect. These things having been shown, let us return to our [text].

23. The reference appears to be to *On Sophistical Refutations 2*, and al-Fārābī’s *zal-Amkina al-mughliṭa*.

## 28. The Incoherence of “The Incoherence”

Al-Ghazālī says: The refutation [of the argument for the eternity of the world from the impossibility of a temporal event’s proceeding from an absolute, unchanging, eternal will] comes from two fronts: The first of them is to ask, “By what means would you [philosophers] censure one who says, ‘The world is temporally created by means of an eternal will that made necessary [the world’s] existence at the moment at which it came to exist; [the world’s] nonexistence continued to the limit up to which it continued, and the existence began from whence it began; before the existence it was not something willed and so owing to that was not created, but at the moment at which it was created, it was willed by the eternal will and so owing to that was created’”? What precludes this belief and would render it absurd?

[1] I say: This is a sophistical claim, namely, since he cannot maintain that the delay of the effect is possible

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after the agent’s action. When his resolve to act is as a voluntary agent, then one can maintain that the delay of [the act] and the effect is possible after the agent’s willing, but its delay is not possible after the action of the agent, and the same holds for the delay of the action after the resolve to act is in the willing agent. So the same problem remains. [Al-Ghazālī] is necessarily faced with only one of two options: either (1) the agent’s act does not necessitate a change in the agent, in which case it would require some external cause of the change; or (2) some changes are self-changed, not needing some cause of change that is associated with them, and some changes can be associated with the Eternal without a cause of change. In other words, there are two things that the opponents [of al-Ghazālī] firmly hold here, one of which is that change entails the activity of the agent and that every change has a cause of change; the second principle is that the Eternal does not undergo change in any kind of way, all of which is difficult to prove.

[2] That of which the Ash‘arites<sup>1</sup> are not at liberty is either to grant a First Agent or to grant that It has a

1. That is, the theological group to which al-Ghazālī belonged.

first [temporal] act, because they cannot posit that the Agent's state with respect to the temporal effect at the time of the act is the same state as at the time of the act's absence. So in this case there must be a new state or some relation that had not been. That [new state or previously nonexistent relation] necessarily is either in the agent or in the effect or in both of them. Consequently, when we require that every new state has an agent, then inevitably the agent of that new state is either one or other of the following. It might be (1) another agent, in which case the former agent is neither the first nor sufficient in itself for its act but needs another. Or it might be (2) the agent itself that actualizes that state that is a condition for its acting, in which case the former act, which was assumed to be the first [act] to proceed from it, is not the first, but rather its act of actualizing that state that is a condition for the effect is before its act of actualizing the effect. This, as you see, is what necessarily follows. (The only exception is where one allows that among the temporal states in agents there can be what does not need a temporal creator, which would not even be an option if it were not for those who allow that certain things are temporally created spontaneously—which was a position of the ancients who denied the agent—but that it is baseless is self-evident.)

[3] In this objection there is confusion between "eternal will" and "temporal will," which are equivocal terms, indeed even contrary; for the will that is in personal experience is a power in which there is a possibility to perform one of two opposites equally, and the possibility of [the will's] being susceptible to two objects of will is still equal (for the will is the desire of the agent to act). When it performs its acts, the desire ceases, and the object of desires comes to be. So when it is said here that one of two opposites is willed eternally, then, by transferring the nature of willing from possibility to necessity, the definition of willing is eliminated, even when it is said that an eternal willing was not eliminated by the presence of the object of will. When [the willing] has no first [moment], then one moment is neither delimited from another nor designated for it to bring about the object of will. Still, we say that demonstration leads to the existence of an Agent with a power that is neither volitional nor natural, but which the Divine Law terms

"will," just as demonstration led to things that are intermediary between things that at first sight are supposed to be contradictories but are not contradictories, as, for example, our saying that there exists something that is neither internal nor external to the world [i.e., God]. [ . . . ]

[4] [The argument that if the world were eternal, then the number of rotations of the planets and stars would be infinite and some infinite rotations would be greater and others smaller], arises when you imagine two motions consisting of rotations between two given extremes of one [and the same] time, and then you imagine at one time a smaller part of each one of the two between two given extremes, so that the proportion of part to part is the proportion of whole to whole. For example, when the rotation of Saturn during a period of time called a year is one-thirteenth of the Sun's rotation in that period, then when you imagine the whole of the Sun's rotations [in proportion] to the whole of Saturn's rotations occurring during one and the same time, inevitably the proportion of all of the rotations of one motion to all of the rotations of the other motion is the proportion of part to part.

[5] When there is no proportion between the two motions considered as wholly complete because each of them is potential, that is, they have no beginning but are infinite, whereas there is a proportion between the parts because each one of [the parts] is actual, then it does not necessarily follow that the proportion of whole to whole tracks the proportion of part to part, as their proof concerning the claim supposes. [That] is because no proportion exists between two magnitudes or extents, each one of which is posited to be infinite. Thus, since the ancients posited, for instance, that the whole of the Sun's motion has no starting point but is infinite, and likewise for Saturn's motion, there simply is no relation between the two, because from [such a relation] it would necessarily follow that the two wholes are finite, as must be the case concerning the two parts of the whole. This is clear in itself.

[6] [Al-Ghazālī's] account imagines that when the proportion of parts to parts is the proportion of the greater to the lesser, then it is necessary for the two wholes that the proportion of one of the two to the other is the proportion of the greater to the lesser. This is necessary only when the two wholes are finite, but

in the case when they are not finite, there is no greater or lesser. When one supposes that here there is a proportion that is the proportion of the greater to the lesser, then one will imagine that some other absurdity necessarily results from that, namely, that what is infinite might be greater than what is infinite. This is an absurdity only when one takes there to be two things that are actually infinite, because in that case the proportion between them would exist, whereas when one takes [them] to be potentially [infinite], there is no proportion. So this is the answer to this puzzle, not the answer provided on behalf of the philosophers by al-Ghazālī. In this way all of their puzzles mentioned in this section are resolved.

[7] The most difficult of all of them is the one that they habitually vent, namely, that when the motions that have occurred in the past are infinite, then no motion could exist as a result of them in the present, right here, unless an infinite number of motions before it had already terminated. (This is true and acknowledged by the philosophers, if the prior motion is supposed to be a condition for the existence of the later.) In other words, [the objection runs] whenever one of [the motions] necessarily exists, then an infinite number of causes before it would necessarily exist. Not a single true philosopher, however, allows the existence of an infinite number of causes, as the materialist allows, because a necessary result of [an infinite number of causes] would be an effect's existing without a cause and a moved thing's existing without a mover.

[8] Yet since demonstration has led some people to a principle that is an Eternal Mover Whose existence has neither beginning nor end and Whose action must not be delayed after Its existence, it follows necessarily that Its act, just like the state concerning Its existence, has no beginning. If that were not the case, Its act would be possible, not necessary, and so It would not have been a First Principle. So the acts of the Agent Whose existence has no beginning must themselves have no beginning just as the state with respect to Its existence. Consequently, it must necessarily follow that one of Its first acts is not a condition for the second, because no one of them essentially actualizes [another]; that one of them should be before another is [only] accidental.

[9] The [philosophers], however, have allowed a certain accidental, though not essential, infinite. In fact, this kind of infinite is something necessary that is a consequence of a First, Eternal Principle's existence. That is the case not only with respect to successive or continuous motions, but also with respect to things about which it is supposed that the prior is a cause of the posterior, such as the human who reproduces a human like himself. That is to say, that the temporal creation of some determinate human by another human must go back to a First, Eternal Agent Whose existence has no beginning and [likewise] Whose bringing about one human from another has no [beginning]. So one human's resulting from another infinitely is accidental, whereas the beforeness and afterness are essential. In other words, just as there is no beginning for the acts performed without an instrument by the Agent whose existence has no beginning, so likewise there is no beginning for the instrument by which [the agent] performs its acts that are characteristically [performed] by an instrument when those [acts] have no beginning.<sup>2</sup> Since the speculative theologians believe that what was accidental was in fact essential, they reject its existence. The solution to their argument was difficult, and they erroneously supposed that their proof was necessary.

[10] This was evident among the discussion of the philosophers; for their first master, namely, Aristotle, had clearly explained that if a motion were [ultimately] owing to motion, then the motion would not exist; and if an element were [ultimately] owing to element, then the element would not exist.<sup>3</sup> This manner of infinite, in their view, neither has a beginning nor is finite. Thus, that [an actual infinite series] has

2. Although Ibn Rushd's prose is cumbersome, the point is clear. When an Eternal Agent performs an eternal act by means of some tool, then that tool must also be eternal. In the case of the procreation of humans, the Eternal Agent creates a human, using an earlier human as its tools for this act. Consequently, since the Agent is eternally creating humans, using them as its tools for this act, human as a species must also be eternal.

3. See Aristotle, *Physics* 8.1, 251a23–b10.

terminated and entered into existence does not apply to anything pertaining to [an accidental infinite], not even past time, because whatever has terminated had a beginning, and whatever did not have a beginning has not terminated. That is also evident from the fact that beginning and ending are related. Thus, whoever claims that the rotations of the celestial spheres are infinite in the future need not suppose they have a beginning, because what has a beginning has an end, and what does not have an end does not have a beginning. The same holds concerning the first and the last: what has a first has a last, and what does not have a first does not have a last. Now what does not have a last, then, in fact has neither a certain part where it terminates nor a certain part where it begins, and what does not have a given part where it begins does not have a termination. Thus, when the speculative theologians ask the philosopher, "Where has the motion that is before the present terminated?" [the philosophers'] response is that it has not terminated, because from the [philosophers'] supposition that it does not have a first, it does not have a termination. So the theologians' delusion that the philosophers concede the termination of [the rotations of the celestial spheres] is not true, because in the [philosophers'] view they would not terminate unless they began. So it has become clear to you concerning the proof cited among the theologians about the temporal creation of the world that it does not sufficiently attain the level of certainty and reach the ranks of demonstration. Also the proof that is introduced and cited from the philosophers in [al-Ghazālī's *Incoherence*] is not worthy of the ranks of demonstration, which is what we intended to show about this work. The best answer to whoever asks about [the First Agent's] acts going into the past is to say, "Its acts going into [the past] are like Its existence going [into the past]," because neither of them has a beginning.

[11] As for al-Ghazālī's response on behalf of the philosophers to rebut the proof that some of the celestial motions are faster than others and the response to it, here is his text:

[The philosophers] might say that the locus of the error is in your claim that [the heavenly

rotations] are a whole composed of units; for these rotations are nonexistent. [They are] either past, and so they no longer exist, or future, and so they do not yet exist. In general, [the whole] indicates presently existing things, but in this case there is nothing existing [such as to be a whole].

Thereafter in opposition to this he said:

We say that number divides into the even and odd, and it is impossible that what is numbered should lie outside of [this division], regardless whether it is something that continues to exist or perishes. So when we posit a number of horses, we must believe that [the number] is either even or odd, regardless of whether we suppose [the horses] as existing or nonexistent. If they cease to exist after existing, this proposition does not change.

This is the end of his account.

[12] This account applies only to what has a beginning and end, whether outside the soul or in it, I mean that intellects judge it to be even and odd, whether currently existing or not. As for whatever exists potentially, that is, having neither a beginning nor an end, neither being even nor odd, or beginning or terminating, or going into the past or into the future applies to it. [That] is because what is in potency has the status of something nonexistent, which is what the philosophers intended by saying that the rotations that were in the past and future are nonexistent. The gist of this question is that whatever is described as a delimited whole, possessing a beginning and end, is so described as having a beginning and end, whether it is outside of the soul or not. As long as some whole of it is actual and something delimited in the past, it is in the soul and outside of it, and so is necessarily either odd or even. As long as the whole of it is not delimited outside of the soul, then it is not delimited except insofar as it is in the soul (because the soul cannot conceptualize what is infinite in existence), and so from this perspective [namely, within the soul] it also is described as odd or even. Inasmuch as it is

outside of the soul, however, it simply is not described as being either odd or even, and the same holds for whatever is in the past. Now it was supposed that it is in potency outside the soul, that is, it has no beginning. So it is not described as being either odd or even, unless it is supposed that it is actual, I mean, that it consists of a beginning and end. A whole or entirety (I mean, possessing a beginning and end) belongs to whatever pertains to the motions only insofar as they are in the soul, just like the case concerning time and rotation, but in their nature they necessarily are neither odd nor even, save insofar as they are in the soul.<sup>4</sup>

[13] The cause of this error is that when something with a certain description is in the soul, it is imagined that it exists outside of the soul with that very description. Since anything that occurred in the past is only conceptualized in the soul as finite, it is erroneously supposed that the nature of whatever occurred in the past is thus outside of the soul, [namely, that it is finite as well]. Since the conceptualization of whatever will occur in the future is designated as infinite, in that one conceptualizes one part after another, Plato and the Ash'arites believed that future celestial rotations could be infinite, but all of this is a judgment based on imagination not demonstration. Thus, whoever supposes that the world has a beginning would have held more firmly to his principle and better preserved his supposition to suppose that it has an end, as many of the theologians had done. . . .

[14] . . . To suppose a numerical multiplicity of immaterial souls is not acknowledged by [the philosophers], because the cause of numerical multiplicity in their view is the matter, while the cause of the similarity in numerically many things is the form. That numerically many things should exist as one in form without matter is absurd. That is [because] an individual is distinguished by some attribute or other only

4. Ibn Rushd's point is that motion considered as a whole or entirety, that is, considered as having a spatial or temporal extension, exists only in the soul. What exists in the world is merely an object at some discrete spatial point at some given moment, not something that exists as actually extending across space and time.

accidentally, since someone else might have that attribute in common with him. Only on the part of the matter is one individual distinct from another. Moreover, the denial of an infinite as something actually existing, regardless of whether they are bodies or not, is a principle universally accepted by [the philosophers]. We do not know anyone who drew a distinction between having a position and not having a position in this sense, except Ibn Sīnā.<sup>5</sup> As for everyone else, I know of no one who has maintained this position. It simply does not fit with any of their principles. So [an actual infinite] is a fiction, because [the philosophers] deny the existence of an actual infinite, whether a body or not, since it would necessarily result that one infinite is greater than another. Perhaps Ibn Sīnā intended it only to satisfy the masses concerning what they regularly hear about the soul. It is, however, hardly a satisfying account; for if things were actually infinite, then the part would be like the whole, I mean, when what is infinite is divided into two parts. For example, if a line or number were actually infinite at both of its extremes, and moreover it were divided into two portions, then each one of its portions would be actually infinite, but the whole was also infinite. So the whole and the part would be infinite because each one of them is actual, which is impossible. All of this necessarily follows only when an actual infinite is posited, not a potential.

[15] . . . Zayd is numerically different from 'Amr, but he and 'Amr are one in form, that is, the soul. So if the soul of Zayd, for instance, were numerically different from the soul of 'Amr in the same way that Zayd is numerically different from 'Amr, then Zayd's and 'Amr's souls would be numerically two [but] one in form, in which case the soul would have a soul. Therefore, it is necessary that Zayd's and 'Amr's souls are one in form, whereas numerical multiplicity, I mean being divided among the individuals, is associated with what is one in form only by the matters. So if the soul does not perish when the body perishes or there is something in it with this description [i.e., being imperishable], then, when it separated from the bodies, it must

5. The reference is to *The Salvation*, 4.2.11, "On the Finite and the Infinite," not translated here.

be numerically one. There is no way to divulge this knowledge in this place.<sup>6</sup>

[16] The account that [al-Ghazālī] used to refute Plato's teaching is sophistical. That is [because] the gist of it is that Zayd's soul is either the very same soul as 'Amr's soul or it is different from it; however, it is not the very same as 'Amr's soul, and so it is different from it. "Different" is an equivocal term, just as "he" is said of many things that are said to be different. So the soul of Zayd and 'Amr are one in one respect but many in another, as if you said "one" with respect to form [and] "many" with respect to what bears [the form].

[17] His claim that divisibility is conceptualized only in what has quantity is partially false. That is because this is true with respect to what is essentially divisible, but not true with respect to what is accidentally divisible, I mean, what is divisible from the fact that it is in what is essentially divisible. What is divisible essentially is, for instance, the body, whereas what is divisible accidentally is like the whiteness that is in bodies, which is divided by the bodies' being divided. Likewise, forms and the soul are accidentally divisible, namely, by their substrate's being divided. The soul is something resembling light, and just as light is divided by the division of the illuminated bodies and then is united when the bodies are absent, so likewise is the case with respect to the soul together with bodies.

[18] His putting forth the likes of these sophistical claims is obscene, for one would think that the above would not escape his notice. He intended that only to dupe the people of his time, but it is incompatible with the character of those striving to reveal the truth. Perhaps the man is to be excused by taking into account his time and place, and that he was testing in his works. [...]

Then it was said:

If [the philosopher] asks by what means would you deny one who refrains from invoking necessity and proves [the impossibility of an eternal will's temporally creating the world] in another way, namely, that moments of time are

indiscernible with respect to the possibility that the will has a preference for [one of] them [over the others]. So what is it that distinguished one determinate moment of time from what was before or after it, when it is not absurd that what is willed should be earlier and later?

[19] The main point of what [al-Ghazālī] related in this section on behalf of the philosophers in order to prove that a temporal event cannot result from an Eternal Agent is that in that case there could not be a will. This rebuff would arise against [the philosophers] only by their conceding to their opponent that all opposites are similar in relation to the Eternal Will, whether [the opposites] concern time (such as the prior and posterior) or are found in contrary qualities (such as white and black), and likewise that nonexistence and existence are, in their view, similar in relation to the First Will. After they concede this premise to their opponent (although they do not accept it), [the opponents] say to them that the will could not selectively determine to do one of two similar things as opposed to the other except by some specific property and cause that exists in one of the two similar things but not in the other. If this is not the case, then the one of the two similar things that occurs as a result [of the will] is by chance. So, it is as if for the sake of argument the philosophers conceded to [their opponent] that if a will *were* to belong to the Eternal, then it *would* be possible for a temporal event to proceed from an eternal. Since the theologians are unable to answer, they resorted to saying that the Eternal Will is an attribute that can distinguish one thing from its like without there being a specific property that selectively determines doing one of the two similar things from its counterpart, just as heat is an attribute that can warm and knowledge is an attribute that can comprehend the object of knowledge. Their opponents, the philosophers, said to them: This is something absurd whose occurrence is inconceivable, because vis-à-vis the one who wills, his acting will not have a preference for one of the two equally similar things to the exclusion of the other unless it is with respect to whatever it is that is not similar about them, I mean, with respect to an attribute that is in one of them but not in the other. When the two are similar in every respect and

6. Ibn Rushd provides the arguments for this position in Selection 27.

there is no specific property at all, then the will prefers both equally. Now when [the will's] preference is equal, where [the will] is the cause of acting, then the preference to do one of them is no more fitting than its preference for the other, and so it prefers to do either two contrary things simultaneously or neither one of them at all, but both cases are impossible.

[20] So for the sake of the initial argument, it is as if [the philosophers] conceded to [their opponents] that all things are similar in relation to the First Agent, and [their opponents then] foisted on them as a necessary conclusion that there would be a specific property that was prior to [the First Agent], which is absurd. So when the [opponents] respond that the will is an attribute that can distinguish like from its like inasmuch as it is like, [the philosophers] rebutted that this is inconceivable and unintelligible concerning the meaning of "will," and so it is as if [the philosophers] have denied to [their opponents] the principle that they had conceded. This is the sum of what this section contained. It shifts the discussion from the initial question to the discussion of the will, but shifting [the subject of discussion] is a sophistical ploy.

[21] . . . The gist of [al-Ghazālī's next] rebuttal consists of two positions. The first is that he concedes that the will in personal experience [i.e., the human will] is that which cannot distinguish something from its like inasmuch as it is like, but that intellectual proof demands the existence of an attribute in the First Agent that can do this. To believe erroneously that an attribute's existing in this condition is impossible is like erroneously believing that nothing exists that is neither internal nor external to the world. On the basis of this, then, the will attributed to the [First] Agent (may He be praised) and to man is an equivocal term, just as is the case concerning the term "knowledge" and the other attributes whose existence in the Eternal is different from their existence in the temporal. It is only by Divine Law that we call [this attribute] "will." This rebuff has obviously sunk to such levels that it is dialectical, because the demonstration that would have led to establishing an attribute with this state, I mean that it specifies that one thing exists instead of another, would posit precisely that the objects of will are similar, but they are not similar. Quite the contrary, they are opposites, since all opposites, every

one of them, can be traced back to existence and nonexistence, and these are at the limit of opposition, which is the contradictory of similarity. So their supposition that the things that the will prefers are similar [i.e., existence over nonexistence] is a false supposition, and the account of it will follow later.

[22] If they say: "We claim only that they are similar in relation to the First One Who wills, since It is pure and free of wishes, whereas wishes are what actually specify one thing from its like." We say: The wishes by whose fulfillment the one who wills is himself perfected (such as our own wishes by which our will prefers things) are impossible for God (may He be exalted!). [That] is because the will whose nature is this, then desires completion vis-à-vis the deficiency existing in the very one who wills. As for wishes that are for the sake of the willed thing itself, No! [The First Willer is not free of such wishes], because from the willed thing, the one who wills acquires nothing that it did not have; rather, only the willed thing acquires that. An example would be something's emergence from nonexistence to existence; for undoubtedly existence is more excellent than nonexistence, I mean, for the thing emerging. This latter is the state of the First Will in relation to existing things; for it has always chosen for them the most excellent of the two opposites, and that essentially and primarily. This is one of the two sorts of rebuttal to which this account is liable.

[23] The second rebuttal [of al-Ghazālī] does not concede the absence of this attribute from the will in personal experience [i.e., the human will] but wants to establish that [even] we have in the presence of similar things a will that distinguishes something from its like. He provides the following example: Assume that immediately in front of a man there are two dates similar in every respect, and suppose that he cannot take both together, and further it is not imagined that in one of the two there is some selectively determining feature. Certainly the man will inevitably distinguish one of the two by taking [it].

[24] This is mistaken; for when one assumes a situation with this description and posits one who wills whom necessity has prevailed upon to eat or take the date, then his taking one of the two dates in this case is not to distinguish like from like. It is only to give up the like in exchange for its like. So whichever of the

two he took, what he willed was attained, and for him his wish was complete. His will, then, preferred only to distinguish between taking one of them and not taking any at all, not between taking one and distinguishing between it and not taking the other (I mean, when you assume that the wishes for the two are indiscernible). In this case, he does not have a predilection for taking one of them over the other; he has a predilection only for taking one of them, whichever it happened to be, and selectively determining it over not taking [at all]. This is clear in itself; for to distinguish one of them from the other is to selectively determine one of them over the other, whereas one cannot selectively determine one of two like things from its counterpart *inasmuch as it is like*. Now if the two in their existence as individuals are not alike (because one of any two individuals is different from the other by an attribute proper to it), then if we assume that the will preferred the unique [individuating] factor (*ma'ná*) of one of them, then the will's seizing upon one of them to the exclusion of the other is conceivable owing to the presence of the difference-making [attribute] found in them. Therefore, the will did not prefer two similar things from the perspective that they are similar.

[25] This is the sense of the first way to oppose [the eternity of the world] that [al-Ghazālī] mentioned. [. . .]

[26] [Concerning al-Ghazālī's second objection, that the philosophers must admit that the temporal proceeds from the eternal, otherwise an infinite causal regress would ensue], I say: If the philosophers were to have introduced the Eternal Existent into existence from the temporal existence according to the manner of proof [given by al-Ghazālī], that is, if they *were* to suppose that the temporal as temporal proceeds only from an eternal, then they would have no other alternative but to extricate themselves from the suspicion concerning this problem. However, you should know that the philosophers do allow the existence of one temporal event [to proceed] from another *accidentally* to infinity when that, as something repeated in a limited and finite matter, is on the following model, [namely,] that the corruption of one of two corruptible things is a condition for the existence of the other. For example, in the view of [the philosophers] it is required that the generation of one human from another

is conditional on the corruption of the prior human such that he becomes the matter from which the third human is generated. For instance, we imagine two humans of whom the first produced the second from the matter of a human who has suffered corruption, and then after the second himself becomes a human, the first human suffers corruption, and so from the matter of [the first human] the second human produces a third human. Thereafter the second human suffers corruption, and so from his matter the third human produces a fourth human. Indeed, we can imagine the action going on infinitely in two matters without any absurdity appearing in that, provided that the agent continues to remain. So if the existence of this agent has neither beginning nor end, then the existence of this action will have neither beginning nor end, just as was explained above. The same happens concerning two that are imagined in the past, I mean, when there is a human, then before him there was a human who produced him and a human who suffered corruption, and before that human there was a human who produced him and a human who suffered corruption.

[27] In other words, when whatever has this characteristic is dependent upon an Eternal Agent, then it is of a cyclical nature in which [all of its potentially infinite members] cannot be [actual]. But if from an infinite number of matters one human were to result from another or could be increased infinitely, then there would be an impossibility. [That is] because it would be possible for an infinite matter to exist, and so it would be possible for an infinite whole to exist, since if a finite whole existed that were increased infinitely without any of it suffering corruption, then it would be possible for an infinite whole to exist. This is something the Philosopher [i.e., Aristotle] explained in *Physics*.<sup>7</sup>

[28] Thus, the way in which the ancients introduced an unchanging Eternal Existent is not at all in the way that temporal events exist from It inasmuch as they are temporal; rather, they are eternal insofar as they are eternal in genus. The truth in their view is that this infinite process must result from an Eternal Agent. Because the temporal itself necessarily results only from a temporal cause, there are two ways by which

7. See Aristotle, *Physics* 3.5.

the ancients introduced into existence an Eternal Existent, one in number, Who is unsusceptible to any sort of change. The first was that they fully understood that this cyclical existence is eternal, namely, they fully understood that the generation of the present individual is a corruption of what was before it. Likewise, they fully understood that the corruption of the one that was corrupted is a generation of what is after it. So necessarily this eternal change results from an Eternal Mover and something eternally moved that does not change with respect to its substance but only with respect to place through its parts, that is, its proximity and remoteness to some of the generated things. In that case, that [change with respect to place] is a cause of the corruption of what is corruptible from among them and the generation of what is generable. This celestial body exists without changing except with respect to place<sup>8</sup> but not with respect to any other sort of change. So it is a cause of temporal events owing to its temporal actions, whereas owing to its having the continuation of these actions, I mean that they do not have a beginning or an end, it results from a cause that does not have either a beginning or an end.

[29] The second way by which [the ancients] introduced a wholly incorporeal and immaterial Eternal Existent is that they found that all the kinds of motion go back to motion with respect to place,<sup>9</sup> and that motion with respect to place goes back to something that is itself moved by a First Mover that is in no way moved, either essentially or accidentally, otherwise an infinite number of moved movers would exist simultaneously, which is impossible.<sup>10</sup> This First Mover, then, must be eternal, otherwise It would not be first. Consequently, every existing motion goes back to this Mover essentially, not accidentally, where [an “essential mover”] is that which exists simultaneous with any moved thing at the time that it is moved. As for one mover’s being before another, as for example one

human reproduces another, that is accidental, not essential. As for the mover who is a condition for the existence of the human from the beginning of [the human’s] coming to be to the end—indeed, from the beginning of his existence to the end of his existence—it is this [First] Mover. Likewise, Its existence is a condition for the existence of all existing things as well as a condition for the conservation of the heavens and Earth and whatever is between them. None of this is explained here demonstratively but by assertions that are akin to [al-Ghazālī’s] but are more satisfying than the opponents’ assertions for whoever is impartial.

[30] If this is clear to you, then I have dispensed with disentangling that by which al-Ghazālī disentangles the opponents of the philosophers in order to turn the objections against them on this problem; for the ways he disentangles them are feeble. [That] is because when he is not clear on the way by which [the ancients] introduced an Eternal Existent into existence, then he will not be clear on the way they disentangled the existence of the temporal from the eternal. That, as we said, is through the intermediary of what is eternal in its substance, being generated and corrupted with respect to its particular motions, not with respect to the universal rotation; or it is through the intermediary of the actions, being eternal in genus, that is, it does not have either a beginning or an end.

[31] Next al-Ghazālī responds on behalf of the philosophers, saying:

It might be said, “We do not find a temporal event’s proceeding from an eternal improbable. What we in fact find improbable is that a *first* temporal event should proceed from an eternal, since there is no difference between the very moment of the creation and what was before it with respect to selectively determining the aspect of existence, which does not [differ] inasmuch as it is a present moment, an instrument, a condition, a nature, a wish, or any other cause. When the event is not the first, it is permitted that it proceeds from [an eternal] when there is the creation of some other thing, such as the preparedness of the receiving substrate and the presence of the fitting moment, and whatever is analogous to this.

8. *Aína*, lit. “where,” i.e., the category of “where” (*ḥayā*) from Aristotle’s *Categories*, which is one of the three categories in which motion can occur. The other two are the categories of quantity and quality.

9. Cf. Aristotle, *Physics* 8.7, 260a26–b15.

10. *Ibid.*, 8.5.

After al-Ghazālī conveys this answer on their behalf, he responds to them saying:

We say that the problem concerning the occurrence of the preparedness, the presence of the moment, and whatever is renewed, still stands: either there is an infinite causal regress or it terminates in an eternal from which the first temporal event results.

[32] I say: this question is the one he asked them at the beginning, and this manner of forcing [them to admit] that the temporal proceeds from the eternal is the one that he [already tried] to foist upon them. Since he answers on their behalf with a response that does not correspond with the question, namely, permitting a temporal event that is not a first temporal event to result from an eternal, he turns the question on them a second time. The answer to this question is what was given before, namely, the way that the temporal proceeds from the First Eternal is not by what is temporal; rather, it is by what is eternal from the perspective that it is eternal in genus, being temporal through the parts. In other words, in the view of [the philosophers], if some temporal event in itself proceeds from any eternal agent, then [that agent, e.g., the celestial body,] is not the First Eternal in their view, but they believe that its action is dependent on the First Eternal. I mean that the presence of the condition of the action of the eternal, which is not the First [Eternal], depends upon the First Eternal according to the way that what temporally creates depends upon the First Eternal, namely, the dependence that is in the whole [i.e., in genus], not in the parts [i.e., in the individual members of the genus].

[33] Next he offers a response on behalf of the philosophers by representing a partial conception of their position, the sense of which is that the temporal is conceived to result from the eternal only by means of a rotation that is similar to the eternal, owing to its having neither beginning nor end, while it is similar to the temporal in that any part of it that is imagined is generated and corrupted. So this motion, through the temporal creation of its parts, is a principle of tem-

poral events, but through the eternity of its totality it is an action of the eternal.

[34] Thereafter he rebuffed this manner by which the temporal proceeds from the First Eternal according to the position of the philosophers, saying to them:

The rotation that is the basis [of all temporal events] is either temporal or eternal. If it is eternal, then how does it become a principle for the first temporal events? If it is temporal, then it depends on another temporal event, and there will be an [infinite] causal chain. You maintain that in one respect it is similar to the eternal and in another respect it is similar to the temporal; for it is permanent [and] renewed, that is, it is permanently renewed and renewed permanently. But we ask, "Is it a principle of temporal events insofar as it is permanent, or insofar as it is renewed?" If it is insofar as it is permanent, then how is it that something [that exists] at some moments and not others proceeds from something permanent that has similar states? If it is insofar as it is renewed, then what is the cause of its renewal in itself? It would need another cause, and there would be an [infinite] causal chain.

[35] This is the sense of his account, and it is sophistical; for the temporal does not proceed from [the rotation] from the perspective that it is permanent. [The temporal] proceeds from [the eternal rotation] only inasmuch as [the rotation] is renewed. If it is not [so considered], then from the perspective that [the rotation's] renewal is not something temporally created, it does not need a renewing temporal cause but is only an eternal act, that is, it has neither a beginning nor end. Necessarily, then, the agent of [this eternal act] is an Eternal Agent, because the eternal act is owing to an Eternal Agent whereas the temporal is owing to a temporal agent. Only from the sense of the eternal in the motion is it understood that it has neither a beginning nor an end, namely, that which is understood concerning its permanence; for motion is not permanent, but is only something that changes.



# JEWISH PHILOSOPHY

Medieval Jewish philosophy may be described as the explication of Jewish beliefs and practices by means of philosophical concepts and norms. Somewhat more rigorously, its subject matter is divisible into three parts. As interpretation of Jewish tradition, medieval Jewish philosophy manifests a special interest in such indigenously Jewish doctrines as the election of Israel, the prophecy of Moses, the Law (Torah) and its eternity, and Jewish conceptions of the Messiah and the afterlife. As religious philosophy, it investigates those philosophical notions that have a special bearing on issues common to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, such as the existence of God, His attributes, creation, providence, prophecy, and general principles of human conduct. Finally, as philosophy, it studies topics that are primarily of philosophical interest, such as the structure of logical arguments, the division of being, and the constitution of the world. Because of these varied interests, medieval Jewish philosophy must be seen as part of the history of philosophy at large, no less than as a development of the biblical-rabbinic tradition on which Judaism rests.

Whereas the biblical and rabbinic writings developed within the Jewish community, Jewish philosophy flourished whenever Jewish thinkers participated in the philosophical speculations of an outside culture. Jewish philosophy arose for the first time in the

Diaspora community of the Hellenistic world, where, from the second century B.C. until the middle of the first century A.D., Jewish thinkers produced a philosophical literature in Greek. The foremost member of this group was Philo Judaeus (c.25 B.C.–c.40 A.D.), who in a series of works, largely commentaries on biblical topics, undertook to harmonize Jewish with Platonic and Stoic teachings. H. A. Wolfson, the eminent historian of medieval thought, considers Philo the founder of religious philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Though Philo influenced Fathers of the Christian Church, he found no direct successors among the Jews. Jewish philosophy lay dormant until it flourished once again as part of a general cultural revival in the Islamic east (see page 218). From the early tenth century until the early thirteenth, Jewish philosophers living in Muslim lands produced a varied philosophical literature in Arabic.

Saadia Gaon (882–942), head of the rabbinical academy at Sura (near Bagdad), was the first major Jewish philosopher on the Islamic scene. Using and adapting the teachings of the Mu'tazilite branch of the Muslim dialectical theologians, the Mutakallimūn (see page 216), Saadia fashioned what has been called a Jewish Kalām. In true Kalāmīc fashion, he selected Divine unity and justice as the two major subjects of

the *Book of Doctrines and Beliefs*, and Kalāmīc proofs for the creation of the world have a prominent place within the work. As the Muslim Mutakallimūn, he has a greater interest in the philosophical solutions of scriptural difficulties than in independent philosophical speculations.

Kalāmīc teachings influenced later Jewish philosophers, but Saadia was to remain the major representative of this school of thought. Already in his own days Jewish philosophy turned in a neoplatonic direction. Under the influence of such works as the *Theology of Aristotle* (see page 216), Jewish Neoplatonists investigated how the world emanated from God and how man, through philosophical speculations, can return to Him. But in accordance with their religious beliefs, Jewish Neoplatonists described God as a being having attributes of personality who created the world by an act of will, rather than as an impersonal principle who produced the world out of the necessity of its own nature.

The first Jewish Neoplatonist was Isaac ben Solomon Israeli (c.855–c.955), Saadia's somewhat older contemporary. Author of medical treatises and philosophical works, Israeli was known among philosophers for his *Book of Definitions* and *Book of Elements*. In their Latin translations, these two works were cited by Christian philosophers from the twelfth century on. But by far the most important Jewish Neoplatonist was Solomon ibn Gabirol (c.1022–c.1051 or 1070), who in the Latin world was known as Avicembrol, Avicembro, and Avencebrol. With him, the setting of Jewish philosophy became Spain in the Islamic west. In his *Fountain of Life* Gabirol defended the distinctive doctrine that spiritual as well as corporeal substances are composed of matter and form. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries this principle was widely debated by Christian scholastics who possessed a complete Latin translation of Gabirol's work.

The eleventh and twelfth centuries produced two Jewish philosophers who, virtually unknown in the outside world, enjoyed great popularity among their own people for the less technical and more pietistic nature of their views. Bahya ibn Pakuda of Saragossa (end of the eleventh century) wrote a much-read ethical work, *Guidebook to the Duties of the Heart*, in which he describes ten spiritual qualities, presenting at the same time directions for how they may be at-

tained. Judah Halevi (c.1085–c.1141), who in his antiphilosophic views shows some similarity to al-Ghazālī (see page 265), composed *Kuzari* as an *apologia* for the Jewish faith. Abraham bar Hiyya, the first to write philosophy in Hebrew, and Joseph ibn Zaddik, a Neoplatonist (both early twelfth century), are two additional philosophers that should be mentioned.

In the second half of the twelfth century, Jewish philosophy, under the influence of Alfarabi (al-Fārābī), Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā), and Avempace (Ibn Bājja) (see page 218), entered its Aristotelian phase. Medieval Jewish Aristotelianism began with Abraham ibn Daud (c.1110–c.1180 or 1190), whose *Exalted Faith*—a work containing an extensive critique of Gabirol's views—discussed a number of Aristotelian physical and metaphysical topics and their relation to Jewish religious thought. But Jewish Aristotelianism reached its climax with Moses Maimonides (1135–1204), who became the overtowering figure of medieval Jewish thought. Maimonides first presented a more popular exposition of his philosophical views within his various legal works, proceeding to a more technical account in *The Guide of the Perplexed*. Addressing students of philosophy who had become vexed by the literal sense of certain scriptural passages, Maimonides shows that scriptural teachings, properly interpreted, are in harmony with philosophical truths. In a Latin translation, Maimonides' *Guide* was read and cited by Christian scholastics of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

After Maimonides the setting of Jewish philosophy shifted to Christian lands—Christian Spain, southern France, and Italy becoming the new centers. As a result, the knowledge of Arabic among the Jews declined and Hebrew became the language of Jewish philosophy. Works originally written in Arabic were now translated into Hebrew. Among the newly translated works, the commentaries of Averroes (Ibn Rushd) (1126–1198) (see page 285) were of great importance, for, under their influence, Jewish philosophy turned into a more rigorously Aristotelian direction. At the same time, divergences between the strict Aristotelianism of Ibn Rushd and the more moderate views of Maimonides formed the subject matter of new investigations. Maimonides' *Guide* gave rise to many commentaries, the most important commentators being Shem Tob Falkera (d. 1290), Joseph Kaspi (1279–

c.1340), and Moses of Narbonne (d. after 1362). During the second half of the thirteenth century, Hillel of Verona used Thomistic arguments to attack the Averroistic doctrine of the unity of the intellect in his *Rewards of the Soul*, while, by contrast, Isaac Albalag developed a doctrine of the double truth.

The most important post-Maimonidean Jewish Aristotelian was Levi ben Gershom—also called Gersonides—astronomer, biblical exegete, and commentator on Ibn Rushd. In his major work, *The Wars of the Lord*, he investigated, in true scholastic fashion, problems that Maimonides had not discussed sufficiently or that he had not resolved to Gersonides' satisfaction. When Maimonides and Ibn Rushd differ, Gersonides often sides with the latter philosopher. Gersonides differs from Maimonides in holding that God is thought thinking itself, that He can be described by positive attributes, that creation can be demonstrated, and that the world was created out of an eternally existing unformed matter. Moreover, Gersonides' stricter Aristotelianism came to the fore when he taught that God knows the world only insofar as it is subject to general laws and that miracles are caused by the Active Intellect rather than by God Himself.

As Aristotelianism spread among the Jews, opposition to it did not lag far behind. But not until Ḥasdai Crescas (c.1340–1410) wrote his *Light of the Lord* did someone undertake a systematic critique of the Aristotelian physical and metaphysical teachings. Denying the Aristotelian principle that an infinite can only exist in potentiality, Crescas affirms the actual exis-

tence of infinite magnitude, of infinite space, and of an infinite series of causes and effects. The affirmation of the latter principle brought Crescas to reject the Aristotelian proofs for the existence of God as first mover and first cause, since these proofs rest on the proposition that it is impossible that an actually infinite series of causes and effects should exist. However, Crescas retained the proof that shows that God is a being necessary through Himself. Crescas also took issue with the Aristotelians in holding that goodness rather than wisdom is the primary attribute of God and in emphasizing that God created the world through love and will. The primacy of love became decisive in Crescas' philosophy of man, for man attains his ultimate happiness by loving God rather than by speculating about Him.

Though Crescas was to remain the last major Jewish philosopher of the Middle Ages, philosophical speculations among Jews continued after his time. In Spain, Jewish philosophers were at work until the expulsion of the Jews in 1492, while in Italy Jewish philosophy continued into the sixteenth century. Among Jewish philosophers of late medieval times, Simon ben Zemah Duran (1361–1444), Joseph Albo (d. 1444), Isaac Abrabanel (1437–1509), and Elijah Delmedigo (c.1460–1493) should be mentioned.

In the selections that follow, Saadia serves as a representative of the Mutakallimūn, Ibn Gabirol stands for the Neoplatonist, Maimonides and Gersonides exemplify two kinds of Aristotelianism, and Crescas illustrates the critique of Aristotelianism.

## Saadia, 882–942

Saadia ben Joseph is generally considered the father of medieval Jewish philosophy, and his *Book of Doctrines and Beliefs* (*Kitab al-'Amānāt wa-al-I'tiqadat*, *Sefer ha-Emunot ve-ha-De'ot*) the first major medieval philosophical work written by a Jew. In his philosophical teachings Saadia bases himself on the doctrines of the Muslim dialectical theologians, the Mutakallimūn, in particular on the doctrines of their rationalist branch, the Mu'tazilites (see page 216). Adopting, modifying, and supplementing Mu'tazilite teachings and basing himself on Hebrew rather than Islamic Scripture and tradition, he fashioned what has been called a Jewish Kalām.

As the Mutakallimūn in general and the Mu'tazilites in particular, Saadia occupied himself with the philosophical analysis of certain scriptural problems rather than with the construction of a philosophical or theological system in the manner of the Neoplatonists and Aristotelians. To accomplish this task, he drew freely on Platonic, Aristotelian, Stoic, and neoplatonic teachings, and this method imposed a certain eclectic character on his work.

Saadia was indebted to the Mu'tazilites not only for a number of their doctrines, but also for the structure of his book. Following them, he divided his *Book of Doctrines and Beliefs* into two major sections, one devoted to a discussion of Divine unity, the other devoted to an account of Divine justice. Moreover, in true Mu'tazilite fashion, Saadia begins his book with what has become one of the distinctive Kalām contributions to medieval philosophy at large—proofs for the creation of the world.

In the Islamic east of Saadia's time, Jews, Christians, Muslims, and Zoroastrians, as well as the mem-

bers of a variety of philosophical schools freely taught their doctrines, attempting at the same time to refute opinions that were at variance with their own. This diversity of teachings produced, according to Saadia's own testimony, false opinions, doubts, and even outright skepticism among his fellow Jews. To remove the confusions of his contemporaries and to transform them from men who believed on the basis of scriptural authority alone into men who could support their beliefs with philosophical arguments became the twofold goal of Saadia's major work.

Taking account of the skeptical temper of his times, Saadia begins his *Book of Doctrines and Beliefs* with an Introduction in which he investigates the sources of doubt and what knowledge is worthy of belief. Reproducing the standard arguments of the skeptics taken from the unreliability of sense perception and the uncertainty of human knowledge, he shows that correct observation, careful analysis, and proper logical method can produce knowledge that can be trusted. Having met the objections of the skeptics, he defines "belief" and then discusses three sources of truth that make it possible to distinguish true from false beliefs. According to him, these sources are sense perception, self-evident first principles, and inferential knowledge. To these three sources, Saadia adds "reliable tradition" as a fourth. Based on historical evidence, "reliable tradition" guarantees the veracity of Scripture and of the rabbinic teachings.

Saadia begins the book proper with four proofs designed to demonstrate the creation of the world. In setting down these proofs, he differs from later philosophers, such as Maimonides and Aquinas, who hold that to demonstrate creation lies outside the compe-

tence of the human mind. According to Saadia, an adequate doctrine of creation affirms creation in time, the difference between the creator and the world that He created, and creation out of nothing. Since proofs for creation lead to the existence of the creator, they are, at the same time, proofs for the existence of God.

In his treatise on creation, Saadia exhibits his erudition and breadth of learning by presenting and attempting to refute twelve cosmogonic and cosmological theories that are at variance with his own. All of these theories seem to have been defended by contemporaries, and they range from doctrines that accept creation but deny that the world was created out of nothing to outright skeptical doctrines that deny the validity of all knowledge, sense perception included.

The central section of the discussion of God is a treatise devoted to Divine unity. In it Saadia investigates how God can be said to be one, both in the sense of being unique and simple, and how, at the same time, a multitude of attributes can be ascribed to Him. Saadia attributes the multiplicity of attributes to the shortcomings of human language, not to any multiplicity within God Himself. It is the nature of human language, he explains, to use a multiplicity of terms to describe a being who, ontologically, is really one. Whether Saadia's teachings imply that he considered Divine attributes to be negative terms or whether he accepted a doctrine of positive predication has been debated by his interpreters. Saadia's attempts to refute dualistic and trinitarian conceptions of God form interesting sections of his discussions of Divine unity.

In the final treatise of the section on Divine unity, Saadia turns to prophecy as God's communication with man, presenting, as part of his discussion, his philosophy of law. Once again using Mu'tazilite distinctions, he divides the commandments of the Law (Torah) into "rational commandments," which, though recorded in the Law, can also be discovered by human reason, and "traditional commandments," which are solely products of the Divine will. Saadia's division of commandments became a major issue in later medieval Jewish thought, some philosophers accepting the distinction and others (Maimonides in particular) rejecting it.

In the second portion of the *Book of Doctrines and Beliefs* Saadia, as has been noted, turns to a discussion

of Divine justice, the central problem being how God's omnipotence and omniscience are compatible with the freedom of human choice. Accepting the freedom of human acts, both as a believing Jew and as a philosopher, Saadia marshals the classical arguments of libertarians to support his view. Man feels himself to be free, he states, and without a belief in human freedom no adequate doctrine of responsibility can be developed. Yet the affirmation of freedom of choice does not require the denial of God's omnipotence and omniscience. God, making use of His infinite power, willed that man should be free, and though God foreknows what man will do, this knowledge is not a causal factor in the production of human acts.

In other treatises of the section on Divine justice, Saadia discusses the classification of human action and the nature of the soul. The final treatises contain what is probably one of the most extensive philosophical accounts of Jewish eschatological teachings—the resurrection of the dead, the Messiah, the redemption of Israel, and the afterlife.

Saadia was the outstanding Jewish scholar and communal leader of his day. Born in 882 in Egypt, he received his early training in his native land, and he pursued further studies in Palestine. In 921, when a controversy concerning a matter of the Jewish calendar broke out between the Palestinian and Babylonian authorities (in reality a controversy about who should exercise religious authority in Jewish life), Saadia sided with the Babylonians and his view prevailed. In 928, he was appointed head (Gaon) of the declining rabbinical academy of Sura (near Bagdad), and under his leadership the academy rose to new heights. When, in 930, he refused to endorse a judgment of the Exilarch's court, the Exilarch, who was the secular head of Babylonian Jewry, removed him from his post. Saadia spent seven years in exile in Bagdad before he was reinstated. During a major portion of his life he waged a ceaseless battle against the sectarian Karaites (who accepted the Bible but not the teachings of the rabbis) and he, as much as anyone, is responsible for their ultimate decline. He died in 942.

Saadia was a prolific writer who contributed to all branches of Jewish learning. He translated the Bible into Arabic, commenting at the same time on a number of its books. He composed works on Jewish law, the

liturgy, and Hebrew grammar. As polemicist, he wrote against Hiwi al-Balkhi, who had attacked the Bible, and against the Karaites. His commentary on the mystical *Sefer Yeẓirah* contains matters of philosophical interest.

Saadia is included in this volume not only as an outstanding Jewish philosopher but also as a representative of Muʿtazilite Kalām at large. The two se-

lections appearing here are both taken from his *Book of Doctrines and Beliefs*. The first contains his doctrine of creation with its characteristic four proofs. The second selection is devoted to his philosophy of law. As part of it, there appears the division of the commandments of the Law into those that are rational (ʿaqlīyyat, *sikliyot*) and those that are traditional (*samʿīyyāt, shimʿiyot*).

## 29. Book of Doctrines and Beliefs

### Chapter 1. *Creatio ex nihilo*

#### 1. The Nature of the Problem

The problem dealt with in this chapter is one on which we have no data from actual observation or from sense perception, but conclusions which can be derived only from postulates of the pure Reason. We mean the problem of the origin of the world. The ultimate proposition which we seek to establish is of a very subtle nature. It cannot be grasped by the senses, and one can only endeavour to comprehend it by thought. This being the nature of the subject, one who inquires into it must necessarily expect to arrive at results of a corresponding nature, and one ought not to reject such results, or try to obtain results of a different character. It is quite certain that the origin of things is a matter concerning which no human being was ever able to give evidence as an eye-witness. But we all seek to probe this distant and profound matter which is beyond the grasp of our senses, and regarding which it has been said by the wise king, 'That which was is far off, and exceeding deep; who can find it out?' (Eccl. 7.24). Should, therefore, our inquiry lead us to the conclusion that all things were created *ex nihilo*—a thing the like of which was never experienced by sense perception—we have no right to reject it out of hand on the ground that we never experience the like of it, so how can we believe it; for what we tried to find from the very outset of our inquiry was precisely something the like of which we never experienced. We must welcome this solution and rejoice in it, since it presents a success on our part in attaining the object of our inquiry.

I thought it necessary to make the above introductory remark in order to warn the reader of this book not

to expect me to demonstrate the *creatio ex nihilo* by way of sense perception. I have made it clear in my Introduction that if this were possible there would be no need for argument or speculation or logical inferences. Furthermore, there would be agreement between us and all other people in regard to its truth, and opinions would not be divided on any point connected with this problem. But in fact we do depend on speculation to reveal to us the truth of the matter, and on arguments to clarify it, since it in no way comes within the domain of experience or sense perception.

We are, in fact, not the only ones who have agreed to accept a cosmological theory which has no basis in sense perception. All those who discuss this problem and seek a solution are agreed on this point. Those, for instance, who believe in the eternity of the world seek to prove the existence of something which has neither beginning nor end. Surely, they never came across a thing which they perceived with their senses to be without beginning or end, but they seek to establish their theory by means of postulates of Reason. Likewise, the Dualists exert themselves to prove the co-existence of two separate and opposing principles, the mixture of which caused the world to come into being. Surely they never witnessed two separate and opposing principles, nor the assumed process of mixture, but they try to produce arguments derived from the pure Reason in favour of their theory. In a similar way, those who believe in an eternal Matter regard it as a *Hyle*, i.e. something in which there is originally no quality of hot or cold, moist or dry, but which becomes transformed by a certain force and thus produces those four qualities. Surely their senses never perceived a thing which is lacking in all those four qualities, nor did they ever perceive a process of transformation and the generation of the four qualities such as is suggested. But they seek to prove their theory by means of arguments drawn from the pure Reason. And so it is with all other opinions, as I shall explain later. This being so, it is clear that all have agreed to accept some view concerning the origin of the world which has no basis in sense perception. If, therefore, our treatment

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of the subject produces something similar, namely, the doctrine of the *creatio ex nihilo*, let the reader of this book who inquires into this problem not be hasty in rejecting our theory, since from the very outset of his inquiry he was virtually asking for some result similar to this, and every student of this problem is asking for such a result. But the reader may be assured that our arguments are stronger than theirs, and that, moreover, we are in a position to disprove their arguments, whatever their school of thought. We have, too, the advantage of being supported in our doctrine by the signs and miracles of Scripture which were intended to confirm our belief. I would ask the reader to bear in mind these three facts which will meet him in every part of this book, namely, (1) that our arguments are stronger than theirs; (2) that we are able to disprove the arguments of our opponents; and (3) that we have in the bargain the testimony of the miracles narrated in Scripture.

## 2. Four Arguments for Creation

From these introductory remarks I go on to affirm that our Lord (be He Exalted) has informed us that all things were created in time, and that He created them *ex nihilo*, as it is said, 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth' (Gen. 1.1), and as it is further said, 'I am the Lord that maketh all things; that stretched forth the heavens alone; that spread abroad the earth by Myself' (Isa. 44.24). He verified this truth for us by signs and miracles, and we have accepted it. I probed further into this matter with the object of finding out whether it could be verified by speculation as it had been verified by prophecy. I found that this was the case for a number of reasons, from which, for the sake of brevity, I select the following four.

[1] The first proof is based on the finite character of the universe. It is clear that heaven and earth are finite in magnitude, since the earth occupies the centre and the heaven revolves round it. From this it follows that the force residing in them is finite in magnitude. For it is impossible for an infinite force to reside in a body which is finite in magnitude. This would be contradictory to the dictates of Reason. Since, therefore, the force which preserves heaven and earth is finite, it necessarily follows that the world has a beginning and

an end. Being struck by the force of this argument, I subjected it to a close examination, taking good care not to be hasty in drawing definite conclusions before having scrutinized it. I, therefore, asked myself: Perhaps the earth is infinite in length, breadth and depth? I answered: If this were the case, the sun could not encompass it and complete his revolution once every day and night, rising again in the place in which he rose the day before, and setting again in the place in which he set the day before; and so with the moon and the stars. Then I asked myself: Perhaps the heaven is infinite? To this I answered: How could this be the case seeing that all celestial bodies are moving and continually revolving round the earth? For it cannot be supposed that only the sphere that is next to us performs this rotation, whereas the others are too large to perform any movement. For by 'heaven' we understand the body which revolves, and we are not aware of anything else beyond it; far less do we believe it to be the heaven and not revolving. Then I explored further and asked: Perhaps there exists a plurality of earths and heavens, each heaven revolving round its earth. This would involve the assumption of the co-existence of an infinite number of worlds, a thing in its nature impossible. For it is inconceivable that, nature being what it is, some earth should exist above the fire, or that air should be found beneath the water. For both fire and air are light, and both earth and water are heavy. I cannot doubt that if there were a clod of earth outside our earth, it would break through all air and fire until it reached the dust of our earth. The same would happen if there were a mass of water outside the waters of our oceans. It would cut through air and fire until it met our waters. It is, therefore, perfectly clear to me that there exists no heaven apart from our heaven, and no earth except our earth; moreover, that this heaven and this earth are finite, and that in the same way as their bodies are limited, their respective force, too, is limited and ceases to exist once it reaches its limit. It is impossible that heaven and earth should continue to exist after their force is spent, and that they should have existed before their force came into being. I found that Scripture testifies to the finite character of the world by saying, 'From the one end of the earth, even unto the other end of the earth' (Deut. 13.8), and, 'From the one end of heaven unto the

other' (Deut. 4.32). It further testifies that the sun revolves round the earth and completes its circle every day by saying, 'The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteneth to his place where he ariseth' (Eccl. 1.5).

[2] The second proof is derived from the union of parts and the composition of segments. I saw that bodies consist of combined parts and segments fitted together. This clearly indicated to me that they are the skilful work of a skilful artisan and creator. Then I asked myself: Perhaps these unions and combinations are peculiar to the small bodies only, that is to say the bodies of the animals and plants. I, therefore, extended my observation to the earth, and found the same was true of her. For she is a union of soil and stone and sand, and the like. Then I turned by mental gaze to the heavens and found that in them there are many layers of spheres, one within another, and that there are in them also groups of luminaries called stars which are distinguished from one another by being great or small, and by being more luminous or less luminous, and these luminaries are set in those spheres. Having noted these clear signs of the union and composition which has been created in the body of the heaven and the other bodies, I believe also, on the strength of this proof, that the heaven and all it contains are created. I found that Scripture also declares that the separateness of the parts of the organisms and their combination prove that they are created. In regard to man it is said, 'Thy hands have made me and fashioned me' (Ps. 119.73); in regard to the earth it is said, 'He is God, that formed the earth and made it, He established it' (Isa. 45.18); in regard to the heaven it is said, 'When I behold Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast established' (Ps. 8.4).

[3] The third proof is based on the nature of the accidents. I found that no bodies are devoid of accidents which affect them either directly or indirectly. Animals, e.g. are generated, grow until they reach their maturity, then waste away and decompose. I then said to myself: Perhaps the earth as a whole is free from these accidents? On reflection, however, I found that the earth is inseparable from plants and animals which themselves are created, and it is well known that whatsoever is inseparable from things created must likewise

be created. Then I asked myself: Perhaps the heavens are free from such accidents? But, going into the matter, I found that this was not the case. The first and principal accident affecting them is their intrinsic movement which goes on without pause. There are, however, many different kinds of movement. If you compare them, you will find that some planets move slowly, others quickly. And another kind of accident is the transmission of light from one celestial body to another one, which becomes illumined by it, like the moon. The colours of the various stars also differ. Some are whitish, some reddish, others yellowish and greenish. Having thus established that these bodies are affected by accidents which are coeval with them, I firmly believe that everything which has accidents coeval with it must be created like the accident, since the accident enters into its definition. Scripture also uses the accidents of heaven and earth as argument for their beginning in time by saying, 'I, even I, have made the earth and created man upon it; I, even My hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their hosts have I commanded' (Isa. 45.12).

[4] The fourth proof is based on the nature of Time. I know that time is threefold: past, present, and future. Although the present is smaller than any instant, I take the instant as one takes a point and say: If a man should try in his thought to ascend from that point in time to the uppermost point, it would be impossible for him to do so, inasmuch as time is now assumed to be infinite and it is impossible for thought to penetrate to the furthest point of that which is infinite. The same reason will also make it impossible that the process of generation should traverse an infinite period down to the lowest point so as ultimately to reach us. Yet if the process of generation did not reach us, we would not be generated, from which it necessarily follows that we, the multitude of generated beings, would not be generated and the beings now existent would not be existent. And since I find myself existent, I know that the process of generation has traversed time until it has reached us, and that if time were not finite, the process of generation would not have traversed it. I profess unhesitatingly the same belief with regard to future time as with regard to past time. I find that Scripture speaks in similar terms of the far distant time by saying, 'All men have looked

thereon; man beholdeth it afar off' (Job 36.25); and the faithful one says, 'I will fetch my knowledge from afar' (Job 36.3).

It has come to my notice that a certain heretic in conversation with one of the Believers in the Unity (of God) objected to this proof. He said: 'It is possible for a man to traverse that which has an infinite number of parts by walking. For if we consider any distance which a man walks, be it a mile, or an ell, we shall find that it can be divided into an infinite number of parts.' To answer this argument some thinkers resorted to the doctrine of the indivisible atom. Others spoke of *tafra* (the leap). Others again asserted that all the parts [in space] are covered by corresponding parts [in time]. Having carefully examined the objection raised I found it to be a sophism for this reason: the infinite divisibility of a thing is only a matter of imagination, but not a matter of reality. It is too subtle to be a matter of reality, and no such division occurs. Now if the process of generation had traversed the past in the imagination, and not in reality, then, by my life, the objection raised would be valid. But seeing that the process of generation has traversed the real time and reached us, the argument cannot invalidate our proof, because infinite divisibility exists only in the imagination.

In addition to these four proofs, there are some more, part of which I have adduced in my Commentary on Genesis, others in my Commentary on *Hilkōt Yeširah*, and in my Refutation of *Iḥiwi al-Balkhi*, in addition to more details which the reader will find in other books of mine. Moreover, the arguments employed by me in the present chapter in refutation of the various opponents of our belief, are all sources of this belief, and strengthen and confirm it.

### 3. The Transcendence of the Creator; Arguments for the *creatio ex nihilo*

Having made it perfectly clear to myself that all things are created, I considered the question whether it was possible that they had created themselves, or whether the only possible assumption is that they were created by someone external to them. In my view it is impossible that they should have created themselves, for a number of reasons of which I shall mention three. The first reason is this: Let us assume that an existing body

has produced itself. It stands to reason that after having brought itself into existence that particular body should be stronger and more capable of producing its like than before. For if it was able to produce itself when it was in a relatively weak state, it should all the more be able to produce its like now that it is relatively strong. But seeing that it is incapable of creating its like now when it is relatively strong, it is absurd to think that it created itself when it was relatively weak. The second reason is: If we imagine that a thing has created itself, we shall find that the question of the time when it did so presents an insuperable difficulty. For if we say that the thing created itself before it came into being, then we assume that it was non-existent at the time when it created itself, and obviously something non-existent cannot create a thing. If, on the other hand, we say that it created itself after it had come into being, the obvious comment is that after a thing has come into existence there is no need for it to create itself. There is no third instant between 'before' and 'after' except the present which, however, has no duration in which an action can take place. The third reason is: If we assume that a body is able to create itself, we must necessarily admit that at the same time it is likewise capable of abstaining from the act of self-creation. Under this assumption we shall find that the body is both existent and non-existent at the same time. For in speaking of the body as *capable*, we take it to be existent, but in going on to speak of it as being capable of abstaining from the act of self-creation, we assume it to be non-existent. Obviously, to attribute existence and non-existence to the same thing at the same time is utterly absurd. I found that Scripture had already anticipated the refutation of this belief, namely, that things created themselves, by saying, 'It is He that hath made us, not we' (Ps. 100.3), and by rebuking the one who said, 'My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself' (Ez. 39.3).

Having proved by these arguments that things can on no account have created themselves, and that they must necessarily be regarded as created by a Creator who is external to them, I tried to reason out an answer to the question whether the Creator made them from something (*prima materia*) or from nothing (*ex nihilo*) as revealed in the Scriptures. I found that it is wrong to assume that things were created from something al-

ready existent. Such a view is self-contradictory, because the term *creation* implies that the substance of the thing is created and has a beginning in time, whilst the qualifying statement 'from something' implies that its substance was eternal, uncreated, and without beginning in time. If we assume that things were created *ex nihilo*, there is no self-contradiction.

Someone may raise the following objection: 'You have affirmed as a conclusion acceptable to Reason that things have a Creator because in the realm of sense perception you have witnessed that nothing is made without a maker. But you likewise find in the realm of sense perception that nothing comes from nothing. Why, then, have you made use of the proposition that nothing is made except by a maker, and have ignored the proposition that everything comes from something already existent, seeing that the two propositions are equally valid?' My answer is: The problem which forms the object of my inquiry, and to the solution of which my arguments are directed, is the question whether or not the world is created *ex nihilo*. Obviously it is inadmissible that a proposition which is under examination should be adduced as evidence in favour of itself against an alternative proposition. We must seek evidence on its behalf from elsewhere; and since the principle that nothing is made except by a maker has a bearing on the subject-matter of our inquiry, I applied this to the solution of our problem, and it led to the conclusion that the world is created *ex nihilo*. I followed this procedure although I found that in certain cases it is permissible to use a proposition in this way as evidence; but this is a subtle matter which lies outside the province of this book. I, therefore, decided to leave it alone and to follow the plain course.

Another point which I made clear to myself is this: Whatever we imagine to be the thing from which the existent beings were created, it must necessarily be assumed to have existed from all eternity. But if it were pre-existent, it would be equal to the Creator in regard to its eternity. From this it follows that God would not have had the power to create things out of it, since it would not have accepted His command, nor allowed itself to be affected according to His wish and shaped according to His design, except if we were to imagine, in addition to these two, the existence of a third cause

which intervened between the two with the result that the one of the two became the Maker, and the other the thing made. But such a view would postulate the existence of something which does not exist; for we have never found anything except a maker and the thing made.

I remembered further that the principal object of our inquiry was to find out who created the substance of things. Now it is well known to us that the maker must necessarily be prior to the thing made by him, and that, by virtue of his being prior to the substance of the thing, the thing becomes one that is created in time. Should we, however, believe the substance to be eternal, the maker would not be prior to the thing created by him, and neither of the two could claim priority so as to be the cause of the other's existence, which is completely absurd.

There is another point which I remembered: The assertion that God created the world from something already existent must inevitably lead to the conclusion that He created nothing at all. For the reason which causes us to think that the world originated from something (*prima materia*) is the fact that such is the way we find the objects of sense perception come into being. Now it is common ground that the objects of sense perception are also found to exist in Space and Time, in shape and form, in measured quantity, in a fixed position and mutual relation, and other similar conditions. All of these experiences are on the same footing as the experience that everything comes from something. Now if we are going to allow all these experiences their full weight and say that things were created from something which existed in Time, Space, form, quantity, position, relation, etc., all this would have to be considered as eternal, and nothing would remain to be created. Creation would become meaningless altogether.

I went still further, arguing that if we fail to admit the existence of something which has nothing prior to it, it is impossible for us to accept the fact that there exists anything at all. For if we consider in our mind that one thing comes from another thing, we have to predicate the same thing of the second as of the first, and say that it could only have come into being from a third thing; the same predicate again must be made of the third thing, namely that it could only have come

into being from a fourth thing, and so ad infinitum. Since, however, an infinite series cannot be completed, it follows that we are not in existence. But, behold, we are in existence, and unless the things that preceded us were finite (in number), they could not have been completed so as to reach us.

What we have deduced from the postulates of Reason, has also been intimated in the Books of the Prophets, namely, that material bodies originate from the design of the Creator, as is said, 'Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God' (Ps. 90.2).

Having thus succeeded in demonstrating by argument these three principles, viz. that the things are created, that their Creator is external to them, and that He created them *ex nihilo*, as it has been verified by the Tradition of the Prophets and by miracles, and this opinion being the first one discussed in this chapter (which is devoted to a speculation on the origin of things) I will now proceed to deal, in the following, with twelve opinions which are held by those who disagree with us in regard to this doctrine. Thus there are altogether thirteen opinions. I shall explain both the arguments put forward by the advocates of these opinions, and their refutation. Whenever their opinion seems to find support in Scripture, I shall elucidate the Scriptural passages concerned, with the help of God.

### Chapter 3. Commandment and Prohibition

#### 1. Law and Grace

It is desirable that I should preface this chapter by the following remarks. Since it has been established that the Creator (be He exalted and glorified) is eternal, and that there was nothing co-existent with Him, His creation of the world testifies to His goodness and grace, as we mentioned at the end of Chapter I in speaking of the reason for the creation of things, and according to what we find in the Scriptures as well, namely, that He is good and doeth good, as is said, 'The Lord is good to all; and His tender mercies are over all His works' (Ps. 145.9).

The first of His acts of kindness towards His creatures was the gift of existence, i.e. His act of calling them into existence after they had been non-existent, as He said to the men of distinction among them, 'Everyone that is called by My name, and whom I have created for My glory' (Isa. 43.7). Thereafter He offered them a gift by means of which they are able to obtain complete happiness and perfect bliss, as is said, 'Thou makest me to know the path of life; in Thy presence is fullness of joy, in Thy right hand bliss for evermore' (Ps. 16.11). This gift consists of the commandments and prohibitions which He gave them.

When faced with this statement, the first impulse of Reason will be to object that God should have been able to bestow upon men perfect bliss and to grant them everlasting happiness without imposing upon them commandments and prohibitions. Moreover, it would seem that in this way His goodness would have been more beneficial to them, seeing that they would have been free from the necessity of making any laborious effort. My answer to this objection is that, on the contrary, the order instituted by God, whereby everlasting happiness is achieved by man's labours in fulfilment of the Law, is preferable. For Reason judges that one who obtains some good in return for work which he has accomplished enjoys a double portion of happiness in comparison with one who has not done any work and receives what he receives as a gift of grace. Reason does not deem it right to place both on the same level. This being so, our Creator has chosen for us the more abundant portion, namely, to bestow welfare on us in the shape of reward, thus making it double the benefit which we could expect without an effort on our part, as is said, 'Behold, the Lord God will come as a Mighty One, and His arm will rule for Him; behold, His reward is with Him, and His recompense before Him' (Isa. 40.10).

#### 2. The Two Classes of Law: Laws of Reason and Laws of Revelation

After these introductory remarks, I now come to the subject proper. I declare that our Lord (be He exalted and glorified) has informed us through the words of His prophets that He wishes us to lead a religious life

by following the religion which He instituted for us. This religion contains laws, which He has prescribed for us, and which it is our duty to keep and to fulfill in sincerity, as is said, 'This day the Lord thy God commanded thee to do these statutes and ordinances; thou shalt, therefore, observe and do them with all thy heart and with all thy soul' (Deut. 26.16). His messengers established these laws for us by wondrous signs and miracles, and we commenced to keep and fulfill them forthwith. Later we found that speculation confirms the necessity of the Law for us. It would, however, not have been appropriate to leave us to our own devices.

It is desirable that I should explain which matters and aspects [of the Divine Law] speculation confirms as necessary. (1) I maintain that Reason bids us respond to every benefactor either by returning his kindness if he is in need of it, or by offering thanks if he is not in need of recompense. Now since this is a dictate of Reason itself, it would not have been fitting for the Creator (be He exalted and glorified) to waive this right in respect of Himself, but it was necessary that He should command his creatures to worship Him and to render thanks unto Him for having created them. (2) Reason further lays down that the wise man should not permit himself to be vilified and treated with contempt. It is similarly necessary that the Creator should forbid His servants to treat Him in this way. (3) Reason further prescribes that human beings should be forbidden to trespass upon one another's rights by any sort of aggression. It is likewise necessary that the Wise should not permit them to act in such a way. (4) Reason, furthermore, permits a wise man to employ a workman for any kind of work and pay him his wages for the sole purpose of allowing him to earn something, since this is a matter which results in benefit to the workman and causes no harm to the employer.

If we put together these four points, their total is tantamount to a summary of the laws which our Lord has commanded us. That is to say, he imposed upon us the duty of knowing and serving Him with a sincere heart, as the prophet said, 'And thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve Him with a whole heart and with a willing mind' (1 Chron. 28.9). 'Then he forbade us to hurl at Him insult and

abuse although it causes Him no harm, seeing that it would not be consonant with wisdom to permit it. Thus it is said, 'Whosoever curseth his God, shall bear his sin' (Lev. 24.15). He did not permit us to trespass upon one another's rights nor to defraud one another, as it is said, 'Ye shall not steal; neither shall ye deal falsely, nor lie one to another' (Lev. 19.11). These three groups of laws and their subdivisions form the first of the Two Classes of Law. The first group of the three includes humbleness before God, worship, standing up in His presence, etc. All this is written in the Law. The second group includes the prohibition of idolatry, swearing falsely by His name, describing Him by derogatory attributes, etc. All this is written in the Law. To the third group belongs the practice of justice, truth-telling, equity, and impartiality, the avoidance of homicide, adultery, theft, tale-bearing, and trickery against one's fellowman; also the command that the Believer should love his neighbour as he loves himself, and whatever is involved in these precepts. All this is written in the Law.

In regard to all the things which He commands us to do, He has implanted approval of them in our Reason; and in regard to all the things which He forbids us to do, He has implanted disapproval of them in our Reason, as is said in the Book of Wisdom—wisdom being identical with Reason—'For my mouth shall utter truth, and wickedness is an abomination to my lips' (Prov. 8.7).

The Second Class of Law consists of matters regarding which Reason passes no judgment in the way either of approval or disapproval so far as their essence is concerned. But our Lord has given us an abundance of such commandments and prohibitions in order to increase our reward and happiness through them, as is said, 'The Lord was pleased, for His righteousness' sake, to make the Law great and glorious' (Isa. 42.21). That which belongs to the things commanded by God assumes the character of 'good,' and that which belongs to the things forbidden by Him assumes the character of 'evil' on account of the Service thereby performed. Thus the Second [Class of Law] is in fact joined to the First Class. In spite of this one cannot fail, upon closer examination, to find in it some slender moral benefits and rational basis to act against the

greater moral benefits and firmer rational basis attached to the First Class [of Law].

It is proper that I should first and foremost discuss the rational laws. Wisdom lays down that bloodshed must be prevented among human beings, for if it were allowed people would annihilate each other. That would mean, apart from the pain suffered, a frustration of the purpose that the Wise [God] intended to achieve through them. Homicide cuts them off from the attainment of any purpose He created and employs them for.

Wisdom further imposes the prohibition of adultery; for, otherwise, human beings would become similar to the animals. No person would be able to know and honour his father in return for the education he received at his hands. Nor would a father be able to bequeath to his son his means of livelihood though the son inherited his existence from him; nor would one know one's other relatives such as paternal and maternal uncles; nor would one be able to show them the kindness due to relatives.

Wisdom further imposes the prohibition of theft; for if it were permitted some people would rely on their ability to steal some other people's property, and would not do any productive work nor amass wealth. But if everyone relied on this sort of subsistence, theft itself would be rendered impossible by the abolition of property since nothing at all would be found to steal.

Wisdom further lays down, and this is perhaps its first principle, that one should speak the truth and abstain from falsehood, for truth is a statement which accords with facts and actual conditions, whereas a lie is a statement which does not accord with facts and actual conditions. When the senses perceive an object in a certain state, and the soul ascribes to it another state, then the two statements conflict in the soul, and from their contradiction the soul knows that there is something blamable.

I will furthermore say this: I have met certain people who think that our selection of these four things as objects of reprobation is wrong. In their opinion that is to be reprobated which causes them pain and grief, and the good, in their opinion, is that which causes them pleasure and rest. To this proposition I reply at length in Chapter 4 on the subject of Justice. I will here mention only part of the reply. I say that one

who holds this opinion has ignored all the arguments which I have adduced, and one who ignores this is a fool with whom we need not trouble ourselves. Nevertheless, I shall not be content until I have compelled him to admit that his view is self-contradictory and impossible. I declare that the killing of an enemy whilst pleasing to the killer causes pain to the killed; that the seizure of any property or married woman whilst pleasing to the person who commits this act causes pain to the person who suffers it. According to the opinion of those who hold this theory it would necessarily follow from their premise that each of these acts is both wisdom and folly at the same time: wisdom because it affords pleasure to the person who commits murder, robbery and rape; and folly because it causes pain to his victim. But every theory which involves a self-contradiction is invalid. The contradictory qualities may also appear combined in relation to one person as in the case of honey into which poison has been dropped. In this case the same person eats something which affords pleasure and causes death at the same time. Surely this compels them to admit that (according to their theory) wisdom and folly will exist together.

The Second Class of Law concerns such matters as are of a neutral character from the point of view of Reason, but which the Law has made the objects of commandment in some cases, and of prohibition in others, leaving the rest in their neutral state. Instances are the distinguishing from ordinary days of Sabbath and Festivals; the selection of certain individuals to be Prophets and Leaders; the prohibition to eat certain foodstuffs; the avoidance of sexual intercourse with certain people; the abstention enforced during periods of impurity. The great motive for the observance of these principles and the laws derived and branching out from them is, of course, the command of our Lord and the promotion of our happiness resulting from it, but I find for most of them also some minor and partial motives of a useful character. I wish to point out and to discuss some of them, realizing as I do that God's wisdom (be He blessed and exalted) is above all this.

The distinction conferred upon certain times has these advantages: In the first place, it enables us to desist from our work at certain times and obtain a

rest from our many travails; furthermore, to enjoy the pleasures of learned pursuits, and to have the benefit of additional prayer; there is also the advantage that people will be free to meet at gatherings and discuss matters concerning their religion and proclaim them in public, etc.

The distinction conferred upon a certain person has these advantages: it enables the public to receive reliable instruction from him, to ask his intercession; and it enables him to inspire people with a desire for godliness that they may attain something like his own rank, and to devote his efforts to promoting piety amongst men, since he is worthy of that; and similar activities.

The prohibition not to eat certain animals has this advantage: it makes it impossible to liken any of the animals to the Creator; since it is unthinkable that one should permit oneself either to eat or to declare as impure what one likens to God; also it prevents people from worshipping any of the animals, since it is unthinkable that one should worship either what serves for food or what one declares as impure.

The prohibition of sexual intercourse with certain categories of women has this advantage: in the case of a married woman, I have already stated the reason before. As to one's mother, sister, and daughter, the reason is this: the necessities of daily life foster intimacy between the members of a family. Consequently, if marriage between them were permitted, they would indulge in sexual licence. Another purpose is to prevent men from being attracted only by those women who are of beautiful appearance and rejecting those who are not, when they see that their own relatives do not desire them.

The laws of defilement and purity have this advantage: they teach men humility and reverence; they strengthen in them (the desire) to pray once more after a period of neglect; they make people more conscious of the dignity of the Holy Place after they have abstained from entering it for a period; and they turn their minds to the fear of God.

If one examines most of these revelational laws in the above fashion, one will find for them a great number of partial motives and reasons of usefulness. But the wisdom of the Creator and His knowledge is above everything human beings can attain, as is said, 'For

the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways' (Isa. 55.9).

### 3. The Necessity of Revelation

Having distinguished in the preceding chapter the Two Classes of Law, namely, the rational and the revelational laws, it is now desirable that I should explain the necessity of prophetic Revelation. For I have heard that there are people who contend that men do not need prophets, and that their Reason is sufficient to guide them aright according to their innate cognition of good and evil. I, therefore, subjected this view to the test of true reasoning, and it showed me that if things were as they make out, God would know it better and would not have sent us prophets, for He does not do things which have no purpose. Then I reflected still more deeply and found that mankind is fundamentally in need of the prophets, not solely on account of the revelational laws, which had to be announced, but also on account of the rational laws, because their practice cannot be complete unless the prophets show us how to perform them. Thus, for instance, Reason commands gratitude towards God for the blessings received from Him, but does not specify the form, time, and posture appropriate to the expression of such gratitude. So we are in need of prophets. They gave it a form which is called 'Prayer'; they fixed its times, its special formulae, its special modes, and the special direction which one is to face when praying. Another instance: Reason disapproves of adultery, but gives no definition of the way in which a woman can be acquired by a man so as to become his legal wife; whether this is effected merely by a form of words, or merely by means of money, or by her and her father's consent, or by the witness of two or ten people, or in the presence of the whole population of a town, or by a symbolic act, or by impressing a sign upon her. So the prophets laid down the rules of dowry, contract, and witness. Another instance: Reason disapproves of theft, but gives no definition of the way in which some object of value becomes a man's property; whether by means of labour, or by way of commerce, or by inheritance, or by the appropriation of unowned articles as in the case of a hunter in the desert or on the seas; whether the purchase becomes valid by the payment

of the price, or by the act of taking possession of the purchased article, or merely by repeating a form of words; and so with many other questions that arise in the wide and extensive field covered by this subject. So the prophets presented us with an equitable decision on every single point relating to these matters. Another instance is the measure of punishment for crimes. Reason deems it right that every crime be punished according to its measure, but does not define its measure; whether punishment should be in the nature of a reprimand only, or should include the defamation of the evildoer, or include, in addition, corporal punishment by stripes, and if so, to what extent, which question applies likewise to defamation and reprimand; or

whether nothing short of capital punishment would suffice; and whether the punishment of every offender should be one and the same, or whether one punishment should be different from another. So the prophets prescribed a measure of punishment for each crime according to its nature; they did not lay down the same rule for all, fixing for some a fine in money. And because of these matters which we have enumerated, and other similar ones, we are in need of prophetic Revelation. If we had had to rely on our own judgment in these matters, we should have opposed each other and never agreed on anything; moreover, prophetic Revelation was necessary on account of the revelational laws, as I have already explained.

# Solomon Ibn Gabirol, c.1022–c.1051 or c.1070

Solomon ibn Gabirol was the outstanding Jewish Neoplatonist of the Middle Ages. A pure philosopher rather than one interested in theological speculations, he devoted his efforts to the construction of an ontological system. This system is outlined in *The Fountain of Life* (*Meḳor Ḥayyim*, *Fons Vitae*), though the work is primarily devoted to his account of matter and form.

The ultimate principle in Gabirol's ontology is the first essence, also called God and the first maker. From the first essence emanated the Divine Will, and from the Divine Will, substances composed of matter and form. The latter substances, in turn, are divided into spiritual substances intelligible to the mind and corporeal substances perceptible to the senses.

Gabirol describes the first essence in typical neoplatonic fashion. Existing above all beings, the first essence is infinite and eternal. Only its existence, not its essence, can be known. It is one in all respects and its attributes are identical with its essence.

To bridge the gap between the first essence, which is one, and the world of matter and form, which is many, Gabirol posits the Divine Will as an intermediary principle. However, Gabirol's doctrine of the Divine Will is not completely clear. There are passages in which he considers the Will as an attribute or power identical with God, while there are other passages in which he describes it as a hypostasis existing in separation from God. Since the Divine Will is the primary agent in the production of the world, it is also called the Acting Logos. The Will can only be known through a kind of intuition that may occur once the created order has been understood. It appears that

Gabirol, in positing Will as the intermediary principle, desires to emphasize the voluntary character of creation.

Within the created order, all beings, spiritual as well as corporeal, are composed of matter and form. The highest principles within the world are universal matter and universal form, these two principles being said to have emanated respectively from the first essence and the Divine Will. The rest of the created order comes to be through the successive determinations of universal matter and universal form, much in the same manner as a species comes to be through the determination of a genus by a differentia. In the procession of matters and forms the higher matters and forms appear in the lower ones. This doctrine is said to make Gabirol a proponent of the doctrine of the multiplicity of forms—a doctrine stating that several substantial forms exist within a given substance.

Invoking the analogy between man, the microcosm, and the world, the macrocosm, Gabirol posits three spiritual substances. Just as intelligence, soul, and nature are formal principles within man, so a universal intelligence, a universal soul, and a universal nature are formal principles within the world. These spiritual substances, it should be emphasized once again, are composed of matter and form.

Within the corporeal world, body is the highest substance. It is composed of the form of corporeality and of a matter that marks the transition from the spiritual to the corporeal world. The corporeal world consists of celestial bodies, human beings, animals, plants, and the four elements.

Little is known of Gabirol's life. He was born c. 1022 in Malaga, reared and educated in Saragossa. A marked poetic gift came early to the fore, and we have poems he composed at the age of sixteen. He was in touch with many of the Jewish notables of his day, as poems about them show, but his relations with them were not always amiable. According to some authorities he died c. 1051, according to others c. 1070.

Whereas in the world at large Gabirol became known for his philosophical work, among his own people he was celebrated for his magnificent Hebrew poems. He composed over three hundred secular and religious poems, some of the latter becoming a fixed part of the liturgy of Spanish Jews. Of these poems, a poetic version of his cosmology, entitled "The Royal Crown" (*Keter Malkut*), possesses philosophical interest. In *The Fountain of Life* Gabirol mentions that he had written a book on the Divine Will, but this work is not extant. He also wrote two popular ethical treatises, *The Improvement of the Qualities of the Soul* and *The Choice of Pearls*.

Gabirol's *The Fountain of Life* suffered a rather curious fate. Written in Arabic, the total work has been preserved only in a Latin translation made by Johannes Hispanus and Dominicus Gundissalinus in the middle of the twelfth century. This translation was well known to Christian scholastics who variously called its author Avicbrol, Avicebron, or Avencebrol. Because of the total absence of all biblical and rabbinic quotations from the work, some scholastics considered its author a Muslim, while others, possibly because of the hypostasized Will, considered him a Christian Arab. Not until the middle of the nineteenth century, when Solomon Munk discovered and published a Hebrew florilegium made by Shem Tob Falquera (1225–1290), was it established that Ibn Gabirol and Avicbrol are one and the same author.

William of Auvergne, Albertus Magnus, Alexander Hales, Bonaventure, Thomas Aquinas, and Duns Sco-

tus were among the scholastics who cited Gabirol. He was known among them primarily for his doctrine that spiritual beings—the angels of the scholastics—are composed of matter and form. Franciscan thinkers accepted Gabirol's doctrine, while Dominicans rejected it. In Jewish circles Gabirol's influence was slight. His views were adopted by some later Neoplatonists, and some of his doctrines had an influence on medieval Jewish mysticism.

The following two selections from *The Fountain of Life* deal with two aspects of Gabirol's doctrine of matter and form. The first consists of one of his derivations of the existence of universal matter and universal form—that described by him as being "according to the universal way." The second selection contains a series of arguments designed to show that spiritual substances are composed of matter and form and that, in spite of this, they are simple.

In reading these selections it should be kept in mind that Gabirol is a dialectician. He relies heavily on images and analogies and often uses many arguments to prove the same point. Moreover, depending on the context, he uses the same philosophical term in different senses. Gabirol's method makes it difficult, at times, to find the exact meaning of what he says.

The Aristotelian notions of matter and form are used by Gabirol in two distinct ways. In certain passages they are considered as principles of change, matter being the principle of potentiality, form the principle of actuality. In other passages, matter and form are considered as component principles of all substances. According to this usage (which is the one prevalent in the selections), matter is the unifying underlying substratum that determines the nature of a substance by giving it its name and essence, while form inheres in matter as a principle of multiplicity and action. Gabirol frequently invokes the neoplatonic principle that if an inferior being emanated from a superior one, the properties of the superior are found in the inferior.

## 30. The Fountain of Life

### First Treatise

PUPIL. I understand about the soul what is possible for me to understand, even though I have not attained the ultimate knowledge which I should have about it. Nevertheless, let us now begin to inquire about universal matter and universal form. I wish, however, that you begin by first enumerating the chapter headings of the subjects about which we must inquire during the investigation in which we are engaged and that you divide the treatises of the investigation in a reasonable manner, in order that I may have everything [readily] at hand.

MASTER. Since it is our purpose to inquire about universal matter and universal form, we must say that everything composed of matter and form is divided into two [kinds]: composite corporeal substance, and simple spiritual substance. Corporeal substance [in tum] is likewise divided into two [kinds]: corporeal matter which underlies the form of qualities, and spiritual matter which underlies the corporeal form. Because of the latter distinction there must be in this work two treatises, to which we must direct our attention. The first of these is devoted to those matters which must first be set down in order to describe universal matter and universal form, to investigate the science of matter and form existing in sensible substances, and to speak of the corporeal matter which underlies qualities. The second treatise is devoted to a discussion of the spiritual matter which underlies the corporeal form. Now, since the spiritual substance requires proofs through which existence is attributed to it and demonstrations through which [its existence] is ascertained (for the existence of spiritual substance is

not self-evident by means of necessary knowledge), there must also be a third treatise devoted to a discussion of proofs for the existence of simple substances. There must, furthermore, be a fourth treatise devoted to the discussion of the inquiry into the knowledge which exists concerning the matter and form of simple substances. When the investigation contained in these four treatises will have been completed, we must then inquire about universal matter and form as they are in themselves. Hence there will be a fifth treatise which is appropriate for the investigation of this subject. Everything which we must investigate concerning matter and form will be contained in the five treatises which we have delineated, and this is everything this book contains.

PUPIL. Since you have well divided the treatises of our inquiry concerning matter and form, let us begin then to investigate that which we intended to investigate about these two principles.

MASTER. The existence of universal matter and universal form is known in more than one way.

PUPIL. Make clear to me these ways.

MASTER. The ways by which the existence of universal matter and universal form can be known are, at first thought, two: the universal, general [way], and the particular, specific [way].

PUPIL. How can the existence of matter and form be known according to the universal way?

MASTER. Every object of investigation [the existence of] which we want to know through its characteristics, can only be investigated through those properties which are inseparable from it. When it has been understood that these properties exist and what they are, then the existence of that thing whose properties they are will be known.

PUPIL. Give me an example of what you have said concerning this investigation.

MASTER. If there exists a universal matter of all things, the following properties must belong to it: it must exist in virtue of itself, it must have one essence, it must be a subject underlying diversity, it must give its essence and name to all things.

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Translated for this volume by Arthur Hyman from *Avencebrolis (Ibn Gebirol) Fons Vitae*, ed. C. Baeumker (*Beiträge zur Geschichte und Philosophie des Mittelalters*, I), Münster, 1892–1895.

PUPIL. What is the proof that these properties must belong to universal matter and must be united with it?

MASTER. If universal matter exists, it must have these properties.

PUPIL. How is this?

MASTER. [Universal] matter must have existence, for something which does not exist cannot serve as matter for something which exists. [Universal matter] must be said to exist in virtue of itself, for if it did not exist in virtue of itself [it would exist in some other matter and this matter in still another], so that the series [of matters] would go on to infinity; [but the existence of an infinite series is impossible]. [Universal matter] must possess one essence, for we seek only one matter of all existing things. [Universal matter] must be a subject underlying diversity, for diversity exists only as the result of forms, and forms do not exist in virtue of themselves. [Universal matter] gives its essence and name to all things, for since it underlies as subject all things, it must necessarily exist in all things, and since it exists in all things, it must give its essence and name to all things.

PUPIL. It is clear now that universal matter must possess these properties.

MASTER. Therefore, seek these properties in all existing things and when you will have found them in all existing things, you will have found first matter.

PUPIL. How shall I investigate this?

MASTER. By means of rational analysis, that is, by removing from what exists one form after another and by proceeding from that which is manifest to that which is hidden until you will come to a form after which there is no other form. This is the form which precedes all other forms in the matter which underlies it.

PUPIL. Give me an example of this.

MASTER. An example of this is the heavens, of whose forms color is the first which appears. Thereafter comes figure, then corporeity, then substantiality, then the other forms, namely the spiritual intelligences, until you will come to the notion of something created existing in virtue of itself which underlies as subject all these forms. Then you will have found that principle which is described by the previously mentioned properties, and you will have found that this is the hidden principle beyond which there is no other

principle except one, namely the creator, whose name is exalted.

PUPIL. In accordance with your instructions I have removed the forms of that which exists one after another and I have proceeded from that which is manifest to that which is hidden until I have reached the hidden principle beyond which there is no other principle.

MASTER. Now [reverse the process and] proceed again from the hidden principle to one that is manifest and from one that is manifest to another principle that is more manifest until you will reach the point from which you began. You will find that the properties of the hidden principle [that is, universal matter] will accompany you and go with you from the hidden principle to the manifest one.

PUPIL. I have looked for these properties in all existing things, until I came to an individual substance which can no longer be divided and I have found them to be infused in all existing things and spread out through them from the highest being to the lowest, and yet I did not see that it is necessary because of this that there should exist a universal matter which underlies all things and which is different from them.

MASTER. Did you not admit that it is one of the properties of universal matter to give to all things its substance and name? From where then would all existing things have these properties, if there would not exist a universal matter which gives these properties to them?

PUPIL. It is as you have said. But in what way is this matter different from the things which exist?

MASTER. It is not possible that the essence of matter should differ from the essence of existing things. However, existing things are made to differ from matter by the forms which come upon matter, that is, by differences which divide matter. Whence the manifest difference among existing things comes to be only through manifest forms and, likewise, the hidden difference among existing things comes to be only through the hidden forms. Thus diversity comes to be only through the forms of existing things. But the hidden essence which receives the forms is the one first universal matter which has no diversity [in itself].

PUPIL. Give me an example of this.

MASTER. Consider golden armbands [and] necklaces made of gold, and put them in place of all existing things. You will find them to be different through [their] forms, while you will find the matter which underlies them to be one. And the essence of their matter will not be different from their own essence. From this [example] you can understand that existent things are different through their form, while the matter which underlies them is one and the essence of this matter is not different from the essence of these things.

PUPIL. You have done well in making me discover universal matter, for I found its properties in all existing things. Make me discover universal form in a manner similar to this.

MASTER. Consider in like manner the properties of universal form. They are: to inhere in a subject which differs from it, to actualize the essence of that subject in which it inheres, and to confer existence upon this subject. If you will find these properties in the forms of existing things, you will have found the universal form.

PUPIL. What argument do you adduce [to show] that these properties belong to the universal form?

MASTER. The [universal] form must necessarily inhere in a subject, for if it did not inhere in a subject, it would be a subject; and in that case form would be matter, and it would have the characteristic of matter. To actualize the essence of the subject in which it inheres and to confer existence upon it belongs also to the form, inasmuch as something has the kind of being it has only through the form.

PUPIL. Did we not say previously that matter also has existence?

MASTER. We said that matter has existence only when we had conferred upon it a spiritual form. In itself, however, matter does not have the kind of existence it has when a form is joined to it, the latter kind of existence being existence in actuality. Otherwise, when we say that matter has existence, we have in mind that it has existence only in potentiality.

PUPIL. I have investigated these properties and find them to accompany all the forms of existing things. But from whence can I say that there exists a universal form from which is derived the existence and perfection of all forms?

MASTER. Refrain from this question now and do not hurry so much, for the answer to it will follow later.

#### Fourth Treatise

MASTER. From what has been said previously it will have become clear to you that matter and form exist in composite substances. Likewise also, in the treatise which precedes this one it has been demonstrated to you by means of necessary proofs that simple substances exist. If you now desire to know that matter and form exist in simple substances, remember those things which were said concerning composite substances, since the way of deriving the knowledge of matter and form is the same in both kinds of [substances].

PUPIL. How is this?

MASTER. If something inferior emanated from something superior, then everything existing in the inferior must also exist in the superior.

PUPIL. You seem to suggest that the corporeal spheres [substances] are in the likeness of the spiritual spheres [substances] and that the former emanated from the latter.

MASTER. I want nothing but this.

PUPIL. Does it seem to you that if the corporeal spheres possess matter and form, so likewise do the spiritual spheres?

MASTER. It cannot be otherwise.

PUPIL. What is the proof of this?

MASTER. The proof that the spiritual substances are the same in their matter, but different in their forms, is this: Since the effects produced by the spiritual substances are different, there can be no doubt that their forms are different. But it is not possible that the matters of these substances are different, since all of these substances are simple and spiritual. And difference proceeds only from the form, and simple matter has no form in itself.

PUPIL. What would you answer, were I to say that [in the case of spiritual substances] the substance of soul is matter and the substance of intellect form?

MASTER. It is impossible that the substance of soul be matter, since soul is composite, and since intellect is above it, and since it is an agent [and because of these reasons it must possess a form]. Similarly, it is also not possible that the substance of intellect be form, for intellect is also composite [and hence it possesses matter]. The proof [that soul cannot be only matter and intellect only form] is the agreement of these two substances with other spiritual substances in respect to substantiality [as a result of which all spiritual substances possess matter] and the difference between them in respect to knowledge and perfection [as a result of which all spiritual substances possess form].

PUPIL. What would you say, were I to maintain that the [spiritual] substances are only matter?

MASTER. If these substances were only matter, they would not be differentiated and they would indeed be one and they would not act on anything. For the matter of something is one, not differentiated in itself, and actions proceed from forms not from matters, as is evident in the case of the sensible substances.

PUPIL. Perhaps these substances are only forms?

MASTER. How is it possible that forms should inhere in an underlying subject without there being a subject in which they inhere?

PUPIL. Why not? For indeed the forms are substances.

MASTER. If these simple substances are one form, how do they become differentiated?

PUPIL. Perhaps they are differentiated through themselves?

MASTER. Were they differentiated through themselves, they would never have anything in common.

PUPIL. Thus they differ in respect to perfection and imperfection.

MASTER. If they were to differ in respect to perfection and imperfection, there would have to exist some subject which underlies perfection and which underlies imperfection.

PUPIL. That which underlies perfection is the form and that which underlies imperfection is likewise the form.

MASTER. Hence the forms are matters, since they are subjects which underlie something. [But that form should be matter is impossible.]

PUPIL. From what has been stated I understand that simple substances are composed of matter and form. But add [further] explanation in support of this principle.

MASTER. It is also not possible that the intelligible substance be only one thing. It is likewise not possible that [the intelligible substance be composed of] two matters or two forms. It follows, therefore, that [the intelligible substance is composed of] matter and form only.

PUPIL. How is it possible that the spiritual substance is composite if it is spiritual?

MASTER. Since it is necessary that the concept of spirituality is different from the concept of corporeity, and it is necessary that this concept inheres in something other than it which describes it, hence spiritual substance is composed in the same way. [This passage may be rendered more freely: Since it is necessary that the form of spirituality is above the form of corporeity, and since it is necessary that the latter form inheres in a subject other than it which gives it its description, (and since corporeal substances are similar to spiritual substances inasmuch as they have emanated from them), it follows that spiritual substance is composed of matter and form in the same way as corporeal substance.] And likewise the division of spiritual substance into intellect and soul and the distinction between intellect and soul in bodies and the separation of these one from the other provides proof for the distinction between matter and form [in spiritual substances]. Therefore, the relation of each of these simple substances in its distinction from the spiritual substance is like the relation of simple matter and form in their distinction from corporeal substance. And also the fact that one spiritual substance is simpler and more perfect than another provides proof that above the spirituality that comes after body there is another spirituality more perfect than it.

PUPIL. Indeed, were it the case that spirituality is a cause which prevents division, it would not be possible that soul is separate from intellect or that one spiritual substance should be more spiritual than another. Hence the distinction between soul and intellect is proof that spirituality is not one; and since it is not one, it is subject to division, and diversification comes upon it.

MASTER. . . . I add a [further] explanation about this by saying that, just as it is necessary that some body is simpler than another, and that there exist in these bodies matter and form which are closer to spirituality and which possess greater simplicity, so is it similarly necessary that some spiritual substance is simpler than another and that spiritual substances possess matter and form of greater simplicity and greater spirituality.

PUPIL. It is very difficult for me to imagine that these simple substances are composed of matter and form and to imagine that there exist diversity and difference among them, inasmuch as all are spiritual and simple.

MASTER. Since it is difficult for you to imagine that spiritual substances are composed of two [principles, namely matter and form], consider their difference from composite substances and their difference among themselves. Then you will be forced to admit that there are differences by means of which spiritual substances differ from composite substances and by means of which spiritual substances differ among themselves, and [the causes of these differences] are the forms inhering in them.

PUPIL. Even though it must be admitted that there exist differences among spiritual substances because of the forms which belong to them, why must it be admitted that there exist differences between these forms, since these forms exist in a state of highest spirituality?

MASTER. You must watch yourself at this point, since the error [which occurs here] is not small. You must imagine the following about the spiritual forms, namely, that they all are one form and that there exists no diversity in them in respect to themselves, since they are pure spiritual [beings]. Diversity only befalls them because of the matter which underlies them as subject. For if [the underlying matter] is close to perfection it will be subtle and the form which inheres in it will be in the highest state of simplicity and spirituality, and the contrary will be the case if the underlying matter is gross. Take the light of the sun as an example of this. For this light in itself is one, but when it encounters subtle, clear air it will penetrate it, and it will appear in a different manner in subtle, clear air and in thick, unclear air. Something similar must be said about the [spiritual] form.

PUPIL. What would you answer were I to say that one spiritual substance does not differ from another because of a substantial form, but because there comes upon it an affection (*passio*) resulting from a difference in the bodies which receive its action? Thus the difference between spiritual forms is the result of their action, not of the substance itself?

MASTER. I did not think that you would raise objections of this kind after the previous proofs accounting for the differences among simple substances. [It is] as if it were not certain to you that the form of nature differs from the vegetative soul, and the form of the vegetative soul differs from the form of the sensory soul, and that the form of the sensory soul differs from the form of the rational soul, and that the form of the rational soul differs from the form of the intellect.

PUPIL. The difference among simple substances is now clear to me. But perhaps at some other time there will arise some other doubt concerning these matters. How can you satisfy me concerning the difference among spiritual substances, seeing that my desire for this knowledge is very strong?

MASTER. If this sort of doubt will befall you, recall some of the excellent and noble spiritual accidents existing in the substance of the soul. You will find then those accidents which will change the soul from that which it was and through which it becomes something which it was not. [And this change] is the result of the arrival of this subtle, accidental form in the soul. If this notion will arise in your imagination, you will resist by means of it the notion which made you doubt, and the former notion will expel the latter and will establish its opposite.

PUPIL. Much doubt has so far befallen me concerning the division of simple substances into matter and form and concerning the difference of these spiritual substances one from the other, inasmuch as I deny that it is possible that something spiritual is divisible. Set down a discussion sufficient to remove this doubt.

MASTER. As argument against the first doubt [namely that spiritual substances are composed of matter and form], set down the difference between spiritual substances and corporeal substances and the difference of spiritual substances one from another. As argument against the second doubt [namely that

spiritual substances differ from one another], set down the difference of the substance of the soul in itself which results from the accidents which come to be in it. Furthermore, consider that in the case of everything which you perceive by means of sense or intellect, you perceive only its form which actualizes its essence. Hence that form has a subject which underlies it and of which it is the form. When you will have understood by means of your intellect the form [of spiritual substance], that is, when you will have understood the nature of that form as a result of which the spiritual substance is what it is, then you will conclude that the spiritual substance possesses a matter which underlies its form.

PUPIL. From the arguments which you have previously set down it is now clear to me that the spiritual substance consists of matter and form. But is there another argument which throws further light on this?

MASTER. Another argument showing that the simple substances which are above the composite substances are composed of matter and form is one that I have often set down previously. It is that the inferior proceeds from the superior and that the inferior is an example for the superior. For if the inferior comes to be from the superior, it is necessary that the order of corporeal substances is in the likeness of the order of spiritual substances. For just as the corporeal substances are arranged in a three-fold order, namely, gross body, subtle body, and the matter and form of which the corporeal substances consist, so, similarly, is the spiritual substance arranged in a three-fold order, namely, first, the spiritual substance which comes after the corporeal substance, then, the spiritual substance which is more spiritual than it and, finally, the matter and form of which the spiritual substances are composed.

PUPIL. Make clear to me that the superior exists in the inferior by means of a clear demonstration which establishes this notion.

MASTER. The proof that all spiritual substances and forms, that is, their essences and action, exist in corporeal substances is that everything that is common to the properties of things exists in the corporeal substances. Since the superior property exists in the inferior, does it not follow necessarily that whatsoever exists in the inferior must also exist in the superior? In-

deed, what has been stated in the logical sciences, namely, that the higher beings [the genera for example] give their name and definition to the lower being [the species], also shows this.

PUPIL. This is certainly so.

MASTER. The fact that the intellect abstracts forms from bodies also shows this, and in this there is proof that the form of the intellect is in agreement with all forms, just as it is clear from the proofs which we previously set down that the forms which inhere in composite substances emanate from the simple substances.

PUPIL. You have already shown that it is not possible that spiritual substances are only matter or only form. But in what way shall I conceive them to be simple, if they are composed of matter and form?

MASTER. This should be clear to you from what has been said previously. However, I shall add further explanation. I say, that, since it is not impossible that something composite should be simple, so also is it not impossible that something simple should be composite. For something composite is simple in respect to something which is below it, and something simple is composite in respect to that which is above it.

PUPIL. Since the matter in simple substances differs from the form existing in them, consider whether the matter, inasmuch as it differs from the form and is opposed to it in its essence, can exist without the form even for an instant, or whether the matter cannot exist without the form even for an instant? For how can the distinction between matter and form become clear, if neither of these principles can exist without the other even for an instant?

MASTER. Wait a while, do not rush in asking until we shall have spoken about universal matter in itself and universal form in itself.

PUPIL. About what have we spoken then until now?

MASTER. Was your inquiry not about the principle that in the intelligible being there exists nothing besides matter and form, just as in the sensible being there exist no principles besides these? And I demonstrated that the intelligible substances consist of matter and form, because they differ in one respect and agree in another. I showed you the same principle also in other ways, and I showed you that it is false that they are only matter or only form. Through these demonstrations you gained knowledge concerning the ques-

tion whether matter and form exist in simple substances. Later on we shall describe what each one of these principles is [in itself] and we shall investigate how one principle differs from the other. Then you will have gained knowledge of whether they exist, what they are, and in what manner they are. But an answer to the question why they are you will derive from the quality of universal matter and universal form. For in this discussion we did not inquire about universal matter and universal form, for we intended to investigate only concerning the matters of spiritual substances. And we take the matter of the particular intellect and its form as an example for attributing

matter and form to each one of the spiritual substances. And I set this down as a rule for describing the substance of the universal intelligence and of the universal substances which are below it.

PUPIL. How is this?

MASTER. Since the particular intellect is composed of matter and form, it necessarily follows that the universal intellect is composed of matter and form. In this way we infer [from the composition of] the particular intellect [the composition of] the universal intellect, just as we infer the existence of the universal intellect from the existence of the particular intellect.

# Moses Maimonides, 1135–1204

Moses Maimonides was by far the best-known Jewish philosopher of the Middle Ages and *The Guide of the Perplexed* (*Dalālat al-Ḥa'irīn*) is easily the most important medieval Jewish philosophical work. For Jewish thinkers, Rabbi Moses ben Maimon's *Moreh Nebukim* determined the course of philosophy from the early thirteenth century on, and there appeared hardly any work for the remainder of the Middle Ages that did not cite Maimonides' views and comment on them. For Christian scholastics of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Rabbi Moses' *Doctor Perplexorum* formed a respected part of the philosophical literature of the day.

In his philosophical views, Maimonides was an Aristotelian, and it was he who put medieval Jewish philosophy on a firm Aristotelian basis. As philosopher, Maimonides followed the teachings of Aristotle as interpreted by the ancient commentators (Alexander of Aphrodisias in particular) and as expounded by the Muslim Aristotelians al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), and Ibn Bājjā (Avempace). The writings of his older contemporary Ibn Rushd (Averroes) became known to Maimonides in his later years, but they do not seem to have had a formative influence on his thought.

Though Maimonides considered himself in continuity with the Muslim Aristotelians, adapting and developing their teachings in accordance with his own views, he differed from them in the works that he produced. Unlike the Muslims, he wrote no commentary on any of Aristotle's works, collected no summa of the philosophical sciences, nor composed any independent philosophical treatises other than his early *Treatise on the Art of Logic*. Holding that the available philo-

sophical literature was adequate for all needs, Maimonides investigated how the Aristotelian teachings can be related to the beliefs and practices of Jewish tradition.

Maimonides' *Guide* is a rather enigmatic book. Instead of being a work of straightforward philosophical or theological exposition, it takes the form of a personal communication to Joseph ben Judah, a former pupil. Moreover, though the topics of the work are clear enough, their arrangement does not always follow an easily discernible order. Still further, Maimonides himself informs his reader that he makes use of methods of indirection and that views set down in one part of the *Guide* at times contradict opinions expressed in another part. It is not surprising that this method produced divergent interpretations of Maimonides' views. There are scholars who see in him a moderate Aristotelian who made a sincere effort to harmonize scriptural and philosophical teachings, while there are others who consider him a rigorous Aristotelian who, by innuendo, subscribes to such doctrines as the eternity of the world and the determination of the human will.

The enigmatic nature of the *Guide* resulted from design. For both the religious and the philosophical traditions within which Maimonides worked maintained that speculative teachings are esoteric and that they are not to be communicated indiscriminately to the masses. Thus, Maimonides' rabbinic sources record as binding law that *Ma'aseh Merkabah* (the account of the Divine Chariot) and *Ma'aseh Bereshit* (the account of the creation of the world)—rabbinic doctrines that Maimonides unhesitatingly identified with Aristotelian metaphysics and physics—may only

be taught to select, properly qualified students. This rabbinic injunction was in agreement with the principle of philosophical prudence that philosophical truths should not be communicated to the masses.

In view of Maimonides' method and the rather unusual arrangement of the *Guide*, it may be well to review the purpose and contents of the work. According to his own testimony, Maimonides wrote the *Guide* for someone who believed in the validity of the Law, who had studied the philosophical sciences and who had become perplexed by the literal meaning of certain biblical terms and parables. Hence, the work is not addressed to the simple believer who has no philosophical interest nor to the philosopher for whom religion has, at best, a utilitarian function. The proper subject of the *Guide* may thus be said to be the philosophical exegesis of the Law or, as Maimonides himself puts it, an account of "the science of the Law in its true sense" or of the "secrets of the Law."

Since his addressee is vexed by the literal meaning of certain biblical terms and parables, in particular by anthropomorphisms and anthropopathisms applied to God, Maimonides begins, after a preface setting down the purposes and method of the work, with chapters devoted to biblical exegesis. Citing a large number of difficult terms, he shows that even in the biblical text these terms have, besides a physical, also a spiritual meaning. Having disposed of this philological task, Maimonides proceeds to a philosophical account of Divine attributes. Accepting Ibn Sīnā's distinction between essence and existence as a real distinction, Maimonides concludes that no positive attributes may be predicated of God. Of the various attributes by which God is described, accidental attributes must be understood as attributes of action, while essential attributes are to be understood as negations. The doctrine of "negative attributes" became a characteristic part of Maimonides' philosophical views. This doctrine was later attacked by, among others, Thomas Aquinas.

Having shown how Divine attributes are to be understood, Maimonides proceeds to formal demonstrations of the existence, unity, and incorporeality of God, and to a discussion of the creation of the world. Prior to Maimonides, these doctrines had been discussed by Muslim and Jewish Mutakallimūn (see page 216). But the Kalāmīc demonstrations, according to Mai-

monides, were false, for they were based on categories of the imagination rather than on categories of reason. Hence, Maimonides considered it necessary to refute the arguments of the Mutakallimūn prior to setting down his own demonstrations. The latter chapters of the first part of the *Guide* are devoted to the exposition and refutation of the Kalāmīc views.

Maimonides opens the second section of the *Guide* with his own demonstrations of the existence, unity, and incorporeality of God. His proofs are preceded by twenty-five physical and metaphysical propositions that he considers as having been demonstrated in the philosophical literature of his day. To these propositions he adds (as Thomas later on) the premise that the world is eternal. However, this premise is set down as a hypothesis required to demonstrate that God exists, not as a proposition that Maimonides accepts as true.

Generally speaking, Maimonides' proofs of the existence of God are those familiar from the philosophical literature of the Middle Ages. All of his proofs, it appears, are physical, the demonstration of the existence of God as the prime mover being his major proof. As one of the four proofs that he presents, Maimonides accepts that of Ibn Sīnā, known as the proof from necessity and contingency. Yet, unlike Ibn Sīnā, Maimonides seems to consider this proof as physical rather than metaphysical. His proofs for the unity and incorporeality of God follow the conventional pattern.

Once Maimonides had completed his philosophical discussion of the existence, unity, and incorporeality of God (and the intelligences), he turned to problems of a more religious nature, the first being the creation of the world. Whereas for Aristotle the question whether the world is eternal or created formed a rather minor point in his discussion of the heavens, for Maimonides, as for other religious philosophers, it became a major issue. In solving this problem Maimonides shows a good deal of ingenuity, and his solution was accepted by Aquinas later on. Attempting to show on textual as well as philosophical grounds that Aristotle never claimed to have demonstrated the eternity of the world, Maimonides concludes that Aristotle's view is only a likely opinion, not a decisive demonstration. Moreover, Maimonides argues, demonstrations of the eternity or creation of the world lie out-

side the competence of the human mind. At best, the human mind can offer likely arguments for either view. In the absence of apodictic demonstrations, Maimonides affirms that the arguments for the creation of the world are more convincing than those against it and, in addition, creation is supported by scriptural teachings. Once Maimonides had accepted the creation of the world, it became easier for him to account for miracles and prophecy.

It is to an analysis of the latter problem that Maimonides turns next. In his account, he strikes a balance between the pietistic view, which sees prophecy solely as an arbitrary gift of God, and the philosophical view, which considers prophecy exclusively as a fulfillment of natural human powers. To be sure, the prophet, according to Maimonides, must be someone healthy in his constitution and possessed of a well-developed intellect and imagination; but at the same time God has a role in prophetic inspiration, be it to prevent someone who is qualified from prophesying or be it to provide an emanation productive of prophecy. The prophet gains certain cognitions that the philosopher does not have, but by far his most important function is political. In the case of Moses, he is someone who brings the Law, while in the case of the other Hebrew prophets he is someone who admonishes about the Law.

After expounding certain metaphysical doctrines in explanation of passages from Ezekiel, Maimonides, in the third part of the *Guide*, proceeds to a discussion of evil and providence. Moral evil is due to human choice, while natural evil is considered as a privation of good. God's providence for the world is generally manifest through the orderly laws of nature, but in the case of man it is individual, the degree of providence being determined by the development of the intellectual faculties of a person.

In the final section of the *Guide*, Maimonides turns to an explanation of the precepts of the Law. For him, the Law is the result of Divine wisdom rather than the product of arbitrary Divine will. Hence, for all the laws, with the exception of certain particular norms, there exist reasons—at least for God—and many of these reasons can be discovered by the human mind. The general purposes of the Law are two: to instill correct opinions and to regulate men's political relations. Cor-

rect opinions lead to the intellectual virtues on which, according to Maimonides, human immortality depends. Maimonides sees a number of the ritual laws as reactions to pagan practices current in ancient times.

Moses ben Maimon was born in Cordova on March 30, 1135. From his father, Maimon, and other teachers he received a thorough training in biblical and rabbinic learning and in philosophy and the sciences. When, in 1148, the fanatic Almohads conquered Cordova, Maimon and his family were forced to flee. Though little is known about the subsequent period, it seems that the family wandered at first in Spain, finally settling in Fez in North Africa. But since North Africa was also under Almohad rule, the family, after a brief stay in Palestine, settled in Egypt in 1165. At first, the family was supported by Maimonides' older brother, David, but after the brother's tragic death Maimonides turned to the practice of medicine. He gained renown as a physician and was appointed court physician to the vizier of Saladin.

Within the Jewish community Maimonides became known and respected for his unparalleled rabbinic learning. Jews from all over the world addressed inquiries to him, and he was appointed head (Nagid) of all Egyptian Jews. He died on December 13, 1204, and he was buried in Tiberias. Of him it was said: "From Moses (the prophet) to Moses (ben Maimon) there had arisen no one like unto him."

Maimonides was one of the greatest Jewish legal scholars of all times. At the age of twenty-three he had begun his first major work, the *Book of Illumination* (*Kitāb al-Sirāj, Sefer ha-Ma'or*), a commentary on the Mishnah, the basic rabbinic text. This work was completed ten years later, in 1168. Though its subject matter is primarily legal, Maimonides' commentary contains two Introductions (really monographs) of special philosophical and theological interest. The introduction to the "Sayings of the Fathers," known as the "Eight Chapters," contains a summary of his psychological views, while the introduction to the tenth chapter of the tractate Sanhedrin contains an account of his eschatological views and of his famous thirteen principles of Jewish belief. The commentary was written in Arabic and later translated into Hebrew.

*Mishneh Torah*, his great code, was Maimonides' second major work. In this book he undertook to

codify the totality of Jewish law, a task that no one had attempted before. Most of this work is taken up with practical matters of law, but, in line with his conviction that all believers must possess a rudiment of correct theological and philosophical opinions, Maimonides began the work with a “Book of Knowledge” (Sefer ha-Madda’) containing a popular exposition of physical and metaphysical topics. The *Mishneh Torah* was his only major work written in Hebrew.

Maimonides’ third major work was *The Guide of the Perplexed*. Written in Arabic, the work was first translated into Hebrew by Maimonides’ contemporary Samuel ibn Tibbon and a second time by Judah al-Ḥarizi. The medieval Latin translation was based on

Ḥarizi’s text. Maimonides also composed a number of medical treatises, and among his other writings, the previously mentioned *Treatise on the Art of Logic* is of special philosophical interest.

The following selections, all taken from the *Guide*, deal with four basic aspects of Maimonides’ thought. In Book I, chapters 51–52 and 57–58, we find a detailed account of his doctrine of Divine attributes. Book I, chapter 69, and Book II, chapters 13, 16, and 25, present aspects of Maimonides’ doctrine of creation and engage with arguments for and against the eternity of the world. In Book II, chapters 32 and 36–38, Maimonides discusses prophecy. And in Book II, chapters 39 and 40, and Book III, chapter 27, Maimonides develops certain aspects of his philosophy of law.

## 31. The Guide of the Perplexed

### Book I

#### Chapter 51

Many things obviously and manifestly exist. Some of these are primary intellectual concepts and sensory impressions, others, things close to these in character. Even if left to his own devices, a man would not need anyone to point these out to him. Such are the existence of movement and man's freedom to act, the phenomena of generation and corruption, and the nature of things apparent to the senses, such as the heat of fire and coolness of water, and many suchlike things.

Since some strange views have been put forward, by error or with some ulterior motive, views which contradict the nature of existing things by denying what is perceived by the senses or implying the existence of the non-existent, philosophers have been compelled to assert the truth of the manifest or to deny the existence of things wrongly imagined. Thus we find Aristotle asserting the existence of movement because it had been denied, or producing evidence against the existence of atoms because it had been asserted.

Our denial of essential attributes in God belongs to this type of argument. It is really a primary intellectual concept, namely, that the attribute is something different from the essence of that to which it is attributed; that it is a state of the essence and therefore an accident. If the attribute is itself the essence of the thing to which it is attributed, then the attribute is either a mere verbal repetition, as would be saying 'man is man,' or an explanation of a term, as saying 'man is a reasoning animal,' For 'reasoning animal' is the essence and nature of 'man.' The proposition does not contain a third term except 'animal' and 'reason-

ing,' i.e. 'man,' who is completely described only by the combination of the two terms.<sup>1</sup> The function of this description<sup>2</sup> is to explain the term, no more, as if one said 'the thing which is called man is the thing which is compounded of life and reason.'

It is thus evident that an attribute must be one of two things. Either it is the essence of the thing to which it is attributed, and thus an explanation of a term. This kind of attribute we reject with reference to God, not for this reason but for another one, which we shall explain later on. Or the attribute is different from the thing to which it is attributed, and thus an idea added to that thing. Consequently that attribute is an accident of that essence. By protesting that the attributes of God are not accidents, we cannot alter the fact that they are. Every new idea added to the essence is accessory to it, not completing its inherent character; that is exactly what 'accident' means.

Furthermore, if the attributes are many, then many things must have existed eternally. Belief in Unity cannot mean essentially anything but the belief in one single homogeneous uncompounded essence; not in a plurality of ideas but in a single idea. Whichever way you look at it, and however you examine it, you must find it to be one, not dividing itself in any manner or for any reason into two ideas. No plurality must be discoverable in it either in fact or in thought, as will be proved in the course of this treatise.

#### Chapter 52

Whenever anything has an attribute affirmed of it, and we say of it: it is so-and-so, that attribute must fall under one of five headings:

Firstly, the thing may be described by its definition; thus man can be described as a reasoning animal. An

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From *Maimonides: The Guide of the Perplexed*, tr. Chaim Rabin (London: East and West Library, 1952; reprinted by Hackett Publishing Company, 1995). Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

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1. Or: no third term is available for the definition of man, except 'animal' and 'reasoning.'

2. Arabic has the same word for 'attribute' and 'description.'

attribute of this type indicates what the thing is (its quiddity). We have proved that this is nothing but an explanation of the name. This type of attribute is generally agreed to be inadmissible in the case of God, since there are no pre-existing causes that could be causes of His existence so that He might be defined by means of them. For this reason all thinkers who use their terms precisely are entirely agreed that God cannot be defined.

Secondly, something may be described by a part of its definition. Thus man may be described as 'animal' or as 'reasoning.' The point about such attributes is their inherent mutual connection with the things to which they are attributed. If we say 'every man has reason' that can mean nothing else but that every being that proves to be human will also prove to be gifted with reason. This type of attribute is universally regarded as inadmissible with regard to God, for if there were such a thing as a part of His quiddity, His quiddity would be compound. This is just as absurd with reference to God as the assertion disposed of in the last paragraph.

Thirdly, something may be described by means of a thing outside its nature and essence, something not required for the complete establishment of its essence. That thing would therefore be a quality adherent to it. Quality, i.e. the category, is an accident. If an attribute of this type were to be ascribed to God, He would be subject to accidents. Merely to mention this is enough to show how far removed from His nature and essence it is to consider him as possessing qualities.

Well may one wonder that those who ascribe attributes to God find it possible to deny that He can be compared or has qualities. They say 'God cannot be qualified.' What can that mean except that He has no qualities? Yet whenever one asserts the essential attachment of any attribute to an essence, it must either constitute that essence, and thus be the essence itself, or, be a quality of that essence.

These three classes of attributes, viz. those describing what the thing is, those describing part of what it is, and those describing a quality of what it is, have thus been demonstrated to be inadmissible with reference to God, because they all imply compositeness. This, as we shall prove later, cannot be admitted with reference to God.

The fourth class of attributes is that which describes a thing in relation to something else, such as time, place or other individual. Thus you may describe Zayd as the father of A, or as the partner of B, or as living in C, or as one who lived in year X. This type of attribute does not imply plurality or change in the substance of the thing described, because it is all the same Zayd who is the father of Bakr and the partner of Umar or the employer of so-and-so, or the friend of someone else, or who lives in a certain house or was born in a certain year. These relations are not his substance or have anything to do with his substance, as would have been the case with qualities.

At first glance it seems as if this type of attribute could be applied to God. On closer consideration, however, they prove to be inadmissible. It is obvious that God cannot stand in any relation to time and place. Time is an accident pursuant to motion, namely when the latter is considered from the point of view of sequence and thus becomes measurable, as is explained in works devoted to this subject. Motion is a thing that attaches to bodies. God is not a body, and therefore there can be no relation between Him and time. Similarly no relation is possible between Him and space. The question to be discussed is whether there is any relation, in the proper sense, between Him and any thing created by Him, so that this might be applied as an attribute.

It is obvious at the first glance that there is no correlation between Him and any of His creatures, since an essential feature of correlation is the mutuality through equality of the two related terms. God, however, *must* exist, and everything else *may* exist, as we shall explain later, and therefore correlation is unthinkable. One might think that some other type of relation is possible between the two, but this is not so. One cannot imagine any relation between intellect and a colour, though both have the same kind of existence according to our system. How then can we imagine a relation between a thing and Him who shares no common trait with anything outside Him at all, for the term 'existence' is only applied to Him as well as to creatures by way of homonymy and in no other way. There is, therefore, no possible true relation between Him and anything He has created, because relation can at any time be only between two things of the

same immediate species, but if they are merely of the same class no relation can exist between them. We cannot say ‘this red colour is stronger, or weaker, than, or equal to, that green colour,’ though both of them belong to the same class, that of colours. If the two terms belong to different classes, no relation at all is possible between them, even according to the primitive standards of popular thinking. It makes no difference if the two classes are under the same category. For instance, there is no thinkable relation between a hundred cubits and the pungency of pepper; the first is a quantity and the second is a quality. There is also no thinkable relation between knowledge and sweetness, or kindness and bitter taste, though all these are in the category of quality. How then could there be any relation between God and any creature, when there is that immense difference in the nature of existence, greater than which no difference can ever be.

If any relation could be imagined, then it would follow that the accident of relation could attach to God. Though it is not an accident attaching to His essence, it is still an accident of sorts. In that case we should be forced to admit that God has attributes, though we should narrow these down to relations. Still, these are the kind of attributes that could most easily be granted in reference to God, since they would not imply a plurality of pre-existent things nor any change in His substance consequent on change of the things with which He would stand in relation.

The fifth class of positive attributes is to describe a thing by its action. By ‘its action’ I do not mean the capacity of habitual professional activity, as in the terms ‘carpenter’ or ‘blacksmith’; these are of the category of quality, as we have mentioned before. By ‘action’ I mean the action that the thing has carried out, as when one says: Zayd is the one who has made this door, or built a certain wall, or woven this garment. This kind of attribute is far from contact with the essence of the thing to which it relates. It is therefore quite permissible to apply this type of attribute to God, especially as we know (as will be explained later on) that these different actions do not emanate from different elements within the essence of the agent, but all the different actions of God are from His essence, not from anything added to it, as we have explained before.

To resume the argument of this chapter: God is One in every respect without plurality and without additions to His essence. The many different attributes found in the books as indicating Him are due to the manifold character of His actions, not to a plurality in His essence. Some of them have the purpose of indicating His perfection, according to what we consider perfection, as we have explained before.

#### Chapter 57 More Advanced Observations on the Subject of Attributes

It is obvious that existence is an accident affecting that which exists. It is, therefore, a concept superadded to the essence of that which exists. This is an incontrovertible fact. Whenever the existence of a thing is due to a cause, its existence is a concept superadded to its essence. But whatever possesses an existence not due to any cause—and such is God alone, for this is what we mean when we say that God exists necessarily—the existence of such a thing is its essence and character and its essence is its existence. Such a thing is not subject to the accident of existing, so that its existence should be a concept superadded to its essence. He exists necessarily and perpetually, not because existence came to Him from without or affected Him as an accident. He therefore exists without existence, and similarly lives without life, is powerful without power, and knows without knowledge. All these derive from a single concept without any multiplicity, as we shall explain later on.

It must also be clearly realized that unity and multiplicity are accidents affecting the thing which exists insofar as it is many or one. This is proved in the *Metaphysics* [5.6, 10.2]. As number is not the thing counted, so unity is not the thing which is one. All these are accidents of the class of discrete quantity which affect the numerable things in existence, because they are subject to such accidents. As for that which exists necessarily and is truly simple without being in any way liable to compositeness, as it is absurd to think of it as affected by the accident of plurality, so it is absurd to think of it as affected by the accident of unity. I mean to say by this that His unity is not a concept superadded to His essence, but He is one without unity.

These subtle concepts, which almost pass the comprehension of our minds, are not readily expressed by words. Words are altogether one of the main causes of error, because whatever language we employ, we find the restrictions it imposes on our expression extremely disturbing. We cannot even picture this concept except by using imprecise language. When we desire to indicate that the Divinity is not plural, all we are able to say is that He is one, although both, 'one' as well as 'many,' are terms of quantity. We must therefore compress our meaning and guide the mind to the proper understanding of our intention by saying 'one, but not by unity.' It is just the same when we use the word 'ancient'<sup>3</sup> to indicate that He did not come into being. The lack of precision in our use of 'ancient' is obvious, since one can only apply the term to something affected by time, which is an accident supervening to movement, which implies a body. Furthermore it belongs to the class of relative terms. When you use 'ancient' of the accident of time, it is like saying 'long' and 'short' with regard to the accident of one-dimensional extension. One cannot really employ the terms 'ancient' and 'come into being' of anything to which the accident of time does not apply, any more than one can say of sweetness that it is either crooked or straight, or of a sound that it is salty or unseasoned. Such things are evident to one who has some practice in assessing the true meaning of ideas and expresses them with full rational comprehension, if he isolates them properly and does not employ the vague sense suggested by the words in common usage.<sup>4</sup>

Wherever you find the words 'first' and 'last' employed in Scripture in speaking of God [e.g. Isa. 44:6], this is to be taken in the same way as the passages where He is described as having eyes or ears. The meaning of those terms is that God is not affected by change and in no way ever acquires new properties, not that He falls under the category of time, so that some analogy might result between Him and things subject to time, and it can be said of Him that He is

first and last. All these terms are 'according to the parlance of men' [Berakhoth 31b]. So, too, when we say one we mean thereby that He has no peer, not that His essence is affected by the concept of unity.

#### Chapter 58 More Difficult than the Preceding Ones

You must understand that the description of God by means of negative terms is the only sound description which contains no element of loose terminology, and implies altogether in no circumstances a lack of perfection in God. His description by positive terms, on the other hand, comports polytheism and a lack of perfection in God in the way we have demonstrated.

First I must explain how negative terms can in a manner be attributes, and in what way they differ from positive attributes. Then I shall show how it is that we have no way of describing Him except by negative terms and no others. An attribute is not something specifying the thing described in such a way that it cannot share the attribute with anything else. On the contrary, an attribute may describe something even if it shares that attribute with other things and is not peculiar to it. For instance, if you see a man from a distance and ask: what is that which is visible? the reply may be: some living being. This is without any doubt a correct description of the thing seen, though it does not set it aside as a peculiar thing from all others. Some specification does, however, result, namely, that the thing seen is not an object of the vegetable or mineral class. In the same manner also, if there is a man in a certain house, and you know that there is some object in it, but not what it is, you may ask: what is in this house? and may receive the reply: there isn't a vegetable or mineral object in it. Then you obtain some specification and know that a living being is in the house, though you do not know what kind of living being it is. From this point of view the negative attributes have something in common with positive attributes, because they must necessarily produce some specification, even though this specification means merely the removal of the negated items from among those that we had before imagined un-negated. The difference between negative and positive attributes is in this, that positive attributes, even when they do not

3. Used in philosophical Arabic for 'uncreated.'

4. Other reading: taking them in their absolute sense, notwithstanding the connotation of comprehensiveness suggested by the words.

specify, indicate some part of the totality of the thing which we desire to know. This may be either a part of its substance or one of its accidents. The negative attributes do not in any manner tell us anything about the essence of the thing which we wish to know as it is, except incidentally, as in our example.

After these prefatory remarks I state that it has been proved that God exists by necessity and that He is non-composite, as we shall prove, and we can apprehend only that He is, not what He is. It is therefore meaningless that He should have any positive attribute, since the fact that He is is not something outside of what He is, so that the attribute might indicate one of these two. Much less can what He is be of a composite character, so that the attribute could indicate one of the parts. Even less can He be substrate to accidents, so that the attribute could indicate these. Thus there is no scope for any positive attributes in any way whatsoever.

It is the negative attributes which we must employ to guide our mind to that which we ought to believe concerning God, because from them no plurality can result in any way. They can guide the mind to the utmost limit of what man can apprehend of God. For instance, it has been proved to us that something must exist apart from those objects which our senses apprehend and which our reason can encompass with its knowledge. We say about this thing that it exists, meaning that it is absurd to say that He does not exist. Then we apprehend that its existence is not like the existence of, say, the elements, which are lifeless bodies, and consequently say that He lives, meaning that God is not subject to death. Then we apprehend that this being is also not like the existence of heaven, which is a living body, and consequently we say that He is not a body. Then we apprehend that this being is not like the existence of an Intelligence, which is neither a body nor subject to death, but is due to a cause, and consequently say that God is eternal, meaning that there is no cause which called Him into being. Then we apprehend that the existence of this Being, which is its essence, is not only sufficient for that Being itself to exist, but many existences emanate from it. It is, however, not like the emanation of heat from the fire or the automatic connection between light and the sun, but it is an emanation which He per-

petually keeps going, giving it a constant flow arranged according to a wise plan, as we shall show. We shall say on account of these arrangements that He is omnipotent, omniscient, and possessed of will. By these attributes we mean to say that He is neither powerless nor ignorant nor distracted or disinterested. When we say He is not powerless, we mean that His existence is sufficient to bring into existence things other than Himself. When we say He is not ignorant, we mean that He apprehends, i.e. lives, for whatever apprehends lives. When we say He is not distracted or disinterested, we mean that all those existing things run along an ordered and planned course, not without supervision and coming into being just by chance, just like anything which a person possessed of will plans with purpose and will. Then we apprehend that there is no other being like this one. When we, therefore, say He is One, we mean thereby to deny any plurality.

Thus it becomes clear that every attribute with which we describe Him is either an attribute of action or has the purport of negating its own absence<sup>5</sup> if our intention thereby is to apprehend His essence rather than His works. These negative terms are also not used absolutely of God, but only in the manner mentioned before, that one denies of a thing something that by the nature of things could not exist in it, as when we say of a wall that it does not see.

You know well, dear reader, that the heaven is a moving body, and that we have measured it in yards and feet and have complete data on the extent of its parts and of most of its movements, and yet our minds are completely unable to apprehend what it is, although we know that it must necessarily possess matter and form, but not matter of the kind that is with us. For this reason we can only describe it by indefinite nouns,<sup>6</sup> not by definite positive terms. We say that the heaven is not light and not heavy, does not suffer action and is therefore not receptive to impressions, it has no taste or smell, and similar negative terms. All this is because we are ignorant of that kind of matter. What will be the position then of our minds when they

5. Read perhaps *salabu şifatin 'adimaha*, the negation of an attribute he does not have.

6. I.e., *nomina infinita*, nouns incorporating a negative.

endeavour to apprehend that which is free from matter, non-composite to the utmost degree, of necessary existence, has no cause and is not attained by anything additional to its perfect essence—the meaning of its perfection being the denial of all shortcomings, as explained before? We can only apprehend that He is; that there exists a Being unlike any other being which He brought into existence, having nothing whatsoever in common with them, who has no plurality in Him, and is not powerless to bring into existence things other than He himself, and that His relation to the world is that of the captain to the ship. This also is not a true relation, and not even remotely resembles the real one, but it serves to guide the mind to the idea that God governs the universe, meaning that He supports it and keeps its order as it should be. This point will be explained in a more concrete manner.

Praise be to Him who is such that when our minds try to visualize His essence, their power of apprehending becomes imbecility; when they study the connection between His works and His will, their knowledge becomes ignorance; and when our tongues desire to declare His greatness by descriptive terms, all eloquence becomes impotence and imbecility.

## Chapter 69

As is commonly known, the philosophers refer to God as the First Cause.<sup>7</sup> Those known as *Mutakallimūn* anxiously avoid this nomenclature, and call Him the Doer. They think it makes a great difference whether we call Him Cause or call Him Doer. Their argument is: if we call Him a cause, there must necessarily be something caused. This leads us to admit that the world is uncreated and necessarily co-existent with God. If we call Him Doer, we need not envisage the co-existence of that which is affected by his doing, because the Doer may exist long before that which he does. What is more, they cannot picture the Doer being a Doer except by assuming that he exists before that which he does.

This argument shows that they do not realize the distinction between that which is potential and that which

is actual. It must be clearly understood that there is no difference between the terms Cause and Doer in this respect. If you call a thing Cause when the act of causation is still a potentiality, it precedes the effect in time. When it is actually a cause its effect necessarily exists by virtue of its existence as a cause in actuality. Similarly, if you call the Doer so when the act of doing is actuality, then the thing done must necessarily co-exist with him. Before the builder builds the house he is not a builder in actuality, only potentially, just as the building materials are only potentially a house before the house is built. As soon as he starts building he becomes a builder in actuality, and the existence of a building becomes a necessary implication. Thus we have gained nothing by substituting the term Doer for the term Cause. What we intend to prove by this discussion is the equivalence of the two terms. We call Him Doer, though His handiwork may not exist, because there is nothing to restrain Him from doing whenever He wishes. We can also call Him Cause in exactly the same sense, although the effect may not exist. The reason why the philosophers do prefer the name Cause over the name Doer must not be sought in their well-known belief that the world is uncreated, but in certain other ideas, which I shall briefly set out here.

In the *Physics* [2.3 and 2.7] it is proved that everything that has a cause is caused by some thing, and that causes fall into four classes: matter, form, maker, and purpose. Some are immediate causes, others indirect, but every one of these four is called cause. They hold the view—which I do not contradict—that God is Maker, Form, and Purpose. They refer to God as Cause in order to imply these three causes, meaning that He is the Maker of the world, its Form, and its Purpose.

In this chapter I intend to demonstrate what we mean by saying of God that He is the Maker, the Form of the world, and at the same time its Purpose. There is no need for you to worry at this stage about the question whether God brought the world into being or whether it is necessarily co-existent with Him, as the Philosophers maintain, because that matter will be discussed at length in a suitable manner. Here we are concerned only with God as efficient cause of the individual acts happening in the world, in the same way as He is the efficient cause of the world as a whole.

7. Both Arabic and Hebrew possess two synonyms for 'cause,' which are often, as here, used side by side.

It is explained in the *Physics* [2.3] that we must in each case seek a further cause to every cause belonging to one of the four kinds just enumerated. To any thing which comes into being one can find these four proximate causes, to these further causes, and to those again further causes, until one arrives at the ultimate causes. Thus something is caused and its efficient cause is such-and-such. This efficient cause in turn has an efficient cause and so on until one comes to a first mover, who is the true efficient cause of all these intervening items. E.g., A is moved by B, B is moved by C, C is moved by D, D is moved by E, and so on *ad infinitum*. But let us stop, for the sake of illustration, at E: there can be no doubt that it is E which moves A, B, C, and D. One would be correct in saying of the motion of A that it is due to E.

It is in this sense that every action in the existing world can be attributed to God, whichever more proximate agency be directly responsible for it. We shall deal with this later in more detail. He therefore is the ultimate cause in so far as He is an efficient cause.

In the same manner we find, when we follow up the natural forms which came into being and cease to exist, that each must necessarily have been preceded by another form which prepared that matter for receiving this form. The earlier form was again preceded by another form, until we come to the ultimate form which is prerequisite to the existence of the intervening forms, which in their turn are the cause of the latest form. That ultimate form in the whole of the existing world is God. It must not be thought that when we say of God that He is the ultimate form of all existing things, we are thereby referring to that Ultimate Form of which Aristotle says in his *Metaphysics* that it neither came into being nor ceased to be [7.8]. The form which is mentioned there is physical, not a separate intellect. When we say of God that He is the ultimate form of the world we do not mean it in the way that the form bound up with matter is the form of that matter, as if God were the form of a physical body. This is not at all what we want to say, but as every existing thing possessing a form is what it is only by virtue of its form, and when that form ceases to exist the thing itself ceases to exist, so, exactly the same as this relation, is the relation of God to all the last principles of the existing world.

By virtue of the existence of the Creator everything exists. God assists its continued existence by means of the function which, for want of a better name, is called<sup>8</sup> emanation, as we shall expound in later chapters of this treatise. If one could imagine the Creator not to exist, then the whole existing world would not exist, and the very essence of the last principles would cease to be, as well as the ultimate effects and all intervening links. It results that God is to the world in the same relation as form to a thing possessing form, whereby it is what it is. Through the form its true character and essence is established. That is the relation of God to the world. From this point of view it can be said that He is the ultimate form, and that He is the form of forms, i.e. that from which the existence and permanence of every form in the world is ultimately derived. The subsistence of forms is due to Him, just as things possessing forms acquire permanence through their forms. Because of this function He is called in our language *hey-ha-olamim*, which means 'Life of the World,' as will be proved later on.

The same considerations apply to final causes, or purposes. If a thing has a purpose, you may seek a purpose for that purpose. Thus one can say, for example, that the material cause of a throne is wood, its effective cause the joiner, its formal cause squareness of a certain type, and its final cause that one should sit on it. Now you may ask what is the final cause or purpose of sitting on the throne, and you will be told: so that he who sits on it is raised above the ground. Then you may go on asking what is the purpose of being raised above the ground. You will then receive the reply: so that he who sits upon it gains in importance in the eye of the beholder. If you then asked further what is the purpose of his gaining importance in the eye of those who see him, you will be informed: so that he may be feared and respected. Ask then what is the purpose of his being feared, and the reply will be: so that his commands will be carried out efficiently. Ask further what is the purpose of his commands being carried out efficiently, and you will be told: so as to prevent men from harming each other. Then you want to know

8. Literally: is called by metonymy, or by a name other than its real name.

what is the purpose of that, and it will be answered: so that they continue in an orderly existence. In this way each purpose requires a further purpose, until the matter ends with the absolute will of God, according to the opinion of some—as will be explained later—so that the last answer would be: thus God wills it. According to another opinion, which will also be explained later, the matter will end with the decree of His wisdom, so that the last answer would be: thus His wisdom decrees. Thus the consistent investigation of every purpose will lead us to His will or His wisdom—according to which opinion we accept. Both of these have proved, according to our system, to be identical with His essence. Neither His will or intention nor His wisdom are things in any way separable from His essence, i.e. different from His essence. God is, therefore, the ultimate purpose of everything. Moreover, the purpose of all things is to resemble as far as possible His perfection, and that is what we mean by His will, i.e. His essence, as will be shown later. For this reason we say of Him that He is the Purpose of Purposes.

I have now made clear why one says of God that He is Maker, Form, and Purpose, and that this is why the Philosophers call Him Cause, and not merely Maker. I must add, however, that one of those *Mutakallimūn* thinkers was foolish and impertinent enough to maintain that, if one assumed the Creator to be non-existent, there would be no logical compulsion to assume also the non-existence of the thing which He had brought into being, namely the world, because there was no need for the work to perish if its maker went out of existence after having made it. This would be quite correct if God were nothing but a Maker, and the thing He made did not require His support for its continued existence. When the joiner dies, the chest he has made does not cease to exist, since he has no influence on its continued existence. Since God, however, is also the form of the world, as we have explained before, and supports its continued existence and permanence, it is absurd to believe that the supporter could disappear and yet the thing he supports continue to exist although it has no existence except by virtue of the support it receives. This is all that need be said concerning the errors of the theory that God is only Maker, and not also Purpose and Form.

## Book II

### Chapter 13

The views of people with regard to the problem whether the world is without beginning or created—having regard only to the opinion of those who believe that a God exists<sup>9</sup>—are of three kinds:

The first view, which is the one held by those who believe in the Law of Moses, is that the whole world—I mean everything that exists, apart from God Himself—was brought into existence by God after having been completely and absolutely devoid of existence. They hold that only God alone existed and nothing beside Him, neither angel nor sphere nor anything that is within the sphere. Then He brought into existence all existing things, as they are, by His will and volition, and not from anything. Time itself, according to them, is one of the things created, since time is consequent upon movement and movement is an accident of that which moves; the thing that moves, and upon the movement of which time is consequent, was created and came into being, not having existed before.

When we say that God *was* before the world was created, where the word ‘was’ implies time; and likewise all the associations in our mind when we think of the infinite duration of His existence before the creation of the world—all this is assumed time or imagined time, not true time. There can be no doubt that time is an accident. In our system it is just one of the created accidents such as blackness and whiteness. It does not belong to the class of qualities, though, but is an inherent accident of movement, as will be clear to anyone who has understood what Aristotle said in explanation of the true nature of time.

We shall here discuss a subject which is not strictly part of the matter with which we are dealing, but has some bearing on it. The analysis of the concept of time has presented difficulties to most thinkers, so much so that they became bewildered as to whether it had any real existence or not, as happened to Galen and others. The reason for this is that it is an accident of an

9. Reading *ilāhan maujūdun*.

accident. Those accidents that have a primary existence in bodies, such as colours and tastes, can be understood without further ado, and their purport can easily be realized. Those accidents, however, that have accidents as their substrate, such as brilliancy in colours and curvedness and roundness in lines, are very hard to grasp. This is especially so when on top of this the substrate accident is not permanently in one state but changes from one state to another. Then the concept becomes even more difficult to grasp. With time the two things come together. It is an accident pursuant to motion, which itself is an accident of the thing that moves. Motion is not like blackness or whiteness which are permanent states, but it is the very nature and essence of motion that it does not persist in one state even for a single moment. This is one of the reasons why the nature of time is so difficult to investigate.

What I want to make clear is that time in our system is a created thing that has come into being like all other accidents as well as the substances which are the substrates of these accidents. Therefore the creation of the world by God cannot have taken place in a temporal beginning, as time itself was one of the things created. You must give very careful consideration to this matter, so as to be ready to deal with the objections which are impossible to avoid for anyone who is not aware of this point. If you admit the possibility of time having existed before the world, you will be led into accepting the belief that the world is uncreated, for time is an accident and must needs have a substrate. Thus something would of necessity have existed before this present world existed. That, however, is just the view from which we try to get away.

This then, is the first view. It is, without any doubt, the one on which the Law of Moses is based. It comes in importance immediately after the dogma of the unity of God—make no mistake about that. It was our father Abraham himself who first proclaimed this view, having arrived at it by speculation. For this reason he would call upon *the name of the Lord the God of the World* [Gen. 21:33],<sup>10</sup> after he had put this view

10. The rendering with 'world' (a meaning which *olam* never has in biblical Hebrew) appears also in Targum and Talmud (Sotah 10b). A.V. (with all versions): 'the everlasting God.'

clearly into words by speaking of *the Maker*<sup>11</sup> of *heaven and earth* [Gen. 14:22].

The second view is the one held by all the philosophers of whom we have heard or which we have read. They say that it is absurd to believe that God should bring forth something from nothing. In their opinion it is also not possible for a thing to pass away into nothing. This means it is not possible for a thing possessing matter and form to come into being after this matter had been completely devoid of existence. To describe God as having the power to accomplish this is in their opinion the same as to describe him as having the power to unite two opposites<sup>12</sup> at the same time, or to create His own equal or to become a body or to create a rectangle with the diagonal equal to its side, and similar impossibilities.

We can deduce from their arguments that they mean: just as there is no lack of power imputed to God in the fact that God does not create impossibilities—because the impossible has a permanent character which is not produced by anyone and can therefore not be changed—so there is no lack of power imputed to God if He is not thought to be able to bring forth something from nothing, since this belongs to the category of impossibilities. They therefore hold that there is some matter in existence, having no beginning just as God has no beginning, that God does not exist without it, nor it without God. They do not hold that its existence is of the same rank as the existence of God, but they think Him to be the cause of its existence. It would be to Him in the relation of, say, the clay to the potter or the iron to the ironworker. This is the matter from which He creates whatever He wills, forming it one time into heaven and earth and another time into something else. Those who follow this opinion believe that the heaven, too, has come into being and is liable to perish, but that it did not come into being from nothing and will not perish into nothing. As the individual living beings come into being and perish out of existing matter and into existing matter, so the heaven comes into being and perishes, and its coming into being and ceasing to be takes place in the same way as that of other existing things.

11. A.V. 'possessor.'

12. Tibbon adds: in one object.

The people of this class are divided into various sects, the number and opinions of which it would be useless to mention in this treatise. The general and fundamental tenet of this sect, however, is as I have described it to you. It is also the belief of Plato. We find that Aristotle reports of him in the *Physics* [8.1. 251a17] that he, Plato, believed that the heaven had come into being and was liable to perish. You can find this opinion clearly expressed in the *Timaeus* [38 b–c]. However, Plato did not hold the same belief as we (Jews), as some people think who cannot analyse opinions and do not think precisely, and therefore imagine that our view is the same as his. This is not so. We believe that the heaven came into being, not out of another thing, but out of absolute non-existence. He believes it to have been brought into existence<sup>13</sup> and being out of another thing. This, then, is the second view.

The third view is that of Aristotle, of his followers and commentators. He says the same as the followers of the sect just mentioned, namely that a thing composed of matter can never be brought forth out of no matter. He goes beyond this, however, and says that the heaven does not fall under the laws of generation and corruption in any way. To put his view briefly, he claims that this universe as a whole, such as it is, never ceased and never will cease to be as it is. The one permanent thing which is not subject to generation and corruption, namely heaven, will always be so. Time and motion are eternal and continuous, having neither come into being nor being liable to cease. Things that come into being and perish, namely those beneath the lunar sphere, will not cease to be so. That means that primary matter essentially neither comes into being nor perishes, but the forms follow each other in it: it divests itself of one form and clothes itself in another. This whole order both in the higher and the lower regions cannot be upset or stopped, or any innovation made in it other than those implied in its own nature, nor does anything ever happen within it that is in any way contrary to the laws of nature. He also says—though not in so many words, but it can be

deduced from his opinions—that he considers it impossible that God should in any way change His will or exercise any fresh volition. True, all this universe as it is was brought into being by God's will, but not made out of non-existence. Just as it is impossible that God should cease to be or that His essence should change, so he thinks it impossible that He should change His will or exercise any new volition. The conclusion is thus forced upon us that this universe, just as it is now, has been so forever and will be so in the most distant future.

This is a brief but adequate presentation of the various views.<sup>14</sup> They are the views of those who accept the existence of God in this world as proven. Others know nothing of the existence of God, but pretend that things come into being and perish by purely accidental aggregation and separation, and that there is no one to guide and arrange their existence. Such are, according to Alexander, Epicurus and his school, among others. There is no point for us in expounding the views of those sects since the existence of God is definitely proven, and it is useless to discuss the views of people who base themselves on a proposition the opposite of which is evident. It is also useless for us to undertake an investigation into the truth of the views of the second school of thought, who believe heaven to be created but transitory, since they accept the idea of something uncreated. In our opinion there is no difference between one who holds that heaven must necessarily have originated out of something else, or will perish and pass into something else, and the belief of Aristotle that it neither came into being nor is liable to perish. The aim of everyone who follows the Law of Moses and Abraham, or any similar outlook, is to believe that there is nothing whatsoever uncreated and co-existent with God, and that the production of existent things from non-existence on the part of God is not impossible, but—according to some thinkers—even necessary. Now that we have established the various views I shall proceed to explain and summarize the arguments of Aristotle for his view and the reasons that led him to it.

13. Reading *mūjada*. Other reading: to have existed (potentially).

14. Other reading: an account of those views and their essential meaning.

## Chapter 16

In this chapter I shall explain what my own view on this problem is, leaving for later the arguments for what I am trying to prove. I should like to add that I am not satisfied with the arguments that have been produced by those *Mutakallimūn* who claim to have proved that the world was created. I do not deceive myself by calling sophistic arguments proofs. If a man claims to have produced proof regarding some problem by means of sophistic arguments, this does not strengthen my faith in that thesis, but weakens it and provokes opposition to it, because when the inadequacy of the arguments becomes apparent, one's mind becomes unwilling to admit the truth of the statement for which these arguments are adduced. It would in such a case have been better had the matter for which no proof is available remained open, or had one of the two contradictory opinions concerning it been accepted by dint of tradition. I have expounded the methods the *Mutakallimūn* employ to establish that the world is created, and have pointed out the weak spots in their arguments. Similarly I consider all the arguments of Aristotle and his school for the eternity of the world not as decisive proofs, but as assertions open to grave doubts, as you will learn later on.

What I want to say is that there is no inherent improbability in the belief that the world was created, which belief I have shown to be the intent of our Law. All the philosophical arguments from which it appears that the matter is otherwise—as we have mentioned—can be shown to be invalid and without convincing force. Once this point is conceded to me, and thus the problem whether the world is created or not is completely open, I accept the traditional solution of it as it is given by prophecy. Prophecy provides an answer to problems which speculation is unable to solve. We shall later show that prophecy need not be rejected even according to the view of those who believe in an uncreated world.

When I have demonstrated the possibility of our proposed view, I shall proceed to show its superiority over other views by speculative argument, too—I mean the superiority of the view that the world is created over the view that it is eternal—and shall demonstrate that though we may not get rid of some discomfort in

admitting that it is created, we experience much greater discomfort in admitting that it is eternal. I shall now proceed to develop the methods by which the arguments of all those who argue for the eternity of the world can be invalidated.

## Chapter 25

It should be clearly understood that our reason for rejecting the eternity of the world is not to be sought in any text of the Torah which says that the world is created. The passages which indicate that the world is created are no more numerous than those that indicate that God is a body. The method of allegorical interpretation is no less possible or permissible in the matter of the world being created than in any other. We would have been able to explain it allegorically just as we did when we denied corporeality. Perhaps it would have been even much easier. We would in any case not have lacked the capacity to explain those texts allegorically and establish the eternity of the world just as we explained those other texts allegorically and denied that God was a body. If we have not done this and do not believe in it, this is for two reasons: one is that it is conclusively proved that God is not a body. We must of necessity explain allegorically all those passages the literal sense of which is contradicted by evidential proof, so that we are conscious that they must be allegorically interpreted. The eternity of the world is not conclusively proved. It is therefore wrong to reject the texts and interpret them allegorically because of preference for a view the opposite of which might be shown to be preferable for a variety of reasons. This is one reason; the other is that our belief that God is not a body does not destroy in our eyes any of the ordinances of our Law or belie the statements of any prophet. There is nothing contrary to Scripture in it, except that the ignorant think it is. As we have explained, there is no contradiction, but this is the real intention of the text. If, on the other hand, we believed in the eternity of the world according to the principles laid down by Aristotle—that the world exists by necessity, that the nature of no thing ever changes and that nothing ever deviates from its customary behaviour—this would destroy the Law from its very foundation and belie automatically every miracle, and make void

all hopes and fears the Law seeks to inspire, unless, of course, one chooses to interpret the miracles as well allegorically, as did the *Batiniyya* sect among the Moslems. In this way we would end up in some kind of idle prattling.

Again if we believe in the eternity of the world according to the second theory we have expounded, that of Plato, namely, that the heavens themselves are transitory, such a view would not upset the ordinances of the Law, nor would its consequence be the belying of miracles, which, on the contrary, would be possible. The various passages could be interpreted in accordance with it. One might even discover many equivocal passages in the text of the Torah and elsewhere with which it could be connected and which might even be considered to argue for it. However, there is no cogent incentive for us to do so unless that theory were proved. Since it is not proved, we shall neither allow ourselves to be beguiled by this theory nor pay the slightest attention to that other theory, but shall take the texts in their literal meaning. We say, therefore, that the Law intimates to us a thing which we have no power fully to apprehend. The miracles bear witness that our claim is true.

It must be clearly understood that once we believe in the world being created, all miracles become possible and the Law itself becomes possible, and any question that might be asked in this connection is automatically void, even such questions as the following: why did God accord a revelation to this one and none to others? Why did God prescribe this Law to a certain nation and not to others? Why did He give the Law at the time He gave it and not before or after? Why did He ordain these positive and those negative commandments? Why did He distinguish any particular prophet by those miracles that are mentioned, and no others took place? What did God intend by this act of lawgiving, and why did He not implant these commandments and prohibitions in our nature, if that was His purpose? To all these questions answer can be made by saying: thus He wanted, or: thus His wisdom decreed it. Just as He brought the world into existence when He willed and in this form, without our being able to analyse His will in this connection or the principles by which His wisdom selected these particular forms or that time, so we do not know His will or the

motives of His wisdom in determining all the things concerning which we have just asked. If one says that the world necessarily had to be as it is, all these questions must be asked, and cannot be disposed of except by reprehensible replies which both contradict, and make nonsense of, the literal sense of all those Scriptural passages concerning which no sensible person can doubt that they are to be taken in their literal sense.

This, then, is our reason for recoiling from that theory. This is why people of worth have spent their lives, and others will go on spending their lives, in speculating on this problem. For if it were proved that the world is created—even in the manner this is stated by Plato—all the objections of the philosophers to us would fall to the ground. If, on the other hand, they would succeed in providing a proof for its eternity according to Aristotle's view, the Law in its entirety would fall to the ground and other manners of thinking would take its place, for I have made clear to you that the whole of it hangs on this one point. Give it, therefore, your most earnest consideration.

## Chapter 32

The opinions of men about prophecy are like their opinions about the eternity—or otherwise—of the world. I mean to say, just as those who acknowledge the existence of God hold three different opinions on the eternity or otherwise of the world, as we have explained, so there exist three different views about prophecy. I shall not detain myself with the view of Epicurus, for he does not believe in the existence of God, leave alone the existence of prophecy. I only intend to mention the views of those who believe in God.

The first view is that of the ignorant mass,<sup>15</sup> as far as they believe in prophecy. Some of the common people of our own faith also believe in this view, which is that God chooses any man He wants, turns him into a prophet and sends him forth. It does not make any difference in their opinion whether that person is a learned man or an ignoramus, old or young. They make it, however, a prerequisite that he should also

15. Or: heathen; perhaps: barbarians (Plessner)

possess a certain degree of goodness and righteousness of character, for so far people have never said yet that God might make a prophet out of a wicked man, unless He first makes him good, in accordance with this view.

The second view is that of the philosophers. It says that prophecy is a kind of perfection in human nature. This perfection cannot be attained by a person except after training which brings the potential faculties of the species into actuality; that is if there is no temperamental obstacle to this or some external reason to prevent it. It is in this respect like every other perfection which can exist in any species. Such a perfection will not actually be found in its full extent in every individual of that species, but inevitably and necessarily only in some individuals. If that perfection is such as to require an agent to bring it out, such an agent must first be there.

According to this view it is impossible for an ignorant person to become a prophet. Also a man cannot go to bed as an ordinary person and wake up as prophet, as if he had found something, but the process takes place in the following way. If a man is virtuous and perfect in both his logical and moral qualities, if his imaginative faculty is as perfect as can be, and he undertakes the preparation of which you will hear, he must necessarily become a prophet, since that perfection is natural to us. According to this view it is not possible that a man should be fit for prophecy and prepare himself for it and yet not become a prophet, any more than that a healthy man should eat wholesome food without it forming sound blood, or similar cases.

The third view is that of our faith, in fact a principle of our religion. This is exactly the same as the philosophical view, except in one respect: we believe that a person who is fit for prophecy and has prepared himself for it may yet not become a prophet. That depends on the divine will, and is in my opinion like all other miracles and runs according to their pattern. The natural thing is that everyone who is fit by reason of his natural disposition and trained by reason of his education should become a prophet. One who is prevented from it is like one who is prevented from moving his hand like Jeroboam [1 Kings 13:4] or from using his sight, like the army of the king of Syria when he wanted to get at Elisha [2 Kings 6:18]. That our

dogma demands by necessity proper preparation and perfection in moral and logical qualities, is proved by the saying 'prophecy only dwells upon him who is wise, strong, and rich' (Shabbath 92a).<sup>16</sup> We have explained this in our commentary on the Mishnah and in our greater work (*Mishneh Torah*, Yesode Hatorah vii), where we stated that the 'sons of the prophets' were those constantly occupied with such preparation. That he who has prepared himself may sometimes not become a prophet is proved by the story of Baruch ben Neriah. He was a disciple of Jeremiah, and the latter trained him, taught him, and prepared him, and he ardently desired to become a prophet, but he was not allowed to become one, as he says: *I have laboured in my sighing and I find no rest* [Jer. 45:3]. Through Jeremiah the answer was given to him: *thus shalt thou say unto him, the Lord saith thus, etc. And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not* [Jer. 4:5]. It is indeed possible to say that this was a declaration that prophecy was too great for Baruch. It might also be said, with reference to the verse: *her prophets also find no vision from the Lord* [Lam. 2:9], that this was by reason of their being in exile, as we shall explain later. However, we find many passages, both in the Bible and in the words of the Sages, all of which consistently support this view: that God makes prophet whomever He wants and whenever He wants, but only a wholly perfect and virtuous person. As for an ignorant vulgar person, it is in our opinion utterly impossible that God should make him a prophet, any more than it would be possible that He would make a prophet out of an ass or a frog.

This, then, is our dogma: nothing can be done without training and perfection. It is this which provides the possibility of which divine power can take advantage. Do not be misled by the passage: *Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee* [Jer. 1:5]. This applies to every prophet, who requires some natural preparedness in his essential natural disposition, as will be shown later. As to the phrase: *I am a child* [Jer. 1:6], you know that the Hebrew language calls

16. In the Talmud: 'the divine presence . . . .' (Cf. also Nedarim 38a.)

Joseph a child at a time when he was thirty years old<sup>17</sup> and calls Joshua a child at a time when he was nearly sixty; cf. the verse, referring to the story of the golden calf: *but his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a child, departed not out of the tabernacle* [Ex. 33:11]. Moses was at the time eighty-one and lived to 120. Joshua lived for fourteen years after his death and reached the age of 110. This proves that Joshua was at the time at least fifty-seven years old, and yet He called him a child.

Neither should you allow yourself to be misguided by the phrase in the Divine Promises: *I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy* [Joel 3:1]. The verse itself explains in what that prophecy was to consist, by saying *your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions*. Everyone who gives information on divine secrets, be it by clairvoyance or guesswork, or by true dreams, is also called a prophet. This is why the prophets of Baal and Asherah can be called prophets. Compare also the passage: *If there arise among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams* [Deut. 13:2]. In the events before Mount Sinai, where all of them witnessed the mighty fire and heard the terrible and frightening voices in a miraculous manner, the rank of prophecy was only attained by those who were fit for it, and that in different degrees, as is proved by the verse: *Come up unto the Lord, thou and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel* [Ex. 24:1]. Moses himself was in the highest rank, for it is said: *And Moses alone shall come near the Lord, but they shall not come nigh* [Ex. 24:2]. Aaron was beneath him, Nadab and Abihu beneath Aaron, and the seventy elders beneath Nadab and Abihu, while the rest of the people were inferior to them in proportion to their degrees of perfection. The Sages express this by saying: 'Moses had a partition to himself and Aaron had a partition to himself' (Mechilta on Exodus 19:24).

### Chapter 36

It must be understood that the true character of prophecy is that of an emanation flowing from God by

17. Gen. 41:12. According to the Rabbis, Joseph was eighteen years old when in Potiphar's house and spent twelve years in prison.

means of the Active Intelligence first upon the rational faculty and thence upon the imaginative faculty. This is the highest rank attainable by man and the utmost degree of perfection which can be found in his species. That state is the highest degree of perfection of the imaginative faculty. Such a process can by no means take place in every man. It cannot be achieved by perfection in the speculative sciences or by improvement of character to the highest possible pitch of goodness and nobility, unless there is added to these the perfection of the imaginative faculty in the very core of one's natural disposition to the highest possible degree.

You are aware, of course, that the perfection of these physical faculties, to which the imaginative faculty belongs, is consequent upon the organ which carries that faculty having the best possible constitution and proportions and the purest substance possible. In such matters as these it is impossible to make up for any deficiencies or faults by any kind of physical training. When the constitutional disposition of an organ is bad, then the most one can hope of any regime designed to cure it is to preserve it in a healthy state, not to restore it to its most perfect state. If its defect is due to its proportions or its position or its substance—I mean the substance of the matter that makes it up—there is no cure for it.

You know all this, and there is no need to explain it at length. You are also, no doubt, acquainted with the activities of the imaginative faculty, such as retaining and combining the impressions of the senses (the sensibilia), and its natural propensity to imitation, as well as the fact that its greatest and noblest activity takes place just when the senses are at rest and do not function. Then some kind of emanation flows upon it, according to its preparation; this is the cause of true dreams, and at the same time the cause of prophecy. The difference is only one of degree, not of kind. You probably know the dictum of the Sages which implies this similarity: 'dream is one sixtieth of prophecy' (Berakhoth 57b). No proportion could have thus been expressed between things different in kind. It would hardly make sense to say: the perfection of man is so many times that of a horse. The same thought is repeated in Bereshith Rabba (xvii, 5), where we find: 'the windfall of prophecy is dream.' This is an excellent comparison. The windfall is just the same as the

fruit except that it has fallen off unripe and before its proper time. In the same way the activity of the imaginative faculty in the state of slumber is just the same as in the state of prophecy, except that it is incomplete and does not reach the final stage.

But why are we telling you about the sayings of the Rabbis and neglect the verse of the Torah: *If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known to him in a vision and speak to him in a dream* [Num. 12:6]? Here God informs us of the true nature of prophecy. He tells us that it is an accomplishment that comes in a dream or a vision. The word *vision* (*mar'eh*) is derived from *videre* (*ra'ah*) 'to see.' It means that the action of the imaginative faculty becomes so perfect that you can see a thing as if it were outside you, and that the thing which is produced by it appears as if it had come to it by way of external sensation. In these two classes, vision and dream, are all the stages of prophecy, as we shall explain later.

It is well known that the matter with which a man is intensely occupied in his waking time and while in full possession of his senses and in which he is interested and to which he is drawn, will be the one on which the imaginative faculty will act during sleep, when the [Active] Intelligence emanates upon it according to its preparedness. It would be superfluous to give instances of this or talk about it at length, since it is an obvious thing which everyone knows. It is practically the same as the perception of the senses, about which no man of sound intellect holds any divergent opinion.

Having made these introductory remarks, I want you to imagine a human individual, the substance of whose brain by its essential natural disposition is perfectly balanced as regards purity of matter, the mixture proper to each part, proportion, and position, and who is not hampered by any defects of mixture in any other organ. Let such a man study and be educated until his potential abilities become realized in actuality and he attains a perfectly accomplished human reason, as well as a pure and balanced human character, and all his desires are concentrated upon seeking the knowledge of the secrets of this universe and the understanding of its causes. His thoughts are constantly directed towards noble subjects and his chief interest is the knowledge of God and the understanding of His

actions, and what beliefs he should hold about them. He has given up all thought and desire for the animal things, I mean the enjoyment of eating, drinking, and carnal intercourse, and with them the sense of touch, which Aristotle discusses in the *Ethics* [3.10] and of which he says that it is something for us to be ashamed of. How well said, and how true that it is a disgrace! We possess it in so far as we are mere animals, like the beasts. There is nothing in it of the concept of humanity. In the other sensual pleasures, such as smell, hearing, and sight, though they are physical, man can occasionally experience an enjoyment in so far as he is a human being, as Aristotle shows.

Our discussion has led us into things which do not belong, strictly speaking, to our subject. It requires them, though, since most of the thoughts of the outstanding men of learning are concerned with the pleasures of that sense [of touch] and they long for them. At the same time they wonder how it is that they do not prophesy, since after all prophecy is something natural.

It is also required of such a person that his thought of, and desire for, sham ambitions should have ceased. I mean by that the search for power or honour among the vulgar crowd and courting their respect and partisanship for the sheer lust of it. He must regard all men according to their circumstances. Seen from this point of view they are either like cattle or like wild beasts of prey, about whom the perfect and unworldly person only thinks, if he thinks of them at all, either to escape harm from them, if he happens to have any commerce with them, or else to get some benefit from them if he needs this for some of his purposes. If a person is of that type, there is little doubt that when his imaginative faculty, being of the utmost perfection, is active, and inspiration flows upon it from the Intellect, according to its speculative accomplishments, he will perceive nothing but very wonderful metaphysical matters, and will see nothing but God and His angels. He will not become aware of, or obtain any knowledge of, any matters but such as are true opinions or general rules of conduct for beneficial relations among men.

We have thus enumerated three points: the perfection of the rational faculty through education, perfection of the imaginative faculty through natural

disposition, and perfection of character through stopping to think of all corporeal pleasures and dispelling one's desire for foolish and wicked honours. It is obvious that perfect individuals will differ greatly with regard to these three. According to the differences in each of these three matters will be the different degrees of all prophets. You know that every faculty of the body sometimes is blunted and weakened and disturbed, and at other times is sound. This imaginative faculty is certainly a faculty of the body. For this reason you find that the prophecy of prophets stops in times of grief or anger and the like. You are no doubt acquainted with the saying: 'Prophecy does not dwell upon a person either in sadness or in indolence' (Shabbath 30b), and with the fact that no revelation came to our father Jacob throughout the period of his grief because his imaginative faculty was occupied with the loss of Joseph (Pirque R. Eliezer 38). You also know that Moses did not receive revelations as he used to from after the affair with the spies until the whole generation of the wilderness had gone (Taanith 30b, Pesachin 69b), because he suffered so deeply from their violent allegations<sup>18</sup>—and this in spite of the fact that the imaginative faculty played no role in his prophecy, but the flow of inspiration from the Intellect took place without its mediation. We have mentioned repeatedly that he did not prophesy in metaphors like other prophets. In the same way you will find that other prophets prophesied for a while and then prophecy was taken from them, as it could not continue owing to some incident that interfered with it. This was no doubt the immediate essential cause for the cessation of prophecy during the exile. What 'sadness' or 'indolence' can be worse for a man in any situation than being a slave subjected to wicked idolaters who combined the lack of true reason with full possession of all bestial lusts, *while there is no might in thy hand* [Deut. 28:32]. This is exactly what we were foretold. This is what he meant by saying: *they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it* [Amos 8:12], and *her king and her princes are among the gentiles, the instruction of the law is no more, her prophets also find no vision from the Lord* [Lam. 2:9].

18. Or: from their enormous sin.

This is quite true and the reason for it is obvious: the instrument had become impaired. For this reason, too, prophecy will come back to us in its normal form in the days of the Messiah—may He reveal Himself speedily!—as we have been promised

### Chapter 37

It is worth taking some trouble to get quite clear about the exact manner in which we are subject to this divine emanation<sup>19</sup> which reaches us and by which we achieve reason and our minds are differentiated. A person may obtain some of it, just enough to make him accomplished, but no more. The quantity that reaches another person may be big enough to overflow after having made him accomplished, so as to work for the accomplishment of others. It is with this as with all things in the world: some are so perfect as to guide others, and others get just enough perfection to be guided by others,<sup>20</sup> as we have explained before.

After these introductory remarks, it must be understood that there are several possibilities: the stream of emanation from the Intellect may flow only upon the rational faculty, without anything flowing from it upon the imaginative faculty. The reason for this may be either because the quantity of the flow is too small or because of some defect in the natural disposition of the imaginative faculty, so that it cannot receive the emanation of the Intellect. Such people form the class of scholars of a speculative bent. The inspiration may flow upon both faculties, the rational and the imaginative, as I and other philosophers have explained, and the imaginative faculty be of the utmost natural perfection. That is the class of prophets. The emanation may also flow only upon the imaginative faculty, the defect of the rational faculty being due either to its natural disposition or to lack of training. That class comprises administrators of states, lawgivers, soothsayers, augurs, and prophetic dreamers, as well as those that perform wonders by strange tricks and secret skills, although they are not possessed of any real knowledge. All these belong to this third class.

19. For Maimonides' opinion of the term, see p. 370.

20. Other reading: to guide himself, but not others.

Here it is necessary to insist upon the fact that some men of that third-named class have, on occasion, experienced wonderful imaginations and dreams and trances in a waking state, which resemble the prophetic vision so much that they themselves think that they are prophets. They are so impressed by what they perceive in those imaginations that they think they have obtained wisdom without study. They put forward horribly confused ideas on important speculative matters, and mix up in the most astonishing way true ideas and illusions. All this is due to the power of their imagination and weakness of their reason, in which nothing ever happens, I mean, which never becomes actual.

There are, of course, in each of these three classes great differences of degree. Both the two first classes are, as we have explained, divisible into two groups, because the emanation that reaches each class may either be of a quantity sufficient to make that man alone accomplished or be more than is needed for his personal perfection so that he can use it to perfect others. In the first class, the scholars, the emanation flowing upon the rational faculty may be sufficient to make that person able to investigate and understand, to know and to discern, without his making any move to teach others or to write; for he feels no desire for it nor is he able to do it. On the other hand the flow may be so powerful as to force him to write or teach.

The same applies to the second class. Some may receive just enough revelation so as to perfect themselves, and no more, others so much that they feel an urge to preach to people and teach them and to pass on to them some of their own perfection. You will see that but for that excess of perfection the sciences would not have been laid down in books, nor would any prophets have preached to men the knowledge of truth.

No scholar ever would write a book for himself in order to teach himself what he knows already. The nature of that Intellect is such that it flows continually and overflows from one recipient of the emanation to another successively, until it reaches an individual from whom the flow cannot pass on to another, but is just sufficient to effect his perfection.

The nature of this situation compels him who has received such an excessive quantity of emanation to preach to men, willy-nilly, whether they accept his

teaching or not, and even if he suffers bodily harm. This goes so far that we find some prophets preached until they were killed, because that divine inspiration moved them and did not allow them to stop or tarry, though they were greatly afflicted. For this reason we find Jeremiah admitting openly that because of the contempt he suffered from those evildoers and unbelievers of his own time, he would have been glad to hide his prophecy<sup>21</sup> and not to preach to them the truth which they rejected; but he was unable to do so. He says: *because the word of the Lord is made a reproach unto me and a derision, all the day. Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But there was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I weary myself to hold it in, but cannot* [Jer. 20:8–9]. This is the meaning of the other prophet's saying: *the Lord God hath spoken; who can but prophesy?* [Amos 3:8]. Keep this well in mind.

#### Chapter 38

It must be fully realized that there is necessarily in every human being some aggressive faculty. But for it, he would not be moved in his mind to repel that which harms him. I hold that this faculty takes the same place among psychological forces as the power of repulsion among natural forces. The force of this aggressive faculty varies like that of other faculties. You may find some man who will attack a lion and another who will run away from a mouse, one who will attack an army and fight them, and another who will tremble and fear when a woman shouts at him. There certainly must be some temperamental disposition rooted in one's nature, which can be increased by methods designed to make actual that which is potential and by a certain mental attitude. Similarly it can be diminished by lack of occasion and by a different mental attitude. You can observe the differences in degree of this faculty in boys right from their childhood.

In the same way this faculty of divination is found in all human beings, only in different degrees. It works in particular in matters in which a man is intensely interested and round which his mind turns, so much so that you may feel in your own mind that a certain per-

21. Other reading: to put a stop to his prophesying.

son has done or said a certain thing in a certain affair, and it really turns out to be so. You will find some people possessing a very powerful and sure gift of surmise and divination, so strong that they hardly ever imagine a thing to take place but that it takes place wholly or partly as they imagined it. There are many causes for such an event, dependent on a variety of circumstances before, after, and during the event, but owing to these powers of divination the brain reviews all these premises and draws conclusions from them in the shortest possible time so that it might be thought to have been done in no time. By means of this faculty some men can give warning of important impending events.

These two faculties, the aggressive and the divinator, must of course be very strong in prophets. When the Intellect inspires them, these two faculties become very much intensified until they produce the well-known results: a single man with his stick approaches a powerful king in order to free a people from slavery; and this man is neither frightened nor apprehensive, because he has been told: *I will be with thee* [Ex. 3:12]. They possess this quality, too, in different degrees, but all must have it, as was said to Jeremiah: *Be not afraid of them . . . be not dismayed of them . . . for behold I have made thee this day a fortified city* [Jer. 1:8, 17, 18], and to Ezekiel: *be not afraid of them, nor of their words* [Ezek. 2:6]. Thus you will find all of them to be men of a strongly aggressive spirit and endowed with ample gifts of divination so that they can tell of impending events in the shortest possible time. In this respect, too, they differed, as you are no doubt aware.

It must be fully understood that true prophets without any doubt attain to speculative perceptions of such a kind that no man by mere speculation could have perceived the causes that necessarily led to that conclusion. Similarly they announce events that no man could have foretold by mere common surmise and intuition. The reason is that same emanation, which flows upon the imaginative faculty until it perfects the latter to such an extent that it functions so as to foretell future events, and perceives them as if they were events perceived by the senses and had reached the imaginative faculty through the senses—that same emanation also perfects the functions of the rational faculty so that it functions in such a way as to know

things as they truly are, and obtains that perception as if it had deduced them from speculative premises. This is the truth which everyone believes who wishes to be just, for each of these things bears out the correctness of all the others.

It stands to reason that all this applies especially to the rational faculty. After all, this faculty is the one which is the recipient of the emanation from the Active Intelligence and which is brought into actuality by it, and only from the rational faculty does the emanation pass on to the imaginative faculty. How then can it be explained that the perfection of the imaginative faculty reaches such a pitch that it apprehends things that have not been communicated to it through the senses, if the rational faculty were not to gain similar advantages in being able to apprehend things it could not have apprehended through reflection and logical deduction from premises? This is the true meaning of prophecy, and those the features which distinguish prophetic teaching.

#### Chapter 39

Having thus spoken of the nature of prophecy, and having discovered its true character and made clear at the same time that the prophethood of our teacher Moses was different from that of all others, let us state that this conclusion in itself is sufficient ground for proclaiming the validity of the Law.<sup>22</sup> Nothing like the mission of Moses to us ever took place in any society known to us from Adam until Moses, nor has any similar mission ever been accorded after him to any of our prophets. It is, indeed, the foundation of our Law that no other will ever take place. Therefore, according to our opinion, there never was nor ever will be more than one Law, namely that of Moses.

The evidence for this, as put down in the Bible and later writings is that none of the prophets that preceded Moses, such as the patriarchs, Sem, Eber, Noah, Methuselah, and Enoch, ever said to a group of people: 'God sent me to you and commanded me to tell you this and that; He forbids you to do thus and thus and commands you to do thus and thus.' Neither the text

22. Or: that his perception was sufficient to cause him to proclaim the Law.

of the Torah nor any reliable tradition ever said such a thing. What happened is that these men received revelations from God in the way we have explained before, and those whose share of the divine emanation was strong, like Abraham, gathered people around them and preached to them by way of instruction and communication of the truth they had apprehended. Thus Abraham would instruct people and explain to them with speculative proofs that there was one God in the world, who had created all other things, and it was not right to worship images, or any created thing. He would enjoin people to keep to this and would attract them by well-chosen words and kindness; but he never said: 'God has sent me to you and has enjoined on me certain positive and negative commandments.' Indeed when he was commanded to circumcise himself, his sons, and those attached to him, he did circumcise them, but did not call upon people in general to do so, after the manner of prophetic preaching. This can be seen from the very words of Scripture: *For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment* [Gen. 18:19]. From this it is obvious that he did so only by way of moral persuasion. The same applies to Isaac, Jacob, Levi, Kohath, and Amram, who were preaching to people in this manner. The Sages say of the prophets who preceded him: 'the law court of Eber, the law court of Methuselah, the homiletic teaching of Methuselah.'<sup>23</sup> All of these — may peace be upon them — were prophets who taught people in the manner of instructors, teachers, and moral guides, not by saying: 'God said to me, speak to the sons of so-and-so.'

This was the state of affairs before Moses. As for Moses himself, you well know what was said to him, what he said, and that all the congregation said of him: *we have seen this day that God doth talk with man, and he liveth* [Deut. 5:24<sup>24</sup>]. To come to the prophets that arose after Moses, you are aware of all their stories as told, and know that their position was that of warners to the people, whom they called to the Law of Moses. They threatened those that turned away from it and

made promises to those that were steadfast in observing it. We further believe that this will always be so, as it is said: *It is not in heaven that thou shouldst say, Who shall go up for us to heaven and bring it unto us*, etc. [Deut. 30:12], and *those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children for ever* [Deut. 29:29<sup>25</sup>].

This is just as it ought to be. If a thing is as perfect as it can possibly be within its own species, then anything existing within that species cannot but fall short of that degree of perfection, either by excess or deficiency. For instance, if a thing possesses the most perfectly balanced mixture possible within that species, then every mixture deviating from this perfect balance will have either too much or too little. This is the case with this Law, in view of its perfect balance which is clearly stated in the words *equitable laws and statutes* [Deut. 4:8]. You know, of course, that equitable (*tzaddiq*) is the same as well-balanced. It consists of acts of worship not implying any burden or exaggeration, such as monasticism<sup>26</sup> or itinerant dervish life and the like, nor a lack of religious duties which leads to gluttony or indulgence and ultimately to a decline of man from his moral and intellectual perfection, as happened with the religions of the nations of antiquity.<sup>27</sup> When we shall, later in this treatise, discuss the reasons for the laws, you will obtain a sufficient idea of its equability and wisdom. This is why it is said of it: *the statutes of the Lord are perfect* [Ps. 19:8].

Only this Law do we call a divine law. The other systems of political constitution, such as the laws of the Greeks and the puerilities of the Sabians and others, are all the work of human planners, not of prophets, as I have repeatedly explained.

#### Chapter 40

It has, I think, been made perfectly clear that man is by nature sociable. His nature is to live in a community; he is not in this respect like other animals, for whom life in a community is not a necessity. This is due to the high degree of compositeness in this species. As you know, man is the most composite being, and

23. Cf. Bereshith Rabba xliii.

24. In Heb. 21.

25. In Heb. 28.

26. Other reading: as that of the Brahmins.

27. Other reading: of the heathen.

therefore there are great differences between human individuals. You will hardly ever find two persons alike in any class of moral characteristics any more than you will find them alike in their external appearance. The reason for this is the difference of mixture. Both the substances and the accidents pursuant to the form differ. Every natural form is associated with certain accidents peculiar to it and pursuant to it, which are distinct from the accidents pursuant to the substance. Nothing like this immense range of individual differences is to be found in any species of animal. The differences between the individuals of any species of living beings are small, except in man. You will find that any two of us are so different as if they were of different species in every feature of character. The harshness of one person may reach such a limit that he will kill his youngest son in anger, while another feels sorry for killing a gnat or other insect and becomes depressed over it. The same applies to most other features.

Seeing that the nature of man brings with it such enormous differences between individuals and at the same time requires life in society, it would be impossible for any society to come about except through a leader who co-ordinates their actions, supplements what is imperfect and restrains exaggeration, and lays down standards for their activities and behaviour so that they can always act according to the same standard. Thus the natural differences will be masked by the large degree of conventional co-ordination, and the community will be well-ordered. For this reason I say that the Law, though it is not part of nature, yet is closely interwoven with nature. It is part of the wisdom of God in maintaining this human species—since He willed its existence—that He made it part of their nature that some individuals possess the faculty of leadership.

To some of these leaders the content of their mission is directly communicated. These are the prophet and the lawgiver. Others have power only to enforce in practice what the former two have laid down,<sup>28</sup> to follow it up and to bring it into actuality. They are the ruler who adopts the laws and the pretender to prophethood who adopts the religious law of the prophet, either in its entirety or in part. He may choose

the latter course either because it is easier for him, or in order to make people believe that these things came to him in a revelation and that he is not a mere follower of someone else. They do this out of jealousy, for there are men who are attracted by certain accomplishments and experience a desire and longing for them; they wish people to imagine that they possess that accomplishment, though they themselves know that they have nothing of it. For instance, you often find people claiming other people's poems or plagiarising them. The same happens in some scientific publications and with many details of various sciences when an envious and lazy person gets hold of a new idea of someone else's and claims that he thought of it first.

The same thing happens also with the accomplishment of prophecy. We find that some people claimed prophethood and said things which had never been revealed by God at all, such as Zedekiah, the son of Chenaanah.<sup>29</sup> Others, we find, claimed prophethood and said things which God most certainly had said—I mean to say, these things had been revealed, but not to them, as in the case of Hananiah, the son of Azzur<sup>30</sup>—and they appropriated them and used them for their own aggrandisement.

All these things are obvious and easy to distinguish. I am only explaining them to remove any doubts in your mind and to provide you with a standard by which you can differentiate between systems of law based on human agreement, those based on divine Law, and lastly those promulgated by men who have taken some prophetic utterances, and by way of plagiarism claim them as their own. In those cases where the originators of laws have clearly stated that they had made them up from their own minds, no further arguments are needed in face of this admission by the party itself, which dispenses with all need for evidence. What I want to discuss are those systems of law concerning which it is claimed that they are of prophetic origin. Of these some are prophetic, i.e. divine, others are human laws (*nomoi*), others again stolen. You may find that the whole purpose of a system of law and the

28. Other reading: what the prophet has proclaimed.

29. I Kings 22:11.

30. Jer. 28.

intention of its administrator who directs its functions, is solely to order the affairs of the state and to free it from injustice and dissension, but there is in it no striving for speculative accomplishments or any attention to the development of the rational faculty. Such a system does not care about people's opinions, be they true or faulty, but its only aim is to regulate the relations of people amongst each other, in some way or other, and to provide for them some imaginary<sup>31</sup> happiness according to the views of that administrator. You will, of course, realize that that law is of human origin, and that its originator is, as we have shown, of the third class, namely of those perfected only in their imaginative faculty.

Then you may find another system of law, all of whose ordinances have regard to the proper management of physical matters as described above, but also to the establishment of proper beliefs, and which makes it its business to implant true ideas about God and the angels in the first instance, and which aims to make man wise, knowledgeable, and mentally active, so that he obtains a true idea of the whole universe. You will know that this ordinance is from God and this law is divine.

It remains for you to discover whether the alleged originator is that accomplished person to whom it was revealed or an individual who merely appropriated those ideas and pretended they were his own. The method for examining this is to investigate the character of that person, to follow up his actions, and to study his life. Your most important indication is the rejection and contempt of bodily pleasures, for that is the first stage of achievement of scholars, how much more so of prophets. This applies specially to the senses, which, as Aristotle says, are shameful for us, and more particularly to the filth of sexual intercourse. This is why God used just this to disgrace all pretenders, so that truth might become known to those who seek it and they might be neither deceived nor misled. Just consider how Zedekiah, the son of Maa-seiah, and Ahab, the son of Kolaiah, claimed prophecy and men followed them when they uttered revelations which had been received by others. Then they be-

came involved in vile sexual lust, so that they committed adultery with wives of their colleagues and followers, until God brought their crimes to light as He had disgraced others before them, and the king of Babylon had them burned, as Jeremiah says: *And of them shall be taken up a curse by all the captivity of Judah which are in Babylon, saying, The Lord make thee like Zedekiah and like Ahab whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire; Because they have committed villainy in Israel, and have committed adultery with their neighbours' wives, and have spoken words in my name falsely, which I have not commanded them; even I know and I am a witness, saith the Lord [Jer. 29:22–33].* Get this point quite clear.

### Book III

#### Chapter 27

Two things are the purpose of the entire Law: the welfare of the soul and the welfare of the body. The welfare of the soul is achieved through communicating to the mass of the people correct beliefs within their intellectual grasp. Some of these have to be imparted by explicit statements, others by parables, since on the whole the nature of the multitude is not so as to allow them to grasp those things as they are. The welfare of the body is achieved by setting aright the way they live together. This purpose is attained by two things. One of them is to remove injustice from their midst. This means that no man is permitted to do what he wants and has power to do, but is constrained to do only such things as are for the common benefit. The second means is to train every individual in socially useful habits so that the affairs of the state run smoothly.

You will appreciate that without any doubt one of these two purposes is the nobler, namely the achievement of welfare of the soul by imparting correct beliefs, while the other precedes it both in the order of nature and of time, I mean the welfare of the body, which is the administration of the state and the happy arrangement of the conditions of its inhabitants as far as this is in our power. This second aim is the more urgent; in the exposition of this subject and its details much effort has been expended, since the first purpose cannot be achieved before the second is attained. For

31. This word is missing in some manuscripts.

it is proved that man can achieve perfection in two respects, firstly in his body and secondly in his soul. The first concerns his being as healthy and fit in his body as possible. This cannot be unless he finds his needs whenever he requires them, namely food and other requisites of his body, such as shelter, baths, etc. However, no man can succeed in this alone, but every individual can only achieve all this by combining into a state. As is well known, man is social by nature.

The second form of perfection is attained when he becomes actually rational, i.e. acquires an intellect in actuality, by knowing of all existing things everything man has the power to know in accordance with his ultimate state of perfection. It is obvious that this ultimate perfection does not carry with it any actions or moral qualities, but consists in opinions alone to which one has been led by speculation and compelled by investigation. It is also obvious that this glorious ultimate perfection cannot be attained unless the first form of perfection has been achieved. Man is unable to conceive clearly an idea, even if it is explained to him, leave alone arrive at this idea through his own efforts, when he is affected by pain, violent hunger, thirst, heat, or violent cold. Only after attaining the first form of perfection is it possible to achieve the ultimate perfection, which is doubtlessly the nobler one and is alone the cause of everlasting life.

The true law, which, as we have explained, is the only and unique one, namely the Law of Moses, has been given so as to bestow upon us the two kinds of perfection together. It provides for the improvement of human relationships by removing injustice and in-

culcating good and generous habits, so that the community will last without any disturbance of its order, and thus every member of it attain to his first stage of perfection. At the same time it ordains for the improvement of men's beliefs and the instilling of correct opinions by which man can attain to ultimate perfection. The Torah expressly mentions these two stages of perfection and informs us that the aim of the entire Law is to attain these: *And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, that it might be well with us at all times, and that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day* [Deut. 6:24]. In this passage the ultimate perfection is mentioned first, in keeping with its importance, since we have explained that it is the ultimate purpose. It is contained in the words 'that it might be well with us at all times.' You know well what the Rabbis have said in discussing the verse: *that it may be well with thee and that thou mayest prolong thy days* [Deut. 22:7]; 'That it may be well with thee—for a world which is wholly good, and that thou mayest prolong thy days—for a world which is eternally extended' (Qiddushin 39b, Yalqut I, 930). Similarly the intention of 'that it may be well with us at all times' here is the attainment of the world that is wholly good and eternally extended, i.e. everlasting life, while the words 'that he might preserve us alive as it is at this day' refer to the first, corporeal existence which lasts only a certain time, and which does not achieve its perfect order except in society, as we have shown.

[ . . . . ]

# Levi ben Gershom (Gersonides), 1288–1344

When, in the thirteenth century, the setting of Jewish philosophy shifted from Muslim to Christian lands, knowledge of Arabic declined among Jews, and Hebrew became the language of their philosophical works. The translation of a large portion of the philosophical literature composed by Jews and Muslims during the earlier period was one of the first products of the changed linguistic situation. The new translations stimulated philosophical speculations among Jews and, for some three hundred years, Jewish philosophers wrote commentaries on earlier works and summaries of them as well as independent treatises and books.

The intellectual climate of the period was determined by the Hebrew translations of Maimonides' *The Guide of the Perplexed* and of a large number of Ibn Rushd's commentaries on Aristotle's works. The tenor of philosophical speculations was an Averroean kind of Aristotelianism (Aristotle, after all, was the Philosopher and Ibn Rushd his Commentator), but it was by no means monolithic. Commentators and independent authors weighed and evaluated their predecessors' views, accepting only those that they considered philosophically sound. The positions that developed ranged from that of naturalistic Aristotelians who accepted the eternity of the universe, the collective immortality of mankind, and the identity of divine providence and the necessary laws of nature to that of harmonists who, accepting the teachings of the Torah in more literal fashion, believed in creation, individual immortality, and the role of God's will in providence.

Of the post-Maimonidean Aristotelians, Levi ben Gerson (Gershom), also known as Gersonides, was

the most important. A man of wide intellectual interests, Gersonides presented his philosophical views in still unpublished supercommentaries on Ibn Rushd's works, in biblical commentaries, and in his major work, *The Wars of the Lord (Milhamot Adonai)*. Addressing advanced students trained in mathematics, physics, and metaphysics, Gersonides wrote his work to "wage the Lord's war against the false opinions found among [his] predecessors" and to present the opinions he considered correct. Demonstrating independence of mind, he did not hesitate to criticize Maimonides, whom he treated with respect, just as he did not hesitate to take issue with Ibn Rushd when he considered him wrong. Thus, for example, he differed from Ibn Rushd in defending individual human immortality and from Maimonides in holding that the creation of the world can be demonstrated by philosophical proofs.

In his *Wars* Gersonides employs what has been called the scholastic method, that is, he shows the technical rigor and attention to detail that is often associated with the late medievals. In his exposition he reviews significant opinions of predecessors, offers arguments in their support, refutes those arguments he considers false, and concludes with his own opinions and their supporting arguments. Throughout the work he takes care to show that his conclusions are identical or, at least, compatible with the views of the Torah.

Agreeing with the Aristotelians that the acquisition of the intellectual virtues is the final goal of human life, Gersonides states that it is the purpose of his work "to investigate very precious and obscure questions on which depend the great fundamental principles

which bring man to scientific [intellectual] happiness.” Foregoing the synoptic presentation of his views, Gersonides addresses six topics concerning which his predecessors had erred or concerning which their exposition had been inadequate: (1) immortality of the soul (intellect), (2) prediction of the future in dreams, divination, and prophecy, (3) divine knowledge of particulars, (4) divine providence, (5) celestial bodies, their movers, the arrangement of these movers, and their relation to God, and (6) creation. One book of the *Wars* is devoted to each of these topics. The fifth book contains a long, as yet unpublished, astronomical section. It should be noted that while Gersonides draws primarily upon the Jewish and Islamic philosophical traditions, there is evidence that he had some acquaintance with Christian scholastic thought. Since it appears that he did not know Latin, he must have received his information through personal contacts with Christian scholars.

Levi ben Gershom (Gersonides), known in Latin as Magister Leo de Baneolis, Leo de Bagnolo, Magister Leo Hebraeus, was born in 1288 and died in 1344. He was active in the Provençal towns of Bagnol (possibly his place of birth), Orange, and, for a short time, in Avignon, but little else is known about his life. A prolific author, Gersonides demonstrated his knowledge of the Bible in commentaries on many of its books, chief among them his commentaries on the Pentateuch and on the book of Job. His commentaries became standard parts of the Jewish exegetical literature, and their importance may be gathered from the facts that the commentary on the Pentateuch was one of the first printed Hebrew books (Mantua, before 1480) and that his biblical commentaries were printed many times. Unlike some Jewish philosophers, he was well versed in rabbinic learning as is attested by a no longer extant commentary on the Talmudic treatise *Berakhot* and two extant responsa. Three liturgical poems by him are also extant.

Gersonides' supercommentaries on Ibn Rushd's works have already been mentioned and they cover Ibn Rushd's commentaries on Aristotle's logical, physical, psychological, and metaphysical writings as well as some of Ibn Rushd's *quaestiones*. In *The Book of the Correct Syllogism (Sefer ha-Heḳḳesh ha-Yashar)*, Gersonides undertakes to correct errors in Aristotle's ac-

count of the syllogism in the *Prior Analytics*. A Latin translation of the work is extant in manuscript, and some of Gersonides' other logical writings appear, in Latin translation, in some of the sixteenth-century editions of Aristotle's works.

Gersonides' scientific contributions were largely in mathematics, particularly astronomy. In the already mentioned first part of Book V of the *Wars* and in other works he wrote on arithmetic and geometry as contained in Euclid's *Elements*, on trigonometry, and on astronomic theories of Ptolemy and al-Bitrūjī of which he was critical. He invented an astronomical instrument known as "Jacob's Staff," and he composed astronomical tables based on his own observations. For Phillip of Vitry, bishop of Meaux, he wrote, in 1343, a treatise on harmonic numbers. Some of Gersonides' scientific writings were translated into Latin.

Taken from the third book of *The Wars of the Lord*, the selection that follows is devoted to God's knowledge. For Gersonides the basic question was: can God know contingent particulars and, if He can, what kind of knowledge of them does He possess? Gersonides is critical of the views of Aristotle and his followers and of Maimonides, and arrives at an intermediate position of his own.

The Aristotelians, notes Gersonides, are divided into two groups: (1) those who deny that God knows contingent particulars both according to their essence and according to their particularity, and (2) those who, while denying that God knows them according to their particularity, affirm that He can know them according to their essence. God, the second group holds, knows contingent particulars according to their eternal and immutable essences as well as according to the unchanging order of the universe and the necessary laws of nature.

Maimonides, by contrast, affirmed that God's perfection requires that He know particulars not only according to their essence, but according to their particularity as well. However, since God's knowledge is eternal and immutable, He knows them simultaneously and from eternity. God, then, has knowledge of future contingents and knows them before they exist. To the question "how is God's foreknowledge compatible with the existence of contingency and, especially, freedom of human choice?" Maimonides

answers that since God's knowledge is unlike ours, God can foreknow without changing the nature of contingency or human choice.

Holding that God's knowledge is totally different from that of man, Maimonides (*The Guide of the Perplexed*, III, 20) lists five characteristics that distinguish God's knowledge from ours: (1) God is one, yet can know things belonging to various species, (2) He can know something that is non-existent, (3) He can know something infinite, (4) His knowledge is unchanging even with regard to things existing in time, and (5) His knowledge does not require that one of two possibilities must necessarily come to be. In his critique (for part of it, see below, pages 391/395) Gersonides takes issue with all these points.

According to Gersonides' own view, God knows contingent particulars in one respect but is ignorant of them in another. Since knowledge, correctly speaking, can only be of immutable essences and the unchangeable laws of nature, Gersonides agrees with the Aristotelians that God can know them only in that way—in his terminology, God knows them insofar as they are ordered and determinate. But at the same time, God knows that they are contingent, though He does not know which of the possibilities will come to

be. God's ignorance of the particularity of contingent things is no defect in God, for not to know what is unknowable, is not a defect. Gersonides' view makes for a rather strong defense of the freedom of the human will.

As part of his discussion of God's knowledge, Gersonides inquires how the term 'knowledge' is predicated of God and man. Maimonides had maintained that the unlikeness of God and man requires that the term is predicated according to complete equivocation and must signify by way of negation (see above, pages 367–369). Against this view, Gersonides argues that, in spite of differences between God and man, there must be some similarity in the two usages of the term. 'Knowledge,' he holds, is predicated according to priority and posteriority, that is, God possesses knowledge in a more perfect way than man. For a similar critique of Maimonides by Thomas Aquinas, see below, pages 473–474.

In the selection the term 'sages of the Torah' refers to those philosophers, especially Maimonides, who interpreted the Torah philosophically. The phrases "May He be blessed" (applied to God) and "of blessed memory" have been omitted from the translation by the editor.

## 32. The Wars of the Lord

### Book III The Nature of Divine Knowledge

#### Chapter I. The Views of Our Predecessors Concerning This Question

It is appropriate to examine whether or not God knows particular, contingent things in the sublunar world, and if He does know them [there is still the question], how He knows them. Since the philosophers and the sages of our Torah have differed with respect to this problem, it is proper that we first examine their views. Whatever truth we find in them we shall accept, and in whatever falsity we find we shall indicate the truth that is to be found in refuting it.

There are two main views on this topic among the ancients that are worthy of discussion: (1) the views of Aristotle and his followers, and (2) the views of the great sages of the Torah. Aristotle maintained that God does not know particular things in the sublunar world.<sup>1</sup> Those who followed him are divided into two camps on this question, the first group maintaining that Aristotle believed that God has no knowledge of these things in the sublunar world, either universals or particulars, for if He were to know either universals or particulars, there would be multiplicity in His knowledge and hence in His essence. In short, His essence would be divided into a more perfect part and a less perfect part. This is similar to the case of things with definitions; some part of the definition is the perfection of the other part of the definition.<sup>2</sup> The second camp holds that Aristotle's view is that God knows the things in the sublunar world with respect to their gen-

eral natures, i.e., their essences, but not insofar as they are particulars, i.e., contingents. Nor is there any multiplicity in His essence on this view, since He knows only Himself and in this knowledge He knows all things with respect to their general natures. For He is the principle of law, order, and regularity in the universe. But God [according to this view] does not know particulars; hence there is no order to them by virtue of [His not knowing them as particulars], although they do exhibit some order and regularity insofar as God knows them [i.e., their general natures]. It shall be demonstrated (with God's help) in Book V of this treatise that this is the authentic view of Aristotle.

However, the great sages of our Torah, such as the outstanding philosopher Maimonides and others of our Torah who have followed him, maintain that God does know all particular and contingent things insofar as they are particular. Indeed, they believe that in one piece of knowledge He knows all these things, which in fact are infinite. This is indeed the view of Maimonides, who in Chapter 20 of Book III of his great book *The Guide of the Perplexed* says the following: "Similarly we say that the various things that occur are known to Him before they take place and that He doesn't cease knowing them. Hence, no new knowledge accrues to Him at all. For example, He knows that a particular person is now nonexistent but will exist at some later date, and will continue to exist for some time and then will be nonexistent. Now when this person actually does exist according to [God's prior] knowledge of him, there is no addition to His knowledge and no new piece of information has arisen which was not already known to Him. But something has in fact taken place that previously was known would take place and exactly in the same way [as He knew it would]. This belief implies that [God's] knowledge refers to the nonexistent and encompasses the infinite. We accept this belief. And we say that the nonexistent things, the bringing forth of which pre-exists in His knowledge and falls within His power to bring about, can be objects of God's knowledge." It is clear from this that Maimonides maintains that God

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From Levi ben Gershom (Gersonides), *The Wars of the Lord*, vol. 2, tr. Seymour Feldman (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1987). Reprinted by permission of The Jewish Publication Society of America.

1. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 12.9.

2. In the definition of 'man' as "rational animal," rationality completes, or perfects, the generic property animality.

knows particular, contingent things insofar as they are particular.

#### Chapter 2. The Arguments in Favor of These Views, as We Have Found Them Explicitly or Implicitly in The Statements of Their Proponents

After having mentioned these opinions on this question, let us now examine them to see which is the true one. It will be necessary to examine the arguments in behalf of these views as well as those that purport to refute them.

Aristotle's thesis that God does not know particulars has been thought to be quite plausible. First, a particular is not apprehended except by means of a corporeal faculty, for example, the senses or the imagination. But it is obvious that God has no corporeal powers. Hence, God does not know these particulars. The following syllogism can be constructed: God has no corporeal powers; anything that apprehends a particular possesses a corporeal power; hence, God cannot apprehend particulars.

Second, a particular is a temporal phenomenon, i.e., its existence is in some portion of time. But someone who cannot be described as in motion or at rest cannot apprehend temporal phenomena. Now God cannot be described as in motion or at rest; hence He cannot apprehend particulars. The following syllogism can be constructed: God cannot be described as in motion or at rest; anyone who cannot be described as in motion or at rest cannot apprehend temporal phenomena; hence God cannot apprehend temporal phenomena. To this conclusion we add a self-evident premise, namely, that particulars are temporal phenomena. From this it follows that God cannot apprehend particulars. . . .

Sixth, if it were alleged that God knows things that are generated, the following dilemma ensues: either He knows them *before* they occur, or He knows them only *simultaneously* with their occurrence, not beforehand. Now, if we assume that He knows them before their occurrence, His knowledge would refer to nonbeing. But this is absurd, for knowledge is necessarily [the cognition] of an existent, apprehended thing. Moreover, this divine foreknowledge of generated things implies the following dilemma. If He knows

generated things as genuine contingents, then His knowledge that one of these contingencies is to occur is compatible with the occurrence of the alternative. If, on the other hand, He knows precisely *which* of the two alternative states of affairs will occur, its alternative will not be genuinely possible. Now, if we assume that God has knowledge of these events as genuine contingencies [the first horn of this dilemma], His foreknowledge of them would change when they actually occurred, for prior to their occurrence they could or could not have happened, but after their occurrence this possibility is removed. And since the intellect is constituted by what it knows, God would be continually changing—but this is utterly absurd. If, on the other hand, God knows *precisely* which of these contingencies will occur [the second horn of this dilemma], it follows that there is no genuine contingency at all; hence everything would be necessary. But this, too, is absurd and repugnant. It is clear, then, that it is false to say that God has knowledge of these generated events before they occur. But if we say that He has knowledge of them simultaneously with their occurrence [the second horn of the original dilemma], new knowledge would continually arise in Him. And since the intellect is constituted by what it knows, the divine essence would be continually changing, which is utterly impossible.

Seventh, if God has knowledge of these particulars, the following three alternatives ensue: (1) God guides and orders them in a good and perfect manner; or (2) He is incapable of ordering them and has no power over them; or (3) He has the power to order them properly but He neglects and forgets them either because they are despicable, lowly, and trivial in His eyes or because He is jealous. Now the latter two of these three alternatives are obviously false. It is evident that God can do whatever He pleases and that He does not refrain from giving perfection to each existing thing as much as possible. This is clearly and marvelously exhibited by the wisdom evident in the creation of animals and in the great power God has in bringing about the greatest possible perfection in them, so that it is impossible for them to be any more perfect than they are. Hence, only the first of these alternatives remains, i.e., God orders these particulars in a perfect and complete way if He knows them at all. But this is contrary

to what we in fact observe of these particulars. They frequently exhibit evil and disorder, so that many evils befall the righteous and many favorable things befall the sinners. Indeed, this is the strongest argument in the eyes of those who deny divine knowledge of particulars. It seems that it was this argument that led Aristotle to say that God does not know particulars. This is evident from what he says in the *Metaphysics*.<sup>3</sup> [In sum,] these are the arguments that we have been able to extract from the words of the philosophers, explicitly or implicitly, in support of the thesis that God does not know particulars. . . .

Nevertheless, the view of our sages of the Torah that God does know particulars also has arguments in its favor. First, since it is admitted by all who philosophize that God is the most perfect being, it is improper to attribute to Him the defect of ignorance, i.e., that He does not know *some* thing; for ignorance is one of the greatest defects. Someone who chooses to attribute to Him ignorance of particulars rather than to ascribe to Him the inability to arrange these particulars in an orderly manner escapes from one evil and falls into something worse. For it could be the case that the recipient cannot receive more perfection than it actually does, and this is not a defect with respect to God.

Second, it is not proper to ascribe to the agent who produces something ignorance of his product. Rather, his knowledge of the product is more perfect than that possessed by someone else. For he knows through one cognition everything that will derive from the produced thing by virtue of the disposition [i.e., structure] according to which he made it. Someone else, however, acquires his knowledge of it from the product, and when he observes that the object exhibits some new property resulting from the nature with which it has been endowed, he acquires new knowledge of that new property. And so new properties of a thing give rise to successive cognitions in the observer, and it is possible that the observer will never obtain complete knowledge of the properties that accrue to this object, [especially] if the properties are quite numerous. Thus, since God is the creator of the whole world, He has a complete knowledge of what shall happen to that

which He has made, a knowledge that cannot be compared to our knowledge. For He knows in one cognition everything that will happen with respect to the world according to the nature with which He has endowed it; whereas we know these things only as they occur. Hence, it is not proper to compare our knowledge and His knowledge, saying that if God were to have this knowledge, He would have many cognitions, and hence His essence would be subject to plurality. What we know by many cognitions is known to God in one cognition, as we have seen. Indeed, God knows through one cognition [many things of] these particulars, of which we can have knowledge [only] by means of a plurality of cognitions. For our knowledge does not encompass the many things that are generated in the world according to the nature with which God has endowed the world.

These two arguments are given by Maimonides in Book III of his celebrated book *The Guide of the Perplexed* in behalf of the claim that God knows all these particulars.<sup>4</sup> It is clear that the second argument, in addition to proving that God knows all the things that happen, refutes some of the arguments of the philosophers against the view that God knows particulars. On the other hand, some of the philosophers have countered the first argument in behalf of divine knowledge of all particulars by saying that the denial of this claim does not entail any defect in God. For not every privation is a defect; it is a defect only when the thing is able to have the characteristic in question, not when it cannot. For example, motion is a perfection of animate creatures; when we deny motion of God, however, it is not a defect in Him but a perfection. Similarly, they say that in claiming that God does not know particulars, no imperfection in Him results, only perfection; for His knowledge concerns superior things, not these trivial matters. And so Aristotle says in Book 12 of the *Metaphysics* that it is better not to see some things than to see them.

Maimonides countered all those difficulties that have been believed to entail the rejection of divine knowledge of particulars by means of his dictum that it is not appropriate to compare divine cognition with

3. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 12.9–10.

4. Maimonides, *Guide*, III, 20–21.

human cognition. For to the extent that His being is greater than ours, so, too, is His knowledge greater than ours. And this is a necessary truth, since His knowledge is identical with Himself, as the philosophers have explained. Accordingly, Maimonides frequently rebukes the philosophers for comparing divine knowledge with human knowledge and inferring therefrom that God does not know particulars. They themselves have shown us in some sense that when applied to both God and men, the term “knowledge” is equivocal. And it is obvious that with respect to things having equivocal predicates, inferences from one to the other cannot be made. By means of this argument, Maimonides claimed that it is not impossible, despite the arguments of the philosophers, for God to know all particulars. And when it has been shown that there is no impossibility in this supposition, it is clearly proper then to ascribe this power to Him in order to remove the defect of ignorance from Him.

According to Maimonides, there are five factors by virtue of which God’s knowledge differs from our knowledge, i.e., each one of these factors that is present in divine cognition cannot obtain in human cognition. I shall explain this in discussing these five factors. . . .

The second of these factors that differentiate divine cognition from human cognition is, according to Maimonides, that divine knowledge refers to things that are nonexistent. It should be realized that Maimonides had to introduce this difference between divine and human cognition because he had already assumed that God knows *all* particulars and hence knows those that are now nonexistent and will exist at some other time and those that will not exist at another time. Accordingly, His knowledge of this event that is nonexistent now is actually present, whereas the object of knowledge to which this knowledge refers is nonexistent. This kind of cognition cannot be at all attributed to our cognition, for, since the object of knowledge and the act of knowledge are numerically one, when the object is not present the knowledge of it is necessarily lacking. Hence, in our cognition, if there is an actual cognitive act, the object of cognition to which it refers must also be present. . . .

### Chapter 3. A Critical Examination of the Adequacy of the Arguments Advanced by the “Master of the *Guide*” [i.e., Maimonides] on This Topic

It is proper that we determine whether Maimonides’ efforts to counter all the possible arguments of the philosophers who differ from him are successful before we examine whether or not these arguments are correct and, if they are correct, whether [or not] they entail what the philosophers concluded from them. For if Maimonides’ replies to these arguments are adequate, there will be no need for us to examine them by means of another method.

We claim that the first thing to do is to examine whether the term “knowledge” is equivocal with respect to divine and human knowledge, such that the difference between them is as Maimonides thought—i.e., that divine knowledge is the opposite of our knowledge, so that what we consider to be opinion, error, or confusion is knowledge with respect to God—or whether the equivocation involved here is such that this difference cannot be such [as Maimonides claimed]. It seems to us that Maimonides’ position on this question of divine cognition is not implied by any philosophical principles; indeed, reason denies this view, as I will show. It seems rather that theological considerations have forced him to this view. The question of whether the Torah requires this doctrine will be considered after our philosophical analysis of this problem.

That philosophical argument rules out Maimonides’ position on this topic will be demonstrated as follows. It would seem that God’s knowledge is equivocal with respect to our knowledge in the sense of prior and posterior predication, that is, the term “knowledge” is predicated of God *primarily* and of others *secondarily*. For in God knowledge is identical with His essence, whereas in anyone else knowledge is the effect of God’s knowledge. In such a case the term is applied to God in a prior sense and to other things in a posterior sense. The same is true with respect to such terms as “exists,” “one,” “essence,” and the like, i.e., they are predicated of God primarily and of other things secondarily. For His existence, unity, and

essence belong to Him essentially, whereas the existence, unity, and essence of every [other] existent thing emanate from Him. Now when something is of this kind, the predicate applies to it in a prior sense, whereas the predicate applies in a posterior sense to the other things that are called by it insofar as they are given this property directly by the substance that has the property in the prior sense. All of this is obvious to the reader of this treatise, and it will be discussed in detail in Book V. Hence, it seems that the difference between divine and human cognition is a difference in terms of greater perfection, for this is what is implied by prior and posterior predication. Now if what we have said is true, and since it is obvious that the most perfect knowledge is more true with respect to specificity and determinateness, it would follow that God's knowledge is more true with respect to specificity and determinateness. Hence, it cannot be that what is considered knowledge with respect to God can be called "belief," "error," or "confusion" with respect to man.

We can show in another way that the difference between divine and human cognition is not as Maimonides thought. It is evident that we proceed to affirm attributes of God from that with which we are familiar. That is, we say that God knows because of the knowledge found in us. For example, since we apprehend that the knowledge belonging to our intellect is a perfection of our intellect—without which it could not be an intellect in act [i.e., perfect]—we predicate of God that He knows by virtue of the fact, which we have demonstrated concerning Him, that God is indubitably an intellect in act. It is self-evident that when a predicate is affirmed of some object because it is true of some other thing, it is not predicated of both things in an absolutely equivocal sense, for between things that are absolutely equivocal there is no analogy. For example, just as it would be impossible to infer that man is intelligent from the fact that body is a continuous magnitude, so, too, would it be impossible [even] if we were to posit [arbitrarily] a term that is predicable of both [attributes] *intelligent* and *continuous* in an absolutely equivocal sense. Hence, it is clear that the term "knowledge" is not completely equivocal when applied to God and man. Since this term cannot be applied univocally with respect to God and

man, it must be predicated in the sense of priority and posteriority. The same holds for other attributes that are predicated of both God and man. Thus, the difference between divine and human knowledge is one of greater perfection, albeit exceedingly so, and this type of knowledge is more precise and clear. In general, the kind of equivocation with respect to divine and human knowledge is analogous to the equivocation involved in the attribute of essence in God and in the acquired intellect among men, since the knowledge and the knower are numerically identical (as has been previously explained). And just as God's essence is more perfect than the essence of the acquired intellect in us, so, too, is His knowledge [more perfect] than our knowledge. . . .

Indeed, it can be verified that the attributes of God are predicated of Him primarily but of other things secondarily, even though it be conceded that there is no similarity between God and His creatures. There are several predicates that are predicated of some things primarily and others secondarily in this way [i.e., even though these things are not similar]. For example, the term "existent" is predicated of a substance primarily but secondarily of accidents, as has been shown in the *Metaphysics*; yet it is evident that there is no similarity between substance and its accidents.<sup>5</sup> It is important to realize that there are attributes that *must* be attributed to God, for example, that He is a substance. The term "substance," however, is not predicated of God and other beings univocally but [of God] primarily and [of everything else] secondarily. For, that which makes all things describable by some attribute in such a way that they are [truly] describable by that attribute—[namely], by virtue of what these things have acquired essentially and primarily [i.e., directly] from it—is itself more appropriately called by that term. Now God makes all other things in such a way that they are substances, for He endows them with their substantiality; accordingly, He is more appropriately describable as "substance." Moreover, the divine substance is self-subsistent, whereas all other substances

5. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 4.2, 1003b, 6–9; 7.1, 1028a, 10–30.

derive their existence from something else, and whatever is self-subsistent is more appropriately described as “substance” than something whose existence derives from another thing. . . .

On the basis of this entire discussion, it is now evident that reason shows that the term “knowledge” is predicated of God primarily and of creatures secondarily, not absolutely equivocally, and that the principles [of religious language] adopted by Maimonides in order to remove the objections of the philosophers concerning the problem of divine knowledge are not acceptable.

Chapter 4. The Completion of Our  
Theory of Divine Knowledge,  
Philosophically Demonstrated;  
Refutation of the Opposing Arguments

. . . . Now, when we consider these arguments that have been brought forth in favor of divine knowledge of particulars and the arguments adduced by the philosophers against this thesis, there is no alternative but to say that God knows particulars in one respect but does not know them in another respect. But what these respects are, would that I knew!

It has been previously shown that these particulars are ordered and determined in one sense, yet contingent in another sense.<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, it is evident that the sense in which God knows these particulars is the sense in which they are ordered and determined, as is the case with the Agent Intellect, according to the results previously established. For from this aspect it is possible to have knowledge of them. On the other hand, the sense in which God does not know particulars is the sense in which they are not ordered, i.e., the sense in which they are contingent. For in the latter sense knowledge of them is not possible. However, God does know from this aspect that these events may not occur because of the choice, which He has given man to compensate for the deficiencies in the supervision coming from the heavenly bodies, as has been explained in Book II. But He does not know which of the contradictory outcomes will be realized insofar as they are [genuinely] contingent affairs; for if He did,

there would not be any contingency at all. [Nevertheless,] the fact that God does not have the knowledge of which possible outcome will be realized does not imply any defect in God. For perfect knowledge of something is the knowledge of what that thing is in reality; when the thing is not apprehended as it is, this is error, not knowledge. Hence, God knows these things in the best manner possible, for He knows them insofar as they are ordered in a determinate and certain way, and He knows in addition that these events are contingent, insofar as they fall within the domain of human choice, [and as such knows them] truly as contingent. Thus, God, by means of the Prophets, commands men who are about to suffer evil fortune that they mend their ways so that they will avert this punishment, as in the case of King Zedekiah who was commanded to make peace with the King of Babylon. Now this indicates that what God knows of future events is known by Him as not necessarily occurring; however, He knows these events in the sense that they are part of the general order and also as possibly not occurring insofar as they are contingent. . . .

Nor do Maimonides’ arguments establish the claim that God knows more than what we have maintained and that He knows *all* particulars. His first argument maintains that God knows sublunar phenomena, for otherwise He would be ignorant. It is clear [however] that if God knows these things in the way we have claimed, there is no ignorance in Him; indeed, He knows them just as they are [i.e., as contingent]. Concerning his second argument [i.e., the analogy with the artisan], we pointed out, while we were discussing this argument, that God’s knowledge of particulars is the knowledge of their intelligible order from which they emanate, and no more; and this is what we have maintained here concerning this topic.

Having established this point, we shall now show that none of the aforementioned arguments of the philosophers against divine knowledge of particulars is valid against our own theory.

The first of these arguments of the philosophers—since God has no corporeal powers, He has no knowledge of particulars—does not prove that God has no knowledge of the intelligible order inherent in them and in terms of which they are ordered and determi-

6. Bk. 2, Ch. 2.

nate. This argument implies only that He does not know them as particulars in their very individuality. This is evident. Similarly, the second argument—God has no knowledge of particulars because they are temporal phenomena—does not refute our theory. For we have not claimed that His knowledge encompasses their temporal aspects; rather we have claimed that it is concerned with the intelligible order in terms of which these particulars are ordered, and from this aspect they are not temporally specified. . . .

The sixth argument maintains that God cannot know generated events [i.e., particular events], for if He did, He would know them either *before* their occurrence or only simultaneously with their occurrence. If He knows them before their occurrence, His knowledge would refer to nonexistents. Moreover, if this is indeed the case, either He knows them as they really are, i.e., as contingents, and then it is still possible that the opposite of what He predicted will occur; or He knows definitely which alternative of two contradictory states of affairs will occur, such that the other alternative is not possible. If we say that He knows them as genuine contingents, His foreknowledge of these events would be subject to change when the event in question has occurred; for prior to its occurrence the event could or could not have occurred, whereas after its occurrence this possibility has disappeared. And since the intellect is constituted by its knowledge, God's essence would be continually subject to change, which is absurd. On the other hand, if we say that He knows definitely which of two contradictory events will occur, no contingency would exist. Finally, if we say that God knows particulars only as they occur, His knowledge would always be generated and His essence subject to change. Since all of these suppositions are absurd, it follows that God does not know particulars at all.

Nevertheless, this argument does not invalidate our version of the thesis that God knows particulars. In saying that God knows particulars insofar as they are ordered and that He knows them as contingent insofar as human choice is involved, we are not subject to any of the above-mentioned absurdities. [In the first place], His knowledge does not refer to nonexistents, since we maintain that His knowledge of particulars is grounded in the intelligible order pertaining to them

as it is present in His mind, but not in these particulars themselves. [In the second place], it does not follow that His knowledge is subject to change when any of these events has occurred, for we have not claimed that His knowledge is based upon any of these events; rather, it is grounded in their intelligible order in His mind. And this order is eternally in His mind and never changes. [In the third place], it does not follow from our hypothesis that there is no contingency [merely because] we maintain that God has foreknowledge of which of two contradictory events will occur. According to our theory God knows that a particular event *should* occur given the ordering of phenomena [in the intelligible order of things], but not that it *must absolutely* occur; for God recognizes that by virtue of human choice this event might not occur, and this is the sense in which these things are contingent.

The seventh argument claims that if God had knowledge of particulars, He would have arranged them equitably and perfectly. However, this is contrary to what we observe of these things, since they exhibit much injustice and disorder. This argument will be refuted when we show that the order obtaining among contingent affairs and the contingency exhibited in them manifest the best order and perfection possible. We have already demonstrated this in our commentary on Job and we shall, with God's help, prove it in Book IV of this treatise.

## Chapter 5. The Advantages of Our Theory

One of the evident advantages of our theory of divine knowledge of particulars is that none of the absurdities that ensue from Maimonides' account of divine knowledge is applicable to it, i.e., the difficulties deriving from the five features that allegedly differentiate divine knowledge from human knowledge. . . .

The second feature—i.e., divine knowledge refers to the nonexistent—does not follow from our account of this kind of knowledge. For we have claimed that God's knowledge of particulars as ordered is based upon the intelligible order pertaining to them which is eternally inherent in His intellect and is not based upon these contingent things. For God does not acquire His knowledge from them; rather they acquire

their existence from His knowledge of them, since their existence is an effect of the intelligible order pertaining to them inherent in the divine intellect. Hence, it does not follow from this that divine knowledge is grounded in nonexistence; rather it is grounded in something that eternally and immutably exists. . . .

#### Chapter 6. The Identity of Our View with the Doctrine of the Torah

It is now incumbent upon us to show that the theory we have established by philosophical argument is identical with the view of our Torah. It is a fundamental and pivotal belief of the Torah that there are contingent events in the world. Accordingly, the Torah commands us to perform certain things and prohibits other things. It is [also] a fundamental principle implicit in all the Prophets that God informs them of these contingent events before they actually occur, as it is said, “God does nothing without having revealed His purpose to His servants the prophets.”<sup>7</sup> Yet it is not necessary that any evil predicted by them must occur, as it is said, “God is gracious . . . [abounding in kindness] and renouncing punishment.”<sup>8</sup> These principles are reconcilable only on the hypothesis that [first] these contingent events are in some sense ordered, and it is in this respect that knowledge of them is possible, but in another sense not ordered, and it is in the latter sense that they are contingent; and [second] that God knows all future contingent events insofar as they are ordered and [in addition] knows that they are contingent. It is, therefore, clear that the view of our Torah is identical with the theory that philosophical argument has proved with respect to divine knowledge. Moreover, it can be shown that the view of the Torah is that God knows these things in a general manner, not as particulars, for it is said “He who fashions the hearts of them *all*, who discerns *all* their

doings.”<sup>9</sup> That is, God created the hearts and thoughts of men *at the same time* insofar as He endowed the heavenly bodies with those patterns from which [these thoughts] are in their entirety derived. In this way God considers *all* their deeds, i.e., simultaneously, not in the sense that His knowledge refers to the particular as particular. This shows that [according to the Torah] God understands all human affairs in a general way. . . .

In short, there is nothing in the words of the Prophets that implies anything incompatible with the theory we have developed by means of philosophy. Hence, it is incumbent upon us to follow philosophy in this matter. For, when the Torah, interpreted literally, seems to conflict with doctrines that have been proved by reason, it is proper to interpret these passages according to philosophical understanding, so long as none of the fundamental principles of the Torah are destroyed. Maimonides, too, followed this practice in many cases, as his famous book *The Guide of the Perplexed* shows. It is even more proper that we not disagree with philosophy when the Torah itself does not disagree with it. Maimonides relates further in Chapter 20 of Book III of the celebrated *Guide of the Perplexed*: “Some thinkers have been inclined to say that God’s knowledge refers to the species and uniformly encompasses all members of the species. This is the view of any believer in a revealed religion who is guided by the necessity of reason.” This [passage] shows that Maimonides believed that this view [i.e., God knows particulars only generally] agrees with the view of the Torah. It seems, too, that the sage Abraham ibn Ezra was of this opinion, for in his *Commentary on the Torah*, he says: “The truth is that He knows every particular generally, not as a particular.” The agreement between our philosophically established theory of divine knowledge and the Torah will be more fully appreciated after we have examined the question of divine providence in the Torah, which will be treated in the next book.

7. Amos 3:7.

8. Joel 2:13.

9. Ps. 33:15 [my italics].

# Hasdai Crescas, d. c.1412

When, under the influence of Maimonides' *The Guide of the Perplexed* and the Hebrew translations of Ibn Rushd's commentaries on Aristotle's works, Aristotelianism spread in Jewish circles, the reaction to the study of philosophy was not far behind. While there were fideists who opposed the study of philosophy on the ground that it undermined religious beliefs and practices and while, in certain of its phases, the controversy was marked by excommunications and counter-excommunications, there were others who invoked reasoned arguments to show that philosophy's claim to have attained truth and certainty had not been made good. The most important of the philosophical critics was Hasdai Crescas who, in *The Light of the Lord (Or Adonai)*, presented arguments against some fundamental Aristotelian notions and went on to develop a philosophy of his own.

The literary structure of *The Light of Lord* was determined by a debate that had been initiated by Maimonides and had gone on since his days. Maimonides, in his commentary on the Mishnah (see above, page 362), had set down thirteen principles of Jewish belief and had demanded that belief in them was obligatory for every Jew. These principles were: the existence of God, His unity, His incorporeality, His eternity, that only God is to be worshiped, prophecy, the superiority of Moses' prophecy to that of other prophets, divine origin of the Torah, eternity of the Torah, God's knowledge of human deeds, reward and punishment, the days of the Messiah, and the resurrection of the dead. While there had been predecessors who had investigated Jewish beliefs, Maimonides was the first who had attempted to formulate a set of authoritative and

binding beliefs. Because of Maimonides' standing in the Jewish community, his bold innovation could not be ignored, and his thirteen principles gave rise to a lively debate. There were those who accepted Maimonides' notion that there are authoritative beliefs but differed from him concerning their content, structure, and number, and there were others who rejected the notion of beliefs altogether, holding that Judaism knows only of the commandments of the Torah.

Crescas was among those who accepted the notion that there are Jewish beliefs, but, differing with Maimonides, he presented his own version in the four books (*ma'amarim*) of *The Light of the Lord*. There are, first of all, basic principles or roots (*shorashim*) of all scriptural beliefs, and they are: existence, unity, and incorporeality of God (Book I). These are followed by six scriptural principles (*pinnot toriyyot*) on which the validity of the Torah depends, and they are: God's knowledge of existent things, providence, divine omnipotence, prophecy, human freedom, and the purpose of the Torah (Book II). Next come true beliefs (*emunot amitiyyot*) that every adherent of the Torah must accept and the denial of which constitutes heresy. These are divided into those that do not depend on any specific commandment and those that do. The former category consists of: creation of the world, immortality of the soul, reward and punishment, resurrection of the dead, eternity of the Torah, superiority of the prophecy of Moses, the efficacy of the Urim and Thumim worn by the High Priest (Ex. 28: 30) in predicting the future, and the coming of the Messiah; the latter consists of such beliefs as the efficacy of prayer and of repentance (Book III). *The Light of the Lord*

concludes with thirteen questions (*de'cot u-sebarot*) ranging from whether there exists more than one world to the existence of demons (Book IV). In his exposition Crescas exhibits mastery of the biblical-rabbinic tradition and the Islamic and Jewish philosophical literature and some familiarity with late medieval Christian thought. There are also some kabbalistic influences in his work.

Of special philosophical interest is Crescas' critique of certain Aristotelian physical and metaphysical notions that Maimonides had presented (*Guide II*, Introduction) in twenty-five propositions on which he based his proofs of the existence, unity, and incorporeality of God. The Aristotelians had defined "place" as the inner surface of a surrounding body; Crescas spoke of "space," which he identified with dimensionality. The Aristotelians had denied the existence of a vacuum; Crescas affirmed its existence. The Aristotelians had argued for the existence of one world; Crescas envisaged the existence of many. The Aristotelians had denied that an actual infinite, be it of space, number, magnitude, or time, can exist; Crescas argued for its existence.

Crescas' opinion that an actual infinite can exist put into question the Aristotelians' proofs of the existence of God. These proofs depended on the validity of the principle that an infinite regress, such as that of motions or causes and effects, is impossible; but this was the very principle that Crescas denied. However, Crescas did not reject altogether the possibility of proving the existence of God, since the proof from necessity and contingency (see below, page 469) is independent of the contested principle and hence valid. Against Maimonides (see above, pages 367–369), Crescas affirmed that positive attributes can be predicated of God.

One of the more enigmatic discussions is Crescas' account of human freedom. While Maimonides and Gersonides had, each in his own way, safeguarded the voluntary character of human actions, Crescas was more deterministic. Affirming that every event in the universe is the result of prior causes and is necessitated by divine omniscience, Crescas also held that human actions are produced by a decision of the will. However, this decision is determined by prior causes.

Crescas tried to mitigate this determinism by listing the commandments of the Torah, training, and similar factors as causes determining the will. More formally, Crescas expressed his opinion by holding that while the will is determined with respect to its causes, it is contingent in its nature. In his philosophy of man, Crescas held that the soul rather than the acquired intellect is immortal and that human happiness and immortality come to be through love and fear of God rather than through intellectual speculation.

Some of Crescas' ideas influenced Renaissance and early modern philosophy. Giovanni Francesco Pico della Mirandola, in his *Examen Doctrinae Vanitatis Gentium*, drew upon Crescas for his discussion of such topics as vacuum, place, motion, and time, and it is possible that Giordano Bruno was influenced by Crescas in some of his critique of Aristotle. Spinoza explicitly mentions Crescas' proof of the existence of God (Letter XII), and his discussion of the infinite and other notions was influenced by Crescas.

Born in Barcelona, Hasdai Crescas was active in Spain during the second half of the fourteenth century and the first decade of the fifteenth. His times were marked by persecutions of the Jews and by false charges against them. In 1367, Crescas, then a merchant and communal leader in Barcelona, was imprisoned with others on the made-up charge of desecrating the Host; but he was soon released. In 1383 he was a member of a delegation that negotiated the renewal of Jewish privileges with Pedro IV, king of Aragon. With the accession of Juan I to the throne of Aragon in 1387, Crescas became closely associated with the court and received the title "member of the royal household." Shortly thereafter he moved from Barcelona to Saragossa, where he became the rabbi of the community. Through royal decree he received the right to invoke the ban of excommunication and to prosecute and punish informers against Jews. Reports that he became chief-rabbi of Aragon are not confirmed by documentary evidence.

The year 1391 was marked by widespread anti-Jewish riots, massacres, and the destruction of Jewish communities throughout Spain. While Crescas, because of his connection with the court, was safe, his only son suffered a martyr's death in Barcelona. The

queen and Crescas had sent letters to the authorities in Barcelona asking for the protection of Crescas' family, but the letters arrived too late. Crescas described the events of 1391 and his son's death in a letter to the Jewish community of Avignon. After the persecutions ceased, Crescas occupied himself with reconstructing the Jewish communities of Spain, having received royal permission to collect funds and resettle the communities of Barcelona and Valencia. He also undertook to reform the administrative structure of the Jewish community of Saragossa. Crescas' influence can be seen from the fact that he was consulted by the chief-rabbinate of France (1391) and of Navarre. Crescas died ca. 1412.

Possibly because of his many responsibilities, Crescas' literary output was rather modest. To counteract the missionizing efforts of Christians he wrote, in Catalan, "Refutation of the Dogmas of the Christians"; but the work has only been preserved in a Hebrew translation. Another polemical work against Christianity is cited by a later author, but this work is no longer extant. Crescas had planned to write a comprehensive work entitled *Lamp of God (Ner Elohim)* as a kind of counterpart to Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah* and *The Guide of the Perplexed* (see above, page 362–363). The first part, *Lamp of the Commandment (Ner Mivvah)*, which was to deal with legal matters, never came to be; the second part is *The Light of the Lord*.

In the chapter of *The Light of the Lord* from which the following selection is taken, Crescas investigates the true, that is, the ultimate purpose of the Torah. Convinced that there can be only one such purpose, he considers four possibilities: (a) moral perfection, (b) bodily perfection, (c) intellectual perfection, and (d) perfection of the soul (cf. Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, III, 27 and 54). In the section preceding the selection, Crescas discusses the first two of these perfections, coming to the conclusion that they cannot be the ultimate purpose of the Torah, for the Torah seeks to bring about eternal perfection, that is, immortality, while moral and bodily perfections are temporal. In this preliminary discussion, he similarly rules out intellectual perfection as the ultimate goal, since the intellect, while it is

joined to the body, thinks intermittently, so that it is temporal as well.

The selection begins with the possibility that the perfection of opinions, that is, intellectual perfection, may be the ultimate purpose of the Torah. This, in fact, had been the view of such Aristotelians as Maimonides and Gersonides, and this is the view that Crescas combats. Drawing upon the psychological theories of Aristotle and his commentators, the Jewish (as well as the Islamic) Aristotelians had maintained that the human intellect begins as the material intellect and can become, through philosophical speculation, the acquired intellect, an incorporeal substance. While there were various interpretations of this general scheme, particularly of the nature of the material intellect, Aristotelians were generally agreed that ultimate human happiness, and with it immortality, comes to be through the acquired intellect.

This general theory, Crescas reports, had two interpretations: (a) that of Gersonides, according to which the intellectual apprehension of material and immaterial substances brings about happiness and immortality, and (b) that of Maimonides, according to which only the intellectual apprehension of God and incorporeal intelligences brings about man's ultimate state. Invoking biblical verses and rabbinic sayings as well as philosophical arguments, Crescas sets out to show that both versions of the contested theory undermine the fundamental principles of Torah and Tradition. More than that, he argues that the Aristotelian theory of the acquired intellect is philosophically untenable. Crescas' arguments against the Aristotelians are subtle and complex. Here it should only be noted that Crescas holds that, of the varying interpretations of the material intellect, that of Themistius is normative for all Aristotelians. According to this, the material intellect is an incorporeal substance. In fact, Ibn Rushd had rejected this interpretation in favor of his own, and Crescas found it possible to use some of Ibn Rushd's arguments against Themistius for his own purposes. Similarly, Crescas, while combating the overall positions of Maimonides and Gersonides, finds some of their arguments useful for his own needs. Having completed his refutation of the Aristotelians' theory that the perfection

of opinions is the ultimate purpose of the Torah, Crescas goes on to present his own view. According to Crescas, the perfection of the soul is the ultimate purpose of the Torah, and this perfection is brought about by love and fear of God, not by intellectual apprehension. Once again, he supports his opinion by biblical verses, rabbinic sayings, and philosophical arguments. Crescas bases his position on four

propositions (see page 404), explaining each one at length.

Crescas' condensed and technical exposition, which, at times, reads like lecture notes, makes the translation of *The Light of the Lord* quite difficult. As an aid to the reader of this volume, the translation is somewhat paraphrastic. It is based on the more literal translation of W. Harvey.

### 33. The Light of the Lord

#### Book II, Part 6, Chapter 1 The Explanation of the True Purpose of the Torah

The perfection of opinions might be considered more essential for this purpose [namely, the true purpose of the Torah which is to lead man to happiness and immortality]. We must elaborate on this statement since, it appears to us, some of the philosophers of our nation have stumbled on it. [Through this investigation] we shall be directed aright to understand the true purpose of the Torah.

We say that it is agreed among [these philosophers] that the intellect becomes a substance through the intelligibles it apprehends and that from them an acquired intellect, which is not intermingled with the material intellect, comes to be. [And] since this intellect is immaterial, it survives eternally, in spite of the fact that it is generated and comes to be; for this intellect has no cause for corruption. For, as is made clear in the *Metaphysics*, matter is the cause of corruption and evil. Accordingly, eternal happiness consists in the apprehension of the acquired intelligibles; and the more [intelligible] concepts one apprehends, the greater in quality will be his happiness. The happiness will be still greater when the [intelligible] concepts are more precious in themselves.<sup>1</sup>

They are also agreed that whoever attains [this kind of] happiness will rejoice and delight after death in what he has apprehended. From the pleasure we attain in this life when we apprehend the intelligibles, they estimate that the pleasure must be even greater after death, when we understand the intelligibles si-

multaneously and continuously.<sup>2</sup> [From this extrapolation] it follows that there is no relation<sup>3</sup> between the pleasure derived from the lesser intelligibles and that derived from the noble intelligibles, for pleasure in the apprehension of the intelligibles in this life differs exceedingly from that in the afterlife.

This is the general opinion that they share and on which they agree, but we have found that they differ [in their particular interpretations]:<sup>4</sup>

[Version I] Some think that this happiness will be greater the more numerous the [intelligible] concepts [apprehended], regardless of whether they are [intelligible concepts] of material or immaterial existent things. They hold this because they think that the order of all existent things is contained in the Agent Intellect, so that whoever comes closer to the Agent Intellect through the apprehension of intelligibles, [be they of material or immaterial things,] will attain a higher degree [of happiness].

[Version II] Others think that only that survives which is apprehended truly by the human intellect concerning the existence of God and His angels, and the more one apprehends, the greater his degree [of happiness]. It appears that [this interpretation is based on the view] that the intellect becomes a substance only through the apprehension of immaterial beings and that it becomes eternal [only through this kind of apprehension]. The more [the intellect] apprehends of these immaterial beings, the greater will be its happiness.

These two opinions not only destroy the Torah and uproot the principles of Tradition, but they can also be disproved by philosophical speculation.

That they destroy the principles of the Torah and Tradition can be seen from the following arguments:

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Based on text and translation in W. Harvey, *Crescas' Critique of the Theory of the Acquired Intellect* (Doctoral Dissertation, Columbia University, 1973). Reprinted by permission of Warren Harvey.

1. Apprehension of God and other incorporeal substances produces greater happiness than apprehension of corporeal substances.

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2. In this life we apprehend the intelligibles sequentially and intermittently, in the next life simultaneously and continuously.

3. I.e., comparison.

4. The first of the versions that follow seems to be that of Gersonides, the second that of Maimonides.

(1) It is one of the principles of the Torah and Tradition that man attains eternal life by performing the commandments. The Mishnah (Kiddushin, I:10) teaches this explicitly when it states that “good will be done to him, who observes one commandment” and the Gemara explains this to mean that this good is “the good reserved for the righteous” [namely, eternal life]. According to the opinions of the philosophers, by contrast, the practical commandments are only prerequisites for [the apprehension of] the intelligibles, and once the intellect has become a substance through [the apprehension of] the intelligibles, there is no longer any benefit in performing the commandments. . . .<sup>5</sup>

That these opinions are false from the point of view of philosophical speculation can also be seen from the following arguments:

(1) According to these opinions, the Torah’s purpose for man would be addressed to another species:<sup>6</sup>

(1a) According to these opinions, the acquired intellect which remains [after death] is immaterial and not intermingled with man. Hence, it is neither his form nor an accident conjoined with him. This is the case, because this intellect has been posited as immaterial and as becoming a substance through the intelligibles.<sup>7</sup>

(1b) Since it has been laid down that [the acquired intellect] survives death, the corruption of man may be conceived without the corruption of this in-

5. Here follow other arguments from the Torah and Tradition designed to show that the afterlife is contingent upon the performance of the commandments, not upon the apprehension of the intelligibles.

6. The meaning of this rather enigmatic statement is as follows: the happiness intended by the Torah is for man, a material substance composed of soul and body; yet according to the philosophers, it is for the acquired intellect, an immaterial substance. Now, since material and immaterial substances differ in species, it would follow that the Torah is intended for the acquired intellect, not for man as he exists in the here and now. This is absurd. There now follow arguments to show the absurdity of the opinion of the philosophers.

7. The implied conclusion is that since the acquired intellect is neither the form of man nor one of his accidents, but an immaterial substance, it must be a different species.

tellec. If [of two things,] the corruption of one is possible without the corruption of the other, and [the first] is not intermingled [with the second], [the first] is necessarily a different individual [from the second]. And if [of two things,] one is a different individual from the other and is not joined with it, the former cannot be the form of the latter.

(1c) The corruption of the immaterial [intellect] may surely be conceived without the corruption of man.

Since, then, it has been shown to be true that [the acquired intellect] is not the form of man, it has been shown thereby that the purpose which [according to the opinions of the philosophers] the Torah has for man, namely the immortality of the intellect, is for something else [that is, another species].

That the immortality of the intellect would be for a species other than man can easily be demonstrated from the nature of each one. For man by his nature goes toward corruption, so that it is impossible that an individual man should be eternal. By contrast, the acquired intellect is posited to be eternal according to its nature, so that its corruption is impossible by its very essence. And corruptible and eternal things differ in species.

(2) It is far-fetched as far as divine justice is concerned that reward and punishment be for someone other than the one who serves God or rebels against Him.<sup>8</sup>

(3) The proposition that the intellect becomes a substance through its [intelligible] concepts, as a result of which it comes to exist separate from the material intellect, is clearly false for the following reasons:

(3a) Since [the acquired intellect] has been posited as immaterial, it does not possess matter as an underlying substratum and as something from which it comes to be. But since it has [also] been posited that [this intellect] is generated, it follows that it must come to be from nothing. But this conclusion is clearly false, since it is impossible that something comes to be out of nothing, and this principle has no exception.<sup>9</sup> The

8. Hence reward and punishment cannot be contingent upon intellectual apprehension.

9. Literally, “and this is one of the impossibles that have a fixed nature.”

only alternative that remains is that the acquired intellect comes to be by way of a miracle from the absolute power of God.<sup>10</sup>

(3b) This proposition is self-contradictory. For when it is laid down that “the intellect becomes a substance through its [intelligible] concepts,” the intellect to which this proposition refers cannot be the material intellect. For it has already been assumed that this intellect [namely, the one that becomes a substance through its intelligible concepts] is separate from the material intellect. But should the proposition refer to the acquired intellect, then, when we say that [this intellect] becomes a substance through its [intelligible] concepts, we have [in fact] affirmed that it exists before it comes to be. By God, this is equivalent to saying that something brings itself into existence. This is obviously false and absurd.

(3c) That the intellect should become a substance through its [intelligible] concepts is clearly false, for there is no escape from the following disjunction: either (3c1) intellectual apprehension, which is the act of apprehending the intelligible, is identical with the intelligible itself, as the philosophers agree [when they hold that] the intellect, the one who apprehends the intelligibles, and the intelligibles are identical,<sup>11</sup> or (3c2) [these three] are not identical.

If (3c1) intellectual apprehension and the intelligible are identical, one of the following two absurdities would necessarily follow:

Either (3c1a) one intelligible is identical with any other intelligible, from which it would follow that all intelligibles are identical. In that case, intellectual apprehension would be one and undifferentiated for all intelligibles. This is clearly absurd, since, in that case, someone who apprehends many intelligibles would have no advantage or preeminence over someone who apprehends only one intelligible.

Or (3c1b) one intelligible is not identical with another intelligible and the act of apprehending one intelligible differs from the act of apprehending another intelligible. From [this assumption] it follows neces-

sarily that when this intellect has become a substance through one intelligible and afterwards apprehends another intelligible, [it becomes another substance, and] there will be as many substances [that is, intellects] as there are intelligibles. Or, alternately, [this intellect remains the same, but] one intelligible is changed into another and becomes a substance through another. As a result, it becomes another substance different in species from the previous one. This is completely absurd. In addition, since [on this assumption] the essential form of man would continuously be produced anew, it would follow that a given man would change and alter from essence to essence. This is completely absurd and false. . . .

From all these arguments the absurdity of these [two] opinions<sup>12</sup> can clearly be seen. However, the first opinion is more reprehensible in one respect, the second in another:

[Version I] According to the first opinion, immortality depends on the apprehension of the intelligibles which belong to philosophy. As a result, the fundamental principles of the Torah would be derivatives<sup>13</sup> of philosophy. It would follow then that if someone apprehends one of the intelligibles belonging to geometry, he would live eternally, in as much as these intelligibles exist in the Agent Intellect. But this is fantasy and invention, lacking any sense.

[Version II] According to the second opinion, the intellectual apprehension of the essence of the incorporeal substances is not through affirmation, but through negation, as Maimonides has explained at length.<sup>14</sup> From this it follows that the apprehension [of the incorporeal substances] is imperfect and, even more, that [the intelligible] would not be in the intellect as [its object] is outside the intellect.<sup>15</sup> I wish that

10. This cannot be the case, since the acquired intellect comes to be through a natural process, not a miracle.

11. Cf. Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed* I, 68.

12. The two versions of the opinions of the philosophers.

13. Literally, ‘conclusions.’

14. See above, pp. 367–369.

15. In the case of corporeal substances the intelligible in the mind corresponds exactly to the form of the substance outside the mind, since the intelligible signifies positively. In the case of the intelligibles of incorporeal substances, there is no such exact correspondence, since these intelligibles signify through negation.

I knew how this imperfect intelligible, which does not exist outside the soul [that is, the intellect] as it exists within it, can become a substance.<sup>16</sup>

But the philosophers made up these opinions as if the nature of truth had compelled them to believe in the immortality of the souls [that is, the intellects] and they conceived thoughts and multiplied words that multiply vanity,<sup>17</sup> and some of the philosophers of our nation strayed after them, and they did not perceive nor did it enter their mind how they were razing thereby the wall of the edifice of the Torah and breaching its hedges, even though this theory [namely, that of the philosophers] is groundless.

Since then it has been shown that that purpose [namely, human happiness and immortality] is not consequent upon the perfection of opinions, as the philosophers had laid down, and since it has also been shown that the other perfections [namely, bodily perfection and the moral virtues] are only prerequisites for [the acquisition of] the intelligibles, it follows that the purpose [of the Torah] is not primarily and essentially consequent upon either opinions or actions. But since this purpose [namely, human happiness and immortality] is consequent upon the Torah, as Tradition teaches, it follows necessarily that this purpose is consequent primarily and essentially upon that part [of the Torah] which is not concerned with opinions alone, or with actions alone. When we examined the Torah and its parts, we found in it a part, small in quantity [but] large in quality, which is not concerned with opinions alone or with actions alone, namely, [that concerned with] the love of God and true fear of Him. And I affirm that this is [the part of the Torah] which necessarily brings about this purpose according to every supporting argument, be it according to Torah and Tradition or according to philosophical speculation.

[That love and fear of God bring about human happiness and immortality is clear] from the Torah when it states explicitly (Deut. 10:12): "And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all His ways, and

to love Him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul." . . .<sup>18</sup>

[From these verses] it is apparent that the [ultimate] purpose sought by the Torah consists of obeying God, by performing his commandments with great ardor and by not transgressing his prohibition by exercising great care—all this with joy and gladness. [This kind of conduct] is the secret of worship, love, and true fear of God, as is stated frequently in biblical verses and in the sayings of the Rabbis. Since [this kind of conduct] is the [ultimate] purpose sought by the Torah and since it is evident that happiness and immortality are consequent upon it, it is also clear, according to Torah and Tradition, that this purpose [that is, this kind of conduct] will bring about happiness and immortality.

[That love and fear of God produce happiness and immortality can also be demonstrated] through philosophical speculation itself, once we have laid down three propositions, concerning whose truth there is no doubt:

(1) First proposition: the soul of man, which is his form, is a spiritual substance disposed toward intellectual apprehension, [but] not intellectually apprehending in actuality in virtue of itself.

(2) Second proposition: someone who is perfect, owing to his essence, loves good and perfection and desires it. And love and pleasure in desire are according to the [degree of] perfection.

(3) Third proposition: Love and pleasure in desire differ from intellectual apprehension.

We shall add a fourth proposition which is self-evident, namely (4) perfection of the soul and the soul's adhesion to God bring about this goal [namely, human happiness and immortality].

How these propositions are shown to be true, I shall now state:

(1) First proposition:<sup>19</sup>

(1a) We began by stating that the soul of man is "his form." This is self-evident, for when the soul is

16. The point of this somewhat awkward phrase is that the intellect cannot become a substance through an imperfect intelligible.

17. Cf. Eccles. 6:11

18. Here follow other biblical verses showing that love and fear of God bring about human happiness and immortality.

19. Crescas now goes on to explain the parts of the first proposition.

separated from the body, man ceases to exist in such a way that the definition [of man] can no longer be truly predicated of him.<sup>20</sup>

(1b) Then we stated that the soul is “a substance.” This is something that has been demonstrated in the first book of the *Physics* where it has been shown that the term “substance” applies primarily to form rather than to matter.

(1c) We stated next that the soul is “spiritual.” This is clear, since the soul possesses faculties that it uses through an exercise of will apart from any of the senses, such as imagination, memory, and intellect.<sup>21</sup>

(1d) Finally we stated that the soul is “disposed toward intellectual apprehension.” This is clear since it has been shown that the soul is a substratum for the rational faculty, inasmuch as this faculty inheres in the body through the intermediacy of the soul. For it is inescapable that the substratum of this disposition [that is, the rational faculty] be either (1) an intellect, (2) a soul, or (3) a body, since there is no fourth kind of existence here on earth.<sup>22</sup>

That this substratum cannot be (1) an intellect, as some of the commentators on Aristotle’s works have thought,<sup>23</sup> is clear from the following arguments:

(1a) First, if the substratum of this disposition were an intellect, this disposition would be intermin-

gled with an intellectual form. As a result, it would be incapable of apprehending all forms, for something can only receive all things if it is devoid of all of them. But, since we have laid down that the intellect is a substratum for this disposition [that is, the rational faculty], it would be the case that, when this intellect receives the intelligibles, it would become a substance through them by receiving them as intermingled. But this is impossible, since [according to the original assumption] this intellect is not devoid of all forms.<sup>24</sup>

By contrast, when we posit the soul as the substratum of this [intellectual] disposition, we posit the soul as a condition for the existence of this disposition, but we do not say that the soul is affected [that is, it becomes a substance] by the reception of the intelligibles. The reason is that the substrata of a disposition to receive things vary greatly. In the case of some, the substratum is affected in some way by the species of that which it apprehends, as is the case with the sense of touch. In the case of others, the substratum receives [its objects] in such a way that it is not affected by the species of that which it apprehends, as is the case when the sense of sight receives colors. For in the case of sight, [the eye] does not receive the shade of the perceived color, yet it is affected by it in some fashion, so that after [the eye] has a strong sensation, it will not have a weak sensation. The common sense is affected by the objects it apprehends even less, for its apprehension is spiritual. The imagination is still more spiritual, and for this reason the imagination is consequent upon our will. And finally, the intellectual disposition [is so spiritual that it] receives its objects [namely the intelligibles] in such a manner that its substratum is not affected by them at all. Thus it is possible that the intellectual disposition receives all the forms, when it is posited that [its] substratum is the soul.

However, if it is posited that the intellect [is the substratum of the intellectual disposition], it would be impossible to affirm of it [that it receives all forms]. For

20. While a living man and a corpse may share the shape of man, the definition of man applies only to a living human being.

21. Sense perception is involuntary and totally corporeal; imagining, remembering, and thinking are voluntary and not totally dependent on the body. This is what Crescas has in mind when he says that the soul is “spiritual.”

22. Crescas now proceeds by a kind of *reductio ad absurdum* proof. Envisaging the possibilities that intellect, soul, or body could be the substratum for the intellectual faculty, he disproves that intellect or body can be that substratum. Hence it must be soul. The numbers that follow, (1), (2), and (3), refer to these three possibilities.

23. The commentators on Aristotle disagreed concerning the nature of the material intellect (see p. 286), which is here considered as the substratum of the rational faculty. Crescas identifies the interpretation of Themistius, that the material intellect is an immaterial substance, with the general opinion of the commentators on Aristotle.

24. This argument is a variation of an argument used by Ibn Rushd to disprove Themistius’ conception of the material intellect. The point of the argument is that, were the substratum of this disposition an intellect, it would possess an intellectual form of its own. But since a substance can only have one form, the substratum cannot receive the intelligibles.

if we were to suppose that the [intellectual] disposition receives the intelligibles in such a way that they are not intermingled with the substratum [that is, the intellect],<sup>25</sup> the following disjunction is unavoidable: either (a) the substratum would be intellectually apprehending, or (b) [the substratum] would not be intellectually apprehending. Now it is false [by definition] that the intellect is not intellectually apprehending, so [that the only alternative that remains is] that it is intellectually apprehending. But if we posit some intelligible which the disposition receives, it would necessarily follow that this intelligible would be in the intellect simultaneously in potentiality and in actuality, and this is false. Unless, by God, one were to concoct that there can be an intelligible which has no relation or connection with the intelligibles which the [intellectual] disposition receives. And this is clearly ludicrous and absurd. Hence, it is clear that the intellect cannot be the substratum of this disposition.

(1b) Second,<sup>26</sup> if the substratum for this disposition were an intellect, it would be inescapable that it be either (1b1) generated or (1b2) not generated.

If (1b1) it were generated, it would, in turn, be inescapable that it be generated either (1b1a) from some other substratum, or (1b1b) out of nothing.

If (1b1a) [the intellect as substratum for the disposition were generated] from some other substratum, it would necessarily follow that this other substratum is subject to change, in order that the substratum [of the disposition] may come to be from it. But, since it has been shown that everything subject to change must be a body, it follows necessarily that [the prior substratum] must be a body. Now, since it is self-evident that something incorporeal cannot come from something corporeal, it would necessarily follow that the substratum [of the disposition] would also be corporeal. But this conclusion contradicts the assumption that the substratum [of the disposition] is an intellect [namely,

that it is incorporeal]. Since this contradiction follows from the assumption that [the substratum of the disposition] is generated, it is the conclusion of this argument that [the substratum] cannot be generated.

If then, the substratum of the disposition is not generated [see above, 1b2], it must be either (1b2a) immaterial or (1b2b) material.<sup>27</sup>

If (1b2b) it is material,<sup>28</sup> it follows necessarily that the intellect of a given man must have been hidden and concealed in matter before he came to be. And since the intellect of [this] man from which that matter came to be became apparent in him, it would be necessary that there is another intellect in him. Furthermore this must also be the case with respect to the matter out of which that matter was generated, and so on to infinity. And it would necessarily follow that all generated and corruptible matters would possess an infinite number of intellects. By God, the only other alternative would be that the intellect is transferred from without when matter comes to be and it would be hidden in matter until its actions appeared. And this is absurd and ludicrous.<sup>29</sup>

If, on the other hand, we assume (1b2a) that the substratum of the disposition is immaterial, then the intellect of Ruben differs from that of Simon in such a way that either (1b2a1) their forms are different or (1b2a2) [the intellects of the two] do not differ in this fashion.

If (1b2a1) we suppose that the two intellects differ, then they must necessarily differ in species, for it is inconceivable in the case of immaterial beings that they should agree in species, but differ as individuals—as has been demonstrated in its place. But it is also false that the two intellects differ in species, since in that case the individuals belonging to the same species would differ in species. If then the intellect of Ruben and the intellect of Simon differ neither in species nor as individuals, then the forms of individuals belonging

25. Having disposed of the possibility that, if the material intellect is the substratum of the intelligibles, it receives these intelligibles as intermingled with it, Crescas now considers the possibility that this intellect (as substratum) receives the intelligibles as existing in separation from it.

26. Here follow further arguments that the substratum of the intellectual disposition cannot be an intellect.

27. Literally, it must be something immaterial (or incorporeal) or not immaterial (or incorporeal).

28. Literally, not immaterial (or incorporeal).

29. This argument is obscure.

30. If the intellects of Ruben and Simon, etc., would differ neither in species nor as individuals, there would be only one intellect for all men.

to the same species would be one in number<sup>30</sup> and an individual member of a species would be identical with another member of that species and vice versa. In addition, this one intellect would be simultaneously in potentiality and actuality, inasmuch as the intelligibles which Ruben has in potentiality, Simon can have in actuality. Furthermore, individual members of the species would not require sense perception in order to acquire the intelligibles, as long as one member of the species would employ his senses in order to acquire these intelligibles.

It is evident then that many absurdities would follow were we to posit that the substratum of this disposition is an intellect. It necessarily follows then that the substratum must be either (3) a body, or (2) a soul.<sup>31</sup>

If we assume that this substratum is a body, it is clear that this substratum could not receive [this disposition] without some intermediary. For it is inconceivable that a body should lack those forms which a body by its very nature receives without an intermediary. For this reason it would follow that were a body to receive this disposition without an intermediary,<sup>32</sup> all bodies would possess an intellect. [This is absurd.] On the other hand, if we posit (2) that the substratum [of this disposition] is a soul, it is clear that [this soul] is not the substratum of [the disposition] in virtue of itself, for it is not the nature of forms, that some forms are the substratum of other forms, unless it be through the intermediacy of matter.<sup>33</sup> From all this it is clear that the substratum of this disposition is a soul through the intermediacy of the body.

In this manner we have verified our expression that “the soul of man is a substance disposed toward intellectual apprehension.”

31. Crescas now returns to the remaining two alternatives. See p. 405 (1d).

32. If a body would receive the intellectual disposition without an intermediary, this disposition would be a form belonging to a body in virtue of itself, and, hence, all bodies would possess an intellect.

33. If the soul were a form by itself it could not receive the intellectual disposition, another form. But since the soul belongs to a body, it can receive the intellectual disposition.

We said “disposed” since the faculty of disposition inheres in the soul.

We said “not intellectually apprehending in virtue of itself,” even though our saying “disposed” would indicate that it is not [apprehending] in actuality. For this additional phrase indicates that the underlying substance [that is the soul] does not become constituted as a substance through intellectual apprehension. And the feet of some of our predecessors stumbled on this phrase. For they thought that the substratum of the disposition is a substance outside the soul.<sup>34</sup> But if this assumed external substance were to become a substance through intellectual apprehension, it would change from one essence to another. And the assertion that the acquired intelligibles become a substance apart from the substratum and that a separate intellect [that is, the acquired intellect] comes to be from them is groundless, as is clear from our previous discussion.

This is sufficient, in keeping with brevity, for establishing the truth of the first proposition.

(2) The second proposition<sup>35</sup> is demonstrated as follows: It is well known that God is the source and fountain of all perfections and that God in virtue of His perfection, which is His essence, loves the good. This is apparent from his actions in bringing the universe in its entirety into existence, from His preserving it, and from His continuous recreation of it—and all this by virtue of his simple will. From this it follows necessarily that love of good is an essential property of perfection. It also follows from this that the greater the perfection, the greater is the love and the pleasure in desire. This agrees very well with what is related in the Torah, for when it mentions the Patriarchs’ love for God it uses the term *ahabah* (love) as in the phrase (Isaiah 41:8) “Abraham *ohabi* (who loves me)” and in the commandments it also uses *ahabah* (love). But when the Torah mentions God’s love for the Patriarchs it uses the term *hesheq*

34. The Aristotelians held, according to Crescas, that the material intellect that is the substratum of the disposition is an incorporeal substance. (See p. 399.) It would then be the case that the material intellect and the acquired intellect would be distinct substances, while it should be the case that the acquired intellect is, in some sense, the actualized material intellect.

35. See p. 404.

(passionate love) which indicates the strength of the love, saying (Deut. 10:15) "yet the Lord passionately loved (*ḥashaq*) your fathers." Now this is among the things that point to the truth of what we have said. For it appears that the love is proportionate to the good that is loved, and that the greater the good, the greater the love. But if the good is infinite in greatness, it is appropriate that the love is also infinite. This might bring one to think that man's love for God should be infinitely great and that consequently [the Torah] should have applied the term *ḥesheq* (passionate love) in describing the Patriarchs' love for God and the term *ahabah* (love) in describing His love for them. Yet, since love is an essential property of perfection and since God's perfection is infinitely great, God's love for the good is greater [than that of man], even though the good He loves is of a very low degree. This is sufficient for the second proposition.

(3) The third proposition is self-evident from the definition of its terms. For *will* is nothing other than the aggregate and the interrelation of the appetitive and imaginative faculties, namely, the agreement concerning things desired, and the pleasure of desire is going to be proportionate to the interrelation. Intellectual apprehension, however, consists of conception and judgment,<sup>36</sup> both of which belong to the rational faculty. All of this has been demonstrated in the *De anima*. Since the rational faculty differs from the appetitive and imaginative faculties, it has been shown to be true that love and pleasure in desire differ from intellectual apprehension. This is the third proposition.

These propositions having been verified, I say that, since it has been demonstrated in the first proposition that the soul of man is a spiritual substance, immortality after separation [from the body] is possible for it. The reason is that since the soul is immaterial, it has none of the causes of corruption. And existence in separation [from the body] is possible for it, since it is a rational substance. And we observe that this substance exercises intellectual apprehension with additional power when the corporeal organs are weak. This is one of the observations indicating that the soul can exist by itself and that it does not pass away as other forms do. [For these forms pass away] when the things of which they are the

forms pass away. Since, then, the soul can exist by itself and since it can exist in separation from the thing of which it is the form [namely, the body], it necessarily has eternal existence according to its nature. For the soul is devoid of materiality which is the cause of corruption, inasmuch as passive faculties do not acquiesce to the active faculties, as has been explained in its place.

Since it has been shown in the second proposition that the love of the good and pleasure in it is proportionate to the perfection [of the lover], it has become clear that the perfection [of the lover] will be proportionate to the degree of the good loved. From this it follows that [man's] love of God, Who is infinite good, is necessary for the greatest conceivable perfection of the soul.

Since it has been shown in the third proposition that love and pleasure in it differ from intellectual apprehension, what is essential for the perfection of the soul is something other than intellectual apprehension, namely, love. Now it is evident that love will bring about adhesion to God, for even in the case of natural things it is clear that love and mutual attraction are the cause of their perfection and unity. Indeed, one of the ancients [Empedocles] thought that love is the principle of generation and combination, while hatred is the principle of corruption and separation. [If this is the case for natural things,] how much more will it be the case for spiritual things that love and agreement among them will give rise to adhesion and unity. And since it has previously been demonstrated and will be further demonstrated in book three, God willing, that God's love for the good is immense, it is evident that the greater the love between God and man, the greater and stronger will be the adhesion.

Since it has been established in the fourth proposition that the perfection of the soul and its adhesion to God must bring about this purpose [namely, human happiness and immortality], it is undoubtedly clear that philosophical speculation itself agrees with what has been set down clearly according to the Torah and Tradition, namely, that true love brings about this [ultimate] purpose, which is the eternal survival [of the soul]. This principle has been accepted by the [Jewish] nation. We were reared on it and the Torah has enlightened us concerning it. It also agrees with philosophical speculation and does not contradict it. . . .

36. These are the first two activities of the intellect.

# LATIN PHILOSOPHY IN THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

The thirteenth century is often regarded as the golden age of scholastic philosophy. It was the age of the *summae*, magisterial and comprehensive syntheses ranging over a wide domain of theology and philosophy. Two movements stemming from the later twelfth century provided foundations for these intellectual monuments, so often compared to the great cathedrals built during the same period. One is the rise of the universities, and the other is the reception of Aristotle. A third factor, more imponderable in its effect, was the creation of the mendicant, or begging orders of friars, especially the Dominicans and Franciscans. Their prominence may have given to theology a somewhat greater sway over philosophical developments than would otherwise have been the case.

The universities provided institutional regularity and esprit de corps for one of the most demanding intellectual methods in the history of philosophy. The last half of the twelfth century saw the emergence of a few major centers of learning out of the scattered monastic and cathedral schools, along with the formation by masters and students of typical guild associations, or, as they came to be called, universities. Although the student-dominated Italian universities

were somewhat earlier, most relevant to the career of philosophy was the University of Paris, which received royal and papal protection during the first two decades of the thirteenth century, at about the same time that Oxford also won its charters. What was at stake in this movement was, as against local secular authority, the right to autonomous clerical jurisdiction and the regulation of living conditions. As against local clerical authority what was gained was the right to license teachers, to regulate the curriculum, and to regulate educational conditions. Within this framework, students participated in two types of instruction. The lecture or exposition was a preliminary reading-through of a prescribed text with some explication of obscure passages. More important was the “question,” or disputation, in which difficult problems were debated in set form by students and masters and then resolved by the master. Public disputations sponsored by the university were held on some feast days, and twice a year there were open, or *quodlibetal*, disputations in which burning issues were aired. But the student engaged in many more than these—indeed, practice disputations were a favorite form of entertainment. This popularity of the disputation expresses the triumph of dialectic over

the other branches of the trivium, and gives to much medieval philosophy the atmosphere of the logic exercise that contrasts so noticeably with the more rhetorical or confessional vehicles of other eras. It should be remembered, however, that the medieval *quaestio* is one of the few philosophical formats that ensure that at least some of the objections to a position will be taken into account.

Concurrent with the rise of the universities was the reception of Aristotle, whose works reached the Latin West through two channels. From the twelfth century on, scholars in Spain and Italy, where Christians were in contact with Muslim learning, prepared Latin translations of the Arabic texts of Aristotle, which, at an earlier time, had been translated from the Greek and Syriac (see page 216). In the first half of the thirteenth century, when the often better Byzantine texts became available to the West, new and often more accurate translations were made from the original Greek. After varying periods of dissemination, this new learning appeared at the universities. Until the 1240s, the leading interpreter of Aristotle was Ibn Sīnā; thereafter this role was assumed by Ibn Rushd. The study of Aristotle eventually replaced most of the older curriculum and was a necessary prerequisite to theology. In that discipline the curriculum was based on the Bible and the *Four Books of Sentences* by Peter Lombard, a collection of patristic texts organized by the *Sic et Non* method brought from law into theology by Abelard. Many of the philosophical discussions of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries are found in the commentaries on that work required of every master in theology.

Just why so many thinkers of the West were so eager to find the new learning is an interesting question, since it seems not to have been welcome to many prelates and theologians. But Aristotle was so ambiguous and provided such a flexible battery of concepts that he could be understood in many ways, and even the rejection of his positions could be formulated in his own terminology. He could be held to have taught the creation of the world as well as its eternity, the necessity of events as well as their contingency, the derivation of human knowledge from perception as well as its dependence on some form of activation by a superior mind; and these and other issues could be ar-

gued in terms of form and matter, substance and accident, potentiality and actuality, the four causes, and so forth. The situation was further complicated by the fact that the understanding of Aristotle that was received was to a greater or lesser extent influenced by neoplatonic conceptions, especially emanation and the independence of the soul from the body. This influence was stronger in Ibn Sīnā than in Ibn Rushd, and so a spectrum of alignments was possible: one could simply adhere to the already regnant authority of Augustine; one could express Augustine's views in Aristotelian terminology; one could find enough affinity between Ibn Sīnā and Augustine to justify adopting the views of the former; one could turn from Ibn Sīnā to Ibn Rushd in understanding Aristotle; one could try to come at Aristotle comparatively free from Muslim interpretations; one could give various types of assent to the Aristotle one comprehended, and so on. Some scholars seek out characteristic families of positions and classify them as Augustinian, Avicennizing Augustinian, Averroist, and so on. Thus Augustinianism is allegedly revealed by such doctrines as that divine illumination is essential to human knowledge; that since the soul is independent of the body, there must be several forms in the human composite; and that the will is not limited by the intellect. But other scholars think this approach makes too little of individual ingenuity and suggest that because a man may be Augustinian on some issues does not imply that he will not be Averroist, for example, on others.

Despite the salutary good sense of such a caution, the following selections were chosen with an eye to representativeness as well as intrinsic merit. Bonaventure must stand here for the Augustinian reaction to Aristotle, even if he does use Aristotle's language. With him there should be grouped his master Alexander of Hales, his compatriot John Peckham, and many others, including Mathew of Aquasparta, Robert Kilwardby, and Henry of Ghent. Siger of Brabant must represent those arts masters more interested in philosophy than theology and who were perhaps jeeringly called Averroists in the succeeding era. Included with Siger in this tradition are Boethius of Dacia, John of Jandun, and a long line of Italian masters reaching into the seventeenth century. Thomas Aquinas here stands for the theological exploitation of Aristotle, a position requir-

ing a fresh understanding of him. Thomas was preceded in this by his master Albertus Magnus, and his work was carried on by Giles of Rome among other followers.

It would be overdramatic to say that this period in which the central problems were posed by Aristotle's philosophy came to an end in 1277 with the condem-

nation of many positions propounded by his partisans, for such problems were discussed long thereafter. But the effort after synthesis came to be overshadowed by a spirit of criticism; and in that sense the Condemnation marks an ending of a sort to the enterprise begun when the translations opened a new world to Latin Christianity.

# Bonaventure, c.1217–1274

For all that he is known as a leading theologian of love and seems to have been a man of the utmost personal charity, Bonaventure's career was dominated by controversies. Within his own religious order, he was caught up in the struggle between those who wished to fulfill the primitive vision of St. Francis of Assisi and those who wished to make accommodations; and in the intellectual world, he took a leading role in checking what he took to be a dangerously uncritical acceptance of Aristotelianism. Scholars debate whether he should be classified as an Augustinian who occasionally used Aristotelian terminology like all the schoolmen of the time, or as an eclectic with no special animus against Aristotle in philosophy, so long as his doctrines did not invade theology. Against the latter there is the claim that it depends on a conception of philosophy—and, indeed, of nature—as autonomous, which Bonaventure rejected. Regardless of how the nuances of interpretation are to be settled, there is little doubt that, especially in his later years, Bonaventure opposed not only the so-called Averroists whom Thomas Aquinas also opposed, but also the more moderate efforts of Aquinas himself. Bonaventure placed special emphasis on exemplarism, the Christian version of Plato's theory of Ideas. It is Aristotle's rejection of the Ideas, he said, that leads to the pernicious errors of the eternity of the world, the unity of the intellect for all men, and the necessity of all that happens.

Consonant with his adherence to exemplarism, Bonaventure developed the illumination theory of knowledge into an elaborate system of types of illumination and degrees of the traces of God in the world. He was deeply influenced by twelfth-century figures

such as Bernard of Clairvaux and Hugh of St. Victor, and in the style of the earlier period was given to brief encyclopedic compendia. But he could explore an issue in depth when he wished and was unusually sensitive to the systematic implications of individual positions. He maintained that the world can be proved not to be eternal; that there is a kind of spiritual matter; that there are several substantial forms in man, forming a hierarchy perfected by the intellective soul; and so on—a catalogue of positions certainly owing something to Augustine. But of more importance than any group of positions is his effort to orient philosophy toward theology, and theology toward the mystical union. Without such an effort, philosophy is merely an outgrowth of worldly curiosity, placing man on “the infinite precipice.” In following the controversies of the thirteenth century it is important to remember that for men such as Bonaventure the price of philosophical error is not merely confusion; it is also the ultimate disaster of damnation.

Bonaventure was born at Bagnoregio, not far from Viterbo, in Italy, in 1221. His name was John of Fidanza, and his father may have been a doctor. When the father could not cure him of a childhood disease, the invocation (one tradition says the presence) of Saint Francis did, and the second name, Bonaventure, may have something to do with this event. He entered the Franciscan order in 1243/4 and for a period after 1243 studied at Paris under Alexander of Hales, a theologian of Augustinian loyalties who had joined the Franciscan order in the wave of enthusiasm that brought many academics into it. From 1250 to perhaps 1253 Bonaventure delivered his *Commentary on the Four Books of Sentences* (*Commentarius in quatuor libros*

*Sententiarum Petri Lombardi*), and perhaps during this period he also wrote *Retracing the Arts to Theology* (*De reductione artium ad theologiam*). Along with Brother Thomas Aquinas of the Dominicans, he was a target of the University of Paris' struggle to bring the mendicant orders under university discipline, and it took papal directives to allow him the mastership. But before he could exercise it, he was called to a different and more poignant responsibility. The general of the Franciscan order resigned and suggested Bonaventure as his successor; and on February 2, 1257, he was elected. This is not the place to present the background of the Spiritualist controversy nor an estimation of the relative importance in it of the wish to be true to the man who proclaimed himself God's simpleton as against the wish to fulfill the condemned apocalyptic theory of history of Joachim of Flora. Bonaventure was firm against the Joachimites, to the extent even of imprisoning the very former general who had nominated him. He tried to be true intellectually to Saint Francis by emphasizing the mystical tradition and maintaining the attitude toward worldly learning outlined above. But the cry of a companion of Saint Francis, "Paris, Paris, thou that destroyest Assisi," may be a comment on the very concept of a Franciscan theologian. There is a wry contrast between the way with a book of the founder and his disciple: Francis is said once to have found a part of the New Testament and taken it apart for distribution, so that each might have a share of the precious story. Bonaventure's regulations for Franciscan libraries prohibited the lending of books, which would come back dirty and torn, if at all.

For the rest of his life, Bonaventure moved about on the business of his order and the wider Church. In 1259 he stayed at Monte Alvernia, where Francis had received the stigmata, and wrote *The Mind's Journey into God* (*Itinerarium mentis in Deum*), placing an

elaborate interpretation on Francis' vision, an interpretation calling upon Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite for its structure. In 1265 he was named archbishop of York, but managed to be excused. The controversy over Aristotelianism was mounting at Paris, and in 1266 he began the practice of public disputations by Franciscan students at the meetings of the order. At Paris, the Franciscan theologian John Peckham attacked the theses of Thomas Aquinas, and there is little doubt that he was backed in this by his general. Finally in April and May of 1273 Bonaventure himself conducted a series of *Conferences on the Hexaemeron* (*Collationes in Hexaemeron*), which are described as containing the seeds of the Condemnation of 1277. Also in 1273 he was made a cardinal by the man whom he had suggested as pope in 1271. This time he could not escape. After taking an active part in the General Council of the Church at Lyons, he died there July 15, 1274. He was canonized April 14, 1482, and declared a Doctor of the Church in 1587. Needless to say, he wrote a great deal on Franciscan and other religious subjects that has not been mentioned here.

The selections that follow begin with two brief excerpts from the *Conferences on the Hexaemeron*. In the first of these Bonaventure presents the proper order of studies, placing philosophy in relation to the theological summae, the writings of the saints, and the Bible. In the second he lists the major errors of Aristotle and attributes them to a rejection of Plato's theory of Ideas and, hence, exemplarism.

These are followed by the entire *The Mind's Journey into God*, in which Bonaventure traces a path upward from the material world through the senses; further up through the higher powers of the human mind, in their natural exercise and then as reformed through grace; to the knowledge of God, first as having the one divine nature and at last as the Trinity of Persons.

## 34. Conferences on the Hexaemeron

### Vision III, Discussion 7

#### *Introduction to the Fourth Vision or, Concerning the Study of Science, Sanctity, and Wisdom*

Now one should go on to the fourth vision, namely, of understanding through elevated contemplation. But since that vision is indeed great and the cognition of a great deal of the truth is included in it, before we treat it we set forth a transition from the aforesaid three visions, preparatory to the fourth.

It should be noted, then, that to go forth from Egypt, that is, from the darkness of curiosity, from vanity, from transitory and changeable things to the land of promise and the recognition of truth, is not for the Egyptians but rather for the sons of Israel. But the opposite movement, namely, from light to darkness, etc., is for the sons of perdition. Lucifer first began this movement, and those of his party imitated him: "I said, I will ascend into the heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, I will be like the Most High. But yet thou shalt be brought down to hell" (Isa. 14:13–15). He is imitated who dismissed the "tree of life," clinging to and savoring of the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Gen. 2:9). He hides himself from God after he sees himself naked and removed from all good habits, since he neglected the principal fruits, which are wisdom and charity, to which vanity is directly contrary. Solomon is imitated, who, after he had instructed the people in Proverbs, after he had shown in Ecclesiastes that everything transitory is vain and despicable, and had hastened to the true wisdom given in the Canticles, yet became curious and vain and, wishing to know everything, for-

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Translated for this volume by James J. Walsh from *S. Bonaventurae Collationes in Hexaëmeron*, ed. R. Delorme (Florence: Ad Claras Aquas, 1934). The biblical references are given in the Douay Version, in which the numbering of certain psalms differs from the King James Version.

got himself. It is patently obvious through this that there is no sure passage to wisdom through science.

Some wish to be all-wise and all-knowing, but it happens to them just as to the woman: "And the woman saw that the tree was good to eat, and fair to the eyes" (Gen. 3:6). They see the beauty of transitory science, and being delighted, they linger, they savor, and they are received. We do not belong to the party of their companions, the disciples of Solomon, but to that of David his father, who preferred the study of sanctity and wisdom to that of science. "Teach me goodness and discipline and knowledge," he said (Ps. 118:66). I wish to taste "how the Lord is sweet" (Ps. 33:9). But he came to this through discipline or science, but to wisdom through the exercise of science, but this with the help of the Most High. Hence, beginning with the principal prayer for the highest, he goes on to the accessories; he does not prefer the last to the first. It is a bad merchant who prefers tin to gold.

The good angels watch over the first movement, according to Augustine in *City of God*. Hence they are called angels since they are messengers, and since they are humble, they are glorified for this. The bad angels watch over the second movement, those who are called "quasi-knowing," since they teach one to prefer the study of science to that of sanctity. The demons achieve this many times through science, since unless it is watched very carefully, there is easy ruin in science. These demons are called "quasi-knowing" because they turned to a natural though depraved ruin. Bernard said, "The first vice is curiosity," and through it Lucifer and Adam fell, and many today are ruined. We should desire to know nothing unless we become more holy and go forward in the wisdom that takes us toward God. Otherwise, time is wasted in the instruction. "I have had understanding above the ancients: because I have sought thy commandments" (Ps. 118:100). The desire for science should be altered, then, lest we know more than one should.

It is therefore necessary to pay heed to how these things contemplated in science and sanctity should be

studied. "For the labor of fools shall afflict them that know not how to go to the city" (Eccles. 10:15), that is, to make progress in wisdom and the Scriptures and sanctity. Seneca said, "I have found many exercising the body, few the mind." Hugh says almost the same in the *Didascalion*: "Many are students, but few are wise." Proverbs: "I passed by the field of the slothful man," etc. (24:30). When he who has a good disposition neglects to study, he will be confused when touched by a word. Whence, "Diligently tend thy ground" (Prov. 24:27). Thus the manner of studying has four conditions, which are, order, assiduity, enjoyableness, and measure.

Order is given in many ways among diverse subjects, but, omitting the others, it is necessary to have the order whereby the prior does not become posterior nor vice versa. But there are four types of writings which are studied: first, the books of the Holy Scriptures, twenty-two in the Old Testament, eight in the New Testament; second, there are the books of the originals, namely, the saints; and the summae of the masters are the third writings; fourth, there are the writings of worldly learning. Thus, let him who wishes to learn, seek science at its source, namely, in Holy Scripture, since "the knowledge of salvation given for the remission of our sins" (Luke 1:77) is not found among the philosophers, nor among the summae of the masters, since they draw from the originals of the saints. But certain science cannot be taken from the originals beyond what the saints draw from Holy Scripture, since the saints could be deceived.

But the disciple of Christ ought first to study Holy Scripture, in which there is no error, just as boys first learn the letters, namely, ABC; afterwards, the syllables; then to read; then what the part and the construction signify; and then they understand. For he who refuses to learn the alphabet will never be proficient in grammar. Likewise for Holy Scripture: first one must study its letters and the text; and just as on the lute a certain string is necessary for harmony, so the entire Scripture is a kind of lute; and so one must have the entire text of the Holy Scripture at hand. Otherwise, one will never be a ready expositor of Holy Scripture.

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One can only come to the understanding of the letter through those [writings] in which the Holy Spirit has revealed it, as are the original [writings] of the saints. This is obvious in the book of Augustine, *Against Faustus*, where he allegorizes elegantly what he takes from others. Consider also his other books, destructive of error and constructive of truth. One must, then, have recourse to the originals of the saints, but they are also most difficult; some studying them have fallen into many errors and heresies. Hence there are the summae of the masters, in which those difficulties are elucidated; but beware of the multitude of writers. And then since these writings make use of the words of many philosophers, the student of Holy Scripture must hear and learn or add this.

Thus there is danger in descending to the originals; there is more danger in descending to the summae of the masters; but the greatest danger lies in descending to philosophy. This is because the words of the originals are pretty and can be too attractive; but Holy Scripture does not have pretty words like that. Augustine would not take it for good if I should prefer him to Christ because of the beauty of his words, just as Paul reproached those who wished to be baptized in the name of Paul. In the course of study, then, caution must be exercised in descending from careful attention in reading Scripture to the originals. There should be a similar warning about descending to the summae of the masters, for the masters sometimes do not understand the saints, as the Master of the *Sentences*, great as he was, did not understand Augustine in some places. Whence the summae of the masters are like the introductions of boys to the text of Aristotle. Let the student beware, then, lest he depart from the common way.

Likewise, the greatest danger is in the descent to philosophy. "Forasmuch as this people hath cast away the waters of Siloe, that go with silence, and hath rather taken Rasin, and the sons of Romelia: Therefore, behold, the Lord will bring upon them the waters of the river strong and many" (Isa. 8:6-7). Whence there is no going back into Egypt for such things.

Take note of how Jerome was scourged for such a descent, as he wrote in the letter *To Eustochius*; after the study of Cicero, he did not find relish in sacred letters. This was done to him for our sake. Hence the

masters and doctors of Scripture ought not prize the writings of philosophers, making themselves disciples in the example of those who cast away the waters of Siloe, in which there is the highest perfection, and go to philosophy, in which there is dangerous deception.

Take note of Gideon, whom the Lord commanded to test the people by the waters; and those who lapped were chosen, that is, those who drink moderately from philosophy. They were given vessels, trumpets, and torches in the battle-line, through which they conquered Madian. Those three hundred chosen for the battle are the preachers of Scripture, sounding the trumpet in preaching; the torches are miracles, the vessels are their bodies exposed for the truth. These terrify and subdue the enemy. The others who drank while lying down are those who give themselves entirely to philosophy, and they are not worthy to stand up in the battle-line, but they are bent over in submission to infinite errors, [treating] the sayings of certain philosophers as though they were the life-giving ferment of Scripture.

Again, take note of the sultan to whom the blessed Francis replied, when he wished to dispute with him about the faith, that faith is above reason and is proved

only by the authority of Scripture and the divine power, which is manifested in miracles; hence he made the fire that he wished to enter into their presence. For the water of philosophical science is not to be mingled with the wine of Holy Scripture merely so that the wine is transmitted into water, which is indeed a bad sign and contrary to the primitive church, when recently converted clerics such as Dionysius dismissed the books of the philosophers and took up the books of Holy Scripture. But in modern times the wine is changed into water and the bread into stone, just the reverse of the miracles of Christ.

The order thus is that first of all the letter and spirit of Holy Scripture is studied, and then the originals are read, and they are subordinated to Scripture. Likewise in passing over to the study of the writings of the philosophers; but the contrary is always done, since the professors, even if not openly, secretly read, copy, and conceal the quartos of the philosophers as though they were idols, like Rachel concealing the stolen idols of her father (Gen. 31:19ff.). Our waters, therefore, ought not go into the Dead Sea but return to the sea as in the drying up of the Jordan. There is, then, this kind of order in study.

## 35. Conferences on the Hexaemeron

### Vision I, Discussion 3

*On God, the Causal Exemplar of Everything, and on the Four Cardinal Virtues Exemplified There and Their Three Degrees*

“And God saw the light that it was good” (Gen. 1:4). This text was chosen because of the first vision of understanding given through nature. “God saw the light,” that is, he made the light to be seen. This was mentioned

above in the two Discussions of scientific consideration and how the light radiates as the truth of things, of words, and of manners, concerning which there are nine partial instructions and three principal rays.

Again, “God saw the light,” that is, he made [it] be seen through wisdom’s contemplation by illuminating the soul in itself, in reflection, and in understanding. And this last illumination in understanding is distinguished by six conditions that that light impresses in the mind; for it is the first simple cause, etc., and in creatures there are opposed conditions. The soul raises itself to that understanding by reason, experience, and understanding of the simple. From all of which, every perfection is given in the soul in those six conditions, since it has substance, power, operation, etc.

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Translated for this volume by James J. Walsh from S. *Bonaventurae Collationes in Hexaëmeron*, ed. R. Delorme (Florence: Ad Claras Aquas, 1934).

To all these the understanding given through nature reaches, and hence the philosophers have come to them; and so in them just as in the angels, "Light is divided from darkness" (Gen.1:4). Thus they knew that light as it is great in the quiddity of things, clear in the pronunciation of words, best in the ordering of manners.

But there was a difference as to whether in that light there is the characteristic of being the exemplar of everything, some saying that it knows itself alone, as in Book 11 of the *Metaphysics*, the last chapter: "And it moves through being loved and desired." These do not posit any exemplar at all. The first of these is Aristotle, who attacked eternal reasons and Ideas, as well as their defender, Plato. The commentator on Book 1 of the *Ethics*, where Aristotle proves that the highest good is not an Idea, replies to his arguments.

From this there follows a second error, namely, that the truth of divine providence and foreknowledge is put aside, if everything is not distinct in it. Whence they say that God knows nothing as a particular and that there is no truth of the future except by necessity, and so foreknowledge is removed and one must maintain that everything happens by chance. Hence fate is necessarily brought in, as the Arabs maintain, that is, the error that the substances moving the world are the causes of everything. And from this there follows the unsuitable position that the disposition of the world is beyond punishment and glory. For if those substances

do not err in moving, neither hell nor demon is posited; whence Aristotle did not posit demons nor more angels than celestial spheres.

Most of all, then, the truth of divine providence and the disposition of the world is put aside in this way. And thus in the putting aside of the truth there is given the error of the eternity of the world, as even Aristotle himself seems to sense, according to the doctors who impute this to him, namely, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa. From this there follows the unity of the intellect or its transmigration into another body or what is corporeal; and since it is not proper to posit an infinite number of intellects, he thought to posit one for all. All these follow if it is held that the world is eternal. And further, it follows that after this life there is neither punishment nor glory.

Those holding such views, therefore, fall into these errors, the understanding of which is closed by the key to the bottomless pit from which a great fog arises. It is more circumspect, then, to say that Aristotle did not feel that the world is eternal, whether he felt so or not, since he was so great that everyone followed him and was devoted to saying the same things; thus all the light determined in his predecessors was extinguished. But we follow him where he spoke well, not where he was in the dark, not on those matters of which he was ignorant or which he concealed. From doing that, men in this life are on the infinite precipice.

## 36. The Mind's Journey into God

### Prologue

[1] In the beginning I call upon the very first Beginning from Whom all enlightenment flows, the *Father of Lights*, from Whom is *every best and perfect gift*, that is upon the Eternal Father, through His Son, our Lord

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From *The Journey of the Mind to God*, tr. Philotheus Boehner (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993). Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

Jesus Christ, that, through the intercession of the most blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of that same God and our Lord Jesus Christ, and through that of blessed Francis, our guide and father, *He may enlighten the eyes of our mind to guide our feet into the way of that peace which surpasses all understanding*, that peace which our Lord Jesus Christ preached to us and which He gave to us. His message of peace our father Francis ever repeated, announcing "Peace" at the beginning and at the end of all his sermons, making every

greeting a wish for peace, making every prayer a sigh for ecstatic peace, like a citizen of that Jerusalem, about which the Man of Peace, *who was peaceable with those that hated peace*, exhorts us concerning it: *Pray for the things that are to the peace of Jerusalem*. For He knew indeed that only in peace was the throne of Solomon established, as it is written: *In peace is his place and his abode is in Zion*.

[2] Inspired by the example of our blessed father, Francis, I wanted to seek after this peace with yearning soul, sinner that I am and all unworthy, yet seventh successor as Minister to all the brethren in the place of the blessed father after his death; it happened that, thirty-three years after the death of the Saint, about the time of his passing, moved by a divine impulse, I withdrew to Mount Alverno, as to a place of quiet, there to satisfy the yearning of my soul for peace. While I dwelt there, pondering on certain spiritual ascents to God, I was struck, among other things, by that miracle which in this very place had happened to the blessed Francis, that is, the vision he received of the winged seraph in the form of the Crucified. As I reflected on this marvel, it immediately seemed to me that this vision might suggest the rising of Saint Francis into contemplation and point out the way by which that state of contemplation may be reached.

[3] The six wings of the Seraph can be rightly understood as signifying the six progressive illuminations by which the soul is disposed, as by certain grades or steps, to pass over to peace through the ecstatic transports of Christian wisdom. The road to this peace is through nothing else than a most ardent love of the Crucified, which so transformed Paul into Christ when he *was rapt to the third heaven* that he declared: *With Christ I am nailed to the Cross; it is now no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me*. This love so absorbed the soul of Francis too that his spirit shone through his flesh the last two years of his life, when he bore the most holy marks of the Passion in his body.

The figure of the six wings of the Seraph, therefore, brings to mind the six stages of illumination, which begin with creatures and lead up to God, into union with Whom no one rightly enters save through the Crucified. For *he who enters not by the door, but climbs up another way, is a thief and a robber. But if anyone enter by this door, he shall go in and out and shall find*

*pastures*. For this reason Saint John writes in the Apocalypse: *Blessed are they who wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and that by the gates they may enter into the city*; that is to say, no one can enter by contemplation into the heavenly Jerusalem unless he enters through the blood of the Lamb as through a door. For no one is in any way disposed for divine contemplations that lead to spiritual transports unless, like Daniel, he is also *a man of desires*. Now, such desires are enkindled in us in two ways, to wit, through *the outcry of prayer*, which makes one sigh *from anguish of heart*, and through *the refulgence of speculation* by which the mind most directly and intensely turns itself toward the rays of light.

[4] Wherefore, it is to groans of prayer through Christ Crucified, in Whose blood we are cleansed from the filth of vices, that I first of all invite the reader. Otherwise he may come to think that mere reading will suffice without fervor, speculation without devotion, investigation without admiration, observation without exultation, industry without piety, knowledge without love, understanding without humility, study without divine grace, the mirror without divinely inspired wisdom. To those, therefore, who are already disposed by divine grace, to the humble and pious, to the contrite and devout, to those who are anointed *with the oil of gladness*, to the lovers of divine wisdom and to those inflamed with a desire for it, to those who wish to give themselves to glorifying, admiring, and even savoring God, to those I propose the following considerations, wishing at the same time to warn them that the mirror of the external world put before them is of little or no avail unless the mirror of our soul has been cleansed and polished. First, then, O man of God, arouse in yourself remorse of conscience before you raise your eyes to the rays of Wisdom reflected in its mirrors, lest perchance from the very beholding of these rays you fall into a more perilous pit of darkness.

[5] I have thought it well to divide this tract into seven chapters, prefixing titles for the easier understanding of the matters about which we must speak. I entreat the reader to consider the intention of the writer more than the work, the sense of the words more than the uncultivated style, the truth more than the adornment, and the exercise of the affections more

than the instruction of the mind. He who would achieve this ought not to run perfunctorily through these considerations, but rather take his time and mull them over.

Here Begins the Reflection of the Poor  
Man in the Desert  
Chapter One  
The Steps in the Ascent to God and  
the Consideration of Him Through His  
Vestiges in the Universe

[1] *Blessed is the man whose help is from you; in this vale of tears he has determined in his heart to ascend by steps to the place which he has hoped for.* Since happiness is nothing else than the enjoyment of the Supreme Good, and the Supreme Good is above us, no one can enjoy happiness unless he rise above himself, not, indeed, by a bodily ascent, but by an ascent of the heart. But we cannot rise above ourselves unless a superior power raise us. However much, then, the steps of our interior progress may be well ordered, we can do nothing unless divine aid support us. This divine aid is at hand for all who seek it with a truly humble and devout heart, that is, by sighing for it in this vale of tears by fervent prayer. Prayer, then, is the mother and origin of every upward striving of the soul. Thus Dionysius, in his book *The Mystical Theology*, wishing to instruct us in the transports of soul, opens first with a prayer. Let us, therefore, also pray and say to the Lord, our God: *Lead me in your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth; let my heart rejoice that it may revere your name.*

[2] By so praying, we are given light to discern the steps of the soul's ascent to God. For we are so created that the material universe itself is a ladder by which we may ascend to God. And among things, some are vestiges, others, images; some corporeal, others, spiritual; some temporal, others, everlasting; some things are outside us, and some within. In order to arrive at the consideration of the First Principle, which is the most spiritual being and eternal and above us, we must pass through vestiges which are corporeal and temporal and outside us. This is what is meant by *being led in*

*the way of God.* Next, we must enter into our mind, which is the image of God, an image which is everlasting, spiritual, and within us. And this is *to walk in the truth of God.* Finally, looking to the First Principle, we must go beyond to what is eternal, most spiritual, and above us. This is *to rejoice in the knowledge and reverence of the Majesty of God.*

[3] This triple way of seeing, then, is equivalent to the three days' journey in the wilderness. It is like the threefold enlightenment of each day: the first is like evening; the second like morning; and the third like noonday. It reflects the threefold existence of things: in matter, in the understanding, and in the Eternal Art, according to which it was said: *Let it be, He made it, and it was made.* Finally, it reflects the threefold substance in Christ, Who is our ladder: His corporeal substance, His spiritual substance, and His divine substance.

[4] In keeping with this threefold progression, our mind has three principal ways of perceiving. In the first way it looks at the corporeal things outside itself, and so acting, it is called animality or sensibility. In the second, it looks within itself and into itself, and is then called spirit. In the third, it looks above itself, and is then called mind. All three ways should be employed to ascend to God, so that He may be loved *with the whole heart, and with the whole soul, and with the whole mind.* Herein lies the perfect observance of the Law and at the same time in this is found Christian wisdom.

[5] Each of the foregoing ways of seeing may be subdivided according to whether we consider God as the *Alpha* or the *Omega*, or whether we consider Him in any one of the aforesaid ways as through or as in a mirror. Or we may consider each of these ways in itself or in conjunction with another that is related to it. Therefore, these three principal steps of ascent must be increased to six in number. Thus, just as God created the whole world in six days and on the seventh day rested, so man, the microcosm, is led in a most ordered way, through six progressive steps of enlightenment, to the quiet of contemplation. Symbolically, the ascent to the throne of Solomon rose by six steps; the Seraphim that Isaiah saw had six wings; after six days the Lord *called Moses out of the midst of the cloud*; and as Saint Matthew tells us, it was *after six days* that

Christ led them up a high mountain by themselves, and was transfigured before them.

[6] Corresponding, therefore, to the six steps in the ascent to God, there are six gradated powers of the soul, whereby we ascend from the lowest things to the highest things, from things outside us to those that are within, and from the temporal to the eternal. These six powers are the senses, imagination, reason, understanding, intelligence, and the summit of the mind or the spark of synderesis. We have these powers implanted within us by nature, deformed through sin, reformed through grace. They must be cleansed by justice, trained by knowledge, and perfected by wisdom.

[7] According to the original disposition of nature, man was created fit for the quiet of contemplation and thus God placed him in the paradise of pleasure. But turning away from the true light to a changeable good, he and all his descendants were by his fault bent over by original sin, which infected human nature in a twofold manner: the mind with ignorance, and the flesh with concupiscence. The result is that man, blinded and bent over, sits in darkness and does not see the light of heaven, unless grace comes to his aid—with justice to fight concupiscence, and with knowledge and wisdom to oppose ignorance. These effects are brought about through Jesus Christ, who has become for us God-given wisdom, and justice, and sanctification, and redemption. For since He is the power and the wisdom of God, the incarnate Word is full of grace and of truth. He has made grace and truth, for He infuses into us the grace of charity, which, since it springs up from a pure heart and a good conscience and faith unfeigned, rectifies the whole soul in the threefold way of seeing mentioned above. He has taught the knowledge of truth according to the three ways of approaching theology: the symbolic, the proper, and the mystical, so that through symbolic theology we may rightly use sensible things; through proper theology, we may rightly use intelligible things; and through mystical theology, we may be rapt to ecstatic transports.

[8] He, therefore, who wishes to ascend to God must first avoid sin, which deforms nature. He must bring the natural powers of the soul under the influence of grace, which reforms them, and this he does through prayer; he must submit them to the purifying influence of justice, and this, in daily acts; he must

subject them to the influence of enlightening knowledge, and this, in meditation; and finally, he must hand them over to the influence of the perfecting power of wisdom, and this, in contemplation. For just as no one arrives at wisdom except through grace, justice, and knowledge, so it is that no one arrives at contemplation except through penetrating meditation, holy living, and devout prayer. And since grace is the foundation for righteousness of the will and for the penetrating enlightenment of reason, we must first of all pray. Next, we must live holily. Then we must gaze at the spectacles of truth and, by gazing at them, rise step by step until we reach the mountain height where the God of gods is seen on Zion.

[9] Now since it is necessary to ascend Jacob's ladder before we can descend it, let us place our first step in the ascent at the bottom, setting the whole visible world before us as a mirror through which we may pass over to God, the Supreme Creator. Thus we shall be as true Hebrews passing over from Egypt to the land promised to the patriarchs; we shall also be Christians passing over with Christ from this world to the Father; we shall be lovers of the Wisdom Who calls to us and says: *Pass over to me all you who desire me, and be filled with my fruits. For, from the greatness and the beauty of the creature comes a knowledge of their Creator.*

[10] The supreme power, wisdom, and goodness of the Creator shine forth in created things insofar as the bodily senses inform the interior senses. This is done in a threefold way. For the bodily senses serve the intellect when it investigates rationally, or believes faithfully, or contemplates intellectually. He who contemplates considers the actual existence of things; he who believes, the habitual course of things; he who investigates with his reason, the mighty excellence of things.

[11] In the first way of seeing, the observer considers things in themselves and sees in them weight, number, and measure: weight in respect to the place towards which things incline; number, by which things are distinguished; and measure, by which things are determined. Hence he sees in them their mode, species, and order, as well as substance, power, and activity. From all these considerations the observer can rise, as from a vestige, to the knowledge of the immense power, wisdom, and goodness of the Creator.

[12] In the second way of seeing—the way of faith—the believer considers this world in its origin, development, and end. For *by faith we understand that the world was fashioned by the Word of God*; by faith we believe that the periods of the three laws—of nature, of the Scriptures, and of grace—followed one another and have flowed on in a most orderly way; by faith we believe that the world must come to an end in the final judgment. In the first of these beliefs we consider the power of the highest Principle; in the second, His Providence; and in the third, His Justice.

[13] In the third way of seeing, he who investigates with his reason sees that some things merely exist; that others exist and live; that still others exist, live, and discern. He also sees that the first of these are the lesser ones, the second are intermediate, and the third are the better. Likewise, he sees that some things are merely corporeal, while others are partly corporeal and partly spiritual. From this observation he realizes that others are wholly spiritual, better and of more dignity than the first two modes of being. Moreover, he sees that some of these things are changeable and corruptible, such as terrestrial things; others are changeable and incorruptible, such as celestial things. And from this observation he realizes that some things are changeless and incorruptible, that is, supercelestial things. Therefore, from visible things the soul rises to the consideration of the power, wisdom, and goodness of God, insofar as He is existing, living, intelligent, purely spiritual, incorruptible, and immutable.

[14] We may extend this consideration to the sevenfold general properties of creatures, which bear a sevenfold witness to the power, wisdom, and goodness of God, if we consider the origin, greatness, multitude, beauty, plenitude, activity, and order of all things. The origin of things, according to their creation, distinction, and adornment as the work of the six days, proclaims the power of God that produced all things out of nothing, the wisdom of God that clearly differentiated all things, the goodness of God that lavishly adorned all things. The greatness of things also—looking at their lengthy extension, breadth, and depth, at the immense power extending itself in all directions, as is clear in the diffusion of light, and at the efficiency of their inner, uninterrupted and diffusive operation, as is manifest in the action of fire—clearly portrays the

immensity of the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Triune God, Who, uncircumscribed, exists in all things by His power, presence, and essence. Likewise, the multitude of things in their generic, specific, and individual diversity of substance, form, or figure, and the efficiency that is beyond all human estimation, manifestly suggests and shows the immensity of the three above-mentioned attributes in God. The beauty of things, too, if we but consider the diversity of lights, forms, and colors in elementary, inorganic, and organic bodies, as in heavenly bodies and in minerals, in stones and metals, and in plants and animals, clearly proclaims these three attributes of God. Insofar as matter is full of forms because of the seminal principles, and form is full of power because of its active potentialities, while power is capable of many effects because of its efficiency, the plenitude of things clearly proclaims the same three attributes. In like manner, manifold activity, whether natural, cultural, or moral, by its infinitely multiple variety, shows forth the immensity of that power, art, and goodness, which is for all things “the cause of being, the basis of understanding, and the norm of orderly conduct.” Finally, when we consider order in reference to duration, position, and influence, that is, from the standpoint of prior and posterior, superior and inferior, more noble and more ignoble, it clearly points out, first of all, in the book of creation, the primacy, sublimity, and dignity of the First Principle in regard to the infinity of His power; secondly, in the book of Scriptures, the order of divine laws, commands, and judgments shows the immensity of His wisdom; and lastly, in the body of the Church, the order of the divine Sacraments, rewards, and punishments reveals the immensity of His goodness. So it is that order itself leads us to that which is first and highest, most powerful, most wise, and best.

[15] Therefore, whoever is not enlightened by such great splendor in created things is blind; whoever remains unheeded of such great outcries is deaf; whoever does not praise God in all these effects is dumb; whoever does not turn to the First Principle after so many signs is a fool. So, open your eyes, alert the ears of your spirit, unlock your lips, and apply your heart that you may see, hear, praise, love, and adore, magnify, and honor your God in every creature, lest perchance the entire universe rise against you. For

because of this, *the whole world shall fight against the unwise*. But on the other hand, it will be a matter of glory for the wise, who can say with the prophet: *For you have given me, O Lord, a delight in your doings, and in the work of your hands I shall rejoice. How great are your works, O Lord! You have made all things in wisdom; the earth is filled with your riches.*

## Chapter Two The Consideration of God in His Vestiges in This Visible World

[1] We may behold God in the mirror of visible creation, not only by considering creatures as vestiges of God, but also by seeing Him in them; for He is present in them by His essence, His power, and His presence. And because this is a higher way of considering than the preceding one, it follows as the second step of contemplation, on which level we ought to be led to the contemplation of God in every creature that enters our mind through the bodily senses.

[2] It should be noted that this world, which is called the *macrocosm*, enters our soul, the *microcosm*, through the portals of the five senses insofar as sense objects are apprehended, enjoyed, and judged. This may be illustrated in the following way. In the visible world there are some things that generate, others that are generated, and still others that govern them both. Those things that generate are simple bodies, such as the heavenly bodies and the four elements. For everything that is generated or produced by a natural agency must be generated and produced from these elements through the power of light that harmonizes the contrariety of the elements in composite things. Those things that are generated are bodies composed of the elements, as are minerals, plants, animals, and human bodies. Those that govern both those that generate and those that are generated are spiritual substances, which may either be completely bound up with matter, as the souls of brutes, or separably linked with it, as are rational spirits; or they may be altogether free from matter, as are the celestial spirits, which the philosophers call Intelligences, and we call angels. According to the philosophers, it is the function of these latter to move the heavenly bodies. Consequently, the

administration of the universe is attributed to them, inasmuch as they receive from the first cause, God, an influx of power which they, in turn, dispense in the work of administration that has to do with the natural stability of things. According to the theologians, however, the ruling of the universe is attributed to the angels according to the command of the most high God with reference to the works of reparation. Accordingly they are called *ministering spirits, sent to serve for the sake of those who shall inherit salvation*.

[3] Man, therefore, who is called a microcosm, has five senses that serve as five portals through which the knowledge of all things existing in the visible world enters his soul. For through sight enter sublime and luminous bodies and all other colored things; through touch, solid and terrestrial bodies; through the three intermediate senses, intermediate bodies: the moist through taste, the aerial through hearing, the vaporous through smell. These last have in them something of the humid, something of the airy, and something of the fiery or the hot, as is evidenced in the aroma from spices.

Through these portals, then, both simple bodies and composite bodies made up of simple ones enter the soul. We perceive by the senses not only particular sense objects, such as light, sound, smell, taste, and the four primary qualities that the sense of touch apprehends, but also common sense objects, such as number, size, form, rest, and motion. And since everything that is moved is moved by another, and since, also, certain things move and come to rest of themselves—animals, for instance—we are led, when we perceive bodily motion through the five senses, to the knowledge of spiritual movers, as from an effect to the knowledge of causes.

[4] The whole of this visible world, then, in its three classes of things, enters the human soul through apprehension. These visible and external things are what first enter the soul through the doors of the five senses. Yet these enter not through their substances but through similitudes generated in the medium, and pass then from the medium into the organ. From the external organ they pass into the internal organ and thence into the apprehensive faculty. Thus, the generation of the species in the medium, and its passing from the medium to the organ, and the turning of the

apprehensive faculty upon it leads to the apprehension of all those things which the soul apprehends from outside itself.

[5] From this apprehension, if it is of a suitable object, pleasure follows. Properly speaking, the senses are delighted in an object perceived through the abstracted similitude, either by reason of its beauty as in sight or by reason of its sweetness as in smell or hearing or by reason of its wholesomeness as in taste and touch. For all pleasure is founded on proportion. But since the species shares the character of form, power, and activity, according to the relation it has to the source from which it emanates, to the medium through which it passes, or to the goal for which it aims, so proportion is observed in the similitude insofar as it has the character of the species or form, and then it is called beauty, because "beauty is nothing other than numbered equality, or a certain disposition of parts, together with a suavity of color." Again, proportion is observed insofar as it has the character of power or strength, and then it is called sweetness, when the acting power does not disproportionally exceed the recipient sense. For the senses are pained by extremes and delighted by moderation. Finally, proportion is observed insofar as it has the character of efficacy and effect, which is proportionate when the agent, by its action, satisfies a need of the recipient. This the agent does by protecting and nourishing the recipient, and this is most apparent in taste and touch. Thus through pleasure, external delights enter the soul by means of their similitudes, according to any of the three kinds of pleasure.

[6] After this apprehension and delight, there follows judgment by which one not only decides whether this thing is black or white, for this pertains to a particular sense, or whether it is wholesome or harmful, for this pertains to an internal sense, but even judges and gives an account of why this object delights. In this act of judging, one inquires into the reason for the pleasure which the senses derive from the object. Now when we inquire into the reason why an object is beautiful, sweet, and wholesome, we find that it consists in a certain proportion of equality. But the nature of equality is the same in both large and small objects: it is not increased by dimensions; neither does it change or pass away with things that change; nor is it

altered by movements. It abstracts, therefore, from place and time and motion, and for this reason it is immutable; nor can it have any limits in space and time — it is absolutely spiritual. Judgment, therefore, is an action which, by purifying and abstracting the sensory likeness received sentiently by the senses, causes it to enter into the intellective faculty. And so this whole external world must enter the human soul through the doors of the senses, according to the three aforementioned activities.

[7] Yet all these activities are vestiges in which we can perceive our God. For, since the perceived species is a similitude generated in the medium and then impressed on the organ itself, and through this impression it leads us to its starting point, that is, to the object to be known, this process manifestly suggests that the Eternal Light begets from itself a Likeness, a coequal, consubstantial, and coeternal Splendor. We can perceive that He Who is the *image of the invisible God* and *the brightness of his glory* and *the image of his substance*, Who is everywhere by His first generation like an object that generates its similitude in the entire medium, is united by the grace of union to the individual of rational nature as the species is united with the bodily organ, so that through this union He may lead us back to the Father, as to the Fountainhead and Object. If, therefore, all knowable things must generate a likeness of themselves, they manifestly proclaim that in them, as in mirrors, can be seen the eternal generation of the Word, the Image, and the Son, eternally emanating from God the Father.

[8] Similarly, the species which delights because it is beautiful, sweet, and wholesome leads one to realize that there exists a first beauty, sweetness, and wholesomeness in that first Species, in which there is the utmost proportion to and equality with the One generating. In this first Species there is power, intimated not by means of phantasms but by the truth of apprehension. In this first Species also there is an impact that preserves, satisfies, and completely dispels the needs of the beholder. Therefore, if *delight is the union of the suitable with the suitable*, and if the Likeness of God alone has the character of that which is most beautiful, most sweet, and most wholesome, and if it is united in truth, intimacy, and a plenitude that fills every capacity, it can be seen clearly that in God

alone is the fountain of true delight and that from all other delights we are led on to the seeking of Him.

[9] Judgment, however, leads us in a still more excellent and more immediate way to a surer beholding of eternal truth. For, if judgment has to be made by reason that abstracts from place, time, and change, and hence also from dimension, succession, and mutability, it is made by a reason which is immutable and without limits in time or space. But nothing is absolutely immutable and unlimited in time and space unless it is eternal, and everything that is eternal is either God or in God. If, therefore, everything which we judge in a more certain manner, we judge by such a reason, then the following is clear: God is for all things the reason and the infallible rule and the light of truth. All things shine forth in this light in a manner which is infallible and indelible, in a manner which does not admit of doubt or possibility of refutation or second judgment on our part, or change, or limit in space and time, and in a manner that is indivisible and intellectual. Therefore, those laws by which we judge with certainty about all sense objects that come to our knowledge, since they are laws that are infallible and indubitable to the intellect of him who apprehends, since they cannot be eradicated from the memory of him who recalls, for they are always present, since they do not admit of refutation or judgment by the intellect of him who judges, because, as Saint Augustine says, “No one judges of them but by them,” these laws must be changeless and incorruptible, since they are necessary. They must be without limits in space because they are not circumscribed by any place. They must be without limits in time since they are eternal, and for this reason they cannot be divided into parts since they are intellectual and incorporeal, not made but uncreated, existing eternally in the Eternal Art, by which, through which, and according to which all beautiful things are formed. Therefore they cannot be judged with certainty except by that Eternal Art which is not only the form that produces all things, but also the form that conserves and differentiates them, for this is the Being that contains the form in all creatures, and is the rule that directs the form in all things. Through it our mind judges all things that enter it through the senses.

[10] This speculation is extended by considering the seven differences of numbers by which, as by seven steps, we ascend to God, as Saint Augustine makes clear in his books, *On the True Religion* and *On Music*, Book 6. In these passages he points out the differences of numbers, which ascend step by step from these visible creatures to the Artificer of all numbered things, so that God may be seen in all of them.

He declares that there are numbers in bodies and especially in sounds and voices, and these he calls “sounding numbers.” Secondly, there are numbers which are drawn from these and which are received into the sense faculty, and these he calls “reacting numbers.” Thirdly, there are numbers that proceed from the soul into the body, as is clear in gesturing and in dancing, and these he calls “forthcoming numbers.” Fourthly, there are numbers in the pleasures of the senses, which result when the attention turns towards the likenesses they have perceived, and these he calls “sensuous numbers.” Fifthly, there are numbers retained in the memory, and these he calls “memorial numbers.” Sixthly, there are numbers by which we judge all the foregoing numbers, and these he calls “judicial numbers,” which, as has been said, are necessarily above the mind, since they are infallible and beyond any evaluation on our part. These last are the ones that impress on our minds the “artistic numbers,” which, however, Saint Augustine does not enumerate in the classification because they are linked with the “judicial numbers.” And from these “artistic numbers” also flow the “forthcoming numbers” from which are created the numerous forms of artifacts. Thus from the highest numbers, through the intermediate, to the lowest, there is a gradated descent. And to the highest numbers in turn, we ascend step by step from the “sounding numbers,” by means of the intermediate “reacting,” “sensuous,” and “memorial numbers.” Therefore, since all things are beautiful and in some way delightful, and since beauty and delight do not exist without proportion, and since proportion exists primarily in numbers, all things are subject to number. Hence “number is the principal exemplar in the mind of the Creator” and, in things, the principal vestige leading to Wisdom. And since number is most evident to all and very close to God, it leads us, by its seven-

fold distinction, very close to Him; it makes Him known in all bodily and visible things when we apprehend numerical things, when we delight in numerical proportions, and when we judge irrefutably by the laws of numerical proportions.

[11] From these first two steps by which we are led to behold God in vestiges, like the two wings drooping about the feet of the Seraph, we can gather that all creatures in this visible world lead the spirit of the contemplative and wise man to the eternal God. For creatures are shadows, echoes, and pictures of that first, most powerful, most wise, and most perfect Principle, of that first eternal Source, Light, Fullness, of that first efficient, exemplary and ordering Art. They are the vestiges, images, and displays presented to us for the contuition of God, and the divinely given signs wherein we can see God. These creatures are exemplars, or rather illustrations offered to souls as yet untrained, and immersed in the senses, so that through these sensible things that they see they may be transported to the intelligible which they do not see, as through signs to that which is signified.

[12] For creatures of this visible world signify the invisible things of God: partly, because God is the Origin, Exemplar, and End of every creature,—and every effect is a sign of its cause; every example a sign of its exemplar; and every way a sign of the end to which it leads,—partly by their own power of representation; partly because of their prophetic prefiguring; partly because of angelic operation; partly also by virtue of supernatural institution. For every creature is by its very nature a figure and likeness of eternal Wisdom, but especially a creature that has been raised by the Spirit of Prophecy to prefigure spiritual things in the book of Scriptures; and more especially those creatures in whose figures it pleased God to appear through the ministry of the angels; and, finally, and most especially, any creature which He chose to institute for the purpose of signifying, and which has not only the character of sign in the ordinary sense of the term, but also the character of sacrament as well.

[13] From all this, one can gather that *since the creation of the world his invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood through the things that are made. And so they are without excuse* who are unwilling to

take notice of these things, or to know, bless, and love God in them, since they are unwilling to be transported *out of darkness into the marvelous light* of God. *But thanks be to God through our Lord, Jesus Christ, Who has transported us out of darkness into his marvelous light*, since by these lights externally given, we are disposed to reenter the mirror of our mind, wherein shine forth divine things.

### Chapter Three The Consideration of God Through His Image Imprinted on Our Natural Powers

[1] The first two steps, by leading us to God through the vestiges through which He shines forth in all creatures, have thereby led us to reenter into ourselves, that is, into our mind, where the divine image shines forth. Now it is, on a third step, that entering into ourselves, and, as it were, forsaking the outer court, we ought to strive to see God through a mirror in the Sanctuary, that is, in the area before the Tabernacle. Here the light of Truth, as from a candelabra, will shine upon the face of our mind, in which the image of the most blessed Trinity appears in splendor.

Enter into yourself, therefore, and observe that your soul loves itself most fervently. It could not love itself unless it knew itself, nor could it know itself unless it summoned itself to memory, for we do not grasp any thing with our understanding unless it is present to our memory. From these considerations notice, not with your bodily eyes, but with the eye of your mind, that your soul has three powers. Consider, therefore, the activities of these three powers and their relationships, and you will be able to see God through yourself as through an image; and this indeed is to *see through a mirror in an obscure manner*.

[2] The function of the memory is to retain and represent not only present, corporeal, and temporal things, but also successive, simple, and everlasting things. It retains the past by remembrance, the present by receiving things into itself, and the future by foresight. It retains also simple things which are the principles of continuous and discrete quantities, such as a point, an instant, and a unit, without which it is

impossible to bring to our memory or to think of things which stem from them. It retains also in a permanent way the principles and axioms of the sciences. For, as long as one uses reason he can never forget them, so that on hearing them again he would approve and give his assent to them not as though he perceives them anew, but rather as though he recognizes them as innate and familiar. That this is so becomes clear when one proposes the following principle: “Each thing is either affirmed or denied”; or “Every whole is greater than its part”; or any other axiom that may not be contradicted in the “interior discourse of the soul.”

In its first activity, the actual retention of all things in time—past, present, and future—the memory is an image of eternity, whose indivisible present extends itself to all times. From its second activity, it is evident that the memory has to be informed not only from the outside by phantasms but also from above, by receiving and having in itself simple forms that cannot enter through the doors of the senses, nor through sensible phantasms. From the third activity, we hold that the memory has present in itself a changeless light in which it recalls changeless truths. And thus it is clear from the activities of the memory that the soul itself is an image of God and a similitude so present to itself and having Him so present to it that it actually grasps Him and potentially “is capable of possessing Him and of becoming a partaker in Him.”

[3] The activity of the intellective faculty consists in understanding the meaning of terms, propositions, and inferences. The intellect grasps the meaning of terms when it understands by a definition what each thing is. But a definition must be given in more general terms; these, in turn, must be defined by others still more general, until we arrive at the highest and most general. If these last are unknown, we cannot understand the less general by way of definition. Consequently, unless one knows what being *per se* is, he cannot fully know the definition of any particular substance. But being *per se* cannot be known unless it is known together with its properties, which are one, true, and good. And since being can be understood as incomplete or as complete, as imperfect or as perfect, as in potency or in act, as existing in a qualified or in an unqualified manner, as a part or as a whole, as transient or permanent, as existing through something else

or *per se*, as mixed with non-being or as pure being, as dependent or as absolute, as posterior or prior, as changeable or unchangeable, as simple or composite, and since “privations and defects can in no way be known except through something positive,” therefore our intellect does not make a full and ultimate analysis of any single created being unless it is aided by a knowledge of the most pure, most actual, most complete and absolute Being, which is Being unqualified and eternal, and in Whom are the essences of all things in their purity. For how could the intellect know that a specific being is defective and incomplete if it had no knowledge of the Being that is free from all defect? And in like manner may we reason about the other properties mentioned before.

Secondly, the intellect can be said truly to comprehend the meaning of propositions when it knows with certainty that they are true; and to know in this way is really to know, for it cannot be deceived in such comprehension. Since it knows that this truth cannot be otherwise, it knows also that this truth is changeless. But since our mind itself is changeable, it could not see this truth shining forth in so changeless a manner were it not for some other light absolutely and unchangeably resplendent; nor can this light possibly be a created light subject to change. The intellect, therefore, knows in that light *that enlightens every man who comes into the world*, which is the *True Light* and the *Word in the beginning with God*.

Finally, our intellect only then truly grasps the meaning of an inference when it sees that the conclusion follows necessarily from the premises and when it sees this inference not only in necessary but also in contingent matters, as, for example, “If a man runs, a man moves.” Our mind perceives this necessary relationship not only in regard to existent things, but also in regard to non-existent ones. For just as it follows, granted a man’s existence, that “If a man runs, a man moves,” so also does the same conclusion follow if he does not exist at all. But such necessity of inference does not follow from the existence of the thing in matter, since it is contingent; nor from its existence in the mind, because that thing would be merely a fiction in the mind if it did not exist in reality. Hence it must come from the exemplar of it in the Eternal Art, according to which things have a link and relation to one

another that follows their representation in the Eternal Art. Thus, as Saint Augustine says in *On the True Religion*, "The light of one who reasons truly is enkindled by that Truth and strives to go back to It." From this it is manifestly evident that our understanding is joined to eternal Truth Itself, and if this light does not teach, no truth can be grasped with certitude. You are able, then, to see within yourself the Truth that teaches you, if desires and sensory images do not hinder you and become as clouds between you and the ray of Truth.

[4] The activity of the elective faculty is found in counsel, judgment, and desire. Counsel consists in inquiring which is better, this or that. But something can be said to be better only because it approaches the best. The approach to the best, however, is greater the more it is like the best. No one therefore knows whether this thing is better than that unless he knows that this is to a higher degree more like the best. And no one knows that one thing is more like another unless he knows the other. For I do not know that this man is like Peter unless I know or recognize Peter. Therefore, a knowledge of the highest good must necessarily be impressed on all who give counsel.

Moreover, a sure judgment in regard to things about which we give counsel is made according to some law. No one, however, judges with certainty according to a law unless he is certain that the law is right and that he should not be a judge of it. But our mind does judge about itself. And since the mind cannot judge the law according to which it makes judgments, that law is higher than our mind. The mind judges according to this law because it is stamped on the mind. But there is nothing higher than the human mind save only Him who made it. Therefore, in its judging, our deliberative faculty reaches the divine laws if it makes a full and ultimate analysis.

Finally, desire is concerned principally with what moves it most, but that moves it most which is loved most, and what is loved most is happiness. But happiness is not attained unless the best and ultimate end is possessed. Human desire, therefore, seeks whatever it seeks only because of the highest Good, because what it seeks either leads to the highest Good or has some likeness to it. So great is the power of the highest Good that nothing can be loved by a creature except through

the desire for that Good, so that he who takes the likeness and the copy for truth errs and goes astray.

See, therefore, how close the soul is to God, and how, through their activity, memory leads us to Eternity, intelligence to Truth, and the elective faculty to the highest Good.

[5] Moreover, if one considers the order, the origin, and the relationship of these faculties to one another, he is led up to the most blessed Trinity Itself. For from memory comes forth intelligence as its offspring, because we understand only when the likeness which is in the memory emerges at the high point of our understanding and this likeness is the mental word. From the memory and the intelligence is breathed forth love, as the bond of both. These three—the generating mind, the word, and love—exist in the soul as memory, intelligence, and will, which are consubstantial, coequal, equally everlasting, and mutually inclusive. If God, therefore, is a perfect spirit, then He has memory, intelligence, and will. He also has a Word begotten and a Love breathed forth, which are necessarily distinct, since one is produced by the other—a production, not of another essence, nor merely of an accidental difference, but a production of a distinct Person.

The mind, then, when it considers itself by looking into itself as through a mirror, rises to the speculation of the blessed Trinity, the Father, the Word, and Love, Three Persons coeternal, coequal and consubstantial, so that whatever is in any one is in the others, but one is not the other, but all three are one God.

[6] To achieve this reflection which the soul has of its unique principle that is triune through the trinity of its powers, by which it is the image of God, it is aided by the lights of the sciences which perfect and inform it and represent the most blessed Trinity in a three-fold manner. For all philosophy is either natural, or rational, or moral. The first is concerned with the cause of being, and thus leads to the Power of the Father; the second is concerned with the basis of understanding, and thus leads to the Wisdom of the Word; the third deals with the ordering of our life and thus leads to the Goodness of the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, the first, natural philosophy, is divided into metaphysics, mathematics, and physics. Metaphysics deals with the essences of things; mathematics

with numbers and figures; and physics with natures, powers, and diffusive operations. Thus the first leads to the first Principle, the Father; the second, to His Image, the Son; and the third, to the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The second, rational philosophy, is divided into grammar, which makes men capable of expressing themselves; logic, which makes them keen in argumentation; and rhetoric, which makes them apt to persuade or move others. This likewise suggests the mystery of the most blessed Trinity.

The third, moral philosophy, is divided into individual, familial, and political. The first of these suggests the unbegotten nature of the First Principle; the second, the familial relationship of the Son; and the third, the generosity of the Holy Spirit.

[7] All these branches of knowledge have certain and infallible laws as lights and beacons shining down into our mind from the eternal law. And thus our mind, enlightened and overflowed by so much brightness, unless it is blind, can be guided through looking at itself to contemplate that eternal Light. And, in truth, the consideration of this Light's irradiation raises up in admiration the wise; but on the contrary, the unwise, who do not believe so that they may understand, it leads to confusion. Hence is fulfilled the prophecy: *You enlighten wonderfully from the everlasting mountains. All the foolish of heart were troubled.*

#### Chapter Four The Consideration of God in His Image Reformed Through the Gifts of Grace

[1] Since we contemplate the First Principle not only by going through us, but also within us, and since this kind of consideration is more excellent than the former, therefore it serves as the fourth step in contemplation. It seems strange indeed that after what has been shown of God's closeness to our souls there are so few concerned about perceiving the First Principle within themselves. Yet the explanation of this is immediately at hand. Distracted by many cares, the human mind does not enter into itself through the memory; beclouded by sense images, it does not come back to itself through the intelligence; and drawn away by the concupiscences, it does not return to itself

through the desire for interior sweetness and spiritual joy. Therefore, completely immersed in things of sense, the soul cannot reenter into itself as the image of God.

[2] And just as, when one has fallen, he must lie where he is unless someone join him and lend a hand to raise him up, so our soul could not be perfectly lifted up out of these things of sense to see itself and the eternal Truth in itself had not Truth, taking on human form in Christ, become a ladder restoring the first ladder that had been broken in Adam.

Thus it is that, no matter how enlightened one may be by the light coming from nature and from acquired knowledge, he cannot enter into himself to delight in the Lord except through the mediation of Christ, Who says, *I am the door. If anyone enter by me he shall be safe, and shall go in and out, and shall find pastures.* But we do not come to this door unless we believe in Him, hope in Him, and love Him. Therefore, if we wish to enter again into the enjoyment of Truth as into Paradise, we must enter through faith, hope, and love of the Mediator between God and men, Jesus Christ, Who is like *the Tree of life in the midst of Paradise.*

[3] The image of our soul, therefore, must be clothed with the three theological virtues, by which the soul is purified, enlightened, and perfected. In this way the image is reformed and made conformable to the heavenly Jerusalem, and becomes a part of the Church Militant, which according to the Apostle, is the offspring of the heavenly Jerusalem. For he says, *That Jerusalem which is above is free, which is our mother.* The soul, therefore, now believing and hoping in Jesus Christ and loving Him, Who is the incarnate, uncreated, and inspired Word—the Way, the Truth, and the Life—when she by faith believes in Christ as in the uncreated Word, Who is the Word and the brightness of the Father, recovers her spiritual hearing and sight,—her hearing to receive the words of Christ, and her sight to view the splendors of that Light. When the soul longs with hope to receive the inspired Word, she recovers, by her desire and affection, the spiritual sense of smell. When she embraces with love the Incarnate Word, inasmuch as she receives delight from Him and passes over to Him in ecstatic love, she recovers her sense of taste and touch. Having recovered the spiritual senses, the soul now sees, hears, smells, tastes, and embraces her beloved

and can sing as the bride of the *Canticle of Canticles*, which was composed for the exercise of contemplation proper to the fourth step. No one reaches this except him who receives it, for it consists more in the experience of the affections than in the considerations of the mind. It is at this step, where the interior senses have been restored to see what is most beautiful, to hear what is most harmonious, to smell what is most fragrant, to taste what is most sweet, and to embrace what is most delightful, that the soul is prepared for spiritual transports through devotion, admiration, and exultation, corresponding to the three exclamations uttered in the *Canticle of Canticles*. The first of these is uttered out of the abundance of devotion, by which the soul becomes *as a pillar of smoke of aromatic spices, of myrrh and frankincense*. The second is uttered out of the exuberance of admiration by which the soul becomes as the dawn, the moon, and the sun, according to the degree of enlightenment that lifts up the soul to admire the Bridegroom whom she contemplates. The third is uttered out of the superabundance of exultation, because of which the soul is made to overflow *with delights* of most sweet pleasure, *leaning wholly upon her beloved*.

[4] When these things have been attained, our spirit is made hierarchical so that it may continue upward to the degree that it is in conformity with the heavenly Jerusalem. For into this heavenly Jerusalem no one enters unless it first comes down into his heart by grace, as Saint John beheld in the Apocalypse. It comes down into our heart when, by the reformation of the image, the theological virtues, the delights of the spiritual senses, and uplifting transports, our spirit becomes hierarchical, that is, purified, enlightened, and perfected. Thus our spirit is sealed with the nine degrees of orders, when in its inner depths the following are arranged in proper order: announcing, dictating, guiding, ordering, strengthening, commanding, receiving, revealing, and anointing, and these correspond, step by step, to the nine orders of angels. In the human mind the first three degrees of the aforementioned orders concern nature; the following three, activity; and the last three, grace. Having obtained these, the soul, entering into itself, enters into the celestial Jerusalem, where, considering the order of the angels, it sees in them God, who dwells in them and performs

all their works. That is why Saint Bernard says in his letter to Pope Eugene IV that "God in the Seraphim loves as charity, in the Cherubim knows as truth, in the Thrones resides as equity, in the Dominations he prevails as majesty, in the Principalities he rules as power, in the Powers he guards as salvation, in the Virtues he acts as strength, in the Archangels he reveals as light, and in the Angels he assists as kindness." From all this, God is seen to be as *all in all* when we contemplate Him in our minds where He dwells through the gifts of the most bountiful love.

[5] On this level of contemplation the study of the divinely revealed Sacred Scriptures is most especially helpful, as philosophy was for the preceding step. For Sacred Scripture is concerned principally with the work of reparation. Hence it treats mainly of faith, hope, and charity, by which the soul must be reformed, and most especially of charity. The Apostle says that charity is the end of the commandment, inasmuch as it stems *from a pure heart and a good conscience and faith unfeigned*. It is the *fulfillment of the Law*, the same Apostle says. And our Savior asserts that the whole Law and the Prophets depend on these two commandments, the love of God and of our neighbor. These two are found united in the one Spouse of the Church, Jesus Christ, Who is at one and the same time our Neighbor and our God, our Brother and our Lord, our King and our Friend, the Word incarnate and the uncreated Word, our Maker and our Re-maker, the *Alpha* and the *Omega*, Who is also the supreme Hierarchy, Who purifies, enlightens, and perfects His spouse, that is, the whole Church and every sanctified soul.

[6] All Sacred Scripture, therefore, treats of this Hierarchy and of the hierarchy of the Church. By it we are taught how to be purified, enlightened, and perfected according to the threefold law handed down: the law of nature, the law of Scriptures, and the law of grace. Or rather, they correspond to its three principal parts, the Law of Moses which purifies, the Prophetic Revelation which enlightens, and the Evangelical doctrine which perfects. Or more especially, they correspond to its three spiritual meanings: the topological which purifies for righteousness of life, the allegorical which enlightens for clearness of understanding, and the anagogical which perfects through

spiritual transports and the most sweet perceptions of wisdom. All this takes place in keeping with the three aforementioned theological virtues, the reformed spiritual senses, the three spiritual transports, and the hierarchical acts of the mind by which it turns back to its interior, there to see God *in the brightness of his saints*; and there as in her resting place she sleeps in peace and rests while the bridegroom beseeches that the spouse may not be awakened until she pleases to come forth.

[7] Thus by these two intermediate steps through which we enter into the contemplation of God within us as in mirrors of created images, like the two middle wings of the Seraph spread for flight, we can understand how we are guided to things divine through the rational soul itself and its naturally implanted faculties, considered in their activities, their relationships, and their possession of sciences. This is apparent from the explanation of the third step. We are also guided by the reformed faculties of the soul itself. This takes place with the help of freely given virtues, spiritual senses, and spiritual transports. And this becomes clear in the fourth step. Moreover we are guided by the hierarchical activities of the human soul, its purification, enlightenment, and perfection, and by the hierarchical revelations of Sacred Scripture, given to us by the angels, according to the word of the Apostle that the Law was given *by angels through a mediator*. And finally, we are led through the hierarchies and the hierarchical orders which must be arranged in our mind as they are in the heavenly Jerusalem.

[8] Filled with all these intellectual lights, our mind, like the house of God, is inhabited by Divine Wisdom; it is made a daughter, a spouse, and a friend of God; it is made a member, a sister, a co-heir of Christ the Head; it is made the temple of the Holy Spirit, faith laying the foundation, hope building it up, and sanctity of soul and body dedicating it to God. All this is accomplished by the most sincere love of Christ, which *is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us*, without Whom we cannot know the mysteries of God. For no one can *know the things of a man save the spirit of the man which is in him*. Even so, *the things of God no one knows but the Spirit of God*. Let us, therefore, be rooted and grounded in charity *that we may be able to comprehend with all the saints*

*what is the length* of the eternity, the breadth of the generosity, the height of the majesty, and the depth of the discerning Wisdom of God.

## Chapter Five The Consideration of the Divine Unity Through Its Primary Name Which Is *Being*

[1] It is possible to contemplate God not only outside us and within us but also above us: outside, through vestiges of Him; within, through His image; and above, through the light that shines upon our mind. This is the light of Eternal Truth, since “our mind itself is immediately informed by Truth Itself.” Those who have become practiced in the first way of contemplation have already entered the atrium before the Tabernacle; those who have become practiced in the second have entered into the Sanctuary; and those who are practiced in the third, enter with the High Priest into the Holy of Holies, where the two Cherubim of Glory stand over the Ark, overshadowing the Mercy-Seat. By these Cherubim we understand the two kinds or grades of contemplation of the invisible and eternal things of God: the first considers the essential attributes of God; the second, the proper attributes of the three Persons.

[2] The first approach fixes the soul’s gaze primarily and principally on Being Itself, declaring that the first name of God is *He Who is*. The second approach fixes the soul’s gaze on the Good Itself, saying that this is the first name of God. The former looks especially to the Old Testament, which proclaims chiefly the unity of the divine essence. Hence it was said to Moses, *I am Who am*. The latter looks to the New Testament, which determines the plurality of the Divine Persons by baptizing *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit*. Thus it is that Christ, our Master, wishing to raise up to the perfection of the Gospel the youth who had observed the Law, attributed to God principally and exclusively the name of *Goodness*. For He says, *No one is good but only God*. Hence Saint John Damascene, following Moses, says that *He who is* is the first name of God; whereas Dionysius, following Christ, says that *Good* is the first name of God.

[3] He, therefore, who wishes to contemplate the invisible things of God in relation to the unity of His

essence should fix the attention of his soul on Being Itself and see that Being Itself is so absolutely certain that it cannot be thought not to be, because the most pure Being Itself does not come to our mind except with the full flight of non-being, in the same way as absolute nothing does not come to our mind except with the full flight of being. Just as, therefore, complete nothingness contains nothing of being or of its attributes, so contrariwise, being itself contains nothing of non-being, either in act or in potency, in objective truth or in our estimate of it. But since non-being is the privation of being, it does not come into the intellect except by means of being. Being, however, does not come to us by means of something else, because everything that is grasped by the intellect is grasped either as non-being, or as being in potency, or as being in act. If, therefore, non-being cannot be grasped except through being, and if being in potency cannot be understood except through being in actuality, and if being designates the pure actuality of being, then being is that which first comes into the intellect, and this being is that which is pure act. But this being is not a particular being which is a limited being, since any such particular being is mixed with potentiality. Neither is it analogous being, for that has the least actuality, since it least exists. It remains, therefore, that the being which we are considering is the Divine Being.

[4] Strange, then, is the blindness of the intellect which does not consider that which it sees before all others and without which it can recognize nothing. But just as the eye, intent on the various differences of color, does not see the light through which it sees other things, or if it does see, does not notice it, so our mind's eye, intent on particular and universal beings, does not notice that Being which is beyond all categories, even though it comes first to the mind, and through it, all other things. Wherefore it appears most true that "as the eye of the bat is disposed towards the light, so the eye of our mind is disposed towards the most evident things of nature." Thus our mind, accustomed as it is to the opaqueness in beings and the phantasms of visible things, seems to itself to be seeing nothing when it gazes upon the light of the highest being. It does not understand that this very darkness is the supreme illumination of our mind,

just as when the eye sees pure light, it seems to be seeing nothing.

[5] Behold, if you can, this most pure Being, and you will find that it cannot be thought of as a being attained through something else. Hence, it must necessarily be thought of as absolutely first, and it cannot come into existence from nothing or from something else. For what else exists of itself if Being itself is not due to itself and not dependent on something else? This most pure Being, likewise, appears to you as absolutely lacking in non-being, and therefore as having no beginning and no end, but as eternal. Furthermore, it appears to you as having nothing whatsoever except this very being itself and, hence, as having no composition, but as most simple. It appears to you as having nothing of possibility, since every possible being has in some way something of non-being, and hence it is supremely and in the highest degree actual. It appears to you as having no defect and thus is most perfect. Finally, it appears to you as having no diversity, and because of this, is supremely one.

Therefore, that Being which is pure being and simple being and absolute being is the primary being, the eternal, the most simple, the most actual, the most perfect and supremely one.

[6] And these things are so certain that their opposites cannot be thought of by one who really understands being itself; and one of these characteristics of Being necessarily implies the other. For since it is unqualifiedly being, therefore it is unqualifiedly first; and since it is unqualifiedly first, therefore it has not been made by another, nor could it be made by itself; hence it is eternal. Again, since it is the first and eternal, it is, therefore, not composed of other things, and hence is most simple. And because it is first, eternal, and most simple, it has nothing of possibility in it that is mixed with act, and thus it is most actual. Again, because it is first, eternal, most simple, and most actual, it is most perfect; for such a Being lacks absolutely nothing, nor can any addition be made to it. And since it is first, eternal, most simple, most actual, and most perfect, therefore it is supremely one. For what is asserted by a superabundance of every kind is asserted unqualifiedly to possess all perfection. But "that which is asserted by superabundance in an unqualified manner can apply to one thing alone." Hence, if "God" is the

name of the being that is first, eternal, most simple, most actual, and most perfect, such a being cannot be thought not to be, nor can it be thought to be other than one. *Hear, therefore, O Israel, the Lord our God is One Lord.*

If you realize this in the pure simplicity of your mind, you will be enlightened to some extent by the illumination of Eternal Light.

[7] Furthermore, you have here something to lift you up in admiration. For being itself is both the first and last; it is eternal and yet most present; it is most simple and yet the greatest; it is most actual and still most changeless; it is most perfect and nonetheless immense; it is supremely one and yet pervades all things. Admiring all these considerations with a pure mind, you will be flooded with a still greater light when you behold further that pure being is precisely the last because it is the first. For since it is first, it does all things for itself, and thus the first being is of necessity the ultimate end; it is the beginning and the fulfillment, the *Alpha* and the *Omega*. Thus, it is entirely present precisely because it is eternal. For, as it is eternal, it does not proceed from another, nor does it lack anything on its part, nor does it progress from one state into another; and therefore it has neither past nor future being, but only a present being. And it is greatest because it is most simple. For since it is utterly simple in essence, it is greatest in power, because the more a power is concentrated in one, the more it is infinite. Further, it is most changeless because it is most actual. As most actual, it is, therefore, pure act; and that which is pure actuality can acquire nothing new, nor lose anything that it already has; hence it cannot be changed. Likewise, because it is most perfect, it is immense. As it is most perfect, one can think of nothing better, nobler, of higher dignity beyond it, and consequently, of nothing greater, and every such being is immense. Finally, it pervades all things, because it is supremely one. For that which is supremely one is the all-embracing principle of all diversity. Hence this being is the universal, efficient, exemplary, and final cause of all things, since it is the “cause of being, the basis of understanding, and the norm for the orderly way of living.” Therefore, pure being is all-pervasive, not as if it were the essence of all things, but as the supremely excellent and most universal and

sufficient cause of all essences. And its power is supremely infinite and pervasive in its efficiency because it is supremely one in its essence.

[8] Once more retracing our steps, let us say that because the most pure and absolute being which is unqualifiedly being is the first and the last, it is therefore the origin and the fulfilling end of all things. As eternal and most present, it encompasses and enters all durations, existing, as it were, at one and the same time as their center and their circumference. Likewise, because it is the most simple and the greatest, it is wholly within all things and wholly outside them; hence it is “the intelligible sphere, whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere.” As most actual and changeless, it is that which, “remaining unmoved itself, gives movement to all things.” Further, because it is most perfect and immense, it is within all things without being contained by them; it is outside all things without being excluded by them; it is above all things without being aloof; it is below all things without being dependent on them. Finally, since it is supremely one and yet pervasive, it is *all in all*, even though all things are many and it is itself but one. And this is so because through its supremely simple unity, its most serene truth, and its most sincere goodness, it contains in itself all power, all exemplarity, and all communicability. Hence *from him and through him and unto him are all things*, for He is all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-good. To behold Him perfectly is a most blessed thing, as it was said to Moses: *Therefore I will show to you all good things.*

## Chapter Six The Consideration of the Most Blessed Trinity in Its Name Which Is *the Good*

[1] Having considered the essential attributes of God, we must raise the eyes of our intelligence to the constitution of the most blessed Trinity, so as to place the second Cherub facing the first. Now just as Being itself is the principal source of the vision of the essential attributes of God, as well as the name through which the others become known, so the Good itself is the principal foundation of the contemplation of the personal emanations.

[2] Behold, therefore, and observe that the highest good is unqualifiedly that than which no greater can be thought. And this good is such that it cannot rightly be thought of as non-existing, since to exist is absolutely better than not to exist. And this good exists in such a way that it cannot rightly be thought of unless it is thought of as triune and one. For good is said to be self-diffusive, and therefore the highest good is most self-diffusive. But this highest diffusion cannot be unless it be actual and intrinsic, substantial and hypostatic, natural and voluntary, free and necessary, un-failing and perfect. Unless there were in the highest good from all eternity an active and consubstantial production, and a hypostasis of equal nobility, as is the case with one who produces by way of generation and spiration,—thus there belongs to the first Principle from all eternity a co-producer—so that there is the loved and the beloved, the generated and the spirated, that is, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, that is to say, unless these were present, there would not be found the highest good here, because it would not be supremely self-diffusive. For the diffusion that occurred in time, in the creation of the world, is no more than a focal point or brief moment in comparison with the immense sweep of the eternal goodness. From this consideration of creation one is led to think of another and a greater diffusion—that in which the diffusing good communicates to another His whole substance and nature. Nor would He be the highest good were He able to be wanting in this, whether in reality or even in thought.

If, therefore, you are able to behold with the eye of your mind the purity of that goodness which is the pure act of the Principle that loves with a love both free and due and a mixture of both, a love which is the fullest diffusion by way of nature and will, and also a diffusion by way of the Word in which all things are expressed, and by way of the Gift, in which all other gifts are given,—if you can do this, then you can see that through the utmost communicability of the Good, there must exist a Trinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. By reason of Their supreme goodness, the three Persons must necessarily have supreme communicability; by reason of their supreme communicability they must necessarily have supreme consubstantiality; and by reason of their supreme con-

substantiality, they must have supreme likeness in their nature. Then, by reason of all these, they must have supreme coequality, and hence supreme coeternity. Finally, from all the foregoing taken together, they must have supreme mutual intimacy, by which one Person is necessarily in the other by reason of their supreme identity, and one acts with the other because of the absolute indivision of the substance, power, and activity of the most blessed Trinity Itself.

[3] But when you contemplate these things, take care that you do not think you can understand the incomprehensible. For you have still something else to consider in these six characteristics, which forcibly strike the eye of our mind with awesome admiration. For here we have supreme communicability side by side with a character proper to each Person, and supreme consubstantiality side by side with a plurality of hypostases, and supreme identity of nature side by side with distinct Personality, and supreme coequality side by side with order, and supreme coeternity side by side with emanation, and supreme mutual intimacy side by side with the emanation of Persons. Who would not be lifted up in admiration at the sight of such great wonders? But we know with absolute certainty that all these things are in the most blessed Trinity, if we but raise our eyes to the all-excelling Goodness. If, therefore, there is supreme communication and true diffusion, then there is also true origin and true distinction. And, since the whole is communicated and not a part merely, then whatever is had is given, and given completely. As a result, He who proceeds and He who produces are distinguished by their properties and yet are one and the same in essence. Since, then, they are distinguished by their properties, it follows that they have personal properties and plurality of hypostases, and an emanation of origin, and an order, not of time but of origin. And the emanation does not consist in local motion but in freely given inspiration by reason of the authority which the Producer, as Sender, has over the One Sent. Moreover, since they are really one in substance, they must possess oneness of essence, of form, of dignity, of eternity, of existence, and of infinity. And while you consider these things, one by one, you have the subject matter that will enable you to contemplate Truth. When you compare them with one another, you have the subject

matter that lifts you to the utmost heights of admiration. Therefore, that your mind may rise, through admiration, to admiring contemplation, you must consider all these attributes together.

[4] For the Cherubim who faced each other symbolize a comparative approach. For, mystery is not lacking in the fact that they faced each other, *their faces being turned toward the Mercy-Seat*, that thus might be verified what Our Lord says in the Gospel of Saint John: *Now this is eternal life, that they may know You the only true God, and him whom You have sent, Jesus Christ*. For we must admire the characteristics of the divine essence and of the divine Persons, not only in themselves but also in comparison with the most marvelous union of God and man in the unity of the Person of Christ.

[5] If you are one of the Cherubim contemplating the essential attributes of God, and if you are amazed at the fact that the divine Being is both first and last, eternal and most present, most simple and without limit, wholly everywhere and nowhere contained, most actual and never moved, most perfect and without any superfluity or deficiency, and yet immense and boundlessly infinite, supremely one and yet supremely pervasive, containing in Himself all things—all power, all truth, all goodness—if, then, you are this Cherub, gaze at the Mercy-Seat and be amazed. For in that Mercy-Seat the first Principle is joined with the last. God is joined with man, who was formed on the sixth day; the eternal is joined with time-bound man, in the fullness of time born of the Virgin; the most simple is joined with the most composite; the most actual is joined with Him Who suffered supremely and died; the most perfect and immense is joined with that which is small; He who is both supremely one and supremely pervasive is joined to an individual that is composite and distinct from others, that is to say, the man Jesus Christ.

[6] And if you are the other Cherub and contemplate that which is proper to the Persons, and if you are amazed that communicability coexists with personal identity, consubstantiality with plurality, a unity of nature with personality, coequality with order, coeternity with production, and mutual intimacy with emanation—for the Son is sent by the Father, and the Holy

Spirit by both the Father and the Son, and yet the Holy Spirit sent from both ever remains with them and never departs from them. If you are this Cherub, now face toward the Mercy-Seat and be amazed that in Christ a personal unity coexists with a trinity of substances and with a duality of natures. In Christ also a perfect accord coexists with a plurality of wills, a mutual predication of God and man coexists with a plurality of proper attributes; a co-adoration coexists with a multiplicity of honors; and a coexaltation over all things coexists with a diversity of dignities; and finally that codominion coexists with a plurality of powers.

[7] In this contemplation consists the perfect illumination of our mind, when, as it were, on the sixth day it sees man made to the image of God. For, if an image is an expressed likeness, then when our mind contemplates in Christ the Son of God, Who is by nature the image of the invisible God, our humanity so wonderfully exalted, so ineffably united, and when at the same time it sees united the first and the last, the highest and the lowest, the circumference and the center, the *Alpha* and the *Omega*, the caused and the cause, the Creator and the creature, that is, *the book written within and without*, it has already reached something that is perfect. Thus it arrives at the perfection of its illuminations on the sixth step, as God did on the sixth day. And now nothing further remains but the day of rest on which, through transports of mind, the penetrating power of the human mind *rests from all the work that it has done*.

## Chapter Seven The Spiritual and Mystical Transport of the Mind in Which Rest Is Given to Our Understanding and Our Affection Passes over Entirely to God

[1] Accordingly, the mind has reached the end of the way of the six contemplations. They have been like the six steps by which one arrives at the throne of the true Solomon and at peace, where, as in an inner Jerusalem, the true man of peace rests with a tranquil soul. These six reflections are also like the six wings of the Cheru-

bim, by which the mind of the true contemplative, flooded by the light of heavenly wisdom, is enabled to soar on high. They are also like the first six days during which the mind must be at work so that it may finally reach the Sabbath of rest.

After our mind has beheld God outside itself through and in vestiges of Him, and within itself through and in an image of Him, and above itself through the similitude of the divine Light shining above us and in the divine Light itself insofar as it is possible in our state as wayfarer and by the effort of our own mind, and when at last the mind has reached the sixth step, where it can behold in the first and highest Principle and in the Mediator of God and men, Jesus Christ, things the like of which cannot possibly be found among creatures and which transcend all acuteness of the human intellect—when the mind has done all this, it must still, in beholding these things, transcend and pass over not only this visible world but even itself. In this passing over, Christ is the way and the door; Christ is the ladder and the vehicle, being, as it were, the Mercy-Seat above the Ark of God and *the mystery which has been hidden from eternity*.

[2] He who turns his full countenance toward this Mercy-Seat and with faith, hope, and love, devotion, admiration, joy, appreciation, praise, and rejoicing, beholds Christ hanging on the Cross, such a one celebrates the Pasch, that is, the Passover, with Him. Thus, using the rod of the Cross, he may pass over the Red Sea, going from Egypt into the desert, where it is given to him to taste the *hidden manna*; he may rest with Christ in the tomb, as one dead to the outer world but experiencing, nevertheless, as far as is possible in this present state as wayfarer, what was said on the Cross to the thief who was hanging there with Christ: *This day you shall be with me in Paradise*.

[3] This also was shown to the blessed Francis, when, in a transport of contemplation on the mountain height—where I pondered over the matter that is here written—there appeared to him the six-winged Seraph fastened to a cross, as I and many others have heard from the companion who was then with him at that very place. Here he passed over into God in a transport of contemplation. He is set forth as an example of perfect contemplation, just as previously he

had been of action, like a second Jacob-Israel. And thus, through him, more by example than by word, God would invite all truly spiritual men to this passing over and this transport of soul.

[4] In this passing over, if it is to be perfect, all intellectual activities ought to be relinquished and the loftiest affection transported to God, and transformed into Him. This, however, is mystical and most secret, *which no one knows except him who receives it*, and no one receives it except him who desires it, and no one desires it except him who is penetrated to the marrow by the fire of the Holy Spirit, Whom Christ sent into the world. That is why the Apostle says that this mystical wisdom is revealed by the Holy Spirit.

[5] And since, therefore, nature avails nothing and human endeavor but little, little should be attributed to inquiry, but much to unction; little to the tongue, but very much to interior joy; little to the spoken or written word, but everything to the Gift of God, that is, to the Holy Spirit. Little or nothing should be attributed to the creature, but everything to the Creative Essence—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And thus, with Dionysius, we address the Triune God: “O Trinity, Essence above all essence, and Deity above all deity, supremely best Guardian of the divine wisdom of Christians, direct us to the supremely unknown, superluminous, and most sublime height of mystical knowledge. There new mysteries—absolute and changeless mysteries of theology—are shrouded in the superluminous darkness of a silence that teaches secretly in a most dark manner that is above all manifestation and resplendent above all splendor, and in which everything shines forth—a darkness which fills invisible intellects by an abundance above all plentitude with the splendors of invisible good things that are above all good.” All this pertains to God.

To the friend, however, for whom these words were written, we can say with Dionysius: And you, my friend, in this matter of mystical visions, renew your journey, “abandon the senses, intellectual activities, and all visible and invisible things—everything that is not and everything that is—and, oblivious of yourself, let yourself be brought back, insofar as it is possible, to union with Him Who is above all essence and all knowledge. And transcending yourself and all things, ascend to

the superessential gleam of the divine darkness by an incommensurable and absolute transport of a pure mind.”

[6] If you wish to know how these things may come about, ask grace, not learning; desire, not understanding; the groaning of prayer, not diligence in reading; the Bridegroom, not the teacher; God, not man; darkness, not clarity; not light, but the fire that wholly inflames and carries one into God through transporting unctions and consuming affections. God Himself is this fire, and *His furnace is in Jerusalem*; and it is Christ who enkindles it in the white flame of His most burning Passion. This fire he alone truly perceives

who says: *My soul chooses hanging, and my bones, death*. He who loves this death can see God, for it is absolutely true that *Man shall not see me and live*.

Let us, then, die and enter into this darkness. Let us silence all our cares, our desires, and our imaginings. With Christ crucified, let us pass *out of this world to the Father*, so that, when the Father is shown to us, we may say with Philip: *It is enough for us*. Let us hear with Paul: *My grace is sufficient for you*, and rejoice with David, saying: *My flesh and my heart have fainted away: You are the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion forever. Blessed be the Lord forever, and let all the people say: so be it, so be it. Amen.*

# Siger of Brabant, c.1240–c.1284

With the introduction of Aristotle's physical and metaphysical writings together with the commentaries of Muslim interpreters, two types of Aristotelians arose within the Christian world. There were those (such as Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas) who, being theologians, undertook to harmonize Christian and Aristotelian teachings, while there were others who interpreted Aristotle in a purely philosophical fashion. Often called Latin Averroists, these interpreters are perhaps better described as secular Aristotelians ("integral," "radical," and "heterodox" Aristotelians are other terms used by modern scholars), for though they accepted a number of Averroistic doctrines, they also used the teachings of other philosophers.

The secular Aristotelians, many of whom seem to have been members of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Paris, pursued philosophical studies without regard to Christian theological teachings. As philosophers, they taught such doctrines as the eternity of the world, the unity of the passive intellect in all men, and the resultant doctrines of collective immortality, determinism within the world, and the absence of free will in man. Since doctrines such as these clearly contradicted orthodox Christian teachings, small wonder that the views of secular Aristotelians were attacked by theologians and that the theses taught by them were publicly condemned. There is hardly a major theologian after the middle of the thirteenth century who did not write against the Averroistic doctrine of the unity of the intellect, and this response culminated in Etienne Tempier's publication of lists of condemned theses, first in 1270 and then again in 1277 (see page 539).

Being Christians, or at least living within the Christian community, the secular Aristotelians, no less than

the theologians, had to solve the problem of faith and reason. In the light of their commitment to pure philosophical speculation they developed what has been called a theory of the "double truth." The exact nature of this theory is not easily determined, though it is clear that it rests on the admission that philosophical and Christian teachings can contradict one another. How this contradiction is to be understood has been formulated by modern scholars in three ways. According to the first of these formulations, proponents of the theory affirm that a person can accept two contradictory propositions at the same time. Thus, for example, he can affirm as philosopher that the world is eternal, while as a Christian he maintains that the world has been created. It is questionable that anyone ever accepted the theory in accordance with this formulation. According to another formulation, proponents of the theory hold that they are merely explaining what Aristotle had taught, not expressing their own views. This is the view that was described (possibly by Aquinas) in a sermon at the University of Paris that says: "Among those who labor in philosophy, some say things that are not true according to faith, and when told that what they say goes against faith, they answer that it is the Philosopher who says so; as to themselves they do not affirm it, they are only repeating the Philosopher's words."<sup>1</sup> In still another formulation, the contradiction is explained by saying that the conclusions of philosophy are only the discoveries of the human mind,

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1. Quoted by Étienne Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (New York: Random House, 1955), p. 398.

while the truths of faith are the products of supernatural revelation. Hence, in the case of conflict, the teachings of revelation are to be accepted.

It can easily be seen that doctrines such as these give rise to questions about the sincerity of their proponents. Were the secular Aristotelians believing Christians who, as philosophers, taught theologically difficult propositions, or were they philosophers who, for reason of expediency, assumed the guise of orthodox Christians? Put in this manner, there is no general answer to the question. Probably both kinds of persons were found among the secular Aristotelians. Only the detailed examination of a given philosopher's work can provide a description of his position, but even then one cannot always be certain where he stands.

It is generally admitted that Siger of Brabant was the most prominent of the secular Aristotelians. At the same time, however, his teachings have been subject to varying interpretations, depending on how the chronology of his writings is fixed and how his professions of orthodox Christian beliefs are understood. These interpretations have ranged from that of Mandonnet and his followers, who find in Siger an Averroist who embraces Christian teachings because it is expedient, to that of Van Steenberghe, who finds no need to question Siger's sincerity and sees him as moving from an "integral Aristotelianism" to a position approximating that of Aquinas.

Whatever one's solution of this question, it is clear that at least during a part of his life, Siger accepted some of the typical propositions of the secular Aristotelians: the truths of religion and philosophy can conflict; creation out of nothing is untenable philosophically; the intellectual soul in all men is one; and the human will is determined. But it would be false to see in Siger merely a proponent of certain unorthodox views. He was a serious philosopher who addressed himself to a variety of philosophical issues current in his day. Thus, for example, he sided with Ibn Rushd against Ibn Sīnā in maintaining that the existence of God is demonstrated in physics rather than in metaphysics and that existence is not an attribute super-added to essence. Again, in formulating a doctrine of creation he inquires what "Aristotle, Ibn Sīnā, faith, and Proclus have in mind [when they say] that there exists one efficient cause of all things." In his *Question*

*on the Intellectual Soul* he pays tribute to "two leading men in philosophy, Albertus and Thomas," though he does not share their views.

Brief mention must be made of a problem that is related to the interpretation of Siger's thought. Dante in his *Divine Comedy* (*Paradiso* 10, 133–137) places Siger within Paradise, having him praised by none other than Thomas Aquinas. The interpretation of this passage is not easy. If Siger inclined toward Thomas's teachings (as Van Steenberghe thinks), his role can readily be understood. But if, as it is more frequently held, Dante was a Thomist while Siger was a secular Aristotelian, how could Dante place Siger within Paradise? Modern scholars have proposed three solutions to this question. Mandonnet holds that Dante was not acquainted with Siger's teachings; Gilson, that Siger is a symbol for philosophy and not the historical Siger; and Nardi, that Dante was not an orthodox Thomist but made use of the doctrines of other philosophers.

Siger was born c.1240. He studied at the University of Paris, where by 1266, when he is first mentioned, he had become a master in the Faculty of Arts. For the next eleven years Siger, together with his followers, was the center of controversies at Paris. Bonaventure attacked Siger's teachings at conferences in 1267 and 1268 (see page 413) and Etienne Tempier, as has been noted, condemned some of his theses publicly in 1270. It appears that after this condemnation Siger became more moderate in his language, though it is questionable that he changed his basic views. In 1277, the year of Tempier's second condemnation, Siger was summoned by Simon du Val, the chief inquisitor of France. But by that time Siger had left Paris, probably for Rome, perhaps because he felt that his case would fare better at the more lenient papal Curia. Siger was acquitted of heresy by Pope Nicholas III, but kept under house arrest. Sometime between 1281 and 1284 he was murdered at Orvieto by his demented secretary.

The discovery and publication of Siger's works during the past seventy years has been one of the major events in the study of medieval philosophy, for now medieval philosophy can no longer be viewed exclusively as the work of theologians, and room has had to be found for its secular branch. Among the works published are: *On the Intellectual Soul* (*De anima intel-*

*lectiva*), *On the Eternity of the World* (*De aeternitate mundi*), *On the Necessity and Contingency of Causes* (*De necessitate et contingentia causarum*), a number of logical, physical, psychological, and metaphysical Questions, six *Impossibilia*, and fragments of *On the Intellect* (*De intellectu*) and the *Book on Happiness* (*Liber de felicitate*).

The following selection consists of one of Siger's complete works, the *Question on the Eternity of the World*. Writing with great philosophical rigor and con-

structing his arguments carefully, Siger investigates in this work in what manner the human species (and the species of other beings subject to generation and corruption) was caused. But since the discussion rests on statements concerning the mode of existence of universals and the relation of potency to actuality, sections of the work are devoted to these two topics. Siger's characteristic statement "We say these things as the opinion of the Philosopher [Aristotle], although not asserting them as true" (see page 445) is to be noted.

## 37. Question on the Eternity of the World

The first question is whether the human species and in general the species of all individuals began to exist only by way of the propagation of generable and corruptible things when it had no previous existence whatsoever; and it seems that this is so.

That species of which any individual began to exist when it had had no previous existence at all is new and began to have existence since it universally and entirely had had no previous existence. The human species is such, and in general the species of all individuals generable and corruptible, because every individual of this type of species began to exist when it had had no previous existence. And, therefore, any species of such things is also new and began, since in all cases it had not previously existed. The major is stated thus: because the species does not have being nor is caused except in singulars and in causing singulars. If, therefore, any individual of some species has been created when it had not existed before, the species of those beings will be such a kind.

Secondly, this same conclusion is also able to be reached in a different manner thus: universals, just as they do not have existence in singulars, so neither are they caused. Every being is caused by God. Therefore, if man has been caused by God, since he is some being of the world, it is necessary that he come to exist in a certain determined individual; just as the heaven and whatever else has been caused by God. Because, if man does not have an individual eternity, as has the sensible heaven according to philosophers, then the human species will have been caused by God so that it began to exist when it had not existed before.

To prove this one must consider, in the first place how the human species was caused, and in general

any other universals of generable and corruptible things; and in this way an answer should be made to the question and the forementioned argument.

Secondly, since the foregoing argument admits that universals exist in singulars, one must seek or consider how this may be true.

Thirdly, because some species began to exist when it had surely not existed before, and because it follows that potentiality precedes act in duration, it should be seen which of these preceded the other in duration. For this presents a difficulty within itself.

### I

Concerning the first, therefore, we should know that the human species has not been caused, according to philosophers, except through generation. Now, because in general the being of all things is in matter which is in potency to form, they are made by a generation which is either essential or accidental. From this, however, that the human species has been made by God through generation, it follows that it does not proceed directly from Him. The human species, however, and in general the species of all things which are in matter, since it is made through generation, is not generated essentially but accidentally. It is not generated essentially, because if any one were to study those things which are made universally, then every thing which is made is made from this determined and individual matter. For, although arguments and knowledge are concerned with universals, yet operations are regarding singulars. Now, however, determined matter does not pertain to the meaning of species, and therefore is not generated essentially; and this is held by Aristotle in *Metaphysics* 7. The same reason why form is not generated is also the reason why the composite which is species is not generated. And I call the species a composite, just as Callias in his own nature is this soul in this body, so also animal is soul in body. The common nature of form and species that they are not generated essentially is because individuated mat-

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From C. Vollert, L. Kendzierski, and P. M. Byrne, ed. and tr., *St. Thomas Aquinas, Siger of Brabant, St. Bonaventure: On the Eternity of the World* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1964). This question translated by L. Kendzierski. Reprinted by permission of Marquette University Press.

ter pertains to the consideration or reasoning of neither of the things from which generation essentially comes, through the transmutation of the thing from non-being to being, or from privation to form. The human species, however, although not generated essentially, has nevertheless been generated accidentally, because it thus happens if man, just as he has been abstracted in thought from individual matter and from the individual, so he might be abstracted in existence. Then, just as he is not generated essentially, it might be thought that he is also not generated accidentally; but, because man in his being is this man, Socrates or Plato, then Socrates is also a man, as Aristotle says in *Metaphysics* 7, that generating a brass sphere generates a sphere because a brass sphere is a sphere. And since just as Socrates is a man, so is Plato, and so with the others. Hence it is that man is generated through the generation of any individual, and not only of one determined individual.

Now, from the explanation it is clear in what way the human species is considered by philosophers eternal and caused. For it is not to be thought of as eternal and caused as if it existed abstracted from individuals. Nor is it eternally caused in the sense that it exists in an eternally caused individual, as the species of heaven or an intelligence; but rather because in the individuals of the human species one is generated before the other eternally, and the species has to be and to be caused through an individual's existing and being caused. Hence it is that the human species always exists and that it did not begin to be after previous nonexistence. For to say that it began to be after it had not existed before is to say that there began to be a certain individual before whom no other individual of that species had existed. And since the human species has not been caused otherwise than generated through the generation of individual before individual, the human species or that which is called by the name of man begins to exist because universally everything generated begins to exist; begins, nevertheless, to exist when it existed and had previously existed. For man begins to be through the generation of Socrates who is generated; he exists, nevertheless, through the existence of Plato of the previous generation. Those things are not contradictory about the universal, just as there is nothing repugnant for a man to run and not to run. Indeed,

man runs in the person of Socrates, and man does not run in the person of Plato. From the fact, nevertheless, that Socrates runs, it is not true to say that man universally and entirely does not run. So also, in the fact that Socrates is generated man begins to be, is not to say that man begins to be in such a way that he had not in any wise previously existed.

From the previous discourse the solution to the forementioned argument is clear.

And first, it must be said that this argument as just stated, namely, that that species is new and began to exist when it had not previously existed, must be denied. Any individual of this kind began to be when it did not previously exist because even though it be true that no individual man began to be after not existing, yet no individual of this kind begins to be unless another one had previously existed. Species does not have existence so much through the existence of one of its individuals as another, and so the human species does not begin to be when it had not existed before. For to admit that the species is such is to say that not only a certain individual of it began to be when he had not been before, but any individual of it began to be when neither he nor another individual of that species had existed before.

And the given reason is similar to the reasoning by which Aristotle speculates in *Physics* 4 whether past time is finite. All past time whether near or remote is a certain *then*, and the certain *then* has a measured distance to the present *now*; therefore all past time is finite. And each of the forementioned propositions is clear from the meaning of that *then* which Aristotle speaks of in *Physics* 4. The solution of this reasoning, according to Aristotle, is that although every second is finite, nevertheless since in time there is a *then* before the *then* to infinity, therefore not all past time is finite. For what is composed of things finite in quantity yet infinite in number has to be infinite. So also, although there is no individual man but that he has begun to exist when he had not existed before, yet there is an individual before the individual to infinity; it is thus that man does not begin to be when he had in no wise existed before, and neither does time. And the case is similar—just as past time has to be through a certain *then*, so also species have to be through the existence of any one of its individuals.

Finally, as regards the form of the reasoning as proposed in the second way, it must be said that the universal does not have existence nor is caused except in singulars; since it is also said that all being has been caused by God, it must be conceded that man also exists as a being of the world and caused by God. But, since it is brought in the discussion and inferred that man has come into existence in some determined individual, it must be said that this conclusion is in no wise to be drawn from the premises; indeed, that reasoning is a hindrance to itself. For it is accepted in the first place that man does not have existence except in singulars nor is caused except in singulars, and it is clear that according to this reasoning he has existence and is created through one or through another. For this reason, therefore, it must be concluded that it is reasonable that man has come into existence in some determined individual. Indeed, the human species comes and came into being accidentally by the generation of individual before individual to infinity. This is not to say, however, that it [the human species] comes into existence only in some determined individual and when it had not existed before. Whence we should wonder about those arguing thus since they want to argue that the human species had begun through its being made, and yet that it was not made essentially but rather by the making of the individual, as they confess. To show their intention they ought to show that individual has not been generated before individual to infinity. This, however, they do not show but they propose one false theory, that the human species is not able to have been made eternal by God unless it had been created in some determined and eternal individual, just as the species of heaven was made eternal; and when they find no eternal being among the individuals of man, they think that they have demonstrated that the whole species began to exist when it had not been at all before.

## II

The second question is whether universals are in particulars, and it is clear that they are not since Aristotle says in *De anima* 2 that universals in themselves exist in the mind. And Themistius in a similar book says

that concepts are similar things which are universals, which the mind collects and stores within itself. And the same Themistius, in *super principium De Anima*, says that genus is a certain concept gathered from the slight similitude of the singulars; the concepts however are in the conceiving mind, and universals, since they are concepts, are also in the mind.

But on the other hand, universals are universal things, for otherwise they might not be said of particulars; and for this reason universals are not within the mind.

Moreover, the thing itself, which is the subject for universality, the man or the stone, is not in the mind. Also, the intention of universality must consist in its being called and denominated universal; and hence man and stone since they are called universals, the intention of universality is in these. Either both, the thing and the intention, or neither is in the mind. Because, if man and stone in respect to the fact that they are, are not in the mind, it seems that neither are they there in respect to the fact that they are universals.

The solution. The universal, because it is a universal, is not a substance, as Aristotle states in *Metaphysics* 7. And so this is clear. The universal, in that it is a universal, is different from any singular. If, therefore, the universal, in that it is universal, would be a substance, then it would be differing in substance from any of the singulars, and each [singular] would be a substance in act, both singular and universal; the act however would be distinguished. Therefore universals would be distinct substances and separated from particulars; on this account with Aristotle it amounts to the same thing to say that universals are substances as to say that they are separated from particulars. And if the universal, in that it is universal, is not a substance, then it is evident that there are two things in the universal, namely, the thing which is denominated universal, the man or stone, which is not in the mind, and the intention itself of universality, and this is in the mind; so that the universal in that it is universal does not exist except in the mind, as is evident in this way. For nothing is called a universal because it exists of its own nature commonly and abstractly from particulars, or by the work of the intellect in the nature of things; because if in its own nature, in its very being, it were to exist abstracted from particu-

lars, it would not be spoken of them since it would be separated from them and we would not need an active intellect. Moreover, the active intellect does not give things any abstraction in existence from individual matter or from particulars, but gives to them an abstraction according to intellection by producing an abstract intellection of those things. If, therefore, the man or stone are universals, it is not except that these things are known universally and abstractly from individual matter. These things do not exist thus in the nature of things because if understood, those things, the man and the stone, do not have existence except in the mind. Since the abstract comprehension of these things is not in things, then those things, because they are universals, are in the mind. And this can also be seen in like cases.

A certain thing is said to be known because there is a knowledge of it and it happens that it is understood. The thing itself, however, with respect to what it is, although it be outside the mind, yet in respect to its being understood, that is, insofar as there is understanding of it, exists only in the mind. Because, if universals are universals, and they are understood as such, namely, abstract and common to particulars, then the universals as universals do not exist except in the mind. And this is what Averroes says in *super Illum De Anima*, that universals as universals are entirely intelligibles, not as beings but as intelligibles. The intelligible, however, as intelligible, that is, insofar as there is an understanding of it, is entirely in the soul. Thus also Themistius says that universals are concepts.

But it must be observed that the abstract and common understanding of any nature, although it be something common, as a common understanding of particulars, yet is not common according to its being predicated of particulars in that it has to be abstracted from particulars; but that which is abstractly and commonly understood and of consequence is so signified, is spoken concerning particulars. For this reason—because that very nature which is spoken of and comprehended as a general thing is in things and is therefore spoken concerning particulars. Although those things are known and understood abstractly and commonly, they do not exist as such; therefore things of this kind are not predicated of particulars according to the ideas of genus and species.

And one must also consider that it is not necessary that the universal exist in actuality before it may be known, because the universal in actuality is intelligible in actuality. Now, it is one and the same actuality whether of the intelligible in actuality or of the intellect in actuality; just as it is one motion whether of the active or of the passive, although they be different. But the intelligible in potency certainly precedes the understanding of it; however, such a thing is not universal also except in potency, and so it is not necessary that the universal have to be universal except in potency before it is understood.

Nevertheless, some have held the contrary in this discussion because the very activity of understanding precedes in the natural order the object causing that act. Now, however, the universal, in that it is universal, moves the intellect and is the object which causes the act of understanding; on this account it seems to them that the universal is not universal in that it is so understood, indeed, because the universal in the natural order is universal before it is so understood and is the cause of that understanding of it.

But the solution of this is that that nature by which is caused the act of the intelligible and of the intellect, which is the intellect in act, is the active intellect and also the phantasm which naturally precede that act. In what manner, however, those two concur to cause the act of understanding must be sought in *super Illum De Anima*. But this must be said: that the universal is not a universal before the concept and the act of understanding, as at least that act is of the active intellect. For the understanding of the thing which is in the possible intellect, since it is possible as regards the subject, belongs to the active intellect as efficient. Thus the universal does not have formally that which is universal from the nature which causes the act of understanding. Indeed, as has been mentioned before, it is the concept and the actuality from which the universal receives its universality. Therefore universals, in that they are universals, are entirely in the mind. On this account they are not generated by nature inasmuch as they are universals, neither essentially nor accidentally. For the nature which is stated and understood universally is in particular things and is generated accidentally.

To the first objection it must be said that the fact that universals are universal things can be understood

in two ways: either because they exist universally or because they are understood universally. Universals, however, are not universal things in the first manner as if they existed universally in the nature of things, for they then would not be concepts of the mind. But universals are universal things in a second manner, that is, they are understood universally and abstractly; in this way universals, insofar as they are universals and since they are concepts, cannot be spoken of particulars as such. For the idea of genus or species is not said of them, but the very nature which is thus understood as that which is itself included, is not in the mind, and is said of particulars.

In regard to another point, it must be said that things are rightly named after something which does not exist in reality. For a thing understood is named from the understanding of it which is not in it but in the mind; and so also the universal is named from the universal and abstract understanding of it which is not in it but in the mind.

### III

Consequently we must investigate the third question. Although act precedes potency in thought, for potentiality is defined through act, as we say the builder is able to build, potency nevertheless is prior to act in substance and in perfection in a thing which proceeds from potency to act because the things which are later in generation are, in substance and perfection, prior, since generation proceeds from the imperfect to the perfect and from potentiality to act. Act is also before potentiality in substance and perfection in the respect that potentiality and act are looked at in different ways, because eternal things are prior to corruptible things in substance and perfection. But nothing eternal, in respect that it is such a thing, is in potentiality. In corruptible beings, however, there is an admixture of potency.

The question is whether act precedes potentiality in time or potentiality the act.

And it seems that the act does not precede potentiality in time because in eternal beings one is not before the other in time. But when the act of a certain species and the potentiality to that act are looked upon

according to the species, they are both eternal. For man is always in act and is always able to be man. Therefore the act thought of in relation to the species does not precede potentiality in time.

Moreover, in this matter in which one is to come from the other in a cycle to infinity, there is none which is first in time. But the seed is from the man and the man from the seed to infinity. Therefore, in those things the one does not precede the other in time. Just as in the case of the seed from which a man is generated there is another generating man previously existing, so also previous to that generating man, since he himself was generated, there must have been a seed from which he was generated.

What is first in the order of generation is first in the order of time. But potentiality is prior to act in the order of generation since generation proceeds from potentiality to act, and therefore it is prior in the order of time.

Moreover, there is no reason why act should precede potentiality in time except that by a power a being is made in act through some agent of its own kind existing in act. But, although from this it follows that the act of the agent precedes in time the act and perfection of the generated thing by that agent, nevertheless, it does not seem to happen that the act of the one generating precedes in time that which is in potentiality to the act of generation. Nor from this also does act simply precede potentiality in time, although some act precedes some potentiality to that act. For, just as being in potentiality comes into actuality through something of its own species in act, so also the thing existing in act in that species is generated from something existing in potentiality to the act of that species. For, just as that which is in potentiality, namely, a man, is brought into act by a man in act, so also the man generating is generated from the previous seed and from a man in potency; and so in that reasoning the hen has preceded the egg in time and the egg the hen, as people argue.

On the other side is Aristotle in *Metaphysics* 9. For he holds that although what proceeds from potentiality to act is the same in number, yet potentiality precedes the act in time, nevertheless, the same being in relation to species and existing in act precedes potentiality.

Moreover, everything existing in potentiality is brought into actuality through something existing in act and at length is brought into the order of moving things by a mover existing completely in act who did not previously have in his power to be anything except in act. Therefore, according to this, act is seen simply to precede potency in time.

To prove this we must first consider that something numerically the same which has existence at some time in potentiality and some time in act is able to be prior in time than it is. But because this potency is preceded by act in another, since every being in potentiality comes into actuality by that which is in some way of its species, therefore it is not proper to say simply that potentiality precedes act in time.

Secondly, one must consider that if the whole universe of caused beings were at some time not being, as certain poets, theologians, and natural philosophers claimed, Aristotle says in *Metaphysics* 12, then potentiality would precede act simply. And also if some entire species of being, as the human species, would begin to exist when it had never existed before, just as some think they have demonstrated, the potentiality for the actuality of that species would simply precede the act. But each of these is impossible, as is evident from the first consideration.

For, if the whole universe of beings at some time had been in potentiality, so that none of the beings would be totally in act—always an agent in act and the mover—then the beings and the world would not now be except in potentiality, and matter of itself would come into act, which is impossible. Thus Aristotle says in *Metaphysics* 12, and so does his Commentator, that for things to be at rest in an infinite time and afterwards to be in motion is the same as for matter to be self-moving.

From the second question it is evident that this is impossible. For, since the prime mover and agent is always in act, and something in potency is not prior to something in act, it follows that it always moves and acts and makes anything or does anything without an intermediate movement. From this, however, that it is always moving and so acting, it follows that no species of being proceeds to actuality, but that it has proceeded before, so that the same species which were, return in a cycle; and so also opinions and laws and re-

ligions and all other things so that the lower circle around from the circling of the higher, although because of the antiquity there is no memory of the cycle of these. We say these things as the opinion of the Philosopher, although not asserting them as true. One, nevertheless, should notice that a certain species of being is able to go into act when it did not exist except in potentiality, although at another time it also was in act, as is evident. For it happens in the heavens that a certain spectacle and constellation appear in the heavens previously not existing, the effect of which is properly another species of being here below, which is then caused and which yet previously existed.

Thirdly, it must be considered that when it is taken that the potency to an act and the act educing that potency are of the same kind in the generator and thing generated, it is not said in so taking them that act precedes potentiality simply nor potentiality act, unless the act is taken according to the species and the proper potentiality is taken according to the individual. For a man in act, and a certain man in act, inasmuch as he is generating, precedes in time that which is being in potency, namely, man generated. But because in this order, just as being in potency proceeds into act through something existing in act, and so act precedes any given potentiality, so also everything existing in act in this species goes from potentiality to act, and so potentiality in this species precedes any given act. Therefore neither simply precedes the other in time, but one comes before the other to infinity, as was stated.

In the fourth question we must consider that in a certain order of moving and acting beings it is necessary that that thing which proceeds from potentiality to act come to some act that educes that potentiality to actuality, and this act does not have to go from potentiality to act. Therefore, since every being in potentiality goes to actuality through some being of its own species in act, not all being, however, in actuality and generating proceeds from potentiality to act. Hence it is that in any given being in potentiality to some act, the act of the species in a certain way, although not entirely for the same reason, precedes that potentiality in time; not however in any given being in act does potentiality from which it proceeds to act, precede. And, therefore, the act is simply said to precede potentiality in time, as has been explained, namely,

because the first mover leading into act all being in potentiality does not precede in time the being in potentiality, since the being in potentiality is regarded in the rank of prime matter. For, just as God always exists, according to Aristotle, so also does the potential man, since he is regarded as in prime matter. Moreover, the prime mover does not precede in time the being in potentiality, since it is looked upon as in matter properly considered in relation to species, as man is in the seed. For it is never true, according to Aristotle, to say that God existed, unless potential man existed or had existed, as in the seed. But in a third manner from what has been said, act simply precedes potentiality in time because in any being in potentiality, as given in proper matter, the act of that potentiality having to educe the potency to act, precedes in time. It is not thus with any given being in act that the potentiality to that act precedes it in time, as is evident in prime movers educing to actuality all beings in potentiality. In the aforementioned we utilize, as also does Aristotle, prime movers as species of things which are educed from potentiality to actuality by them; and unless they were the beings of a certain kind in act which do not proceed from potentiality to actuality, the act would not simply precede the potentiality in time, as Aristotle has said in *Metaphysics* 9, saying that act precedes potentiality in time, adding the reason, because one act is always taken as before another up to the one which is always the prime mover.

From this the solution of the reasoning of those opposed is clear.

To the first problem, therefore, it must be said that being in potentiality is not eternal unless when it is regarded as in prime matter. For, when taken as in its proper matter, according to which anything is said to exist properly in potentiality, as is said in *Metaphysics* 9, it is new, unless it were taken according to species. For, just as nothing generated is corruptible in infinite time, so also nothing generable is not generated in infinite time, since the generable has been taken as in proper matter and in a position near to generation, as the Commentator says in *super Ium Caeli et Mundi*.

To the second problem it must be said, as has been mentioned, that in the order of things generating existing in act which also proceed from potentiality to act, there is no being in act before the being in potentiality, but one there is always before the other to infinity. Because every being in potentiality in the essential order of moving and acting beings at length comes to some being existing in act which does not go from potentiality to act, hence it is that on account of that order the act is said simply to precede that potency.

To the third problem it must be said that it is well established that in a being which is the same in number proceeding from potency to act, potency precedes act; but that, nevertheless, before the being in potency there is another of the same species in act, educing it from potency to act.

To the last problem we must say that it is truly spoken that the act precedes potentiality, because all being in potentiality goes into actuality through something existing in act. Nor do those two things which are contradictory hinder one another. In the first place, this is not so because the being in act educing that which is in potentiality into act precedes in time not only the act in the being generated, but also the potentiality proper to the actuality of the being generated because of the fact that not only is the act of the generated being from the one generating, but also the being in potentiality to the act of the generated being is also from the one generating, as the seed from the man. And universally, proper matters are from the prime mover educing each thing from potentiality to act. In the second place, what is opposed does not hinder, as is evident from what has been said above. Although in the order of moving beings, on the basis of which the argument is made, it is necessary to admit that before being in act, there is a being in potency from which it proceeds into act, so also before being in potency there is a being in act which educes itself from potentiality to act; nevertheless, in another order of moving things it is necessary to hold that there is a being in act which educes into act what is in potency, since the being in potency from which it is made does not precede it, as is evident.

# Thomas Aquinas, 1225–1274

In 1879, Pope Leo XIII issued the encyclical *Aeterni Patris*, in which he said, “we exhort you, venerable brethren, in all earnestness to restore the golden wisdom of Saint Thomas, and to spread it far and wide for the defense and beauty of the Catholic faith, for the good of society, and for the advantage of all the sciences. . . . Let carefully selected teachers endeavor to implant the doctrine of Thomas Aquinas in the minds of students, and set forth clearly his solidity and excellence over others. Let the universities already founded or to be founded by you illustrate and defend this doctrine, and use it for the refutation of prevailing errors.”<sup>1</sup> This only climaxed a long series of papal commendations of Aquinas. Thomism thus has the status of a kind of official doctrine in modern times, and this leads one to suppose that it must have been equally important in the thirteenth century. When one learns that several of his positions were condemned shortly after his death, it may well be wondered whether the reputation of Aquinas as the master voice of the golden age of scholastic philosophy may not owe more to modern intellectual politics than to authentic history. But when one looks to authentic history, it is clear that Thomas Aquinas was an important thinker in his own day and was controversial just because of that. He became Preacher General of his order, he taught at the papal court, and, in an extremely unusual assignment, he served a second term as regent master of theology at the University of Paris. His early canonization confirms this impression of a central significance.

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1. Paragraph 31, quoted from J. Maritain, *St. Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Meridian Books, 1958), p. 208.

Some of the reasons for this are not difficult to discover. The major controversies of the time were based upon the philosophy of Aristotle and his Muslim interpreters. In the early years of the thirteenth century it was forbidden to teach his physical and metaphysical works. But the culminating prohibition of 1231 was to hold only until those works had been purged of errors. The commission appointed for this did little, the prohibition was gradually ignored, and in the 1240s Aristotle was taught in full at Paris as elsewhere. The bearing of his philosophy on theology thus became an unavoidable issue, intensifying the need to finish the task of “purging Aristotle.” Aquinas can be seen as doing just this—in the words of his teacher Albertus Magnus, “making Aristotle intelligible to the Latins.” To accomplish this, Aquinas had the advantage of new and accurate translations from the Greek made by his fellow Dominican, William of Moerbeke; he also was not as docile in accepting previous interpretations as authentic Aristotle as were some of his contemporaries. Aquinas thus could be said to do for Aristotle what he said Augustine did for Plato: “whenever he found in his teaching anything consistent with the faith he adopted it; and those things which he found contrary to faith he amended.”

But to regard Aquinas merely as the Catholic Aristotle is to miss features of his thought of which much has been made by his followers. We must remember that the objections to Aristotle were theologically grounded. Bonaventure, for instance, thought the Aristotelian assumption of the self-sufficiency of nature was not as expressive of the dependence of creation on the Creator as the Platonic denigration of the sensible world in favor of ideal Forms. Piecemeal censorship

could hardly cope with such encompassing objections; without comparable theological considerations there would be little reason to undertake a purgation at all. Aquinas's response is given in two equally fundamental positions: to detract from creatures is to detract from their Creator; and grace perfects but does not destroy nature. The world of nature thus takes on a dignity that helps to legitimize the philosophical naturalism of Aristotle. The sensible world is not to be taken merely as a deficient symbol of a more purely spiritual realm but as one of the levels of divine creation, with its own genuinely operative causes and powers. Such powers include man's natural reason, which is adequate for the knowledge of natural essences and certain truths deducible from them, such as the existence of God. But what of the problems that prompted the prohibitions of Aristotle in the first place? What, for instance, of his proof that the world is eternal, which contradicts the divine revelation that it is created? The problems are accentuated for Aquinas by his further principle that since truths knowable by natural reason and truths revealed in sacred Scriptures are parts of a single divine science, they cannot be mutually contradictory. Furthermore, revealed truths must be regulative, since for the most part they concern matters that lie beyond the competence of natural reason. Aquinas must sift the claims of the philosophers, pointing out not only where their reasoning sometimes errs, but more interestingly, also where their assumptions cannot be naturally validated. Some questions, including this one of the eternity of the world, are thus undecidable by natural reason.

It has also been urged that he does more than provide Aristotle with theological inspection and justification. Guided by revelation, he is held to have effected a properly philosophical transformation of certain Aristotelian positions—or, as it has been put, he makes Aristotle say things the Stagirite might not recognize. A good example of this is the doctrine of being. Aristotle's primary metaphysical distinction is between potentiality and actuality, and for him, being is ultimately actuality. Such a doctrine could not be the last word for a theologian reflecting on creation and on the statement in Exodus 3:14, "I am that I am," which seems to say that God is Being. Aquinas took up the distinction between essence and existence already employed by the Muslims and used it to deepen Aristotle's

conception. Existence he did not construe as an accident accruing to essence, as Ibn Sīnā had it, but rather, as the very act of existing of the essence. In God, essence and this act are identical, but creatures are ontologically complex. In natural creatures, the essence includes both form and matter, so there is not only the actualization in form of the potentialities of matter, but also the realization in existence of the entire essence. Needless to say, at a time when the mode of a distinction was often as important as the distinction itself, controversy soon developed as to whether this Thomistic version of essence and existence was a distinction between realities or was some other type of distinction.

One should, then, pay attention not only to the Aristotelianism of Thomas Aquinas, but also to the theological perspective from which Aristotle is legitimized and occasionally transformed. Sometimes Aquinas seems to be aware that he is altering Aristotle, but sometimes he does not. It is best not to assume that one has understood Aquinas fully merely because one understands the relevant passage from Aristotle, for the sea change it undergoes may be crucial.

Thomas Aquinas was born in 1225 at Roccasecca, near Aquino, not far from Monte Cassino, the great parent abbey of the Benedictines. He was the seventh son of a noble family; and, perhaps with political intent, perhaps because of a lame leg, or perhaps because of a precocious piety, he was sent to that abbey as an oblate at the age of five. At fourteen he went to the University of Naples, where despite resistance from his family he became interested in the new Dominican order. He is reported at one time to have been offered the opportunity to become abbot of Monte Cassino with the privilege of remaining a nominal Dominican; but he persisted, and in 1244, after the death of his father, he became a real Dominican. Shortly thereafter he was kidnapped by his brothers and held for over a year. Perhaps due to papal influence, he was released; and in the autumn of 1245 was at the University of Paris studying under Albertus Magnus, Albert the Great, an encyclopedic thinker with a strong interest in Aristotle. By 1248, Aquinas had his bachelor's degree and went to Cologne with Albert to set up a Dominican study center. By 1252, he was back at Paris studying theology, and in 1256 he obtained the

master's degree. He had to be given both a papal dispensation to take the degree under age and a royal guard to protect him from masters and students who were enraged by the freedom from university discipline of the members of the new mendicant orders. For the next three years he taught theology at Paris. In June of 1259, the young theologian helped propose a program of study in the liberal arts for his order at a chapter held at Valenciennes, and in the same year he began a lengthy sojourn with the papal court, moving from Anagni to Orvieto to Rome to Viterbo. At Orvieto, both Albertus Magnus and William of Moerbeke were present. In 1268, Aquinas was sent back to Paris for his second period as regent master in theology. There he was confronted by the Averroism or secular Aristotelianism of many of the arts masters, led by Siger of Brabant, and by the Augustinianism forcefully expressed by John Peckham of the Franciscans, seconded by his general, Bonaventure. After the controversies of this regency, Aquinas was sent to Naples in 1272 to found a new study center; and there, suddenly, on December 6, 1273, he stopped writing. Such things had been revealed to him, he said, that all he had written seemed as straw. He became ill on his way to a general council of the Church; and on March 7, 1274, he died at the Cistercian monastery of Fossanuova. Controversy over his doctrines continued, and in 1277 certain of his theses were condemned by the bishop of Paris along with many theses from so-called Averroism. His works were adopted by the Dominicans and proscribed by the Franciscans. Under the sympathetic Pope John XXII, he was canonized on July 18, 1323, and the then bishop of Paris revoked the earlier condemnation of his positions.

Aquinas wrote an enormous amount, even by medieval standards. Only major works that are widely recognized as philosophically important will be mentioned here. For further information, the reader can consult the "Brief Catalogue of the Works of Saint Thomas Aquinas" prepared by G. Emery, O.P., for the English edition of Jean-Pierre Torrell's *Saint Thomas Aquinas: The Person and His Work* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), I: 330–361. It was presumably between 1254 and shortly after 1256 that he completed his discussion of Peter Lombard's *Sentences* (*Scriptum in IV Libros Senten-*

*tiarum*) and the very important *On Being and Essence* (*De ente et essentia*). During his first regency he completed some theological commentaries and the disputations appropriate for a teaching master: *Disputed Questions on Truth* (*Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*) and *Quodlibetal Questions* (*Quaestiones quodlibetales*). The greatest of his productions during the early years with the papal court is the *Summa against the Gentiles* (*Summa de veritate fidei Catholicae contra Gentiles*), finished in 1264. It was followed by the equally important *Summa of Theology* (*Summa Theologiae*), written to provide an ordered synthesis for beginners. The work was probably begun in 1265, and remained unfinished at Aquinas's death. He began at the papal court and finished later at Paris a series of expository commentaries on works of Aristotle, including *De Interpretatione*, *De anima*, *Nicomachean Ethics*, *Metaphysics*, *Physics*, *Politics*, and *Posterior Analytics*. Upon his return to Paris, he engaged in further disputations, including *Disputed Question on the Soul* (*Quaestio disputata de anima*) and *Disputed Questions on Evil* (*Quaestiones disputatae de malo*). He also produced a series of short works on the burning issues of the time: *On the Eternity of the World* (*De aeternitate mundi*), *On the Unity of the Intellect* (*De unitate intellectus*), and *On Separate Substances* (*De substantiis separatis*).

The selections that follow begin with the basic ontological doctrine Aquinas set forth in the early *On Being and Essence*. It should be pointed out that the term *esse* is translated here simply as 'being.' Some think that the complexity of Aquinas's thought calls for this to be translated as 'existence' or even 'act of existence.' It should also be noted that a major doctrine of Aquinas is that individuation is through matter in determinate dimensions. He calls this *materia signata*, which is rendered here as 'signate matter.' He also uses *designate*, but since he does not seem to have in mind the semantic relation moderns sometimes term 'designation,' this is rendered usually as 'determinate.' However translated, this doctrine has important consequences for his conception of the soul and theory of knowledge, and came in for considerable criticism (see the Condemnation of 1277).

The remaining selections are all drawn from the *Summa of Theology* (*Summa Theologiae*), where Aquinas

nas intended a conciseness fitted for the introductory student. They begin with the nature of theology, showing how it is distinguished from philosophy, and exploring problems involved in the understanding of religious language. One problem concerns the logical status of predications concerning God and creatures, which Aquinas resolves by holding that such predication is analogical, which contrasts with the view held by Maimonides among others that they are negative, and with Duns Scotus's claim that some such predications must be univocal. The next group of selections is concerned directly with God. In those concerning the demonstrability of the existence of God, the criticism of Anselm's proof should be noted, and the limitations of Aquinas's own proofs. They proceed from facts of nature and the definitions of terms rather than the knowledge of the divine essence, and such proofs can only show that something exists, not that its existence is adequately explained. They should also be compared with the proofs of Duns Scotus, who seems to regard these as less perfect than more properly metaphysical ones such as his. It should also be noted that the "Rabbi Moses" of the selections on providence is Moses Maimonides. The selections on the eternity of the world can be compared to the treatment by Siger of Brabant and to that by Bonaventure, not included here. The acceptability of an infinite series of accidental efficient causes should also be brought to bear on the treatment of causal series in Thomas's proofs for the existence of God.

The next series emphasizes the problem of the soul, inseparable from the problem of knowledge for thirteenth-century thinkers. Aquinas's position is directed against Bonaventure and Ibn Rushd as well. The former held that in man there is not just one substantial form but several, and that the soul has its own "spiritual" matter—a doctrine derived from Ibn Gabirol (see page 351). Ibn Rushd held that the individual knows by a complex relationship to an intellect common to the human species. Aquinas's account of the adequacy of natural cognitive powers can also be contrasted with the illuminationism of Augustine and to the critique of the entire epistemology of intelligible species by William of Ockham. The emphasis on the role of the intellect in Aquinas's treatment of free will provides an introduction to the selections concerned for ethics, where there is a similar emphasis on the intellect in his treatment of happiness and in his theory of law. Here there are interesting comparisons to be made to Maimonides, Duns Scotus, and William of Ockham. The definition of law from Question 90, article 4, may also be helpful in following this treatment: "Law is nothing else than an ordinance of reason for the common good, promulgated by him who has the care of the community."

Aquinas's position as a major philosopher, both in the medieval and the modern worlds, needs little amplification. There may be room for doubt as to whether he is the most characteristic medieval Christian philosopher, but there is no doubt that he has made the greatest mark in the world.

## 38. On Being and Essence

### Introduction

A slight error in the beginning is large in the end, according to the Philosopher in *De caelo et mundo*, and being and essence are what is first conceived in the intellect, as Avicenna says in the *Metaphysics*. So, lest from ignorance of these, error should occur, one should first set out the difficulty regarding them by telling what is signified by the terms 'essence' and 'being,' how being and essence are found in various cases, and how they stand with respect to the logical intentions, i.e., genera, species, and differentia.

Moreover, as we ought to take knowledge of what is simple from what is complex, and come to what is prior from what is posterior, so learning is helped by beginning with what is easier. Hence we should proceed from the signification of being to the signification of essence.

### Chapter I

One should be aware that, as the Philosopher remarks in the *Metaphysics*, being just as being has two senses. One is that which is divided through the ten categories; the other is that which signifies the truth of propositions. The difference between these is that in the second sense everything can be called being about which an affirmative proposition can be formed, even if it calls for nothing real; this is the sense in which privations and negations are called beings. For we say that affirmation is opposed to negation, and that blindness is in the eye. But in the first sense it cannot be said that anything is being unless it calls for something real; so that in the first sense, blindness and such as that are not beings. Thus the term 'essence' is not taken from

being in the second sense, for some are called beings in that sense which do not have an essence, as is obvious in the case of privations. But essence is taken from being in the first sense. Whence the Commentator, in the same place, says, "Being in the first sense is what signifies real substance."

And since, as was remarked, 'being' in this sense is divided through the ten categories, it is required that 'essence' signify something common to all natures through which various beings are organized into various species in various genera, as humanity is the essence of man, and so for other cases. And since that through which a thing is constituted into its own genus or species is what we signify through the definition indicating what a thing is, the term 'essence' has been changed by philosophers into the term 'quiddity' [whatness]. And this is what the Philosopher often calls "what it was to be," that is, that through which something is *what* it is. It is also called form, in the sense in which the certitude of any thing is signified through form, as Avicenna says in Book 2 of his *Metaphysics*. By another name it is also called nature, taking nature in the first of the four senses which Boethius gives in his *De duabis naturis*. According to this, nature is said to be all that the intellect can grasp in any way, for a thing is only intelligible through its definition and essence. And the Philosopher also says in Book 5 of the *Metaphysics* that every substance is nature. But the term 'nature' taken in this sense seems to signify the essence of a thing ordered to the proper operation of the thing, since no thing lacks its own operation. But the term 'quiddity' is taken from what is signified through the definition, and it is called essence since through it and in it a thing has being.

### Chapter II

But since being is primarily and unqualifiedly said of substances, and secondarily in a qualified sense of accidents, essence is truly and properly found in substances, but only in a qualified way in accidents.

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Translated for this volume by James J. Walsh from *S. Thomae Aquinatis opusculum De ente et essentia*, ed. C. Boyer (Rome: Gregorian University, 1933). Boyer utilized both the Baur and the Roland-Gosselin editions.

Of substances, some are simple and some composite, and there is essence in both; but in a truer and nobler way in simples. . . .

In composite substances, form and matter are characteristic, such as are soul and body in man. But it cannot be said that either of these alone is called essence. It is clear that matter alone is not essence, since a thing is knowable and ordered in species or genus through its essence. But matter is not the basis of knowledge, nor is anything determined to species or genus in accordance with it, but rather only in accordance with that by which it is in act. Nor can form alone be called the essence of composite substance, however much some try to maintain this. From what has been said, it is obvious that essence is what is signified through the definition of a thing, but the definition of natural substances does not contain form alone, but also matter. Otherwise, natural and mathematical definitions would not differ. Nor can it be said that matter is to be taken as a mere addition to essence in the definition of natural substance, as a being outside of its essence. For this manner of definition is more proper to accidents, which do not have perfect essence, and hence take substance or a subject outside of their genus in their definition. Thus it is obvious that essence includes matter and form. But it cannot be said that essence signifies a relation between matter and form or anything over and above them, since this would necessarily be an accident or extraneous to the thing, and the thing would not be known through it, all of which pertains to essence. For matter is brought into a being in act and a definite thing through form, which is the act of matter. So that which is added over and above does not give unqualified being in act to matter, but being in act in a certain way, as accidents do, as whiteness makes something white in act. When a form such as that is taken on, it is not said to be absolutely generated, but qualifiedly.

What remains, therefore, is that the term 'essence' signifies in the case of composite substances that which is compounded from matter and form. . . . however much it is form alone that in its way is the cause of being of this type. We see the same in other instances which are constituted from several principles. These things are not named from one or another of those principles alone, but from what embraces both.

This is clear for flavors: sweetness is caused by the action of heat dissipating the humid, and however much heat is in this way the cause of sweetness, a body is not called sweet from the heat, but from the flavor which embraces heat and the humid. But since the principle of individuation is matter, it might seem to follow from this that the essence, which embraces form as well, is only of the particular and not the universal. From which it would follow that a universal would not have a definition, if essence is what is signified through definition. Hence it should be known that the matter which is the principle of individuation is not matter taken in any and every way, but only signate matter. And I call matter signate which is considered under definite dimensions. This matter is not called for in the definition of man just as man; but it would be called for in the definition of Socrates, if Socrates had a definition. In the definition of man, non-signate matter is called for, for it is not this bone and this flesh which is called for in the definition of man, but just bone and flesh, which are the non-signate matter for man.

### Chapter III

. . . The essences of genus and of species also differ with respect to signate and non-signate, however much another manner of determination [*designatio*] might belong to each. For the determination of an individual with respect to a species is through matter determinate in its dimensions, but determination of a species with respect to genus is through a constitutive difference, which is taken from the form of the thing. But this determination or designation which is in the species with respect to the genus is not through anything existing in the essence of the species which is in no way in the essence of the genus. Indeed, whatever is in the species is also in the genus, although not as determinate. . . .

Hence the basis is apparent for the analogy between genus, species, and differentia on the one hand and matter, form, and the composite in nature on the other, even though the latter are not the same as the former. For genus is not matter, but is taken from matter as signifying the whole; nor is the differentia form,

but is taken from form as signifying the whole. Whence we say man is the rational animal, but not from animal and rational in the way we say he is from soul and body. He is said to be man from soul and body in the way that a third thing is constituted from two things, neither of which the third thing is. For man is not the soul nor is he the body. But if man is said to be in some way from animal and rational, it will not be as a third thing from two things, but as a third concept [*intellectus*] from two concepts. For the concept of animal lacks the determination of the species-form, and it expresses the nature of the thing through its status as matter with respect to the final perfection. But the concept of the differentia "rational" consists in the determination of the species-form. The concept of the species or definition is constituted from these two concepts. And so, just as a thing constituted from various things does not take the predication of those things from which it is constituted, so neither does a concept take the predication of those concepts from which it is constituted. For we do not say that a definition is the genus or the differentia. . . .

As has been said, the nature of the species is indeterminate with respect to the individual, just as the nature of the genus is with respect to the species. Hence just as the genus, as it is predicated of the species, implies in its signification, however indistinctly, all that is determinately in the species, so the species, as it is predicated of the individual, must signify, though indistinctly, all that is essentially in the individual. In this way the essence of the species is signified by the word 'man,' whence man is predicated of Socrates. But if the nature of the species is signified as set apart from the signate matter which is the principle of individuation, it will stand as a part, and the word 'humanity' signifies it in this way. For humanity signifies that whence man is man. But signate matter is not that whence man is man, and so in no way is it contained among those from which man has it that he is man. Since, therefore, the concept of humanity includes only those from which man has it that he is man, it is obvious that signate matter is excluded or set aside from its signification. And because a part is not predicated of the whole, so it is that humanity is predicated neither of man nor of Socrates. And so Avicenna says that the quiddity of a composite is not that very com-

posite, however much the quiddity itself is composite. Thus humanity, even though it is composite, still is not man; rather, it has to be received into signate matter.

But, as was said, the determination of a species with respect to the genus is through forms, and the determination of an individual with respect to the species is through matter. So the term signifying that from which the nature of the genus is taken, setting the determining form completing the species, has to signify that material part of the whole, just as body is the material part of man. But the term signifying that from which the nature of the species is taken, setting aside the signate matter, signifies the formal part, and so humanity is signified as a certain form. And it is called the form of the whole, but not as though it were added on to the essential parts, matter and form, as the form of a house is added to its integral parts. Rather, it is a form which is the whole, embracing both form and matter, while setting aside that through which matter is rendered determinate.

And so it is apparent that the term 'man' and the term 'humanity' each signify the essence of man, but in different ways, as has been said. For the term 'man' signifies it as a whole, in that it does not explicitly involve the determination of matter, but contains that implicitly and indistinctly, just as the genus was said to contain the differentia. Hence the term 'man' is predicated of individuals. But the term 'humanity' signifies the essence as a part, since it only contains in its signification what belongs to man as man, with all determination of matter set aside. As a result it is not predicated of individual men. On account of this, sometimes the term 'essence' is found predicated of a thing (for Socrates is said to be a certain essence) and sometimes it is denied, as when we say the essence of Socrates is not Socrates.

## Chapter IV

Having seen what is signified by the term 'essence' in composite substances, one should see how it stands with respect to the nature of genus, species, and differentia. Since that to which the characteristic [*ratio*] of genus, species, or differentia pertains is predicated of this designated singular, it is impossible for the

characteristic of a universal, namely, genus or species, to pertain to essence signified as a part, as by the term ‘humanity’ or ‘animality.’ Hence Avicenna says that rationality is not the differentia, but the basis for the differentia; for the same reason, humanity is not the species nor is animality the genus. Likewise, it cannot be said that the characteristic of genus or species pertains to essence as a certain thing existing outside of singulars, as the Platonists maintained. For in that way, genus and species would not be predicated of this individual; it cannot be said that Socrates is what is separate from him, nor does what is separate conduce to the knowledge of this singular. What is left, then, is that the characteristic of genus or species pertains to essence as it is signified in the manner of a whole, as by the terms ‘man’ or ‘animal’ implicitly and indistinctly containing all that is in the individual.

Nature or essence taken thus can be regarded in two ways. One way is according to its own nature, and this is the absolute consideration of it. In this way, nothing is true to say of it except what pertains to it in just such a way; anything else is falsely attributed to it. For example, to man just as man there pertain rational and animal and whatever else falls into his definition. But white or black or any such not belonging to the nature of humanity does not pertain to man as man. Hence if it is asked whether this very nature can be called one or many, neither should be conceded. For either is outside of the concept of humanity, and either can accrue to it. For if plurality were of its very nature, it could never be one; yet it is one as it is in Socrates. Likewise, if unity belonged to its concept and nature, then there would be one and the same nature of Socrates and Plato, and it could not be pluralized among several instances.

Considered in the other way, essence has being in this one or that, and thus something is predicated as an accident of it by reason of that in which it is. In this way it is said that man is white, since Socrates is white, however much that does not pertain to man as man. But this nature has two-fold being, one in singulars, the other in the soul; and accidents follow upon the said nature in each. Thus in singulars it has multiple being according to the diversity of singulars. Yet for the nature itself, according to its proper, that is, absolute consideration, none of these has to be. For it is false to

say that the nature of man, taken thus, has to be in this singular. For if to be in a singular pertained to man just as man, it would not ever be outside this singular. Likewise, if it pertained to man just as man not to be in this singular, it would never be in it. But it is true to say that being in this singular or that or in the soul does not belong to man just as man. It is obvious, then, that the nature of man absolutely considered abstracts from any being whatever, in a way that does not set aside any of them, and this nature so considered is what is predicated of all individuals. Yet it cannot be said that universality pertains to a nature taken thus, since unity and community belong to universality. But neither of those pertains to human nature according to its absolute consideration; for if community belonged to the concept of man, then wherever humanity were found, community would be found, and this is false. For in Socrates there is not found any community; whatever is in him is individuated. Likewise it cannot be said that the status of genus or species attaches to human nature according to the being which it has in individuals, since human nature is not found in individuals according to the unity pertaining to all, which is what the nature of universality requires.

What remains, then, is that the status of a species attaches to human nature according to the being it has in the intellect. For human nature has being in the intellect abstracted from everything individuating. It has a uniform character with regard to all individuals which are outside the soul, as it is equally the image of all and conducive to the knowledge of all insofar as they are men. And from its having such a relation to all individuals, the intellect devises and attributes to it the character of a species. Whence the Commentator says in Book 1 of the *De anima* that it is the intellect which makes universality in things. Avicenna also says this in his *Metaphysics*. And however much this nature as known has the character of a universal as compared to the things which are outside the soul, since it is one likeness for all, still, according to the being it has in this or that intellect, it is a certain particular appearance [*species . . . intellecta*!]. Hence the mistake of the Commentator in the *De anima* is obvious. He wished to argue the unity of the intellect from the universality of the form as known. But the universality of that form is not according to the being which it has in

the intellect, but according to the way it is referred to things as their likeness, just as if there were a corporeal statue representing many men, surely the image or appearance [*species*] of the statue would have its own singular being in the way it would be in this particular matter; but it would have the character of community as commonly representative of several. . . .

Thus it is clear how essence or nature stands regarding the character of species. This character does not come from those features which pertain to it in its absolute consideration, nor from the accidents such as whiteness or blackness which accrue to it according to the being it has outside the soul; but it comes from the accidents which accrue to it according to the being it has in the intellect. It is also in this way that the character of genus or differentia pertains to it.

## Chapter V

Now it remains to see how essence is in separate substances, namely, the soul, the intelligences and the First Cause. However much all philosophers concede the simplicity of the First Cause, still some try to maintain the composition of matter and form in the intelligences and in souls. The author of this position is said to have been Avicenna in the book *Fons Vitae*. But this is contrary to what is usually said by philosophers, since they describe those substances as separate from matter and they argue them to be without matter. The strongest argument is from the power for knowing which is in them. For we only see forms to be actually known as separated from matter and its conditions; and they are made to be actually known only through the power of a knowing substance, as achieved by it and received in it. Whence it is necessary that in any knowing substance whatever, there be every type of immunity from matter; so that it does not have a material component, nor is it even as a form impressed in matter, as are materialized forms.

Nor can anyone claim that it is not every kind of matter that impedes the capacity to be known, but only corporeal matter. For if this were by reason of corporeal matter only, then to impede knowability would require that the matter have a corporeal form, since matter is only called corporeal because it stands under

a corporeal form. And this cannot be, since that very corporeal form is actually knowable, as are other forms which are abstracted from matter. So in no way is there composition from matter and form in an intellective soul or an intelligence, with matter taken as it is in corporeal substances. But there is a composition of form and being. Thus in the comment on the ninth proposition of the *Liber de causis* it is said that an intelligence is one having form and being, and form is taken there as the quiddity itself or the simple nature. And how this is, is plain to see. For whatever things are so disposed that one is the cause for the other to be, the one that has the character of the cause can be without the other, but not the reverse. But such a disposition is found in form and matter that form gives being to matter. So it is impossible for there to be any matter without form, but it is not impossible for there to be some form without matter. For form just as form does not have dependence on matter. If some forms are found which can only be in matter, this happens in that they are distant from the First Principle, which is the first act and pure act. And so those forms which are closest to the First Principle are forms inherently subsisting without matter, for form does not require matter throughout the genus, as was said. Forms of this kind are intelligences, and so it is not required that the essences or quiddities of these substances be other than form itself.

The essences of composite and simple substances differ, then, in that the essence of composite substances embraces not only form, but form and matter; but the essence of simple substances is form alone. And this makes for two other differences. One is that the essence of composite substance can be signified as a whole or a part, which happens because of the determination of matter, as was said. Hence the essence of a composite thing cannot be predicated in just any way of that composite thing, for it cannot be said that man is his quiddity. But the essence of a simple thing, which is its form, can only be signified as a whole, since there is nothing there except form as receiving the form. And so the essence of a simple substance is predicated of it in whichever way it is taken. So Avicenna says that the quiddity of a simple substance is itself simple, since there is not anything to receive it.

The second difference is that from the fact that the essences of composite things received in determinate matter are multiplied according to its division, it happens that some are the same in species but diverse in number. But since the essence of simples is not received in matter, no such multiplication can obtain in that case. Hence it is not required that many individuals of the same species be found for those substances; but there are as many species as there are individuals, as Avicenna explicitly states. However much such substances are forms without matter, it is not simplicity of every type which is in them, such as are pure acts, but they are mixed with potentiality, in this way: whatever does not belong to the concept of essence or quiddity comes from outside it and makes up a composition with essence, since no essence can be known without the parts of essence. But every essence or quiddity can be known without anything being known concerning its being. For I can know what man is, or a phoenix, and still not know whether or not it has being in reality [*rerum natura*]. Therefore it is obvious that being is other than essence or quiddity, unless perchance there is some thing whose quiddity is its being. There can only be one such being, the First. For it is impossible that there should be pluralization of anything except through the addition of some differentia, the way the nature of a genus is multiplied in species, or through a form being received in diverse matter, the way the nature of a species is multiplied in diverse individuals, or through one being abstracted and another received in something, in the way that if there were some separated heat, from the separation itself it would be other than an unseparated heat. But if there were given some thing which is only being, such that the very being is subsistent, this being would not take the addition of a differentia. For then it would not be being alone, but being and some form outside of that. And much less would it take the addition of matter, since then it would not be a subsisting being but a material one. So what is left is that there can only be one such thing which is its own being, when it is necessary that in any other thing outside of that, its being is other than its quiddity or nature or form. Thus it is necessary that in intelligences, being is outside of form; hence it was said that an intelligence is form and being.

But all that pertains to something is either caused from the principles of its own nature, as is the capacity to laugh in man, or comes to it from some extrinsic principle, as the light in the air from the influence of the sun. But being itself cannot be caused by the form or quiddity of a thing, speaking of the efficient cause, because then a thing would be the cause of itself and would bring itself into being, which is impossible. Therefore it is necessary that every such thing whose being is other than its nature should have its being from another. And since everything which is through something else is reduced to a first cause which is through itself, it is necessary that there be some thing which is the cause of being for all things, in that it is being alone. Otherwise there would be an infinity in causes, since everything which is not being alone has a cause for its being, as has been said. Thus it is apparent that an intelligence is form and being, and that it has its being from a first being which is being alone, and this is the First Cause, which is God.

But everything which receives something from another is in potentiality with respect to that, and what is received in it is its act. Therefore it is necessary that the form or quiddity which is an intelligence be in potentiality with respect to the being which it receives from God, and that the being is received as act. It is in this way that act and potency are found in intelligences, yet not form and matter, except equivocally. And so to undergo, to receive, to be a subject and all such which seem to pertain to things by reason of matter, pertain equivocally to intellectual and to corporeal substances, as the Commentator says in Book 3 of the *De anima*. . . .

Distinction among these [separated] substances is thus according to the grade of potentiality and act, so that a superior intelligence which is closer to the First, has more of act and less of potentiality, and so for the others. This is ended in the human soul, which occupies the lowest rung among intellectual substances. Whence the possible intellect is disposed to knowable forms in the way that prime matter, which occupies the lowest rung in sensible being, is to sensible forms, as the Commentator says in Book 3 of the *De anima*. So the Philosopher compares it to a blank slate on which nothing is written. And because it has more of

potentiality than other substances capable of knowledge, it performs in such proximity to material things that a material thing is drawn to participate in its being. So from soul and body there results one being in one composite, however much that being, as belonging to the soul, is not dependent on the body. And after this form which is the soul, other forms are found

having more of potentiality and closer to matter, so much so that they do not have being without matter. In these also is found order and grade, on down to the primary forms of the elements, which are closest to matter, so that they do not have any operation except according to the demands of active and passive qualities and others which dispose matter to form. . . .

## 39. *Summa Theologiae* First Part Selections from the “Treatise on God”

### Question 1 Concerning Sacred Teaching: What Is Its Character and What Is Its Range?

#### *Article 1. The necessity of sacred teaching.*

It seems that it is not necessary to have any other teaching beyond the philosophical disciplines:

1. Humans should not strive for what is beyond reason, as it is said in Ecclesiasticus 3:5: “Seek not after what is higher than you.” But what falls under reason is adequately treated in the philosophical disciplines. Accordingly, it seems superfluous to have any other teaching beyond the philosophical disciplines.

2. There can be teaching only about what is, for nothing is known except what is true, which coincides with being. But everything that is is studied by the philosophical disciplines, including God; hence there is a part of philosophy that is called theology or divine science, as the Philosopher makes clear in *Metaphysics* 6 [1026a19]. Accordingly, it was not necessary

to have any other teaching beyond the philosophical disciplines.

**On the contrary.** It is said in 2 Timothy 3:16: “All scripture inspired by God is useful to teach, reprove, correct, and instruct in justice.” But scripture inspired by God does not belong to the philosophical disciplines, which are discovered by human reason. Accordingly, it is beneficial that, beyond the philosophical disciplines, there be another science, inspired by God.

**Reply.** It was necessary for the sake of human salvation that there be a teaching in accord with divine revelation, beyond the philosophical disciplines investigated by human reason. First, because human beings are ordered to God as to an end that surpasses the grasp of reason; as Isaiah 64:4 says: “The eye has not seen, without you, O God, what you have prepared for those who love you.” But the end must be known in advance to humans, who should order their intentions and actions towards their end. Hence it was necessary for the sake of human salvation that certain truths which surpass human reason be made known to us through divine revelation. Moreover, it was necessary for God to instruct us by divine revelation even regarding the truths about God that can be investigated

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From Aquinas, *The Treatise on the Divine Nature*, tr. Brian J. Shanley (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2006). Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

by human reason. This is because the truth about God investigated by reason would otherwise be available only to a few people, after a long time, and with the admixture of many errors. Yet the whole of human salvation, which lies in God, depends upon knowledge of this truth. Accordingly, in order that salvation might come about for human beings more suitably and surely, it was necessary for them to be instructed about divine truths by divine revelation. Thus, beyond the philosophical disciplines investigated by human reason, it was necessary to have a sacred teaching through revelation.

**Response to 1.** Although human beings ought not to seek through reason those things that surpass human knowledge, nevertheless what has been revealed by God ought to be accepted through faith. Hence scripture also says in the same place: “many things have been shown to you beyond the human senses.” Sacred teaching consists of just such things.

**Response to 2.** Differences between sciences result from a difference in the character [*ratio*] of how they are known. An astronomer and a physicist both prove the same conclusion—for example, that the earth is round—but the astronomer does this through a means that is mathematical (that is, one that abstracts from matter), whereas the physicist does it through a means that takes matter into account. Hence there is no reason why the very same things which are considered by the philosophical disciplines insofar as they are knowable by the light of natural reason may not also be considered by another science insofar as it is knowable by the light of divine revelation. Hence the theology of sacred teaching differs in kind from the theology that is considered a part of philosophy.

*Article 2. Is sacred teaching a science?*

It seems that sacred teaching is not a science:

1. Every science proceeds from self-evident principles. But sacred teaching proceeds from articles of faith that are not self-evident, since they are not accepted by everyone. “For not everyone has faith,” as it says in 2 Thessalonians 3:2. Accordingly, sacred teaching is not a science.

2. Science does not concern itself with particulars. But sacred teaching does concern itself with particulars, such as the actions of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and others like them. Hence sacred teaching is not a science.

**On the contrary.** Augustine says in *On the Trinity* 14: “To this science alone belongs that whereby salutary faith is begotten, nourished, defended, and strengthened.”<sup>1</sup> But this pertains to no science other than sacred teaching. Hence sacred teaching is a science.

**Reply.** Sacred teaching is a science. However, we must note that there are two different kinds of sciences. For some sciences proceed from principles that are known by the natural light of the intellect, such as arithmetic, geometry, and others of this kind. Other sciences proceed from principles known through the light of a higher science, in the way that the science of perspective proceeds from principles known through geometry, and the science of music through principles known from arithmetic. Sacred teaching is a science in this latter way, since it proceeds from principles known through a higher science, namely the science that belongs to God and the blessed. Hence just as music accepts principles handed down to it from arithmetic, so sacred teaching accepts principles revealed to it by God.

**Response to 1.** The principles of any science are either self-evident or reducible to what is known by a higher science. As was noted, the principles of sacred teaching are of the latter kind.

**Response to 2.** Particulars are considered in sacred teaching, but not because they are the principal consideration. Rather, they are introduced both as examples for our lives (as they are in the moral sciences) and in order to confirm the authority of those men through whom divine revelation, upon which sacred scripture or sacred teaching is founded, has come down to us.

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1. Ch. 7.

*Article 3. Is sacred teaching one or many sciences?*

It seems that sacred teaching is not one science:

1. According to Aristotle in *Posterior Analytics* 1 [87a38]: "a science is one when it considers one genus of subjects." But no single genus of subjects includes the Creator and creatures, which are both considered in sacred teaching. Hence sacred teaching is not one science.

2. Angels, bodily creatures, and human morals are all considered by sacred teaching. But these topics belong to distinct philosophical sciences. Accordingly, sacred teaching is not one science.

**On the contrary.** Sacred scripture speaks of it as one science, for it says in Wisdom 10:10: "I gave to him the science of holy things."

**Reply.** Sacred teaching is one science. The reason for this is that the unity of a power or disposition should be considered in terms of its object—not the object taken materially, but in terms of its formal character [*ratio*]. For example, a human, a donkey, and a stone agree in the one formal character of *being colored*, which is the object of vision. Accordingly, because sacred scripture considers things insofar as they have been revealed by God (as was noted [a. 1]), all things whatever that are revealable by God share in the one formal character that is the object of this science and are therefore included under sacred teaching as under one science.

**Response to 1.** Sacred teaching does not concern itself equally with God and creatures, but rather with God primarily and creatures insofar as they are ordered to God as their origin and end. Thus the unity of the science is not compromised.

**Response to 2.** Nothing prevents lower powers and dispositions from being distinguished with regard to matters that fall together under a single higher power or disposition, since the higher power or disposition considers its object under a more universal formal character. For example, the object of the common sense is what is sensible, including both the visible and the audible; hence the common sense, although it is one

power, extends to all the objects of the five senses. Similarly, whatever distinct philosophical sciences consider can also be considered by sacred teaching as a single science under a single character—namely, insofar as they are things revealable by God. Thus sacred teaching is, so to speak, an impression of God's own science, which is a single, simple science of all things.

*Article 4. Is sacred teaching a speculative or practical science?*

It seems that sacred teaching is a practical science:

1. According to the Philosopher in *Metaphysics* 2, "The end of practical science is action."<sup>2</sup> Now sacred teaching is ordered to action, as it says in James 1:22: "Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only." Thus sacred teaching is a practical science.

2. Sacred teaching is divided into the old law and the new law. But law pertains to moral science, which is a practical science. Thus sacred teaching is a practical science.

**On the contrary.** Every practical science concerns things that humans do or make, as morality concerns human actions and architecture concerns buildings. But sacred teaching is principally about God, to whom human beings stand rather as things made. Thus sacred teaching is not a practical science but rather a speculative one.

**Reply.** As was noted [a. 3], sacred teaching, being one, nevertheless extends to the objects of distinct philosophical sciences in virtue of the formal character that it aims at in the distinct sciences—insasmuch, that is, as they are knowable in the light of God. Thus although philosophical sciences are either practical or speculative, sacred teaching encompasses both kinds of science, just as God by one and the same science knows both himself and the things he makes. Still, it is more speculative than practical, because it principally considers divine things rather than human actions, which latter it considers only insofar as people are ordered through them to the perfect knowledge of God that is eternal bliss.

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2. 1, 993b21.

The response to the objections is obvious from what has just been said.

*Article 5. How does sacred teaching relate to the other sciences?*

It seems that sacred teaching is not nobler than the other sciences:

1. The nobility of a science is related to its certitude. But the other sciences, whose principles cannot be doubted, seem to be more certain than sacred teaching, whose principles—the articles of faith—are open to doubt. Accordingly the other sciences seem to be nobler than sacred teaching.

2. Lower sciences take from higher sciences, as music takes from arithmetic. But sacred teaching takes something from the philosophical disciplines, for as Jerome says in his *Letter to Magnus*: “the ancient doctors so besprinkled their books with the doctrines and opinions of the philosophers that you cannot tell what it is that you ought to admire the most—their secular erudition or their knowledge of scripture.”<sup>3</sup> Hence sacred teaching is lower than the other sciences.

**On the contrary.** The other sciences are said to be handmaidens of this teaching, as Proverbs 9:3 says: “Wisdom sent her handmaids to invite them to the ark.”

**Reply.** While this science is speculative in one respect and practical in another, nevertheless it transcends all the other sciences, both speculative and practical. For one speculative science is said to be nobler than another in some cases because of its certitude and in others because of the nobility of its subject matter. This science surpasses all the other speculative sciences on both counts: (1) with respect to certitude, because the other sciences have their certitude from the natural light of human reason, which can err, whereas sacred teaching has its certitude from the light of God’s knowledge, which cannot be deceived; (2) with respect to nobility of subject matter, because this science is principally concerned with things that tran-

scend reason by virtue of their sublimity, whereas the other sciences consider only those things that fall under reason’s grasp.

When it comes to practical sciences, one is considered nobler than another when it is ordered to a more ultimate end. Political science is nobler than military science, for instance, because the good of military activity is ordered to the good of the state. Now the end of sacred teaching insofar as it is practical is eternal beatitude, to which all the other ends of the practical sciences are ordered as to their ultimate end. Hence it is clear that sacred teaching is nobler than other sciences in every way.

**Response to 1.** Nothing prevents what is more certain by nature from being less certain to us because of the weakness of our intellect, which “is related to the most evident things in nature as the eye of an owl to the light of the sun,” as is said in *Metaphysics* 2 [993b9]. Thus the doubt which some people experience with respect to the articles of faith is not because the thing believed is uncertain, but rather because of the weakness of the human intellect. Yet even the least knowledge that we can have of the highest things is more desirable than the most certain knowledge that we can have of the lowest things, as is said in *On Animals* 11 [*Parts of Animals* 644b31].

**Response to 2.** This science can take something from the philosophical disciplines not because it necessarily needs their help, but rather in order to achieve greater clarity regarding its own proper subject matter. For it does not receive its principles from the other sciences, but immediately from God through revelation. So it does not take from other sciences as if they were superior to it, but rather it uses them as inferiors and ancillaries, in the way that an architectonic science makes use of a subordinate science, as political science uses military science. The fact that it uses these other sciences in this way is not the result of some intrinsic defect or insufficiency, but rather because of the weakness of our intellect, which is more easily led to things that surpass reason (the subject of this science) through what is known by the natural reason on which other sciences are based.

3. *Epistola ad Magnum oratorem urbis Romae*, Ep. 70.

*Article 6. Is this teaching wisdom?*

It seems that this teaching is not wisdom:

1. No teaching which derives its principles from elsewhere is worthy of the name "wisdom," since "it pertains to the wise person to order others, not to be ordered" (*Metaphysics* 1 [982a18]). But this teaching does derive its principles from elsewhere, as was noted [a. 2]. Therefore this teaching is not wisdom.

2. It pertains to wisdom to prove the principles of other sciences; hence it is called the chief of the sciences, as is clear in *Ethics* 6 [1141a20]. But this teaching does not prove the principles of other sciences. Therefore it is not wisdom.

3. This teaching is acquired through study. But wisdom is received by divine inspiration; that is why it is numbered among the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit identified in Isaiah 11:2. Therefore it is not wisdom.

**On the contrary.** At the head of the law in Deuteronomy 4:6 it says: "This is our wisdom and understanding in the presence of the people."

**Reply.** This teaching is the greatest wisdom of all human wisdoms, not merely in one domain [as below], but absolutely. For since it pertains to wisdom to order and judge, and the judgment of lower things is had through a higher cause, someone is said to be wise in any domain who considers the highest cause in that domain. For example, in the domain of building, the artisan who designs the house's plan is called "wise" and "architect" or "master builder," relative to the lower laborers who chop the wood and prepare the stones; hence it is said in 1 Corinthians 3:10: "I laid the foundation like a wise architect." Moreover, in the domain of human life generally, prudent people are said to be wise because they order human actions toward the appropriate end; hence it is said in Proverbs 10:23: "Wisdom, in a man, is prudence." Accordingly, someone who considers the absolutely highest cause of the whole universe, God, is said to be supremely wise; hence Augustine says in *On the Trinity* 12 [14] that wisdom is knowledge of divine things. But it is proper to sacred teaching above all to consider God as the highest cause, not only in terms of what is know-

able through creatures, in the way philosophers have done—as it says in Romans 1:19: "What is known of God is manifest to them"—but also in terms of what is known only to God about himself and communicated by revelation to others. Hence sacred teaching most of all is said to be wisdom.

**Response to 1.** Sacred teaching does not derive its principles from any human science, but rather from divine science, which, as the highest wisdom, is what orders all our knowledge.

**Response to 2.** The principles of the other sciences are either self-evident and unprovable, or proved through natural reason in another science. But the knowledge proper to this science comes from revelation rather than natural reason. And so it is not its responsibility to prove the principles of the other sciences, but only to judge them. For whatever is found in other sciences that is inconsistent with the truth of this science is to be condemned as utterly false; hence it is said in 2 Corinthians 10:4: "Destroying counsels and every height that exalts itself against the knowledge of God."

**Response to 3.** Because judgment pertains to wisdom, two ways of judging make for two kinds of wisdom. For someone may judge in one way through inclination, the way those with virtuous dispositions judge rightly what ought to be done in accord with virtue because they are inclined toward it; hence it says in *Ethics* 10 [1176a17] that the virtuous person provides the measure and rule for human actions. Another way of judging is through knowledge, and in this way those who are knowledgeable in the science of morality could judge virtuous actions even if they lack the virtue. Accordingly, the first way of judging divine things belongs to the wisdom that is the gift of the Holy Spirit, as it says in 1 Corinthians 2:15: "The spiritual person judges all things" and as Dionysius says in the second chapter of *On the Divine Names*: "Hierotheus is instructed not only by learning, but also by experiencing the divine."<sup>4</sup> The second way of judging belongs to

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4. PG 3.648.

this teaching insofar as it is acquired by study, although its principles are received from revelation.

*Article 7. What is the subject of this science?*

It seems that God is not the subject of this science:

1. Every science presupposes knowledge of what the subject is, as the Philosopher says in *Posterior Analytics* 1 [71a13]. But this science does not presuppose knowledge of what God is, for as John Damascene says: “It is impossible to say what God is.”<sup>5</sup> Thus God is not the subject of this science.

2. All the things that are considered in one science are included under its subject. But sacred scripture considers many things other than God, such as creatures and human morality. Thus God is not the subject of this science.

**On the contrary.** The subject of any science is what that science speaks about. But in this science, God is what it speaks about; for it is called “theology,” as in “speech about God.” Thus God is the subject of this science.

**Reply.** God is the subject of this science, for the following reason. The relationship of subject to science is like the relationship of an object to a power or disposition. Now what is properly assigned as the object of some power or disposition is that under the aspect [*ratione*] of which all things are related to that power or disposition. A human being and a rock, for instance, are related to sight insofar as they are both colored, and so what is colored is the proper object of sight. Now all things are treated in sacred teaching under the aspect of God, either because those things are God himself or because they are ordered to God as origin and end. Hence it follows that God is truly the subject of this science. This is clear from the principles of this science, the articles of faith, which are about God. But whatever is the subject of the principles of a science is also the subject of the entire science, because the entire science is virtually contained in its principles. Some authors, however, attending more to what is considered in the science than to the aspect under which it is considered, have assigned another subject

5. *De fide orthodoxa* 1.4.

to this science: either things and symbols; or the works of salvation; or the whole Christ, that is head and members. All these things are considered in this science, but insofar as they are ordered to God.

**Response to 1.** Although we cannot know what God is, in this teaching, instead of a definition, we use God’s effects, either of nature or grace, for the things we examine about God in this teaching (just as in certain philosophical sciences we demonstrate a truth about a cause on the basis of an effect by taking the effect in place of the cause’s definition).

**Response to 2.** All the other things considered in sacred teaching are included under God—not as his parts, or species, or accidents, but as ordered to him in some way.

*Article 8. Does sacred teaching involve arguments?*

It seems that this teaching does not involve arguments:

1. Ambrose says in the first book of *On the Catholic Faith*: “Cast aside arguments if faith is what you seek.”<sup>6</sup> Yet in this teaching faith is what is sought above all, and that is why it is said in John 20:31: “These things have been written so that you might believe.” Thus sacred teaching does not involve arguments.

2. If this teaching did involve arguments, they would be based either on authority or on reason. If they were from authority, then that would seem to be incompatible with the dignity of this science because, according to Boethius,<sup>7</sup> an argument based on authority is the weakest kind. If they were based on reason, then this would be incompatible with its aim, since, as Gregory says in a homily,<sup>8</sup> “Faith has no merit where human reason supplies proof.” Thus sacred teaching does not involve arguments.

**On the contrary.** It is said of a bishop in Titus 1:9 that he should “embrace the faithful word which is in accord with our teachings, so that he might be able to

6. Ch. 12.

7. *In Topicis Ciceronicis* 1 and *De differentia topicorum* 3.

8. *In Evangelium* 2, 26.

exhort in sound teachings and refute those who contradict it."

**Reply.** Just as other sciences do not provide arguments in order to prove their own principles, but rather argue from those principles in order to make manifest other truths in the science, so too this teaching does not provide arguments to prove its own principles, which are the articles of faith, but rather from these proceeds to show something else. For example, the Apostle in 1 Corinthians 15:12 argues from the resurrection of Christ in order to prove the general resurrection. But we must keep in mind that, among the philosophical sciences, the lower sciences neither prove their principles nor dispute with those who deny them; rather, they leave that to a higher science. The supreme philosophical science, metaphysics, disputes with one who denies its principles if that adversary concedes something; if that adversary concedes nothing, however, then it cannot dispute with him, although it can answer his objections. Therefore sacred scripture, since it has no science above it, disputes with those who deny its principles. It does so through arguing, if the opponent concedes any of the truths established by divine revelation. For example, when disputing with heretics we use authoritative texts of sacred teaching, and through one article of faith argue against those who deny another. If, on the other hand, the opponent believes nothing of what has been revealed by God, there are no avenues available to prove the articles of faith through arguments; yet there is a way to answer whatever arguments might be raised against the faith. For since faith rests upon infallible truth, and it is impossible that there be a genuine demonstration of what is contrary to the true, it is plain that any arguments offered against faith are not demonstrations, but rather arguments that can be answered.

**Response to 1.** Although arguments based on human reason do not have the ability to prove what belongs to faith, nevertheless (as was noted) this teaching uses articles of the faith to argue for other articles.

**Response to 2.** To argue from authority is most appropriate in this teaching inasmuch as its principles are received through revelation, and thus it must be believed

on the authority of those to whom the revelation was given. Nor does this detract from the dignity of this teaching, for although an argument from authority based on human reason is the weakest of all, nevertheless an argument from authority based on divine revelation is the most powerful of all. Even so, sacred teaching also uses human reason, not in order to prove what belongs to faith (since that would eliminate its merit) but rather in order to clarify various other topics considered in this teaching. For since grace does not destroy nature but rather perfects it, natural reason should serve faith in the same way that the natural inclination of the will obeys charity. Hence the Apostle says in 2 Corinthians 10:5: "leading every understanding into captivity to obey Christ." And so sacred teaching makes use even of philosophical authorities in those matters where they were able to know the truth through human reason, as Paul employs the words of Aratus in Acts of the Apostles 17:28: "As some of your own poets said, we are of the race of God." Nevertheless, sacred teaching makes use of this kind of authority as something coming from outside its domain, providing merely probable arguments. When it offers necessary arguments, it properly uses the canonical scriptures. It also relies properly on the authority of the other doctors of the church, although only for probable arguments. That is because our faith is based on the revelation made to the Apostles and Prophets who wrote the canonical books rather than on any revelation that might have been given to other doctors. Hence Augustine says in a letter to Jerome: "Only those books of scripture that are called canonical have I learned to hold in such honor so as to believe very firmly that none of their authors erred at all in writing them. But other authors I read in such a way that I do not assume that what they have thought or written is true, no matter how much they might excel in holiness and learning."<sup>9</sup>

*Article 9. Should sacred scripture use metaphorical or symbolic language?*

It seems that sacred scripture should not use metaphors:

1. What is proper to the lowest teaching does not seem appropriate for this science, which (as was noted

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9. *Epistola* 82.1.

[a. 5]) holds the highest place among all the sciences. But to proceed by various likenesses and images is proper to poetics, which is the lowest of all teachings. Therefore it is not appropriate for this science to use likenesses of this sort.

2. This teaching appears to be ordered to the manifestation of truth; hence a reward is promised to those who make it manifest, in Ecclesiasticus 24:31: “Whoever elucidates me shall have eternal life.” But likenesses of this kind obscure the truth. Hence it is not fitting for this teaching to consider the divine through likenesses of bodily things.

3. The loftier a creature is, the more it approaches the divine likeness. Accordingly, if anything from creatures were to be transferred onto God, then it should be something taken above all from the loftier creatures rather than the humblest ones, as is frequently found in scripture.

**On the contrary.** It is written in Hosea 12:10: “I have multiplied vision for them and I have been likened to another at the hands of the prophets.” But it belongs to a metaphor to convey something through a likeness. Thus it belongs to sacred teaching to use metaphors.

**Reply.** It is appropriate for sacred scripture to convey divine and spiritual things through bodily likenesses. That is because God provides for all things in accord with what befits their natures. But it is natural for human beings to arrive at what is intelligible through what is sensible, since all our knowledge originates in sensation. Thus it is fitting that sacred scripture convey spiritual truths to us through bodily metaphors. This is what Dionysius says in the first chapter of *On the Celestial Hierarchy*: “It is impossible for the divine ray to enlighten us unless it be enveloped by many sacred veils.”<sup>10</sup> It is also fitting that sacred scripture—which is proposed to all alike according to Romans 1:14: “To the wise and the foolish I am a debtor”—propose spiritual truths through bodily likenesses so that at the very least those who are so terribly unsophisticated that they are incapable of grasping intelligible things in themselves might thereby come to grasp the scriptures.

10. Section 2.

**Response to 1.** A poet uses metaphors in order to provide images, for an image is naturally pleasing to people. But, as was noted [in the reply], sacred teaching uses metaphors because it is necessary and useful.

**Response to 2.** The ray of divine revelation is not ruined by the sensible imagery in which it is enveloped, as Dionysius says.<sup>11</sup> Instead, it retains its truth so that it does not allow the minds to whom this revelation is made to dwell on the likenesses, but instead raises them up to know intelligible things. Those to whom revelation was made are then able to instruct others in these things. That is why what scripture conveys with metaphors in one place it expresses more directly elsewhere. Moreover, the very concealment in images is useful for arousing those eager to know the truth and as a defense against the ridicule of unbelievers, of whom it is said in Matthew 7:6: “Do not give what is holy to dogs.”

**Response to 3.** As Dionysius teaches in the second chapter of *On the Celestial Hierarchy*,<sup>12</sup> it is more fitting that scripture convey divine truths through images drawn from the meanest kinds of bodily creatures rather than the noblest. There are three reasons for this. First, because in this way the human soul is better preserved from error. For it is obvious that these images are not meant to be ascribed literally to divine things, which might be doubted if images drawn from noble bodies were used to describe divine things, especially in those who are untrained to think about anything beyond noble bodies. Second, because this approach fits better with the kind of knowledge of God that we are able to achieve in this life. For with respect to God, it is more apparent to us what God is not, rather than what God is. And so the likenesses drawn from things far removed from God lead us to a truer appreciation that God is beyond anything we can say or think about God. Third, because in this way divine things are more hidden from the unworthy.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

*Article 10. Should sacred scripture be interpreted in multiple senses?*

It seems that a passage of sacred scripture does not have multiple senses—the historical or literal, allegorical, tropological or moral, and anagogical:

1. A multiplication of senses in one scriptural passage produces confusion and deception, and it undermines an argument's firmness; and so the multiplication of premises does not result in a sound argument but rather leads to a number of fallacies. But sacred scripture ought to be efficacious in displaying the truth without any fallacy. Thus a scripture passage ought not communicate multiple senses.

2. Augustine says in *Concerning the Usefulness of Belief* that "the scriptures which are called the Old Testament have been transmitted to us in accord with a fourfold division: the historical, the etiological, the analogical, and the allegorical."<sup>13</sup> Now these four senses seem to be completely different from the four mentioned above. It therefore does not seem fitting for the same passage of sacred scripture to be interpreted in the four senses stated at the outset.

3. In addition to the four senses already mentioned, there is also the parabolic sense, which is not included in their number.

**On the contrary.** Gregory says in Chapter 20 of his *Morals*: "Sacred scripture surpasses all the other sciences in its manner of speaking, because with one and the same sentence, while it narrates an action, it conveys a mystery."<sup>14</sup>

**Reply.** The author of sacred scripture is God, who has the power not only to use words in order to signify (which even humans can do) but also to use things themselves in order to signify. Thus although words are used to signify in every science, it is proper to this science that the things signified by the words themselves signify something. Accordingly, the primary signification, by which words signify things, pertains to the first sense, which is the historical or literal sense. In contrast, the signification by which the things that

are signified by words themselves signify further things is called the spiritual sense, which presupposes and rests upon the literal sense.

The spiritual sense is divided into three. For as the Apostle says in Hebrews 7:19, the old law prefigures the new law, while the new law, as Dionysius says in *On the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, prefigures future glory. In the new law, the deeds that are done by the head [Christ] are signs of what we ought to do. Thus insofar as the things belonging to the old law signify the things belonging to the new law, there is an allegorical sense; insofar as the things done by Christ or signifying Christ are signs of what we ought to do, there is a moral sense; and insofar as they signify the things that are in eternal glory, there is an anagogical sense. And because the literal sense is what the author intends, and the author of sacred scripture is God, who comprehends everything at once through his intellect, it is not inappropriate, as Augustine says in Book 12 of *Confessions*,<sup>15</sup> that there be multiple senses in accord with the literal sense of a single scripture passage.

**Response to 1.** The multiplication of senses in this manner does not make for equivocation or any other kind of ambiguity because, as was already said (in the reply), these senses are multiplied not because one word signifies many things, but rather because the very things signified by the words can themselves be signs of other things. And so too no confusion follows in sacred scripture because all the senses rest on a single one: the literal sense. An argument can be constructed from this alone, and not from things said allegorically, as Augustine notes in his letter to Vincent.<sup>16</sup> Yet nothing is lost of Sacred Scripture in this way, because there is nothing necessary to faith put forward in a spiritual sense that scripture does not convey somewhere else expressly.

**Response to 2.** These three—history, etiology, analogy—pertain to the same literal sense. For history is, as Augustine himself explains, when something is proposed straightforwardly. Etiology, on the other hand,

13. Ch. 3.

14. Ch. 1.

15. Ch. 31.

16. *Epistola* 93.8.

is when the cause of what is spoken about is explained, as when the Lord explained the reason why Moses gave men license to repudiate their wives, namely because of their hardness of heart (Matt. 19:8). Analogy is when the truth of one part of scripture is shown not to contradict the truth of another part. Of the four listed in the objection, only the allegorical is set in the place of the three spiritual senses, just as Hugh of St. Victor too includes the anagogical under the allegorical sense, maintaining in Book 3 of his *Sentences* that there are only three senses: the historical, the allegorical, and the tropological.<sup>17</sup>

**Response to 3.** The parabolic sense is contained under the literal sense. The reason is that a parable's words signify one thing properly and another figuratively, and the literal sense is not the figure itself, but rather what is figured. After all, when scripture speaks of God's arm, the literal sense is not that there is some kind of bodily limb in God, but rather what that limb signifies, namely the power to act. Thus it is clear that nothing false can fall under the literal sense of sacred scripture.

## Question 2 Does God Exist?

### Article 1. *Is the existence of God self-evident?*

It seems that the existence of God is self-evident [*per se notum*]:

1. Things are said to be self-evident to us when knowledge of them is naturally present in us, as is clear in the case of first principles. But, as Damascene says at the beginning of his book,<sup>1</sup> “knowledge of the existence of God is naturally implanted in everyone.” Hence the existence of God is self-evident.

2. Things are said to be self-evident that are known as soon as the terms are known, as the Philosopher asserts about the first principles of demonstration in *Posterior Analytics* I [3, 72b18]; for if I know what a whole is and what a part is, then I immediately know that

every whole is greater than any of its parts. But if I understand what the name “God” signifies, then it follows immediately that God exists. For by the name is signified “that than which a greater cannot be signified.” Now something is greater when it exists both in reality and in the intellect, rather than only in the intellect. Therefore since when I understand this name “God,” he immediately exists in the intellect, it follows that God must also exist in reality. Hence the existence of God is self-evident.

3. The existence of truth is self-evident, since someone who denies that there is truth concedes its existence: for if there is no truth, then it is true that there is no truth. But if there is something true, then there must be truth. Now God is Truth itself according to John 16:6: “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” Hence the existence of God is self-evident.

**On the contrary.** No one can think the opposite of what is self-evident, as the Philosopher makes clear in *Metaphysics* 4 [1005b11] and *Posterior Analytics* 4 [76b23] regarding the first principles of demonstration. But according to Psalms 53:1 it is possible to think the opposite of God's existing: “The fool said in his heart: there is no God.” Hence the existence of God is not self-evident.

**Reply.** Something can be self-evident in two ways: first, in itself [*secundum se*] but not relative to us [*quoad nos*]; second, in itself and relative to us. For a proposition is self-evident when the predicate is included in the definition [*ratione*] of the subject, as in the case of “A human being is an animal,” since animal is part of the definition of human being. Accordingly, if it is known to everyone what the subject is and what the predicate is, then that proposition will be self-evident to everyone, as is clear with the first principles of demonstration that have common terms that no one can be ignorant of, such as “being” and “nonbeing,” “whole” and “part,” and others like these. If, however, there were people who did not know, regarding the subject or predicate, what it is, then that proposition would be self-evident in itself but not for those who do not grasp its subject and the predicate. Thus it happens, as Boethius says in *On the Hebdomads*, that “some general conceptions of the mind are self-

17. *De sacramentis* 1.4.

1. *De fide orthodoxa* 1.1.

evident only to the wise," such as "what is incorporeal does not exist in space."<sup>2</sup>

Hence I say that this proposition "God exists" is self-evident in itself because the predicate is identical with the subject: for God is his existence, as will later be made clear [Q. 3, a. 4]. Yet since we do not know what God is, the proposition is not self-evident to us but rather must be demonstrated through what is more evident to us, even if less evident by nature, namely through God's effects.

**Response to 1.** There is a kind of common and confused knowledge of the existence of God naturally implanted within us, namely insofar as God is our happiness. For human beings naturally desire happiness, and what human beings naturally desire they naturally know. But this is not to know in an unqualified way that God exists, just as to know that someone is coming is not the same thing as to know that it is Peter, even though he is the one coming. For many suppose that the perfect human good, happiness, lies in riches, while others suppose it to be found in pleasures or something else.

**Response to 2.** Perhaps someone who hears the name "God" would not understand it to signify "something than which a greater cannot be thought," since some have believed God to be a body. But even if it is granted that everyone understands the name "God" to signify what the objection says—namely "that than which a greater cannot be thought"—nevertheless it does not follow from this that one understands that what is signified by the name exists in the natural order, but rather only in the apprehension of the intellect. Nor can it be argued that it exists in reality unless it were granted that there exists in reality something than which a greater cannot be thought, which would not be granted by those who deny that God exists.

**Response to 3.** The existence of truth in general is self-evident, but that a first truth exists is not self-evident to us.

### Article 2. Is the existence of God demonstrable?

It seems that the existence of God is not demonstrable:

1. That God exists is an article of faith. But what pertains to faith is not demonstrable, because a demonstration produces scientific knowledge, whereas faith concerns what is unseen, as the Apostle Paul says in Hebrews 11:1. Hence the existence of God is not demonstrable.

2. The middle term of a demonstration is what the thing is. Yet we cannot know what God is, but only what God is not, as Damascene says.<sup>3</sup> Hence we cannot demonstrate that God exists.

3. If it were to be demonstrated that God exists, this would be so only through God's effects. Yet God's effects are not proportionate to God, since God is infinite and his effects are finite, and the finite is never proportionate to the infinite. Thus since a cause cannot be demonstrated on the basis of an effect that is disproportionate to it, it seems that the existence of God cannot be demonstrated.

**On the contrary.** The Apostle says in Romans 1:20: "The unseen things of God can be grasped through an understanding of what God has made." Yet this would not be so unless it were possible to demonstrate that God exists through what God has made, since the first thing we must understand about anything is whether it exists.

**Reply.** There are two kinds of demonstration. One kind, called *propter quid* demonstration, is through the cause; this is through what is prior in an unqualified way. The other kind, called a *quia* demonstration, is through an effect. This is through what is prior relative to us, for when an effect is more manifest to us than its cause, we proceed through the effect to knowledge of the cause. Now from any effect we can demonstrate the existence of its proper cause, if its effects are indeed more known relative to us. The reason for this is that, since effects depend upon a cause, if an effect is posited then its cause necessarily preexists. Hence the existence of God, inasmuch as it is not self-evident to us, can be demonstrated through effects that are evident to us.

2. PL 64.1311.

3. *De fide orthodoxa* 1.4.

**Response to 1.** The existence of God and all the other truths about God that can be known through natural reason are not articles of faith, but rather preambles to the articles, as is said in Romans 1:19. For faith presupposes natural knowledge in just the way that grace presupposes nature, and in the way that a perfection presupposes what it perfects. Still, nothing prevents what is demonstrable and knowable in itself from being accepted as worthy of belief by someone who does not grasp the demonstration.

**Response to 2.** Whenever a cause is demonstrated from an effect, it is necessary that the effect be used in place of the definition of the cause in proving the existence of the cause. This is especially so in the case of God. For in order to prove the existence of something it is necessary to use as the middle term what the name signifies. But this will not be what the thing is, because the question of what something is is subsequent to the question of whether it exists. But the names attributed to God are derived from God's effects, as will be shown later [Q. 13, a. 1]. Consequently, when demonstrating that God exists through his effects, we can assume as a middle term what is signified by the name "God."

**Response to 3.** From effects disproportionate to their causes, it is not possible to derive perfect knowledge of the cause. But from any effect it is possible for us to demonstrate manifestly the existence of its cause, as was noted. Thus from the effects of God it can be demonstrated that God exists, although by means of such effects we cannot perfectly know God according to his essence.

### *Article 3. Does God exist?*

It seems that God does not exist:

1. If one of two contraries were infinite, the other would be totally destroyed. But it is understood by the name "God" that God is some kind of infinite good. Hence if God existed, then no evil would be found. But evil is found in the world. Thus God does not exist.

2. What can be accomplished through fewer principles is not brought about through more. But it seems that all natural phenomena can be accomplished through other principles when it is assumed that God

does not exist. For things that are natural are reducible to the principle that is nature, whereas things that happen by design are reducible to a principle that is human reason or will. Hence it is not necessary to posit the existence of God.

**On the contrary** is what is said in Exodus 3:14 in the person of God: "I am who am."

**Reply.** The existence of God can be proved in five ways. The first and more evident way is drawn from motion. For it is certain and firmly established by the senses that some things in this world are moved. Now whatever is moved is moved by another. For something is moved only insofar as it is in potentiality with respect to that toward which it is moved, whereas something moves another insofar as it is in actuality. For to move another is nothing other than to bring something from potentiality to actuality. But something can be brought from potentiality to actuality only through some being in actuality. For example, something actually hot, such as fire, makes wood, which is hot in potentiality, be actually hot, and so moves and alters it. Now it is not possible that the same thing be both in actuality and in potentiality at the same time and in the same respect, but rather only in different respects; for what is actually hot cannot at the same time be potentially hot, but it is at the same time potentially cold. Hence it is impossible that something be both mover and moved in the same respect and in the same way, or that it move itself. Thus whatever is moved must be moved by another. Therefore if the source of motion is itself moved, then it must itself be moved by another, and this latter by another. Yet this [kind of a causal chain] cannot proceed infinitely because then there would not be something that is a first mover and consequently no other movers at all, since secondary [or moved] movers can move only insofar as they are moved by a first mover, just as a stick moves another only because it is moved by the hand. Therefore it is necessary to arrive at some first mover that is not put in motion by anything, and this all understand to be God.

2. The second way is from the nature of efficient causes. For we find that there is an order of efficient causes among sensible things. But we neither find nor is it possible for something to be the efficient cause of

itself, for then it would be prior to itself, which is impossible. Now it is not possible to proceed infinitely among efficient causes. The reason is that, in any ordered series of efficient causes, the first is the cause of the intermediary and the intermediary causes the last, whether the intermediaries are many or only one. But if you take away the cause, you take away the effect. Hence if there were not a first efficient cause, then there would not be either an intermediate cause or a last cause. But if the series of efficient causes were to proceed infinitely, then there would be no first efficient cause and thus no last effect or intermediate efficient causes, which is obviously false. Therefore it is necessary to posit some first efficient cause, which everyone names God.

3. The third way is taken from the possible and the necessary, and goes like this: We find that some things are possible with respect to existence or nonexistence, since they are found to be generated and corrupted and consequently possible with respect to existence or nonexistence. But it is impossible for everything that is to exist like this, for that which can possibly not exist does not exist at some time. Accordingly if all things are possible with respect to nonexistence, then at some time there would have been nothing in reality. But if this were true then there would also be nothing now, because what is not does not begin to be except through something that is. Accordingly, if no being had existed, it would have been impossible for anything to have begun to exist, and thus there would be nothing now, which is patently false. Hence not all beings are possible, but rather it is required that there be something necessary in reality. Now every necessary being either has the cause of its necessity from another or not. But it is not possible to proceed infinitely in a series of necessary beings that have a cause of their necessity, as was just proven in the case of efficient causes. Therefore it is necessary to posit something that is necessary through itself, something that does not have the cause of its necessity from another, but that is the cause of necessity for the others. This is what everyone calls God.

4. The fourth way is taken from the gradation to be found among things. For we find among things one that is more or less good than another, more or less true, more or less noble, and so on with other perfec-

tions like these. But more or less is said about diverse things insofar as they approach in their diverse ways something that is the maximum, as in the case where something is hotter the more it approaches what is maximally hot. Accordingly there is something that is truest, best, noblest, and consequently greatest in being, for whatever is truest is also greatest in being, as said in *Metaphysics* 2 [993b30]. Now whatever is said to be maximally such in any genus is the cause of everything else in the genus; for instance fire, which is maximally hot, is the cause of all other instances of heat, as said in the same book [993b25]. Therefore there must be something that is, for everything else, the cause of its existence, goodness, and every other perfection, and this we call God.

5. The fifth way is taken from the governance of things. For we see some things that lack knowledge, namely natural bodies, act for the sake of some end. This is apparent from the fact that they always or most often act in the same way so as to attain what is best. From this it is obvious that they achieve their end not by chance but by intention. But those things that lack knowledge do not tend toward an end except under the direction of something with knowledge and intelligence, as in the case of an arrow from an archer. Therefore there is some intelligent being by whom all natural things are ordered to an end, and this we call God.

Response to 1. As Augustine says in his *Enchiridion*: "God, since he is supremely good, would never have allowed anything evil in his works unless he were so omnipotent and good that he could bring forth good even from evil."<sup>4</sup> Hence it pertains to the infinite goodness of God that God allow evils and from them bring forth goods.

Response to 2. Since nature acts for the sake of a determinate end by the direction of some superior agent, it is necessary that whatever happens naturally be reduced to God as first cause. Similarly, whatever happens by design must also be reduced back to a higher cause, which is not human reason and will, since these are changeable and fallible. For it is necessary,

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4. Ch. 11.

as was shown, that all mutable and fallible beings be reduced to some first principle that is immutable and necessary through itself.

## Question 5 The Good in General

### *Article 1. Are good and being identical in reality?*

It seems that good differs in reality from being:

1. Boethius says in *On the Hebdomads*: “I see that it is one thing for things to be good and another for things to be.”<sup>1</sup> Therefore good and being differ in reality.

2. Nothing gives form to itself. But something is called good through the information of being, according to the commentary on *The Book of Causes*.<sup>2</sup> Therefore good differs in reality from being.

3. Good can be found in degrees of more or less. But existence is not found in degrees of more or less. Therefore good differs in reality from being.

**On the contrary.** Augustine says in *On Christian Doctrine* that “insofar as we are, we are good.”<sup>3</sup>

**Reply.** Good and being are identical in reality; they differ only conceptually (*secundum rationem*). This is made clear as follows. The concept of the good consists in this: that something is desirable; hence the Philosopher says in *Nicomachean Ethics* 1 [1094a3] that “the good is what all things desire.” But it is clear that something is desirable insofar as it is perfect, for everything desires its own perfection. Now a thing is perfect insofar as it is actual, from which it is clear that something is good insofar as it exists, since existence is the actuality of every thing, as was shown above [Q. 3, a. 4; Q. 4, a. 1, response to 3]. Hence it is clear that good and being are identical in reality, but that “good” expresses the concept of desirability that is not expressed in “being.”

1. PL 64.1312.

2. Prop. 19, Bardenhewer Edition (Fribourg, Switzerland, 1882), p. 181.

3. 1.32.

**Response to 1.** Although good and being are identical in reality, nevertheless, since they differ conceptually, something is not said to be unqualifiedly a being and unqualifiedly good in the same way. For “being” properly speaking means that something exists in actuality, and actuality properly speaking has a relation to potentiality; therefore, something is called a being unqualifiedly because of that which first distinguishes it from what is only in potentiality, and this is the substantial existence of a thing. So it is through a thing’s substantial existence that we call it a being unqualifiedly. Through additional actualities a thing is said to be in some qualified way, as, for example, “to be white” signifies being in a qualified manner; since to be white does not take something out of absolute potentiality, since it comes to something already actually existing.

Good, on the other hand, implies the character of the perfect, which is the desirable, and so implies the character of the ultimate. Hence what is ultimately perfect is said to be unqualifiedly good. Whatever does not possess the ultimate perfection that it ought to have, even though it has some perfection inasmuch as it is actual, is not said to be unqualifiedly perfect or unqualifiedly good, but rather good only in a qualified way.

To sum up: due to its primary existence, its substantial existence, something is said to be a being unqualifiedly, but good only in a qualified manner, that is, insofar as it is a being. Due to its ultimate actuality, on the other hand, something is called a being in a qualified way and good unqualifiedly. Thus when Boethius says that “it is one thing for things to be good and another for things to be,” we should take this to mean being good unqualifiedly and being unqualifiedly, since it is because of a thing’s first actuality that it is a being unqualifiedly, while because of its ultimate actuality it is good unqualifiedly. Still, a thing is good in a certain way because of its first actuality, and is a being in a certain way because of its ultimate actuality.

**Response to 2.** Something is called good through information insofar as it receives good unconditionally through its ultimate actualization.

**Response to 3.** Likewise, something is called more or less good because of its further actualization—for instance, because of knowledge or virtue.

## Question 6 Divine Goodness

### Article 2. Is God the highest good?

It seems that God is not the highest good:

1. Being the highest good adds something to being good; if it did not, then every good being would also be the highest good. But everything that is related to something else by addition is thereby composed. Therefore the highest good is composed. But God is utterly simple, as shown above [Q. 3, a. 7]. Therefore God is not the highest good.

2. "The good is what all things desire," as the Philosopher says.<sup>1</sup> But the only thing desired by all is God, who is the end of all things. Therefore nothing besides God is good. This is also apparent from Luke 18:19: "No one is good but God alone." But something is "highest" in comparison to others, as one heat is highest in comparison to everything that is hot. Therefore God cannot be called the highest good.

3. "Highest" implies a comparison. But things that are not in the same genus are not comparable, as sweetness is not properly said to be greater or less than a line. Since it was shown above [Q. 3, a. 5 and Q. 4, a. 3, response to 3] that God is not in the same genus with any other good things, it seems that God cannot be said to be the highest good as compared to those things.

**On the contrary.** Augustine says in *On the Trinity* 1 [2] that the Trinity of divine persons "is the highest good, which is discerned by the most purified minds."<sup>2</sup>

**Reply.** God is the highest good absolutely, and not only in some genus or order of things. For, as just established [a. 1], good is attributed to God insofar as every desirable perfection flows from God as from its first cause. They do not flow from God as from a univocal agent, however (as was made clear above [Q. 4, a. 3]), but as from an agent that does not agree with its effects by reason of either species or genus. Now the

resemblance of the effect to a univocal cause is uniform; in the case of equivocal causes, however, the form is found in a more excellent manner in the cause, as heat is found in a more excellent manner in the sun than in fire. Thus it is necessary that since the good is in God as in the nonunivocal first cause of all things, it is there in the most excellent manner. Because of this, God is said to be the highest good.

**Response to 1.** What highest good adds to good is not some new reality [*rem absolutam*], but rather only a relation. For a relation by which something is said of God relative to creatures is not really in God, but rather in the creatures; it is in God only conceptually. It is like the case where something is said to be knowable relative to some science; it is not knowable because it is itself related to that science, but rather because some science is related to it. And so it is not necessary that there be any composition in the highest good, but only that everything else fall short of it.

**Response to 2.** When it is said that "the good is what all things desire," this should not be understood to mean that all things desire one and the same good. It rather means that whatever is desired has the nature of good. And when it is said that "no one is good but God alone," that should be understood as referring to what is essentially good (as will be said below [a. 3]).

**Response to 3.** Things that are not in the same genus, if they are in fact contained in different genera, are not comparable in any way. Yet when it is denied that God is in the same genus with other goods, it is not as if God were in another genus. Rather, he is outside every genus and is the source of every genus. Thus God is compared to everything else as surpassing them, and it is this kind of comparison that is implied by being the highest good.

### Article 4. Are all things good by divine goodness?

It seems that all things are good by divine goodness:

1. Augustine says in *On the Trinity* 8 [3]: "This is good and that is good. Take away this and that and see the good itself, if you can: you would thus see God, who is not something good by another good, but the

1. *Ethics* 1.1, 1094a3.

2. *PL* 42.822.

good of every good.”<sup>3</sup> But each thing is good by its own good. Thus each thing is good by the very good that is God.

2. As Boethius says in *On the Hebdomads*,<sup>4</sup> all things are said to be good insofar as they are ordered to God, and this is by reason of divine goodness. Thus all things are good by divine goodness.

**On the contrary.** Everything is good insofar as it exists. But it is not said that everything is a being through divine existence, but through its own proper existence. Therefore it is not the case that everything is good by divine goodness, but by its own proper goodness.

**Reply.** In those matters where a relationship is implied, nothing prohibits something from being named on the basis of something outside itself, as when something is said to be in a place by the place and said to be measured by a measure. With respect to things said absolutely, however, there have been diverse opinions. Plato posited separate species for everything, with individuals being named after them on the basis of participating in them in some way; for example, Socrates is said to be a human being according to the separate idea of human being. Just as Plato asserted that the idea of human being and the idea of horse were separate, which he called Human Being Itself or Horse Itself, so he asserted separate ideas of being and one, which he called Being Itself and One Itself, and through participation in them something is said to be or be one. Plato claimed that what is Being Itself and One Itself is the highest good. And since good is convertible with being and also with one, he said that this Good Itself is God, through whom everything else is said to be good through some mode of participation. While this opinion seems to be unreasonable insofar as it posits species of natural things subsisting separately in themselves, as Aristotle repeatedly proves, yet it is absolutely true that there is something first that is a being and good through its own essence, which is what we call God (as was shown above [Q. 2, a. 3]). This claim is one that Aristotle accepts.

3. PL 42.949.

4. PL 64.1312.

Thus something can be called good and a being insofar as it participates in what is essentially the first being and good, through some kind of assimilation, albeit distantly and deficiently, as is clear from above [Q. 4, a. 3]. Thus each thing is said to be good by divine goodness as from the first exemplar and efficient cause, and the final principle of all goodness. Nevertheless, each thing is said to be good by a semblance of the divine goodness inhering in it, which is formally its own goodness whereby it is called good. Thus there is one goodness for all things, and also many goodnesses.

The solution to the objections is clear from this response.

### Question 13 The Names of God

#### *Article 2. Are any of the names said of God predicated substantially?*

It seems that no name is said of God substantially:

1. Damascene says: “It must be that none of the things that are said of God signify what God is substantially, but rather show what God is not, or some relationship to something, or something of what follows from God’s nature or action.”<sup>1</sup>

2. In the first chapter of *On the Divine Names*, Dionysius says: “You will find every hymn of the holy theologians distinguishing the names of God clearly and praiseworthy in keeping with the good processions from the Supreme Godhead.”<sup>2</sup> This means that the names assumed by the holy teachers in the divine praise are distinguished according to the processions of God. But what signifies the procession of something signifies nothing pertaining to its essence. Therefore the names said of God are not said of God substantially.

3. Something is named by us insofar as it is understood by us. But God is not understood by us in this life according to his substance. Therefore no name imposed by us is said of God according to his substance.

1. *De fide orthodoxa* 1.9.

2. PG 3.589.

**On the contrary.** Augustine says in Book 6 of *On the Trinity*: "This is what it is to be God: to be strong, or to be wise, or whatever else you will say about that simplicity. By this, God's substance is signified."<sup>3</sup> Therefore every name of this kind signifies the divine substance.

**Reply.** The names that are said of God negatively or that signify God's relationship to a creature obviously in no way signify God's substance, but rather the denial that he has some characteristic or the relationship of God to something else—or rather of something to God. But there have been many opinions regarding the names that are said of God absolutely or affirmatively—such as 'good,' 'wise,' and predicates of this kind. Some have said that all these names, although they are said of God affirmatively, nevertheless are found to deny things of God rather than to impute things to God. Hence they claim that when we say that God is living, we mean that God is not like an inanimate thing, and that something similar is the case with other names. This was the view of Rabbi Moses.<sup>4</sup> There are others<sup>5</sup> who say that these names are imposed to signify some relationship of God to what is created: so that when we say that God is good, the meaning is that God is the cause of goodness in things. And the same reasoning is applied to other names.

Both of these views seem to be unacceptable for three reasons:

First, on neither of these positions could one assign a reason whereby certain names are more appropriately said of God than others. For God is the cause of bodies just as God is the cause of good things. So if nothing else is meant when we say that "God is good" other than "God is the cause of good things," then it can similarly be said that "God is a body" since God is the cause of bodies. Moreover, in saying that God is a body, it is denied that God is only a potential being, like prime matter.

Second, it would follow that all the names said of God would be said derivatively [*per posterius*] of God, just as health is said derivatively of medicine because it signifies only that medicine is the cause of health in an animal, whereas health is said of the animal primarily [*per prius*].

Third, this is contrary to the intention of those speaking of God. For when we say that God is living, we intend something other than that God is the cause of our life, or that God differs from inanimate bodies.

Thus something else must be maintained: that names of this kind signify the divine substance and are predicated of God substantially, but that they fall short of a representation of God. This is made plain as follows. Names signify God insofar as our intellect knows God. But since our intellect knows God from creatures, it knows God insofar as those creatures represent God. But it was shown above [Q. 4, a. 2] that God, being universally and absolutely perfect, prepossesses in himself all the perfections of creatures. Thus any creature represents God and is like God to the degree to which it has any perfection. It does not represent God as though they were of the same species or genus, however, but rather as an effect falling short of the form of its surpassing principle which yet, as an effect, has some likeness to its cause, just as the forms of terrestrial bodies represent the power of the sun. This was explained earlier [Q. 4, a. 3] when we considered God's perfection. Accordingly, the aforesaid names signify the divine substance, but do so imperfectly, just as creatures imperfectly represent the divine substance.

Hence when we say "God is good," it does not mean that God is the cause of goodness or that God is not bad; rather, this means that what we call good in creatures preexists in God, albeit in a higher mode. From this it does not follow that it belongs to God to be good insofar as God is the cause of goodness, but rather just the opposite: that because God is good, God diffuses goodness to things, as Augustine says in *On Christian Doctrine*: "Because God is good, we are."<sup>6</sup>

**Response to 1.** The reason Damascene says that these names do not signify what God is is that none of them

3. Ch. 4.

4. *The Guide of the Perplexed* 1, ch. 58 (p. 367).

5. Alan of Lille is one such theologian. See *The Rules of Theology*.

6. Book 1.32.

perfectly express what God is. But each one does signify God imperfectly, just as creatures represent God imperfectly.

**Response to 2.** In the signification of names, there is sometimes a distinction between that *from which* the name is imposed to signify and that which the name is imposed to signify. For example, the term ‘rock’ [*lapis*] is imposed from its injuring the foot [*laedit pedem*], but it is not imposed to signify what “injuring the foot” signifies—rather, it signifies a certain species of body; otherwise, everything injuring the foot would be a rock. Accordingly, the response is that divine names of this kind are indeed imposed from the processions of the deity, for just as creatures represent God, although imperfectly, according to the diverse processions of perfections, so our intellect knows and names God according to each procession. But these names are not imposed in order to signify the processions themselves, as if when it is said that God is living the meaning were that life processes from God. Rather, this name is imposed to signify the very principle of things insofar as life preexists in it, although in a more eminent mode than we can understand or signify.

**Response to 3.** We cannot in this life know the essence of God as it is in itself, but we do know it as it is represented in the perfections of creatures. Thus the names imposed by us do signify God’s essence.

*Article 5. Are any names said of God and creatures univocally, or are they said equivocally?*

It seems that the names said of God and creatures are said of them univocally:

1. All equivocal terms resolve into univocal terms, as many resolve to one. For if the word ‘dog’ is said equivocally of a barking thing and a sea creature, it is necessary that it be said of something univocally—namely all the barking things—or else there would be an infinite regress. Now some agents are found to be univocal, and these agree with their effects in name and in definition, as when a human generates a human. Other agents are equivocal, as when the sun causes heat, even though it is hot only equivocally. Accordingly, it seems that the first agent, to

which all other agents are resolved, is a univocal agent. Thus what is said of God and creatures is predicated univocally.

2. No likeness follows from equivocals. Accordingly, since there is some kind of likeness between creatures and God—according to Genesis 1:26: “Let us make man in our image and likeness”—it seems that something is said univocally of God and creatures.

3. A measure is homogeneous with what it measures, as it says in *Metaphysics* 10 [1053a24]. But God is the first measure of every being, as it says in the same place. Therefore God is homogeneous with creatures, and thus something can be said univocally of God and creatures.

**On the contrary.** Whatever is predicated of various things according to the same name but not according to the same meaning [*rationem*] is predicated of them equivocally. But no name belongs to God according to the meaning that it has when it is said of creatures, for wisdom in creatures is a quality, but not in God, and a change in genus is a change in meaning, since the genus is part of the definition. The same reasoning applies to other cases. Therefore whatever is said of God and creatures is said equivocally.

Furthermore, God is more distant from creatures than any creature is distant from another creature. But because of the distance between some creatures, it happens that nothing can be predicated of them univocally, as is the case with things that do not share any genus. Much less, therefore, is anything predicated of God and creatures univocally, but rather everything is predicated equivocally.

**Reply.** It is impossible that anything be predicated of God and creatures univocally. For every effect that does not match the power of the agent cause receives from the agent a likeness that is not of the same nature [*ratio*]; rather, it receives it in a lesser way, with the result that what exists in the cause simply and in the same way exists in the effects in a divided and multiplied way. Thus the sun, in virtue of a single power, produces many and varied forms in terrestrial things. In the same way, as was said above [a. 4], all the perfections of things, which are divided and multiplied in created things, preexist in God as a unity. Accordingly,

when any name pertaining to perfection is said of a creature, it signifies that perfection as distinct from others in keeping with the account expressed by its definition; for example, when the term 'wise' is said of a human being, we signify some perfection that is distinct from the essence of that person, as well as from the power, the existence, and everything else of that sort. But when we say that name of God, we do not intend to signify something distinct from the essence, power, or existence of God. Thus, when the term 'wise' is said of a human being, it in some way describes and comprehends the thing signified; this is not true when it is said of God, however, for what is signified remains incomprehensible, exceeding the signification of the name. So it is clear that 'wise' is not said of God and human beings according to the same meaning [*ratio*]. Similar reasoning applies to other names. Thus no name is predicated of God and creatures univocally.

But neither is all predication purely equivocal, as some have said,<sup>7</sup> since this would entail that nothing can be known or demonstrated about God, but rather would always be subject to the fallacy of equivocation. This would be contrary to the philosophers, who prove many things about God through demonstration, and contrary to the Apostle, who in Romans 1:20 says: "The invisible things of God are clearly seen, being understood through the things that are made."

It therefore must be said that names of this kind are said of God and creatures according to analogy, that is, according to proportion. This can happen with names in two different ways: either when many have a proportion to one, as health is said of medicine and urine insofar as they both have an order and proportion to the health of an animal, one being the sign of health and the other being its cause; or when one has a proportion to another, as health is said of medicine and an animal insofar as medicine is the cause of health in the animal. It is in this latter way that something is said of God and creatures analogically, and not by pure equivocation or univocally. For

we can name God only from creatures, as was said above [a. 1]. And thus whatever is said of God and creatures is said according to some ordering of creatures to God as source and cause in which all the perfections of things preexist in a more excellent way. This kind of commonality lies in between pure equivocation and simple univocity. For when things are said analogically, there is not a single meaning [*ratio*] in common, as there is in the case of univocal terms, nor is there a completely diverse meaning, as in the case of equivocal terms. For a name that is said analogically of many signifies diverse proportions to some one thing, as health when said of urine signifies the sign of an animal's health and health when said of medicine signifies the cause of the same health.

**Response to 1.** Although in the case of predication it is necessary that all equivocal terms be resolved to univocal terms, nevertheless in the case of action it is not necessary that a univocal agent precede a nonunivocal agent. For a nonunivocal agent is the universal cause of the entire species, as the sun is the cause of the generation of all human beings. A univocal agent, however, is not the universal agent cause of the entire species; otherwise it would be the cause of itself, since it is itself a member of the species. Instead, it is a particular cause with respect to a determinate individual that it constitutes as a participant in the species. Accordingly, the universal cause of the entire species is not a univocal agent. Moreover, the universal cause is prior to a particular cause. However this universal agent, although it is not univocal, is also not completely equivocal, since then it would not make something like itself; rather, it can be said to be an analogical agent, just as in predication all univocal terms resolve into one first term which is not univocal, but analogical—that is, being.

**Response to 2.** A creature's likeness to God is imperfect, since it does not represent the same thing even in genus, as was said above [Q. 4, a. 3].

**Response to 3.** God is not a measure proportionate to what is measured. Therefore it is not necessary that God and creatures be contained in one genus.

7. Aquinas probably has in mind Moses Maimonides in *The Guide of the Perplexed* 1, ch. 59 and Ibn Rushd, *Commentary on the "Metaphysics"* XII, comm. 51.

Regarding the claims made On the Contrary, they conclude that names of this kind are not predicated of God and creatures univocally; they do not prove, however, that they are predicated equivocally.

*Article 6. Are names said primarily of God or creatures?*

It seems that names are said primarily of creatures rather than of God:

1. We name things in the way that we know them, since names, according to the Philosopher, are signs of thoughts.<sup>8</sup> But we know creatures primarily, rather than God. Therefore the names imposed by us belong primarily to creatures rather than to God.

2. According to Dionysius in his book *On the Divine Names*, we name God from creatures.<sup>9</sup> But names applied from creatures to God are said primarily of creatures rather than God—such as ‘lion,’ ‘rock,’ and names of this kind. Therefore all names that are said of God and creatures are said primarily of creatures rather than of God.

3. All the names said in common of God and creatures “are said of God as the cause of all things,” as Dionysius says.<sup>10</sup> But what is said of something by virtue of its being a cause is said of it secondarily, for health is said primarily of an animal rather than of the medicine that is the cause of its health. Therefore names of this kind are said primarily of creatures rather than of God.

**On the contrary.** In Ephesians 3:14 it says: “I bend my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom all paternity in heaven and on earth is named.” Similar reasoning seems to apply to the other names said of God and creatures. Therefore names of this kind are said primarily of God rather than of creatures.

**Reply.** All names said of many by analogy are necessarily named through a relationship to some one thing, and thus one must be found in the definition of

them all. Now since “the concept [*ratio*] that the name signifies is the definition,” as it says in *Metaphysics* 4 [1012a23], the name must be said primarily of what is found in the definition of some and secondarily of other things, according to the order whereby they approach what is first to a greater or lesser degree. For example, ‘healthy’ said of an animal enters into the definition of ‘healthy’ said of medicine, which is called healthy because it causes health in the animal; it likewise enters into the definition of ‘healthy’ said of urine, which is called healthy insofar as it is a sign of an animal’s health.

Accordingly, all the names that are said metaphorically of God are said primarily of creatures rather than of God, since what is said of God in this way signifies nothing other than a likeness to such creatures. For just as to say that a meadow is smiling signifies nothing other than that it is similar in beauty when it flowers to a person who smiles, according to some likeness of proportion, so too the name ‘lion’ when said of God signifies just that God is the sort of being that acts powerfully in his works, just as a lion is. So it is clear that when these terms are said of God, their signification cannot be defined except through what is said of creatures.

In the case of other names, not said metaphorically of God, the account would be the same if they were only said causally of God, as some have maintained.<sup>11</sup> For if when God is said to be good, this meant nothing other than that God is the cause of the goodness of creatures, then the term ‘good’ as said of God would contain in its idea [*intellectu*] the goodness of creatures, and then ‘good’ would be said primarily of creatures rather than of God. But it was shown above [a. 2] that names of this kind are said of God not only causally but also essentially. For when it is said that God is good or wise, this signifies not only that God is the cause of wisdom and goodness, but also that these preexist in God in a more eminent way. Accordingly, it should be said that with respect to the thing signified by the name, it is said primarily of God rather than creatures, since perfections of this kind flow from God to creatures. But with respect to the imposition of the name, it is imposed by us first on creatures, which we

8. *De interpretatione* 1.2, 16a3.

9. 1.6.

10. *The Mystical Theology* 1.2.

11. Alan of Lille, *The Rules of Theology* 21.

know first. That is why these names have the mode of signification which belongs to creatures, as was said earlier [a. 3].

**Response to 1.** This objection concerns the imposition of the name.

**Response to 2.** The account is not the same for names said metaphorically of God and for other names, as was said [in the reply].

**Response to 3.** This objection would work if names of this kind were only said causally of God and not essentially, as 'healthy' is said of medicine.

*Article 11. Is the name "He Who Is"  
the most proper name of God?*

It seems that the name "He Who Is" is not the most proper name of God:

1. The name "God" is incommunicable, as was said [a. 9]. But the name "He Who Is" is not incommunicable. Therefore the name "He Who Is" is not the most proper name of God.

2. Dionysius says in Chapter 3 of *On the Divine Names* that "the name 'good' can reveal all the processions of God."<sup>12</sup> But what most befits God is that he is the universal principle of all things. Therefore the name "good" is most proper to God, and not the name "He Who Is."

3. Every divine name seems to imply some relationship to creatures, since God is known by us only through creatures. But the name "He Who Is" implies no relationship to creatures. Therefore the name "He Who Is" is not the most proper name of God.

**On the contrary.** It says in Exodus 3:14 that when Moses inquired, "If they ask me what is his name, what am I to tell them?" the Lord replied: "Speak thus to them: 'He Who Is sent me to you.'" Therefore the name "He Who Is" is the most proper name of God.

**Reply.** The name "He Who Is" is the most proper name of God for three reasons:

12. PG 3.680.

First, because of its signification. For it does not signify some form, but existence itself. Hence since the existence of God is God's very essence, which is true of nothing else, as shown above [Q. 3, a. 4], it is obvious that among all the other names, this most properly names God, for everything is named from its form.

Second, because of its universality. For every other name is either less common or, if convertible with it, nonetheless adds something to it conceptually [*secundum rationem*] whereby it in some way informs and determines it. Now our intellect in this life cannot know the very essence of God as it is in itself; instead, whatever mode it determines concerning what it understands about God, it falls short of the mode that God in himself is. Thus the less determinate and the more universal and absolute any names are, the more properly they are said of God by us. Therefore Damascene says that "Chief among all the names said of God is 'He Who Is': for comprehending all in itself, it contains existence itself as a kind of infinite and indeterminate ocean of substance."<sup>13</sup> For every other name determines some mode of a thing's substance, but the name "He Who Is" determines no mode of being, being related indeterminately to all of them, and thus it designates that infinite ocean of substance.

Third, because of its cosignification. For it signifies existence in the present, and this is most properly said of God, "whose existence knows no past or future," as Augustine says in *On the Trinity*, Book 5.<sup>14</sup>

**Response to 1.** The name "He Who Is" is a more proper name of God than the name "God" is, both with respect to that from which it is imposed to signify (namely, existence), and with respect to its mode of signification and cosignification, as was said [in the reply]. But with respect to that which the name is imposed to signify, the name "God" is more proper because it is imposed to signify the divine nature. Even more proper, however, is the *Tetragrammaton*, which is imposed to signify the incommunicable and (if one may say so) singular substance of God.

13. *De fide orthodoxa* 1.9.

14. This is actually a quote from Peter Lombard's *Sentences* 1.8.1.

**Response to 2.** The name “good” is the principal name of God insofar as God is a cause, but not unconditionally; for, speaking absolutely, existence is understood before the cause.

**Response to 3.** It is not necessary that all the divine names imply a relationship to creatures; it is sufficient that they be imposed on the basis of the perfections proceeding from God to creatures. Among these the first is existence itself, from which is taken the name “He Who Is.”

## Question 19 The Will of God

*Article 8. Does the will of God impose necessity on the things willed?*

It seems that the will of God imposes necessity on the things willed:

1. For Augustine says: “No one is saved, except whom God has willed to be saved. He must therefore be asked to will it, for if He wills it, it must necessarily be.”<sup>1</sup>

2. Further, every cause that cannot be hindered produces its effect necessarily, because, as the Philosopher says, “nature always works in the same way, if there is nothing to hinder it.”<sup>2</sup> But the will of God cannot be hindered. For the Apostle says (Rom. 9:19): “Who resisteth His will?” Therefore the will of God imposes necessity on the things willed.

3. Further, whatever is necessary by its antecedent cause is necessary absolutely; it is thus necessary that animals should die, being compounded of contrary elements. Now things created by God are related to the divine will as to an antecedent cause, whereby they

have necessity. For this conditional proposition is true: “if God wills a thing, it comes to pass”; and every true conditional proposition is necessary. It follows therefore that all that God wills is necessary absolutely.

**On the contrary.** All good things that exist God wills to be. If therefore His will imposes necessity on the things willed, it follows that all good happens of necessity; and thus there is an end of free choice, counsel, and all other such things.

**Reply.** The divine will imposes necessity on some things willed, but not on all. The reason of this some have chosen to assign to intermediate causes, holding that what God produces by necessary causes is necessary, and what He produces by contingent causes contingent.

This does not seem to be a sufficient explanation, for two reasons. First, because the effect of a first cause is contingent because of the secondary cause, from the fact that the effect of the first cause is hindered by deficiency in the second cause, as the sun’s power is hindered by a defect in the plant. But no defect of a secondary cause can hinder God’s will from producing its effect. Secondly, because if the distinction between the contingent and the necessary is to be referred only to secondary causes, this must mean that the distinction itself escapes the divine intention and will, which is inadmissible.

It is better therefore to say that this happens because of the efficacy of the divine will. For when a cause is efficacious to act, the effect follows upon the cause, not only as to the thing done, but also as to its manner of being done or of being. Thus from defect of active power in the seed it may happen that a child is born unlike its father in accidental points, which belong to its manner of being. Since then the divine will is perfectly efficacious, it follows not only that things are done, which God wills to be done, but also that they are done in the way that He wills. Now God wills some things to be done necessarily, some contingently, so that there be a right order in things for the perfection of the universe. Therefore to some effects He has attached unfailing necessary causes, from which the effects follow necessarily; but to others defectible and contingent causes, from which effects

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1. *Enchiridion* 103.

2. Aristotle, *Physics* 2.8, 199b18.

arise contingently. Hence it is not because the proximate causes are contingent that the effects willed by God happen contingently; but God has prepared contingent causes for them because He has willed that they should happen contingently.

**Response to 1.** By the words of Augustine we must understand a necessity in things willed by God that is not absolute, but conditional. For the conditional proposition that "if God wills a thing, it must necessarily be," is necessarily true.

**Response to 2.** From the very fact that nothing resists the divine will, it follows not only that those things happen that God wills to happen, but that they happen necessarily or contingently according to His will.

**Response to 3.** Consequents have necessity from their antecedents according to the mode of the antecedents. Hence things effected by the divine will have that kind of necessity that God wills them to have, either absolute or conditional. Not all things, therefore, are necessary absolutely.

## Question 22 The Providence of God

### *Article 2. Is everything subject to the providence of God?*

It seems that not everything is subject to divine providence:

1. For nothing foreseen can happen by chance. If then everything has been foreseen by God, nothing will happen by chance. And thus chance and fortune disappear; which is against common opinion.

2. Further, a wise provider excludes any defect or evil, as far as he can, from those over whom he has a care. But we see many evils existing in things. Either, then, God cannot hinder these, and thus is not omnipotent; or else He does not have care for everything.

3. Further, whatever happens of necessity does not require providence or prudence. Hence, according to the Philosopher: "Prudence is the right reason of contingent things concerning which there is counsel and

choice."<sup>1</sup> Since, then, many things happen from necessity, everything cannot be subject to providence.

4. Further, whatsoever is left to itself cannot be subject to the providence of a governor. But men are left to themselves by God, in accordance with the words: "God made man from the beginning, and left him in the hand of his own counsel" (Ecclus. 15:14). And particularly in reference to the wicked: "I let them go according to the desires of their heart" (Ps. 53:13). Everything, therefore, cannot be subject to divine providence.

5. Further, the Apostle says (1 Cor. 9:9): "God doth not care for oxen"; and we may say the same of other irrational creatures. Thus everything cannot be under the care of divine providence.

**On the contrary.** It is said of divine wisdom: "She reacheth from end to end mightily, and ordereth all things sweetly" (Ws 8:1).

**Reply.** Certain persons totally denied the existence of providence, as Democritus and the Epicureans,<sup>2</sup> maintaining that the world was made by chance. Others taught that incorruptible substances only were subject to providence, while corruptible substances were not in their individual being, but only according to their species; for in this respect they are incorruptible.<sup>3</sup> They are represented as saying (Job 22:14): "The clouds are His covert; and He doth not consider our things; and He walketh about the poles of heaven." Rabbi Moses, however, excluded men from the generality of corruptible things, because of the excellence of the intellect which they possess, but in reference to all else that suffers corruption he adhered to the opinion of the others.<sup>4</sup>

We must say, however, that all things are subject to divine providence, not only in general, but even in

1. *Ethics* 6.5, 1140a35; 6.7, 1141b9; 6.13, 1144b27.

2. Cf. Nemesius, *De natura hominis* 44.

3. According to Saint Thomas himself (*In I Sent.* d. 34, q. 2, a. 2), this opinion is attributed to Aristotle and expressly held by Ibn Rushd. Cf. Maimonides, *Guide* III, ch. 17; Ibn Rushd, *In Metaphysics* 12, comm. 52.

4. *Guide* III, ch. 17.

their own individual being. This is made evident thus. For since every agent acts for an end, the ordering of effects towards that end extends as far as the causality of the first agent extends. Whence it happens that in the effects of an agent something takes place which has no reference towards the end, because the effect comes from some other cause outside the intention of the agent. But the causality of God, Who is the first agent, extends to all beings not only as to the constituent principles of species, but also as to the individualizing principles; not only of things incorruptible, but also of things corruptible. Hence all things that exist in whatsoever manner are necessarily directed by God towards the end; as the Apostle says: “Those things that are of God are well ordered” (Rom. 13:1). Since, therefore, the providence of God is nothing other than the notion of the order of things towards an end, as we have said, it necessarily follows that all things, inasmuch as they participate being, must to that extent be subject to divine providence. It has also been shown that God knows all things, both universal and particular.<sup>5</sup> And since His knowledge may be compared to the things themselves as the knowledge of art to the objects of art, as was said above,<sup>6</sup> all things must of necessity come under His ordering; as all things wrought by an art are subject to the ordering of that art.

**Response to 1.** There is a difference between universal and particular causes. A thing can escape the order of a particular cause, but not the order of a universal cause. For nothing escapes the order of a particular cause, except through the intervention and hindrance of some other particular cause; as, for instance, wood may be prevented from burning by the action of water. Since, then, all particular causes are included under the universal cause, it is impossible that any effect should escape the range of the universal cause. So far then as an effect escapes the order of a particular cause, it is said to be by chance or fortuitous in respect to that cause; but if we regard the universal cause, outside whose range no effect can happen, it is said to be

foreseen. Thus, for instance, the meeting of two servants, although to them it appears a chance circumstance, has been fully foreseen by their master, who has purposely sent them to meet at the one place, in such a way that the one has no knowledge of the other.

**Response to 2.** It is otherwise with one who is in charge of a particular thing, and one whose providence is universal, because a particular provider excludes all defects from what is subject to his care as far as he can; whereas one who provides universally allows some little defect to remain, lest the good of the whole should be hindered. Hence, corruption and defects in natural things are said to be contrary to some particular nature, yet they are in keeping with the plan of universal nature, inasmuch as the defect in one thing yields to the good of another, or even to the universal good: for the corruption of one is the generation of another, and through this it is that a species is kept in existence. Since God, then, provides universally for all being, it belongs to His providence to permit certain defects in particular effects, that the perfect good of the universe may not be hindered; for if all evil were prevented, much good would be absent from the universe. A lion would cease to live, if there were no slaying of animals; and there would be no patience of martyrs if there were no tyrannical persecution. Thus Augustine says: “Almighty God would in no wise permit evil to exist in His works, unless He were so almighty and so good as to produce good even from evil.”<sup>7</sup> It would appear that it was because of these two arguments to which we have just replied, that some were persuaded to consider corruptible things—i.e., things in which chance and evil are found—as removed from the care of divine providence.

**Response to 3.** Man is not the author of nature; but he uses natural things for his own purposes in his works of art and virtue. Hence human providence does not reach to that which takes place in nature from necessity; but divine providence extends thus far, since God is the author of nature. Apparently it was this argu-

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5. Q. 14, a. 2.

6. Q. 14, a. 8.

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7. *Enchiridion* 11.

ment that moved those who withdrew the course of nature from the care of divine providence, attributing it rather to the necessity of matter, as did Democritus, and others of the ancients.<sup>8</sup>

**Response to 4.** When it is said that God left man to himself, this does not mean that man is exempt from divine providence, but merely that he has not a prefixed operating power determined to only the one effect; as in the case of natural things, which are only acted upon as though directed by another towards an end: for they do not act of themselves, as if they directed themselves towards an end, like rational creatures, through the possession of free choice, by which these are able to take counsel and make choices. Hence it is significantly said: "In the hand of his own counsel." But since the very act of free choice is traced to God as to a cause, it necessarily follows that everything happening from the exercise of free choice must be subject to divine providence. For human providence is included under the providence of God as a particular cause under a universal cause. God, however, extends His providence over the just in a certain more excellent way than over the wicked, inasmuch as He prevents anything happening which would impede their final salvation. For "to them that love God, all things work together unto good" (Rom. 8:28). But from the fact that He does not restrain the wicked from the evil of sin, He is said to abandon them. This does not mean that He altogether withdraws His providence from them; otherwise they would return to nothing, if they were not preserved in existence by His providence. This was the reason that had weight with Tully, who withdrew human affairs, concerning which we take counsel, from the care of divine providence.<sup>9</sup>

**Response to 5.** Since a rational creature has, through its free choice, control over its actions, as was said above,<sup>10</sup> it is subject to divine providence in an especial manner: something is imputed to it as a fault, or

as a merit, and accordingly there is given to it something by way of punishment or reward. In this way the Apostle withdraws oxen from the care of God: not, however, that individual irrational creatures escape the care of divine providence, as was the opinion of the Rabbi Moses.<sup>11</sup>

*Article 3. Does God have immediate providence over everything?*

It seems that God has not immediate providence over all things:

1. For whatever pertains to dignity must be attributed to God. But it belongs to the dignity of a king that he should have ministers, through whose mediation he provides for his subjects. Therefore much less has God Himself immediate providence over all things.

2. Further, it belongs to providence to order all things to an end. Now the end of everything is its perfection and its good. But it pertains to every cause to bring its effect to good; and therefore every agent cause is a cause of the effect over which it has providence. If therefore God were to have immediate providence over all things, all secondary causes would be withdrawn.

3. Further, Augustine says that "It is better to be ignorant of some things than to know them, for example, ignoble things,"<sup>12</sup> and the Philosopher says the same.<sup>13</sup> But whatever is better must be attributed to God. Therefore He has not immediate providence over ignoble and wicked things.

**On the contrary.** It is said (Job 34:13): "What other hath He appointed over the earth? or whom hath He set over the world which He made?" On which passage Gregory says: "Himself He ruleth the world which He Himself hath made."<sup>14</sup>

**Reply.** Two things belong to providence—namely, the exemplar of the order of things foreordained to-

8. Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1.3, 983b7; 4, 985b5.

9. *De divinatione* 2, 5.

10. Response to 4, and Q. 19, a. 10.

11. *Guide* III, ch. 17.

12. *Enchiridion* 17.

13. *Metaphysics* 11.10, 1074b32.

14. *Morals* XXIV, 20.

wards an end, and the execution of this order, which is called government. As regards the first of these, God has immediate providence over everything, because he has in His intellect the exemplars of everything, even the smallest; and whatsoever causes He assigns to certain effects, He gives them the power to produce those effects. Whence it must be that He has pre-comprehended the order of those effects in His mind. As to the second, there are certain intermediaries of God's providence, for He governs things inferior by superior, not because of any defect in His power, but by reason of the abundance of His goodness; so that the dignity of causality is imparted even to creatures. Thus Plato's opinion, as narrated by Gregory of Nyssa, is removed.<sup>15</sup> He taught a threefold providence. First, one which belongs to the supreme Deity, Who first and foremost has provision over spiritual things, and thus over the whole world as regards genus, species, and universal causes. The second providence, which is over the individuals of all that can be generated and corrupted, he attributed to the divinities who circulate in the heavens; that is, certain separate substances, which move corporeal things in a circular motion. The third providence, which is

15. Cf. Nemesius, *De natura hominis* 44.

over human affairs, he assigned to demons, whom the Platonic philosophers placed between us and the gods, as Augustine tells us.<sup>16</sup>

**Response to 1.** It pertains to a king's dignity to have ministers who execute his providence. But the fact that he does not know the plans of what is done by them arises from a deficiency in himself. For every operative science is the more perfect, the more it considers the particular things where action takes place.

**Response to 2.** God's immediate provision over everything does not exclude the action of secondary causes, which are the executors of His order, as was said above.<sup>17</sup>

**Response to 3.** It is better for us not to know evil and ignoble things, insofar as by them we are impeded in our knowledge of what is better and higher (for we cannot understand many things simultaneously), and insofar as the thought of evil sometimes perverts the will towards evil. This does not hold true of God, Who sees everything simultaneously at one glance, and Whose will cannot turn in the direction of evil.

16. *City of God* 9.1; 8.14.

17. Q. 19, a. 5 and 8.

# 40. *Summa Theologiae*

## First Part

### Selections from the “Treatise on Creation”

#### Question 45

#### The Mode of Emanation of Things from the First Principle

*Article 1. Is to create to make  
something from nothing?*

It would seem that to create is not to make anything from nothing.

1. For Augustine says: “To make concerns what did not exist at all; but to create is to make something by bringing it forth from what was already existing.”<sup>1</sup>

2. Further, the nobility of action and of motion is considered from their terms. On this basis, action is nobler if it is from good to good, and from being to being, than if it is from nothing to something. But creation appears to be the most noble action, and first among all actions. Therefore it is not from nothing to something, but rather from being to being.

3. Further, the preposition ‘from’ [*ex*] expresses the relation of some cause, and especially of the material cause; as when we say that a statue is made from brass. But *nothing* cannot be the matter of being, nor in any way its cause. Therefore to create is not to make something from nothing.

**On the contrary.** On the text of Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created heaven,” etc., the *Gloss* says: “To create is to make something from nothing.”<sup>2</sup>

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1. *Contra adv. legis et proph* 1.23.

2. *Glossa ordinaria*, on Gen. 1:1.

**Reply.** As was said above, we must consider not only the emanation of a particular being from a particular agent, but also the emanation of all being from the universal cause, which is God;<sup>3</sup> and this emanation we designate by the name of *creation*. Now what proceeds by a particular emanation is not presupposed to that emanation. Thus, in the generation of man, we must say that he does not exist before being generated; but man is made from *not-man*, and white from *not-white*. Hence if the emanation of the whole universal being from the first principle be considered, it is impossible that any being should be presupposed to this emanation. Now *nothing* is the same as *no being*. Therefore as the generation of a man presupposes the *non-being* which is *non-man*, so creation, which is the emanation of all being, presupposes the *non-being* which is *nothing*.

**Response to 1.** Augustine uses the term *creation* in an equivocal sense, according as to be created signifies improvement in things; as when we say that a bishop is created. This is not the way in which we here use the term creation, but in the way already stated.

**Response to 2.** Changes receive their species and dignity, not from the term *wherfrom*, but from the term *whereto*. Therefore a change is more perfect and excellent when the term *whereto* of the change is more noble and excellent, although the term *wherfrom*, corresponding to the term *whereto*, may be more imperfect: thus generation is absolutely nobler and more excellent than alteration, because the substantial form is nobler than the accidental form; and yet the privation of the substantial form, which is the term *wherfrom* in generation, is more imperfect than the contrary

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3. *Q. 44, a. 2.*

which is the term *wherfrom* in alteration. Similarly, creation is more perfect and more excellent than generation and alteration, because the term *whereto* is the whole substance of the thing; whereas what is understood as the term *wherfrom* is absolutely non-being.

**Response to 3.** When anything is said to be made from nothing, the preposition ‘from’ [*ex*] does not signify a material cause, but only an order, as when we say, “From morning comes midday”—i.e., *after* morning comes midday. But we must understand that this preposition ‘from’ [*ex*] can either include the negation expressed when I say the *nothing*, or it can be included in it. If taken in the first sense, then we affirm the order by stating the relation of what now is to its previous non-being. But if the negation includes the preposition, then the order is denied, and the sense is, “It is made from nothing—i.e., it is not made from anything”; just as if we were to say, “He speaks of nothing,” because he does not speak of anything. Both uses of ‘from’ are present when we say that something is made from nothing. But in the first way, the preposition ‘from’ [*ex*] expresses order, as has been said. In the second sense, it expresses a relation to a material cause, and denies it.

#### Article 2. Can God create anything?

It would seem that God cannot create anything.

1. For according to the Philosopher, the ancient philosophers considered it as a commonly received axiom that “nothing is made from nothing.”<sup>4</sup> But the power of God does not extend to the contraries of first principles; as, for instance, that God could make the whole to be less than its part, or that affirmation and negation be both true at the same time. Therefore God cannot make anything from nothing, or create.

2. Further, if to create is to make something from nothing, to be created is to be made. But to be made is to be changed. Therefore creation is change. But every change occurs in some subject, as appears by the definition of motion: for motion is the act of what is in

potentiality. Therefore it is impossible for anything to be made out of nothing by God.

3. Further, what has been made must have at some time been becoming. But it cannot be said that, at the same time, what is created is becoming and has been made, because in permanent things what is becoming, is not, and what has been made, already is; and so, if we said that it was both, it would follow that something would be, and not be, at the same time. Therefore, when anything is made, its becoming precedes its having been made. But this is impossible, unless there is a subject in which the becoming is sustained. Therefore it is impossible that anything should be made from nothing.

4. Further, an infinite distance cannot be crossed. But an infinite distance exists between being and nothing. Therefore it does not happen that something is made from nothing.

**On the contrary.** It is said (Gen. 1:1): “In the beginning God created heaven and earth”; on which the *Gloss* says that “to create is to make something from nothing.”<sup>5</sup>

**Reply.** Not only is it not impossible that anything should be created by God, but it is necessary to say that all things were created by God, as appears from what has been said. For when anyone makes one thing from another, the thing from which he makes it is presupposed to his action, and is not produced by his action; and thus the craftsman produces his works from natural things such as wood or brass, which are caused, not by the action of art, but by the action of nature. So, too, nature itself causes natural things so far as concerns their form, but presupposes matter. If, therefore, God acted only on the condition of a subject presupposed to His action, it would follow that the thing presupposed would not be caused by Him. Now it was shown above that nothing can be unless it is from God, Who is the universal cause of all being.<sup>6</sup> Hence it is necessary to say that God brings things into being from nothing.

4. *Physics* 1.4, 187a28.

5. *Glossa ordinaria*, on Gen. 1:1.

6. Q. 44, a. 1 and 2.

**Response to 1.** The ancient philosophers, as was said above, considered only the emanation of particular effects from particular causes, which necessarily presuppose something in their action;<sup>7</sup> whence came their common opinion that "nothing is made from nothing." But this dictum has no place in the first emanation from the universal principle of things.

**Response to 2.** Creation is not change, except according to our way of understanding. For change means that the same thing should be different now from what it was previously. Sometimes it is the same actual reality which is different now from what it was before, as happens when the motion is according to quantity, quality, and place; but sometimes it is the same being only in potentiality, as in substantial change, the subject of which is matter. But in creation, by which the whole substance of a thing is produced, the same thing can be taken as different now and before only according to our way of understanding, so that a thing is understood as first not existing at all, and afterwards as existing. But "as action and passion coincide as to the substance of motion," and differ only according to diverse relations,<sup>8</sup> it must follow that, when motion is withdrawn, there remain only the diverse relations in the Creator and in the creature. But because the mode of signification follows the mode of understanding, as was said above,<sup>9</sup> creation is signified as a change; and on this account it is said that to create is to make something from nothing. And yet *to make* and *to be made* are more suitable expressions here than *to change* and *to be changed*, because *to make* and *to be made* import a relation of cause to the effect, and of effect to the cause, and imply change only as a consequence.

**Response to 3.** In things which are made without motion, to become and to be already made are simultaneous, whether such making is the term of motion, as illumination (for a thing is being illuminated and is illuminated at the same time), or whether it is not the

term of motion, as the concept is being made in the mind and is made at the same time. In things of this kind, what is being made, is; but when we speak of their being made, we mean that they are from another, and that previously they did not exist. Hence, since creation is without motion, a thing is being created and has been created at the same time.

**Response to 4.** This objection proceeds from a false imagination, as if there were an infinite medium between nothing and being; which is plainly false. This false imagination comes from the fact that creation is signified as a change existing between two terms.

*Article 5. Does it belong to God alone to create?*

It would seem that it does not belong to God alone to create.

1. For according to the Philosopher, that is perfect which can make something like itself.<sup>10</sup> But immaterial creatures are more perfect than material creatures, which nevertheless can produce their like; for fire generates fire, and man begets man. Therefore an immaterial substance can make a substance like to itself. But immaterial substance can be made only by creation, since it has no matter from which to be made. Therefore a creature can create.

2. Further, the greater the resistance on the part of the thing made, the greater power required in the maker. But a *contrary* resists more than *nothing*. Therefore it requires more power to make something from its contrary (which nevertheless a creature can do) than to make a thing from nothing. All the more therefore can a creature make something out of nothing.

3. Further, the power of the maker is considered according to the measure of what is made. But created being is finite, as we proved above when treating of the infinity of God.<sup>11</sup> Therefore only a finite power is needed to produce a creature by creation. But to have a finite power is not contrary to the nature of a creature. Therefore it is not impossible for a creature to create.

7. Q. 44, a. 2.

8. Aristotle, *Physics* 3.3, 202b20.

9. Q. 13, a. 1.

10. *Meteorologica*. 4.3, 380a14; *De an.* 2.4 415a26.

11. Q. 7, a. 2, 3 and 4.

**On the contrary.** Augustine says that neither good nor bad angels can create anything.<sup>12</sup> Much less therefore can any other creatures.

**Reply.** It is sufficiently apparent at first glance, according to what has preceded, that to create can be the proper action of God alone.<sup>13</sup> For the more universal effects must be reduced to the more universal and prior causes. Now among all effects the most universal is being itself; and hence it must be the proper effect of the first and most universal cause, God. Hence we find it said that “neither intelligence nor the soul gives being, except inasmuch as it works by divine operation.”<sup>14</sup> Now to produce being absolutely, and not merely as this or that being, belongs to the nature of creation. Hence it is manifest that creation is the proper act of God alone.

It is possible, however, for something to participate in the proper action of another, not by its own power, but instrumentally, inasmuch as it acts by the power of another, as air can heat and ignite by the power of fire. And so some have supposed that although creation is the proper act of the universal cause, still some lesser cause, acting by the power of the first cause, can create. And thus Avicenna asserted that the first separate substance created by God created another separate substance after itself, then the substance of the heavens and its soul; and that the substance of the heavens creates the matter of the inferior bodies.<sup>15</sup> And in the same manner the Master of the *Sentences* says that God can communicate to a creature the power of creating, so that the creature can create as God’s minister, and not by its own power.<sup>16</sup>

But such a thing cannot be, because the secondary instrumental cause does not share in the action of the superior cause, except inasmuch as by something proper to itself it acts dispositively in relation to the ef-

fect of the principal agent. If therefore it produced nothing by means of what is proper to itself, it would be set to work in vain; nor would there be any need for us to use special instruments for special actions. Thus we see that a saw, in cutting wood, which it does by the property of its own form, produces the form of a bench, which is the proper effect of the principal agent. But the proper effect of God creating is what is presupposed to all other effects, and that is being taken absolutely. Hence nothing else can act dispositively and instrumentally towards this effect, since creation does not depend on anything presupposed, which can be disposed by the action of the instrumental agent. So it is impossible for any creature to create, either by its own power, or instrumentally—that is, ministerially.

And above all it is absurd to suppose that a body can create, for no body acts except by touching or moving; and thus it requires in its action some pre-existing thing which can be touched or moved, which is contrary to the very idea of creation.

**Response to 1.** A perfect thing participating in any nature makes a likeness to itself, not by absolutely producing that nature, but by applying it to something else. For an individual man cannot be the cause of human nature absolutely, because he would then be the cause of himself; but he is the cause that human nature exists in the man begotten. And thus he presupposes in his action the determinate matter whereby he is an individual man. But just as an individual man participates in human nature, so every created being participates, so to speak, in the nature of being; for God alone is His own being, as we have said above.<sup>17</sup> Therefore no created being can produce a being absolutely, except inasmuch as it causes *being* in some particular subject; and so it is necessary to presuppose that whereby a thing is this particular thing as prior to the action whereby it produces its own like. But in an immaterial substance it is not possible to presuppose anything whereby it is this thing, because it is a *this* by its form, through which it has being. For an immaterial substance is a subsisting form. Therefore an immaterial substance cannot produce another like

12. *De Trinitate* 3.8.

13. a. 1; Q. 44, a. 1 and 2.

14. *De causis* 3.

15. *Metaphysics* 9.4. Cf. al-Ghazālī, *Metaphysics* 5; Ibn Rushd, *Destruct. destruct.* III; *De causis* 3. Cf. also Albertus Magnus, *Summa de creaturis* 2, q. 61, a. 2.

16. Peter Lombard, *Sentences* 5.3.

17. Q. 7, a. 1, Response to 3; a. 2.

immaterial substance as regards its being, but only as regards some added perfection; as we may say that a superior angel illumines an inferior, as Dionysius says.<sup>18</sup> In this sense we also speak of paternity in heaven, as the Apostle says (Ephes. 3:15): "From whom all paternity in heaven and on earth is named." From which it clearly appears that no created being can cause anything, unless something is presupposed; which is against the nature of creation.

**Response to 2.** A thing is made from its contrary accidentally; but properly it is made from the subject which is in potentiality.<sup>19</sup> And so the contrary resists the agent, inasmuch as it keeps the potentiality from the act to which the agent intends to reduce the matter; just as fire intends to reduce the matter of water to an act like to itself, but is impeded by the form and contrary dispositions, by which the potentiality of the water is as it were restrained from being reduced to act. But the more the potentiality is restrained, the more power is required in the agent to reduce the matter to act. Hence a much greater power is required in the agent when no potentiality pre-exists. Thus it appears that it is an act of much greater power to make a thing from nothing than from its contrary.

**Response to 3.** The power of the maker is reckoned not only from the substance of the thing made, but also from the mode of its being made; for a greater heat heats not only more, but also more quickly. Therefore, although to create a finite effect does not reveal an infinite power, yet to create it from nothing does reveal an infinite power. This appears from what has been said. For if a greater power is required in the agent in proportion to the distance of the potentiality from act, it follows that the power of that which produces something from no presupposed potentiality (which is how a creating agent produces) is infinite, because there is no proportion between *no potentiality* and the potentiality presupposed by the power of a natural agent, as there is no proportion between *non-being* and *being*. And because no creature has an absolutely infinite

power, any more than it has an infinite being, as was proved above,<sup>20</sup> it follows that no creature can create.

## Question 46 On the Beginning of the Duration of Creatures

*Article 1. Has the universe  
of creatures always existed?*

It would seem that the universe of creatures, which is now called the world, had no beginning, but existed from eternity:

1. For everything which begins to be had, before being, the possibility of being: otherwise its coming to be would have been impossible. If therefore the world began to be, before it began to be it was possible for it to be. But *that which can be* is matter, which is in potentiality to being, which results from a form, and to non-being, which results from privation of form. If therefore the world began to be, matter must have existed before the world. But matter cannot be without form: and if the matter of the world is joined to form, *that is* the world. Therefore the world existed before it began to be: which is impossible.<sup>1</sup>

2. Further, nothing which has power to be always, sometimes is and sometimes is not; because as far as the power of a thing lasts, so long does it exist. But every incorruptible thing has the power to be always, for its power does not extend to any determinate time. Therefore no incorruptible thing sometimes is, and sometimes is not. But everything, which has a beginning, at some time is, and at some time is not. Therefore no incorruptible thing begins to be. But there are many incorruptible things in the world, as the celestial bodies and all intellectual substances. Therefore the world did not begin to be.<sup>2</sup>

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20. Q. 7, a. 2.

1. Argument of the Peripatetics, according to Maimonides, *Guide* II, ch. 14. Cf. Ibn Rushd, *Destruct. destruct.* I; *In Physics* 8, comm. 4.

2. Aristotle, *De caelo* 1.12, 281b18. Ibn Rushd, *In de caelo*, 1, comm. 119.

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18. *On the Celestial Hierarchy* 8.2.

19. Aristotle, *Physics* 1.7, 190b 27.

3. Further, what is ungenerated has no beginning. But the Philosopher proves that matter is ungenerated,<sup>3</sup> and also that the heavens are ungenerated.<sup>4</sup> Therefore the universe did not begin to be.<sup>5</sup>

4. Further, there is a vacuum where there is not a body, but there could be. But if the world began to be, there was first no body where the body of the world now is; and yet it could be there, otherwise it would not be there now. Therefore before the world there was a vacuum; which is impossible.<sup>6</sup>

5. Further, nothing begins anew to be moved except for the fact that either the mover or the thing moved is now otherwise than it was before. But what is now otherwise than it was before is moved. Therefore before every new motion there was a previous motion. Therefore motion always was; and therefore so also was the thing moved, because motion is only in a movable thing.<sup>7</sup>

6. Further, every mover is either natural or voluntary. But neither begins to move except by some pre-existing motion. For nature always operates in the same manner: hence unless some change precede either in the nature of the mover, or in the movable thing, there cannot arise from the natural mover a motion which was not there before. As for the will, without itself being changed, it puts off doing what it proposes to do; but this can be only by some imagined change, even if it involves only the passage of time. Thus he who wills to make a house tomorrow, and not today, awaits something which will be tomorrow, but is not today. At the very least he awaits for today to pass, and for tomorrow to come; and this cannot be without change, because time is the number of motion. Therefore it remains that before every new motion, there was a previous motion; and so the same conclusion follows as before.<sup>8</sup>

3. *Physics* 1.9, 192a28.

4. *De caelo*, 1.3, 270a13.

5. An argument of Aristotle, found in Maimonides, *Guide* II, ch. 13 (p. 371).

6. Ibn Rushd, *In De caelo* III, comm. 29.

7. An argument of Aristotle, found in Maimonides, *Guide* II, ch. 14. Cf. Ibn Rushd, *In Physics* 8, comm. 7.

8. Ibn Sīnā, *Metaphysics* IX.1. Ibn Rushd, *In Physics* 8, comm. 8; comm. 15; *Destruct. destruct.* I.

7. Further, whatever is always in its beginning, and always in its end, cannot cease and cannot begin; because what begins is not in its end, and what ceases is not in its beginning. But time is always in its beginning and end, because no part of time exists except *now*, which is the end of the past and the beginning of the future. Therefore time cannot begin or end, and consequently neither can motion, of which time is the number.<sup>9</sup>

8. Further, God is before the world either in the order of nature only, or also in duration. If in the order of nature only, therefore, since God is eternal, the world also is eternal. But if God is prior in duration, since what is prior and posterior in duration constitutes time, it follows that time existed before the world; which is impossible.<sup>10</sup>

9. Further, if there is a sufficient cause, there is an effect; for a cause from which there is no effect is an imperfect cause, requiring something else to make the effect follow. But God is the sufficient cause of the world: He is the final cause by reason of His goodness, the exemplary cause by reason of His wisdom, and the efficient cause by reason of His power, as appears from the above.<sup>11</sup> Since therefore God is eternal, the world also is eternal.<sup>12</sup>

10. Further, He who has an eternal action also has an eternal effect. But the action of God is His substance, which is eternal. Therefore the world is eternal.<sup>13</sup>

**On the contrary.** It is said (John 17:5), “Glorify Me, O Father, with Thyself with the glory which I had before the world was”; and (Prov. 8:22), “The Lord possessed Me in the beginning of His ways, before He made anything from the beginning.”

9. Aristotle, *Physics* 8.1, 251b19. Cf. Ibn Rushd, *In Physics* 8 comm. 11.

10. Ibn Sīnā, *Metaphysics* IX.1. Cf. Ibn Rushd, *Destruct. destruct.* I.

11. Q. 44, a. 1, 3, and 4.

12. Ibn Sīnā, *Metaphysics* IX.1. Cf. Alexander of Hales, *Summa theologiae* 1, no. 64; Bonaventure, *In II Sentences*, d. 1, pt. 1, a. 1, q. 2.

13. Ibn Sīnā, *Metaphysics* IX.1. Maimonides, *Guide* II, ch. 18.

**Reply.** Nothing except God can be eternal. This statement is far from impossible. For it has been shown above that the will of God is the cause of things.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, things are necessary according as it is necessary for God to will them, since the necessity of the effect depends on the necessity of the cause.<sup>15</sup> Now it was shown above that, absolutely speaking, it is not necessary that God should will anything except Himself.<sup>16</sup> It is not therefore necessary for God to will that the world should always exist; but supposing an eternal world to exist, it exists to the extent that God wills it to exist, since the being of the world depends on the will of God as on its cause. It is not therefore necessary for the world to be always; hence neither can it be proved demonstratively.

Nor are Aristotle's arguments absolutely demonstrative, but only relatively—viz., as against the arguments of some of the ancients who asserted that the world began to be in some actually impossible ways. This appears in three ways.<sup>17</sup> First, because both in *Physics* 8<sup>18</sup> and in *De caelo* 1<sup>19</sup> he premises some opinions, such as those of Anaxagoras, Empedocles, and Plato, and brings forward arguments to refute them. Secondly, because wherever he speaks of this subject, he quotes the testimony of the ancients, which is not the way of a demonstrator, but of one persuading of what is probable. Thirdly, because he expressly says that there are dialectical problems which we cannot solve demonstratively, as, "whether the world is eternal."<sup>20</sup>

**Response to 1.** Before the world existed, it was possible for the world to be, not, indeed, according to the passive power which is matter, but according to the active power of God. The world was possible also, according as a thing is called absolutely possible, not in relation to any power, but from the sole relation of the terms which are not repugnant to each other; in which

sense possible is opposed to impossible, as appears from the Philosopher.<sup>21</sup>

**Response to 2.** Whatever has the power always to be, from the fact of having that power cannot sometimes be and sometimes not-be. However, before it received that power, it did not exist. Hence this argument, which is given by Aristotle,<sup>22</sup> does not prove absolutely that incorruptible beings never began to be; it proves that they did not begin according to the natural process by which generable and corruptible beings begin to be.

**Response to 3.** Aristotle proves that matter is ungenerated from the fact that it has not a subject from which to derive its existence;<sup>23</sup> and he proves that the heavens are ungenerated, because they have no contrary from which to be generated.<sup>24</sup> Hence it appears that no conclusion follows in either case, except that matter and the heavens did not begin by generation; as some said especially about the heavens.<sup>25</sup> But what we say is that matter and the heavens were produced into being by creation, as appears above.<sup>26</sup>

**Response to 4.** The notion of a vacuum is not only that *in which is nothing*, but also implies a space capable of holding a body and in which there is not a body, as appears from Aristotle.<sup>27</sup> But we hold that there was no place or space before the world was.

**Response to 5.** The first mover was always in the same state, but the first movable thing was not always so, because it began to be whereas hitherto it was not. This, however, was not through change, but by creation, which is not change, as was said above.<sup>28</sup> Hence it is evident that this argument, which Aristotle gives,<sup>29</sup> is

14. Q. 19, a. 4.

15. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 4.5, 1015b9.

16. Q. 19, a. 3.

17. Cf. Maimonides, *Guide* II, ch. 15.

18. *Phys.* 8.1, 250b24; 251b17.

19. *De caelo* 2.10, 279b4; 280a30.

20. *Top.* 1.9, 104b16.

21. *Metaphysics* 4.12, 1019b19.

22. *De caelo* 1.12, 281b18.

23. *Physics* 1.9, 192a28.

24. *De caelo* 1.3, 270a13.

25. Cf. *op. cit.* 1.10, 279a13.

26. Q. 45, a. 2.

27. *Phys.* 4.1, 208b26.

28. Q. 45, a. 2, Response to 2.

29. *Phys.* 8.1, 251a25.

valid against those who admitted the existence of eternal movable things, but not eternal motion, as appears from the opinions of Anaxagoras and Empedocles.<sup>30</sup> But we hold that motion always existed from the moment that movable things began to exist.

**Response to 6.** The first agent is a voluntary agent. And although He had the eternal will to produce some effect, yet He did not produce an eternal effect. Nor is it necessary for some change to be presupposed, not even because of imaginary time. For we must take into consideration the difference between a particular agent, that presupposes something and produces something else, and the universal agent, who produces the whole. The particular agent produces the form, and presupposes the matter; and hence it is necessary that it introduce the form in due proportion into a suitable matter. Hence it is logical to say that the particular agent introduces the form into such matter, and not into another, because of the different kinds of matter. But it is not logical to say so of God Who produces form and matter together; whereas it is logical to say of Him that He produces matter fitting to the form and to the end. Now a particular agent presupposes time just as it presupposes matter. Hence it is logically described as acting in a time *after* and not in a time *before*, according to an imaginary succession of time after time. But the universal agent, who produces both the thing and time, is not correctly described as acting now, and not before, according to an imaginary succession of time succeeding time, as if time were presupposed to His action; but He must be considered as giving time to His effect as much as and when He willed, and according to what was fitting to demonstrate His power. For the world leads more evidently to the knowledge of the divine creating power if it was not always, than if it had always been; since everything which was not always manifestly has a cause; whereas this is not so manifest of what always was.

**Response to 7.** As is stated in *Physics* 4, “before and after belong to time,” according as “they are found in motion.”<sup>31</sup> Hence beginning and end in time must be

taken in the same way as in motion. Now, granted the eternity of motion, it is necessary that any given moment in motion be a beginning and an end of motion; which need not be if motion has a beginning. The same applies to the *now* of time. Thus it appears that the view of the instant *now*, as being always the beginning and end of time, presupposes the eternity of time and motion. Hence Aristotle brings forward this argument against those who asserted the eternity of time, but denied the eternity of motion.<sup>32</sup>

**Response to 8.** God is prior to the world by priority of duration. But the word *prior* signifies priority, not of time, but of eternity. — Or we may say that it signifies the eternity of imaginary time, and not of time really existing; much as, when we say that above the heavens there is nothing, the word *above* signifies only an imaginary place, according as it is possible to imagine other dimensions beyond those of the body of the heavens.

**Response to 9.** Just as the effect of a cause that acts by nature follows from it according to the mode of its form, so likewise it follows from the voluntary agent according to the form preconceived and determined by the agent, as appears from what was said above.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, although God was from eternity the sufficient cause of the world, we may not hold that the world was produced by Him, except as preordained by His will—that is, that it should have being after non-being, in order more manifestly to declare its author.

**Response to 10.** Given the action, the effect follows according to the requirement of the form which is the principle of action. But in agents acting by will, what is conceived and preordained is considered as the form which is the principle of action. Therefore, from the eternal action of God an eternal effect does not follow; there follows only such an effect as God has willed, an effect, namely, which has being after non-being.

30. Cf. *ibid.* 250b24.

31. Aristotle, *op. cit.* 4.11, 219a17.

32. *Op. cit.* 8.1, 251b29.

33. Q. 19, a. 4; Q. 41, a. 2.

*Article 2. Is it an article of faith  
that the world began?*

It would seem that it is not an article of faith but a demonstrable conclusion that the world began:

1. For everything that is made has a beginning of its duration. But it can be proved demonstratively that God is the producing cause of the world; indeed this is asserted by the more approved philosophers.<sup>34</sup> Therefore it can be demonstratively proved that the world began.<sup>35</sup>

2. Further, if it is necessary to say that the world was made by God, it must have been made from nothing, or from something. But it was not made from something, or otherwise the matter of the world would have preceded the world; and against this are the arguments of Aristotle who held that the heavens are ungenerated. Therefore it must be said that the world was made from nothing; and thus it has being after non-being. Therefore it must have begun to be.<sup>36</sup>

3. Further, "everything which works by intellect works from some principle,"<sup>37</sup> as is revealed in all works of human art. But God acts by intellect, and therefore His work has a principle, from which to begin. The world, therefore, which is His effect, did not always exist.

4. Further, it appears manifestly that certain arts have developed, and certain parts of the world have begun to be inhabited at some fixed time. But this would not be the case if the world had always been in existence. Therefore it is manifest that the world did not always exist.

5. Further, it is certain that nothing can be equal to God. But if the world had always been, it would be equal to God in duration. Therefore it is certain that the world did not always exist.<sup>38</sup>

6. Further, if the world always was, the consequence is that an infinite number of days preceded this

present day. But it is impossible to traverse what is infinite. Therefore we should never have arrived at this present day; which is manifestly false.<sup>39</sup>

7. Further, if the world was eternal, generation also was eternal. Therefore one man was begotten of another in an infinite series. But the father is the efficient cause of the son.<sup>40</sup> Therefore in efficient causes there could be an infinite series; which however is disproved in *Metaphysics* 2.<sup>41</sup>

8. Further, if the world and generation always were, there have been an infinite number of men. But man's soul is immortal. Therefore an infinite number of human souls would now actually exist, which is impossible. Therefore it can be known with certainty that the world began: it is not held by faith alone.<sup>42</sup>

On the contrary. The articles of faith cannot be proved demonstratively, because faith is of things "that appear not." But that God is the Creator of the world in such a way that the world began to be is an article of faith; for we say, "I believe in one God," etc.<sup>43</sup> And again, Gregory says that Moses prophesied of the past, saying, "In the beginning God created heaven and earth": in which words the newness of the world is stated.<sup>44</sup> Therefore the newness of the world is known only by revelation, and hence it cannot be proved demonstratively.

Reply. That the world did not always exist we hold by faith alone: it cannot be proved demonstratively; which is what was said above of the mystery of the

34. Cf. Q. 44, a. 2.

35. Alexander of Hales, *Summa theologiae* 1, no. 64; Bonaventure, *In II Sentences*, d. 1, pt. 1, a. 1, q. 3.

36. Alexander of Hales, *Summa theologiae* 1, no. 64.

37. Aristotle, *Physics* 3.4, 203a31.

38. Alexander of Hales, *Summa theologiae* 1, no. 64.

39. Argument of al-Ghazālī in Ibn Rushd, *Destruct. destruct.* I; and of the Mutakallimūn, found in Maimonides, *Guide* I, ch. 74.

40. Aristotle, *Physics* 2.3, 194b30.

41. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Ia. 2, 994a5. For the use of this argument, cf. the Mutakallimūn in Ibn Rushd, *Destruct. destruct.* I.

42. Argument of al-Ghazālī, found in Ibn Rushd, *Destruct. destruct.* I; and of the Mutakallimūn in Maimonides, *Guide* I, ch. 73.

43. *Symb. Nicaenum* (Denzinger, no. 54).

44. *In Ezech.* hom. 1, bk. 1.

Trinity.<sup>45</sup> The reason for this is that the newness of the world cannot be demonstrated from the world itself. For the principle of demonstration is the essence of a thing. Now everything, considered in its species, abstracts from *here* and *now*; which is why it is said that “universals are everywhere and always.”<sup>46</sup> Hence it cannot be demonstrated that man, or the heavens, or a stone did not always exist.

Likewise, neither can the newness of the world be demonstrated from the efficient cause, which acts by will. For the will of God cannot be investigated by reason, except as regards those things which God must will of necessity; and what He wills about creatures is not among these, as was said above.<sup>47</sup> But the divine will can be manifested by revelation, on which faith rests. Hence that the world began to exist is an object of faith, but not of demonstration or science. And it is useful to consider this, lest anyone, presuming to demonstrate what is of faith, should bring forward arguments that are not cogent; for this would give unbelievers the occasion to ridicule, thinking that on such grounds we believe the things that are of faith.

**Response to 1.** As Augustine says, the opinion of philosophers who asserted the eternity of the world was twofold.<sup>48</sup> For some said that the substance of the world was not from God, which is an intolerable error; and therefore it is refuted by proofs that are cogent. Some, however, said that the world was eternal, although made by God. “For they hold that the world has a beginning, not of time, but of creation; which means that, in a scarcely intelligible way, it was always made. And they try to explain their meaning thus: for just as, if a foot were always in the dust from eternity, there would always be a footprint which without doubt was caused by him who trod on it, so also the world always was, because its Maker always existed.”<sup>49</sup> To understand this we must consider that an efficient cause

which acts by motion of necessity precedes its effect in time; for the effect exists only in the end of the action, and every agent must be the beginning of action. But if the action is instantaneous and not successive, it is not necessary for the maker to be prior in duration to the thing made, as appears in the case of illumination. Hence it is held that it does not follow necessarily that if God is the active cause of the world, He must be prior to the world in duration;<sup>50</sup> because creation, by which He produced the world, is not a successive change, as was said above.<sup>51</sup>

**Response to 2.** Those who would hold that the world was eternal, would say that the world was made by God from nothing; not that it was made after nothing, according to what we understand by the term ‘creation,’ but that it was not made from anything. And so some of them even do not reject the term ‘creation,’ as appears from Avicenna.<sup>52</sup>

**Response to 3.** This is the argument of Anaxagoras as reported in *Physics* 3.<sup>53</sup> But it does not lead to a necessary conclusion, except as to that intellect which deliberates in order to find out what should be done; which procedure is like movement. Such is the human intellect, but not the divine intellect.<sup>54</sup>

**Response to 4.** Those who hold the eternity of the world hold that some region was changed an infinite number of times from being uninhabitable to being inhabitable and *vice versa*.<sup>55</sup> They also hold that the arts, by reason of various corruptions and accidents, were subject to an infinite succession of discovery and decay.<sup>56</sup> Hence Aristotle says that it is absurd to base

45. Q. 32, a. 1

46. Aristotle, *Posterior analytics* 1.31, 87b33.

47. Q. 19, a. 3.

48. *City of God* 11.4.

49. *Op. cit.* 10.31.

50. Cf. Ibn Rushd, *Destruct. destruct.* I.

51. Q. 45, a. 2, Response to 3.

52. *Metaphysics* 9.4.

53. Aristotle, *Physics* 3.4, 203a31; 8.1, 250b24.

54. Q. 14, a. 7.

55. Cf. Augustine, *City of God* 12.10; Aristotle, *Meteorologica* 1.14, 351a19.

56. Cf. Augustine, *City of God* 12.10; Ibn Rushd, *In Metaphysics* 12, comm. 50.

our opinion of the newness of the whole world on such particular changes.<sup>57</sup>

**Response to 5.** Even supposing that the world always was, it would not be equal to God in eternity, as Boethius says;<sup>58</sup> for the divine Being is all being simultaneously without succession, but with the world it is otherwise.

**Response to 6.** Passage is always understood as being from term to term. Whatever bygone day we choose, from it to the present day there is a finite number of days which can be traversed. The objection is founded on the idea that, given two extremes, there is an infinite number of mean terms.

**Response to 7.** In efficient causes it is impossible to proceed to infinity per se. Thus, there cannot be an infinite number of causes that are per se required for a certain effect; for instance, that a stone be moved by a stick, the stick by the hand, and so on to infinity. But it is not impossible to proceed to infinity *accidentally* as regards efficient causes; for instance, if all the causes thus infinitely multiplied should have the order of only one cause, while their multiplication is accidental: e.g., as an artificer acts by means of many hammers accidentally, because one after the other is broken. It is accidental, therefore, that one particular hammer should act after the action of another, and it is likewise accidental to this particular man as generator to be generated by another man; for he generates as a man, and not as the son of another man. For all men gen-

erating hold one grade in the order of efficient causes—viz., the grade of a particular generator. Hence it is not impossible for a man to be generated by man to infinity; but such a thing would be impossible if the generation of this man depended upon this man, and on an elementary body, and on the sun, and so on to infinity.

**Response to 8.** Those who hold the eternity of the world evade this argument in many ways. For some do not think it impossible for there to be an actual infinity of souls, as appears from the *Metaphysics* of Al-gazel, who says that such a thing is an accidental infinity.<sup>59</sup> But this was disproved above.<sup>60</sup> Some say that the soul is corrupted with the body.<sup>61</sup> And some say that of all souls only one remains.<sup>62</sup> But others, as Augustine says, asserted on this account a circulation of souls—viz., that souls separated from their bodies again return thither after a course of time.<sup>63</sup> A fuller consideration of this matter will be given later.<sup>64</sup> But be it noted that this argument considers only a particular case. Hence one might say that the world was eternal, or at least some creature, as an angel, but not man. But we are considering the question in general, namely, whether any creature can exist from eternity.

57. *Meteorologica* 1.14, 352a26; 351b8.

58. *Consolation of Philosophy* 5, prose 6 (page 135).

59. *Metaphysics* 1, tr. 1, div. 6. Cf. Ibn Rushd, *Destruct. destruct.* 1.

60. Q. 7, a. 4.

61. Cf. Nemesius, *De natura hominis* 2.

62. Ibn Rushd, *Destruct. destruct.* 1.

63. *Serm.* 241, 4; *City of God* 12.13. Cf. Plato *Timaeus* 39a.

64. Q. 75, a. 6; Q. 76, a. 2; Q. 118, a. 3.

# 41. *Summa Theologiae*

## First Part

### Selections from the “Treatise on Human Nature”

#### Question 75 On Soul Considered in Its Own Right

*Article 2. Is the human soul something subsistent?*

It seems that the human soul is not something subsistent:

1. That which is subsistent is said to be a particular thing [*hoc aliquid*]. It is not the soul that is a particular thing, however, but rather the composite of soul and body. Therefore the soul is not something subsistent.

2. Everything that is subsistent can be said to engage in some operation. But the soul is not said to do so, because (as is said in *De anima* 1 [408b11–13]) to say that the soul senses or thinks “is like someone’s saying that it weaves or builds.” Therefore the soul is not something subsistent.

3. If the soul were something subsistent, then some operation would belong to it without the body. But no operation does belong to it without the body, not even understanding, because it is not possible to understand without a phantasm, and there are no phantasms without the body. Therefore the human soul is not something subsistent.

**On the contrary.** Augustine says in *De Trinitate* 10 [7.10] that “whoever sees that it is the nature of mind both to be a substance and not to be bodily, sees that those who take it to be bodily go wrong because they associate mind with the things that they depend on for conceiving of any nature” — namely, images of bodies. Therefore the nature of the human mind is not only

nonbodily, but also a substance—that is, something subsistent.

**Reply.** It is necessary to say that the principle of intellectual operation, which we call the soul of a human being, is a nonbodily and subsistent principle. For it is clear that through the intellect a human being can cognize the natures of all bodies. But that which can cognize certain things must have none of those things in its own nature, because that which exists in it naturally would impede its cognition of other things. In this way we see that a sick person’s tongue, infected with a jaundiced and bitter humor, cannot perceive anything sweet; rather, all things seem bitter to that person. Therefore if the intellectual principle were to contain within itself the nature of any body, it could not cognize all bodies. But every body has some determinate nature. Therefore it is impossible for the intellectual principle to be a body.

It is likewise impossible for it to operate *through* a bodily organ, because the determinate nature even of that bodily organ would prevent the cognition of all bodies. Analogously, a determinate color not just in the pupil, but even in a glass vase, makes liquid poured into that vase seem to be of the same color.

Therefore this intellectual principle, which is called mind or intellect, has an operation on its own [per se] that the body does not share in. But nothing can operate on its own unless it subsists on its own, because every operation belongs to something actually existent, and so a thing operates in the same manner that it exists.<sup>1</sup> (For this reason we say not that heat heats, but that the thing that is hot does so.) We can conclude, therefore, that the human soul, which is called intellect or mind, is something nonbodily and subsistent.

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1. *De anima* 1.1, 403a10–11.

**Response to 1.** The phrase 'particular thing' can be taken in two ways: first, for anything subsistent; second, for something subsistent and complete within the nature of some species. The first rules out something inhering as an accident or a material form; the second additionally rules out the imperfection associated with a part. A hand, then, could be called a particular thing in the first way, but not in the second. So therefore, since the human soul is part of the human species, it can be called a particular thing in the first way—in the sense of being subsistent—but not in the second. For in this latter way it is the composite of soul and body that is called a particular thing.

**Response to 2.** Aristotle says those words not with respect to his own position, but with respect to the view of those that were claiming that to think is to be in motion. (So much is clear from the preceding remarks he makes there [408a34–b11].)

Alternatively, one can reply that a thing's acting on its own holds of that which exists on its own. But a thing can sometimes be said to exist on its own if it does not inhere as an accident or a material form, even if it is a part. Still, a thing is said to be strictly subsistent on its own when it neither inheres in the way just stated nor is a part. In this way one's eye or hand could not be said to subsist on its own, nor consequently to operate on its own. Thus even the operations of the parts are attributed to the whole, through the parts. For we say that human beings see through their eyes and touch through their hands. And this is different from how what is hot heats through heat: for there is no way in which heat makes things hot, strictly speaking. Therefore one can say that the soul thinks, just as the eye sees. But one speaks more strictly in saying that the *human being* thinks, through the soul.

**Response to 3.** The body is required for the intellect's action not as the organ through which such an action is carried out, but on account of its object. For a phantasm is related to intellect just as color is to sight.<sup>2</sup> But needing a body in this way does not preclude intellect's being subsistent. Otherwise an animal would not

be something subsistent, since it needs external sense objects in order to sense.

*Article 6. Is the human soul incorruptible?*

It seems that the human soul is corruptible:

1. Things that have a similar starting point and course seem to have a similar end. But human beings and beasts have a similar starting point for their generation, since they are made from earth.<sup>3</sup> There is also a similar course of life in each, since "all things breathe alike, and a human being has nothing more than a beast," as is said in Ecclesiastes 3:19. Therefore, as the text there concludes, "there is a single death for humans and beasts, and an equal condition for both." But the soul of brute animals is corruptible. Therefore the human soul is also corruptible.

2. Everything that comes from nothing can be turned back into nothing, since the end ought to match the start. But, as is said in Wisdom 2:2, "We are born from nothing," which is true not only as regards the body, but also as regards the soul. Therefore, as that passage concludes, "After this we will be as if we had not been"—even with regard to soul.

3. Nothing exists without its proper operation. But the soul's proper operation, to understand with phantasms, cannot take place without the body. For, as is said in the *De anima*, "the soul understands nothing without a phantasm" [431a16–17], and there is no phantasm without the body [403a8–10]. Therefore the soul cannot remain once the body is destroyed.

**On the contrary.** Dionysius says in *On the Divine Names* 4.2 that because of divine goodness, human souls are "intellectual" and "have inexhaustible substantial life."

**Reply.** It is necessary to say that the human soul, which we call the intellective principle, is incorruptible. For there are two ways in which something is corrupted: either per se or per accidens. But it is impossible for something subsistent to be generated or corrupted per accidens—i.e., by something [else's] being generated or corrupted. For a thing is generated or

2. Aristotle, *De anima* 3.7, 431a14–17; see Q. 85, a. 1 later.

3. Gen. 1:24; see Response to 1.

corrupted in the same way that it exists—existence being what a thing acquires through generation and loses through corruption. Hence that which has existence per se can be generated or corrupted only per se. Things that do not subsist, on the other hand, such as accidents and material forms, are said to be made and corrupted through the generation and corruption of their composites. But it was shown above that the souls of brute animals are not subsistent [Q. 75, a. 3] and that only human souls are [Q. 75, a. 2]. So the souls of brute animals are corrupted when their bodies are corrupted, whereas the human soul cannot be corrupted, unless it is corrupted per se. But this, to be sure, is entirely impossible—not only for it, but for any subsistent thing that is wholly form. For it is clear that what holds of something in its own right is inseparable from it. Existence, however, holds per se of form, which is actuality. As a result, matter acquires actual existence in virtue of its acquiring form, whereas corruption results in virtue of the form's being separated from it. But it is impossible for a form to be separated from itself. As a result, it is impossible for a subsistent form to cease existing.

Further, even if we were to suppose that the soul is composed of matter and form, as some maintain, we would still have to hold that it is incorruptible. For corruption is found only where contrariety is found, since generation and corruption occur from one contrary to another. For that reason celestial bodies, which do not have matter subject to contrariety, are incorruptible. But there cannot be any contrariety in the intellectual soul. For it receives in keeping with the mode of its existence, and those things that are received in it are without contrariety. This is because even the concepts of contrary things are not contraries within intellect; instead, the same knowledge embraces contraries. Therefore it is impossible for the intellectual soul to be corruptible.

One can also see an indication of this from the fact that each thing naturally desires existence in its own way. Now in the case of things that are cognitive, desire depends on cognition. But the senses cognize only in terms of what is here and now, whereas the intellect apprehends existence unconditionally, according to all times. For this reason every thing that has an intellect naturally desires to exist forever. But a natural de-

sire cannot be pointless. Therefore every intellectual substance is incorruptible.

**Reply to 1.** Solomon introduces this argument in the voice of the foolish, as is made clear in Wisdom 2. So the claim that human beings and other animals have a similar starting point for their generation is true as regards the body, since all animals have been made alike from the earth. But the claim is not true as regards the soul. For the soul of brute animals is produced by a bodily power, whereas the human soul is produced by God. And to signify this it is said in Genesis [1:24], as regards the other animals, “Let the earth produce the living soul,” while as regards human beings it is said [2:7] that “He breathed into his face the breath of life.” And so the last chapter of Ecclesiastes concludes that “Dust reverts to the earth from where it came, and spirit returns to the God who gave it.”

Likewise, the course of life is similar as regards the body, and this is what Ecclesiastes 3:19 refers to: “All things breathe alike,” and also Wisdom 2:2: “Smoke and breath are in our nostrils,” etc. But as regards the soul the course is not similar, since human beings think and brute animals do not. So it is false to say that “a human being has nothing more than a beast.” And so there is a similar death as regards the body, but not as regards the soul.

**Reply to 2.** A thing is said to be able to be created not through a passive capacity, but only through the active capacity of a Creator who can produce something from nothing. In just the same way, when it is said that something can be turned back into nothing, the creature is not being credited with the capacity for nonexistence; rather, the Creator is being credited with the capacity for not instilling existence. But something is said to be corruptible when the capacity for not existing is present in it.

**Reply to 3.** Understanding with phantasms is the soul's proper operation insofar as it is united to its body. Once separated from its body, however, it will have a different mode of understanding, like that of other substances that are separate from body. This will become clearer below.

*Article 7. Does the soul belong  
to the same species as an angel?*

It seems that the soul and an angel belong to a single species:

1. Any given thing is directed to its own distinctive end through the nature of its species, through which it has an inclination toward its end. But the soul and an angel have the same end—namely, eternal blessedness. Therefore they belong to a single species.

2. The ultimate specific *differentia* is the one that is loftiest, since it fills in the defining character [*rationem*] of the species. But nothing is loftier in an angel and the soul than intellectual being. Therefore the soul and an angel agree in their ultimate specific *differentia*. Therefore they belong to a single species.

3. The soul seems to differ from an angel only through its being united to the body. But the body, since it is outside of the soul’s essence, does not seem relevant to its species. Therefore the soul and an angel belong to a single species.

**On the contrary.** Things that have distinct natural operations differ in species. But souls and angels have distinct natural operations, because (as Dionysius says in *On the Divine Names* 7.2) angelic minds have simple and indeterminate and blessed intellects; they do not accumulate their divine cognition from things that are visible. He later says the opposite of this regarding the soul. Therefore the soul and an angel do not belong to a single species.

**Reply.** Origen claimed that all human souls and angels belong to a single species; he supposed this because he claimed that the difference of levels found in such substances was accidental—stemming (as was said above [Q. 47, a. 2]) from free decision.<sup>4</sup> This cannot be, because incorporeal substances cannot differ numerically unless they differ in species, and unless their natures are unequal. For if they are not composed of matter and form, but are subsistent forms, then it will clearly be necessary for them to differ in species. For the existence of a separated form is intelligible only when there is one form for one species.

4. *On First Principles* I.6, I.8, II.9, III.5.

Likewise, if a separated whiteness existed, there could be just one of them: for one whiteness differs from another only through its belonging to one thing or another. Specific difference, however, always implies a concomitant difference in nature, just as among species of colors one color is more perfect than another, and likewise in other cases. The reason for this is that the *differentiae* that divide up a genus are contraries. Contraries, however, are related in terms of being more and less perfect, because the basis of contrariety is lacking and having, as is said in *Metaphysics* 10 [1055a33].

The same conclusion would also follow if substances of this sort were composed of matter and form. For if the matter of one is distinguished from the matter of another, then necessarily either (i) the form is the principle distinguishing the matter (in such a way that matters are different because of a disposition for different forms) and then specific difference and inequality in nature still results; or (ii) matter will be the principle distinguishing the forms. But one matter could be said to be different from another only with respect to quantitative division, which has no place in incorporeal substances like an angel and the soul. Therefore it cannot be the case that an angel and the soul belong to a single species.

As for how there are many souls belonging to a single species, this will be shown below [Q. 76, a. 2 Response to 1].

**Response to 1.** That argument holds for an end that is proximate and natural. But eternal blessedness is an end that is ultimate and supernatural.

**Response to 2.** The ultimate specific *differentia* is loftiest inasmuch as it is the most determinate—in the way that actuality is loftier than potentiality. Yet it then follows that *intellectual* is not the most lofty, because it is indeterminate and common to many levels of intellectuality—just as *sensory* is common to many levels of being sensory. So just as not all sensory things belong to a single species, so too neither do all intellectual things.

**Response to 3.** The body does not belong to the soul’s essence, but the soul, due to the nature of its essence,

is able to be united to the body. For this reason, it is not the soul that properly belongs to the species, but the compound. And the very fact that the soul in a certain way needs the body for its operation shows that the soul occupies a lower intellectual level than does an angel, which is not united to a body.

## Question 76 The Soul's Union with the Body

### *Article 1. Is the intellectual principle united to the body as its form?*

It seems that the intellectual principle is not united to the body as its form:

1. The Philosopher says in *De anima* 3 that the intellect is separate [429b5], and that it is the actuality of no body [429a24–27]. Therefore it is not united to the body as its form.

2. Every form is determined by the nature of the matter whose form it is; otherwise no proportion would be required between matter and form. Therefore if the intellect were united to the body as its form, then, since every body has a determinate nature, it would follow that the intellect would have a determinate nature. And then it would not be capable of cognizing all things, as is clear from earlier discussions [Q. 75, a. 2], which is contrary to the nature of intellect. Therefore the intellect is not united to the body as its form.

3. Any receptive capacity that is the actuality of a body receives a form materially and individually, since the thing received exists in the recipient in keeping with the mode of the recipient. But the form of a thing grasped by intellect is not received in intellect materially and individually, but instead immaterially and universally—otherwise the intellect would not be capable of cognizing immaterial and universal things, but only singular things, as the senses do. Therefore the intellect is not united to the body as its form.

4. The capacity and the action belong to the same thing, because that which is capable of acting is the same as that which is acting. But intellectual action does not belong to any body, as is clear from earlier discussions [Q. 75, a. 2, Q. 75, a. 5]. Therefore neither is

the intellectual capacity a capacity that belongs to a body. But no power or capacity can be more abstract or simple than the essence from which the power or capacity is derived. Therefore neither is the substance of intellect the form of the body.

5. That which has existence on its own is not united to the body as its form. For a form is that by which a thing exists, and so the existence that belongs to a form does not belong to it in its own right. But the intellectual principle has existence in its own right, and it is subsistent, as was said above [Q. 75, a. 2]. Therefore it is not united to the body as its form.

6. That which holds of a thing in its own right always holds of it. But it holds of form in its own right to be united with matter, since it is the actuality of matter through its essence, not through any accident. (Otherwise matter and form would make one thing not substantially, but accidentally.) Therefore a form cannot exist without its proper matter. But the intellectual principle, since it is incorruptible (as was shown above [Q. 75, a. 6]), remains when it is not united to the body, after the body has been corrupted. Therefore the intellectual principle is not united to the body as its form.

**On the contrary.** According to the Philosopher, in *Metaphysics* 8 [1043a2–21], a *differentia* is drawn from the form of a thing. But the *differentia* that gives rise to *human being is rational*, which is ascribed to a human being on account of the intellectual principle. Therefore the intellectual principle is the form of a human being.

**Reply.** It is necessary to say that the intellect, which is the principle of intellectual operation, is the form of the human body. For that through which a thing first operates is a form of that to which the operation is attributed—e.g., that through which the body is first healed is health; and that through which the soul first knows is knowledge. Thus health is a form of the body, and knowledge a form of the soul. And the reason for this is that nothing acts except insofar as it is in actuality, and therefore it acts through that through which it is in actuality. It is clear, however, that the first thing through which the body lives is the soul. And since life is displayed in different grades of living beings through

different operations, the soul is that through which we first carry out any one of these operations of life. For the soul is the first thing through which we are nourished, through which we sense, through which we engage in locomotion, and—likewise—through which we first think. Therefore this principle through which we first think, whether it be called intellect or the intellectual soul, is the form of the body. And this is Aristotle's demonstration in *De anima* 2 [414a4–18].

Now if someone wants to say that the intellectual soul is not the form of the body, then it is incumbent on that person to find a way in which the action that is thinking is the action of a particular human being. For each one of us experiences that it is oneself who thinks. Now an action gets attributed to a thing in three ways, as is clear from the Philosopher in *Physics* 5 [224a21–34]. For a thing is said to produce movement or to act either

- (a) in respect of its whole self, in the way that a doctor heals; or
- (b) in respect of a part, in the way that one sees through one's eyes; or
- (c) per accidens, in the way that something white is said to build, because the builder accidentally happens to be white.

Therefore when we say that Socrates or Plato thinks, we clearly are not attributing this to him (c) per accidens. For we are attributing it to him inasmuch as he is a human being, which is *essentially* predicated of him. Therefore either we must say that (a) Socrates thinks in respect of his whole self, as Plato claimed in saying that a human being *is* the intellectual soul; or we must say that (b) the intellect is a part of Socrates. And the first surely cannot be maintained, as was shown above [Q. 75, a. 4], because it is the very same human being who perceives himself both to think and to sense. Yet sensing does not occur without the body, and so the body must be a part of the human being. We can conclude, then, that the intellect by which Socrates thinks is a part of Socrates, and consequently the intellect is somehow united to Socrates' body.

The Commentator, in *De anima* 3 [5], says that this union takes place through intelligible species. These

species have two subjects, one the possible intellect, the other the phantasms that exist in corporeal organs. In this way, then, the possible intellect is connected to the body of one or another human being through an intelligible species.

But that connection or union is not sufficient for the intellect's action to be Socrates' action. This is clear through a comparison to the senses (which is how Aristotle goes about exploring the characteristics of intellect): for, as is said in *De anima* 3 [431a14], phantasms are to intellect just as colors are to sight. Therefore just as the species of colors are in sight, so the species of phantasms are in the possible intellect. But it is evident that we do not attribute the action of sight to a wall just because that wall has the colors whose likenesses are in sight. For we do not say that the wall *sees*, but rather that it is *seen*. Therefore just because the species of phantasms are in the possible intellect, it does not follow that Socrates (who has the phantasms) is thinking, but rather that he, or his phantasms, are being thought of.

Now some have wanted to say that the intellect is united to the body as its mover,<sup>1</sup> with the result that from intellect and body one thing comes about, so that the action of intellect can be attributed to the whole. But this is futile for a variety of reasons.

1. The intellect moves the body only through appetite, and appetite's movement presupposes the operation of intellect. Therefore Socrates does not think because he is moved by intellect, but rather the converse: because Socrates thinks, he is accordingly moved by intellect.

2. Because Socrates is an individual in whose nature there is one essence, composed of matter and form, it follows that if the intellect is not his form then it falls outside of his essence. And so the intellect will be related to the whole Socrates as mover is to moved. But thought is an action that stays within the agent; it does not pass into another, as heating does. Therefore thought cannot be attributed to Socrates on account of his being moved by intellect.

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1. The ancient source is Plato: see Q. 76, a. 3. See also William of Auvergne, *Tractatus de anima* 1.7, 6.35.

3. We attribute a mover's action to the thing being moved only as to an instrument—e.g., the action of a carpenter, to his saw. Therefore if we attribute thought to Socrates because it is the action of what moves him, then it follows that we are attributing it to him as if to an instrument. This runs contrary to the Philosopher, who holds that thought does not occur through a corporeal instrument.<sup>2</sup>

4. Although we attribute the action of a part to the whole—e.g., the eye's action to the person—nevertheless we never attribute that action to a different part (unless perhaps per accidens). For we do not say that the hand sees as a result of the eye's seeing. Therefore if from intellect and Socrates one thing comes about in the proposed way, then the intellect's action cannot be attributed to Socrates. If, on the other hand, Socrates is the whole composed of intellect's union with the rest of Socrates, and nevertheless the intellect is united to the other parts of Socrates only as a mover, then it follows that Socrates is not unconditionally one thing, and consequently that he is not unconditionally a being. For something is a being in just the way that it is one.

The only way that is left, then, is the way that Aristotle proposes: that this particular human being thinks because the intellectual principle is his form. In this way, then, from the intellect's very operation, it is evident that the intellectual principle is united to the body as its form.

The same can also be made clear from the defining character of the human species. For the nature of a thing is revealed by its operation. But the special operation of a human being, considered as a human being, is to think: for through this we transcend all animals. For this reason, too, Aristotle in the *Ethics* [1177a12–19] founds our ultimate happiness on this operation—as on what is special to humans. A human being must obtain its species, then, in accord with the principle of this operation. But everything obtains its species from its own special form. It follows, then, that the intellectual principle is the special form of a human being.

It is important to consider, however, that to the extent a form is loftier, to that extent it is more dominant

over corporeal matter, less immersed in it, and more surpasses it in its operation or power. For this reason we see that the form of a mixed body has an operation that is not caused by the elemental qualities. And the farther we go in loftiness among forms, the more we find that the power of the form surpasses the elemental matter: the vegetative soul beyond the form of metal, and the sensory soul beyond the vegetative soul. But the human soul is the ultimate in loftiness among forms. Thus its power so surpasses corporeal matter that it has an operation and power that it in no respect shares with corporeal matter. And this power is called the intellect.

It is important to notice, however, that if someone were to claim that the soul is composed of matter and form, then he could in no way say that the soul is the body's form. For since form is actuality, whereas matter is solely potential being, there is no way in which what is composed of matter and form can be the form of something else in respect of its whole. But if it is the form in respect of some part of itself, then we will say that the soul is that which is the form, and we will say that what it is the form of is what is first ensouled—as was said above.

**Response to 1.** As the Philosopher says in *Physics* 2 [194b8–15], the last of the natural forms toward which natural philosophy directs its attention—that is, the human soul—is indeed separate, but is nevertheless in matter. And he proves this from the fact that “a human being, together with the sun, generates a human being *from matter*.” The human soul is separate, on the one hand, with respect to its intellectual power, because its intellectual power is not the power of any corporeal organ, in the way that visual power is the actuality of the eye. For thought is an actuality that cannot be exercised through a corporeal organ, in the way that vision is. It is in matter, on the other hand, inasmuch as that soul to which this power belongs is the form of the body, and the end product [*terminus*] of human generation. So the reason the Philosopher says in *De anima* 3 that the intellect is separate is that it is not the power of any corporeal organ.

**Response to 2 & 3.** Through this the reply to the second and third objections is clear. For in order for a hu-

2. *De anima* 3.4, 429a24–27.

man being to be able to think about all things through intellect, and for the intellect to think about immaterial and universal things, it is enough for the *intellective power* not to be the actuality of the body.

**Response to 4.** The human soul, because of its perfection, is not a form that is immersed in corporeal matter or completely subsumed by it. And so there is nothing to stop one of its powers from not being an actuality of the body—even though the soul is essentially the form of the body.

**Response to 5.** The soul shares with corporeal matter the existence in which it subsists: from that matter and from the intellective soul, one thing comes about. This occurs in such a way that the existence that belongs to the whole composite also belongs to the soul itself, something that does not occur in the case of other forms, which are not subsistent. And for this reason the human soul continues in its existence after the body is destroyed, whereas other forms do not.

**Response to 6.** In its own right, the soul is suited to be united to a body, just as a lightweight body is suited, in its own right, to be up high. And just as a light body remains light even after it has been separated from its proper place, and retains its readiness and inclination for that proper place, so the human soul continues in its existence even after it has been separated from its body, and it maintains its natural readiness and inclination for union with its body.

*Article 2. Is the intellective principle numerically multiplied according to the number of bodies?  
Or is there a single intellect for all human beings?*

It seems that the intellective principle is not multiplied according to the number of bodies, but that there is a single intellect for all human beings:

1. No immaterial substance is multiplied numerically within a single species. But the human soul is an immaterial substance, since (as was shown above) it is not composed of matter and form. Therefore there are not multiple human souls within a single species. But all human beings belong to a single species. Therefore all human beings share a single intellect.

2. By removing the cause, one removes the effect. Therefore, if human souls were multiplied according to the number of bodies, it would seem to follow that by taking away the bodies, one would not be left with multiple souls. Instead, out of all those souls, only one thing would be left. This is heretical, because there would then be no difference in rewards and punishments.

3. If my intellect is different from your intellect, then my intellect is something individual, and likewise so is yours. For particulars are things that differ numerically and share in a single species. But everything that is received in something exists in it according to the mode of the recipient. Therefore the species of things would be received individually in my intellect and in yours. This runs contrary to the nature of intellect, which is cognitive of universals.

4. That which is understood exists within the intellect of the one that understands it. Therefore if my intellect is different from yours, there must be one thing understood by me and another by you. As a result that thing will be counted as an individual, and will be understood only potentially, and a common notion will have to be abstracted from both—since a common intelligible object can be abstracted from any two different things. This runs contrary to the nature of intellect, because in that case the intellect would not seem to be distinct from the imaginative power. Therefore it seems we can conclude that all human beings share a single intellect.

5. When a student acquires knowledge from a teacher, it cannot be said that the teacher’s knowledge generates the knowledge in the student, because then knowledge too would be an active form, like heat, which is plainly false. Therefore it seems that numerically the same knowledge that is in the teacher is imparted to the student, which can happen only if each shares in a single intellect. Therefore it seems that the student and the teacher, and consequently all human beings, share in a single intellect.

6. Augustine says in *De quantitate animae* [32.69] that “if I were to say only that there are many human souls, I would laugh at myself.” But it is with respect to intellect most of all that there seems to be a single soul. Therefore all human beings share in a single intellect.

**On the contrary.** The Philosopher says in *Physics* 2 [195b25–28] that just as universal causes are related to universals, so particular causes are related to particulars. But it is impossible for animals that are different in species to share in a soul that is singular in species. Therefore it is impossible for things that are numerically different to share in an intellective soul that is numerically one.

**Reply.** It is entirely impossible for all human beings to share in a single intellect. This is obviously the case if, as Plato held, human beings are their intellects. For if Socrates and Plato share in just a single intellect, then it would follow that Socrates and Plato are a single human being, and that they are distinguished from one another only through that which is outside the essence of each. Then the distinction between Socrates and Plato would be no different than that between a [single] person wearing a coat and a hat, which is entirely absurd.

It is likewise clear that this is impossible if, in keeping with Aristotle's view, the intellect is held to be a part or capacity of the soul that is a human being's form. For it is impossible that many numerically different things share in a single form—just as it is impossible that they share in a single existence. The reason is that form is the source of existence.

It is likewise clear that this is impossible no matter how one supposes that the intellect is united to this human being and that one. For it is clear that if there is one principal agent and two instruments, one can speak unconditionally of a single agent, but of several actions. (For instance, if one human being touches different things with each hand, there will be one person touching, but two contacts.) If, however, there is a single instrument and different principal agents, then there will be said to be several agents, certainly, but a single action. (For instance, if many people pull a ship with one rope, there will be many people pulling, but one act of pulling.) But if there is a single principal agent and a single instrument, we will say that there is a single agent and a single action. (For instance, when a blacksmith strikes with a single hammer, there is a single person striking and a single act of striking.)

Yet clearly, no matter how the intellect is either united or joined to this or that human being, the intellect is what is principal among the various things that pertain to a human being. For the sensory powers obey and serve the intellect. Therefore if one were to imagine two human beings possessing distinct intellects but sharing a single sense—e.g., if two human beings had a single eye—then there would be more than one person seeing, but a single act of vision. But if there is a single intellect, then no matter how different all the other things are that the intellect uses as instruments, there is no way in which Socrates and Plato could be said to be anything other than a single thinker. And if we add that this thinking, which is the action of intellect, comes about through no other organ than the intellect itself, then it will further follow that there is both a single agent *and* a single action—i.e., that all human beings are a single thinker and [have] a single thought (relative to the same object of thought).

Now my intellectual action *could* be made different from yours through a difference in phantasms—viz., by there being one phantasm of a stone in me, and another in you—if that phantasm, as it is one thing in me and another in you, were the *form* of the possible intellect. For the same agent brings about different actions in virtue of different forms. (The same eye, for instance, has different visions in virtue of the different forms of things.)

But the possible intellect's form is not the phantasm but rather the intelligible species, which is abstracted from phantasms. And a single intellect abstracts only a single intelligible species from different phantasms of the same kind. This is evident in the case of a single human being, in whom there can be different phantasms of stone, though what is abstracted from all of them is a single intelligible species of stone, through which the intellect of a single human being, by a single operation, understands the nature of stone—despite the difference in phantasms. Therefore if all human beings shared a single intellect, the difference in phantasms in this one and that one could not differentiate the intellectual operation of this human being and that one, as the Commentator supposes in *De anima* 3 [5]. We can conclude,

therefore, that it is altogether impossible and unacceptable to claim that all human beings share a single intellect.

**Response to 1.** Although the intellective soul has no matter from which it exists, as angels too do not, nevertheless it is the form of some matter, which is not the case for an angel. And so there are many souls belonging to a single species, corresponding to the divisions in matter. But there absolutely cannot be many angels belonging to a single species.

**Response to 2.** Any given thing has unity in just the way that it has existence. As a result, judgments about a thing's number are the same as those about its existence. It is clear, however, that the intellectual soul is, as regards its existence, united to the body as its form. Nevertheless, after the body is destroyed, the intellectual soul remains in existence. For the same reason, the number of souls accords with the number of bodies; nevertheless, after the bodies are destroyed, the souls remain in existence, multiplied.

**Response to 3.** The individuality of what thinks, or of the species through which it thinks, does not exclude its thinking about universals. If it did, then, since separate intellects are a kind of subsistent substance and as a result particular, they could not think about universals. But the materiality of what cognizes, and of the species through which it does so, *does* impede the cognition of a universal. For just as every action occurs in keeping with the mode of the form through which the agent acts (e.g., heating, in keeping with the mode of heat), so cognition takes place in keeping with the mode of the species by means of which the cognizer cognizes. It is clear, however, that a common nature is distinguished and multiplied by individuating principles that come from matter. Therefore if the form through which cognition comes about is material, and not abstracted from material conditions, then it will be a likeness of the nature of the species or genus inasmuch as it is distinguished and multiplied by individuating principles. The thing's nature, in its commonality, could not in that way be cognized. But if the species is abstracted from the individual conditions of

matter, then it will be a likeness of the nature without the things that serve to distinguish and multiply it. In this way the universal *will* be cognized. And it does not matter, in this regard, whether there is a single intellect or many. For even if there were only one, it would still have to be a certain thing, as would the species through which it thinks.

**Response to 4.** Regardless of whether there is one or many intellects, that which is understood is one. For that which is understood is in intellect not in its own right, but in respect of its likeness. For, as is said in *De anima* 3 [431b29], "it is not the stone that is in the soul, but the species" of the stone. Still, it is the stone that is understood, not the species of the stone, except when intellect reflects on itself. Otherwise, our knowledge would not be about things in the world [*de rebus*], but about intelligible species.

Still, things that differ in having different forms can be made like the same thing. And because cognition occurs in virtue of the cognizer's being made like the thing being cognized, it follows that the same thing can be cognized by different cognizers. This is plain in the sensory case: for many people see the same color in virtue of different likenesses, and likewise many intellects understand a single intellectual object.

On Aristotle's view, this alone differentiates sense and intellect: that a thing is sensed in keeping with the disposition that it has outside the soul, in its particularity, whereas the nature of the thing that is understood certainly does exist outside the soul, but without having the same mode of existence outside the soul as when it is understood. For what is understood is the common nature, putting to one side the individuating principles; but this is not the mode of existence that it has outside the soul. According to Plato's view, however, the thing understood exists outside the soul according to the same mode in which it is understood. For he held that the natures of things are separated from matter.

**Response to 5.** The knowledge in the student is different from that in the teacher. As for how it is caused, this will be made clear in what follows [First part, Q. 117, a. 1].

**Response to 6.** Augustine means that it is not *only* the case that there are many souls—as if they were not made one in their one specific nature.

## Question 78 The Soul’s Pre-Intellective Capacities

### *Article 1. The kinds of capacities belonging to the soul.*

It seems that we should not distinguish five kinds of capacities belonging to the soul—vegetative, sensory, appetitive, locomotive, and intellective:

1. The soul’s capacities are said to be its parts.<sup>1</sup> But only three parts of the soul are generally assigned by everyone: the vegetative soul, the sensory soul, and the rational soul. Therefore there are only three kinds of capacities belonging to the soul, not five.

2. The soul’s capacities are the bases for the functions associated with life. But a thing is said to be living in four ways. For the Philosopher says in *De anima* 2 [413a22–25] that “because *living* is spoken of in many ways, we say that a thing lives even if only one of these is present: intellect, sense, local movement and rest, and finally the movement involved in feeding, decay, and growth.” There are, then, only four kinds of capacities belonging to the soul—leaving out the appetitive.

3. No specific kind of soul should be devoted to that which is common to all capacities. But appetite belongs to each of the soul’s capacities.

For sight has an appetite for an agreeable visible object; so it is said in Ecclesiasticus 40:22 that “the eye will desire grace and beauty and, beyond this, green sown fields.” Every other capacity, for the same reason, desires an object agreeable to it. Therefore appetite should not be held to be a single specific kind among the soul’s capacities.

4. The basis of movement in animals is either sense, intellect, or appetite, as is said in *De anima* 3 [433a9–10]. Therefore the motive power should not be held to be a specific kind of soul beyond the ones just listed.

1. E.g., Aristotle, *De anima* 1.5, 411a26–b30.

**On the contrary.** The Philosopher says in *De anima* 2 [414a31–32], “we say that these capacities are the vegetative, sensory, appetitive, locomotive, and intellective.”

**Reply.** There are five kinds of capacities belonging to the soul, as just listed. Three [of these] are called souls, whereas four are called modes of living.

The reason for this discrepancy is that different souls are distinguished in keeping with the different ways a soul’s operation surpasses the operation of corporeal nature. For all corporeal nature lies under the soul, and is related to it as its matter and instrument. So there is one operation of the soul that exceeds corporeal nature to such an extent that it is not even exercised through a corporeal organ. This is the operation of the *rational soul*. There is another operation of the soul, below that one, which is brought about through a corporeal organ, but not through any corporeal quality. This is the operation of the *sensory soul*. For even if hot and cold, wet and dry, and other such corporeal qualities are required for a sense to operate, still this is not in such a way that the sensory soul’s operation gets carried out mediated by the power of such qualities; they are instead required only for the proper disposition of the organ. Finally, the lowest of the soul’s operations is that which is brought about both through a corporeal organ and by the power of a corporeal quality. Still, it surpasses the operation of corporeal nature, because the motions of bodies come from an external source, whereas operations of this sort come from an internal source. (For this is common to all the soul’s operations; for everything with a soul moves itself in some way.) The operation of the *vegetative soul* is of this lowest kind. For digestion and the operations that follow, such as the absorption of food and the release of waste, are brought about instrumentally through the action of heat, as is said in *De anima* 2 [416b27–29].

The kinds of capacities belonging to the soul are distinguished in terms of their objects. For to the extent that a capacity is loftier, to that extent it is concerned with a more universal object, as was said above. But there are three levels at which the objects of the soul’s operations can be considered. For the object of

one capacity of the soul is only the body united with the soul. This kind of capacity of the soul is called the *vegetative*; for the vegetative capacity acts only on the body to which the soul is united. There is another kind of capacity belonging to the soul, a kind concerned with a more universal object—namely, with every sensible body, and not only with the body united to the soul. There is still another kind of capacity belonging to the soul, one that is concerned with a still more universal object—namely, not only with sensible bodies, but universally with all being.

From this it is clear that these latter two kinds of capacities of the soul have an operation that concerns not only a connected object, but also an extrinsic one. But because that which operates must somehow be connected to the object it operates on, an extrinsic thing that is the object of an operation of the soul must be related to the soul in two respects.

- First, inasmuch as it is suited to be connected to the soul, and to be in the soul through its likeness. There are, in this respect, two kinds of capacities: the *sensory*, which concerns a less common object, a sensory body, and the *intellective*, which concerns the most common of objects, universal being.
- Second, inasmuch as the soul is inclined and tends toward an external thing. And in regard to this relationship as well, there are two kinds of capacities belonging to the soul: One is the *appetitive*, in virtue of which the soul is related to an extrinsic thing as to its end, which comes first in its intention. The other is the *locomotive*, inasmuch as the soul is related to an external thing as to the end point of its operation and movement. For every animal that moves does so in order to pursue something desired and intended.

*Modes of living* are distinguished in terms of the grades of living beings. For there are some living beings that have only the *vegetative* power, as plants do. Then there are some that have the *sensory* power as well as the vegetative, but not the locomotive. (This is the case for immobile animals like shellfish.) Some, beyond this, have *locomotion*, as do complete animals,

which need many things for their lives and so need to move so that they can search out the necessities of life that are not placed right at hand. Finally, there are some living beings in which, along with these, there is the *intellective* power—namely, human beings. The *appetitive* does not make up a grade of living beings, because whatever has sense also has appetite, as is said in *De anima* 2 [414b1].

This solves the first two objections.

**Response to 3.** Natural appetite is the inclination of any given thing, of its own nature, for some thing. Thus any capacity desires, by natural appetite, that which is agreeable to it. But animal appetite is the result of a form that has been apprehended. This sort of appetite requires a specific capacity of the soul: the apprehension alone is not enough. For one has an appetite for a thing as that thing is in its nature, whereas the thing is not in an apprehensive power in virtue of its nature, but in virtue of its likeness. It is clear, then, that sight has a natural appetite for a visible object only as regards its act—namely, as regards seeing. The animal, on the other hand, has an appetite for the thing seen through its appetitive power—not only as regards seeing, but also as regards other uses. However, if the soul were to have no need for the things perceived by the senses, except for the sake of the actions of those senses (namely, so that it would sense them), then we would not have to posit the appetitive as a specific kind among the soul’s capacities. For then the natural appetite of the capacities would be adequate.

**Response to 4.** Although sense and appetite are the bases of movement in complete animals, nevertheless these powers, considered as such, are not sufficient for producing movement unless another power is added to them. For there is sense and appetite in immobile animals, and yet they lack motive power. This motive power is not only in sense and appetite so as to command movement, but also in the relevant parts of the body, so that they are ready to obey the appetite of the soul that produces the movement. An indication of this is that when one’s limbs are taken out of their natural disposition, they do not obey the appetite for movement.

## Question 79 The Soul's Intellectual Capacities

### *Article 2. Is the intellect a passive capacity?*

It seems that the intellect is not a passive capacity:

1. Everything is acted on with respect to its matter and acts because of its form. But the intellectual power is a result of the immateriality of the substance that possesses it. Therefore it seems that the intellect is not a passive power.

2. The intellectual capacity is incorruptible, as was said above [Q. 75, a. 6]. But the intellect, if it is passive, is corruptible, as is said in *De anima* 3 [430a24–25]. Therefore the intellectual capacity is not passive.

3. That which acts is loftier than that which is acted on, as Augustine says in *De Genesi ad litteram* 12 [16.33] and Aristotle says in *De anima* 3 [430a18–19]. But all the capacities of the vegetative part are active, and they are the lowest of the soul's capacities. Therefore, a fortiori, the intellectual capacities, the highest of the soul's capacities, are all active.

**On the contrary.** The Philosopher says in *De anima* 3 [429b25] that the operation of intellect consists in being acted on in a certain way.

**Reply.** There are three ways in which a thing can be said to be acted on. The first way, the strictest, is when a thing has something removed from it that suits it by nature or by its own proper tendency. Examples are when water loses its coldness by being heated, and when a person becomes sick or sad.

In a second, less strict way, someone is said to be acted on as a result of something's being removed from him, regardless of whether that thing suits him. In this way, not only is someone who becomes sick said to be acted on, but also someone who is made well, and not only someone who is made sad, but also someone who is made cheerful. This applies to any way in which something is altered or moved.

In a third, broad way, a thing is said to be acted on simply because that which is in potentiality for something receives what it was in potentiality for, without anything's being taken away. In this way, everything

that goes from potentiality to actuality can be said to be acted on, even when it is being completed.

It is in this third way that the operation of our intellect consists in being acted on, as is evident through the following argument:

The operation of intellect, as was stated above [Q. 78, a. 1], concerns universal being. Therefore one can determine whether the intellect is in actuality or potentiality by determining how the intellect stands relative to universal being. For there is one intellect that stands to universal being as the actuality of all being—this is the divine intellect, the essence of God. All being preexists here, originally and virtually, as in its first cause. Consequently, the divine intellect is not in potentiality, but is pure actuality. But no created intellect can stand as actuality relative to all universal being; for, if so, then it would have to be an infinite being. And so every created intellect, by virtue of its very existence, is not the actuality of all intelligible things, but relates to those intelligibles as potentiality to actuality.

But potentiality stands to actuality in two ways. One kind of potentiality is always perfectly actualized; this is how we described the matter of celestial bodies. The other kind of potentiality is not always in actuality, but goes from potentiality to actuality, as do things that undergo generation and corruption. So an angelic intellect is always in actuality with respect to its intelligible objects, on account of its closeness to the first intellect, which is pure actuality (as was said above). But the human intellect, which is ranked the lowest of intellects and is the most remote from the divine intellect's perfection, is in potentiality with respect to intelligible things. It is at first like a tablet on which nothing has been written, as the Philosopher says in *De anima* 3 [430a1]. This is clearly evident from the fact that we understand only potentially at first, whereas later we are made to understand actually. It is clear, therefore, that our intellect's operation consists in being acted on in a certain way: in the third way of *being acted on*. Consequently, the intellect is a passive capacity.

**Response to 1.** That objection holds of being acted on in the first and second ways, which are characteristic of prime matter. But the third way of being acted on

belongs to anything existing in potentiality that is brought to actuality.

**Response to 2.** Some say that the passive intellect is sensory appetite, where the soul's passions are found.<sup>1</sup> In *Ethics* 1 [1102b25], as well, sensory appetite is said to be rational by participation, because it "obeys reason." Others say that the passive intellect is the cogitative power, which is called particular reason.<sup>2</sup> Either way, it can be considered passive according to the first two ways of being acted on, inasmuch as this so-called intellect is the actuality of a bodily organ. But the intellect that is in potentiality for intelligible things, which Aristotle for this reason calls the possible intellect,<sup>3</sup> is passive only in the third way, because it is not the actuality of a corporeal organ. And as a result it is incorruptible.

**Response to 3.** That which acts is loftier than that which is acted on, if the acting and the being acted on concern the same object. This is not always the case, however, if they concern different objects. Now the intellect is a power that is passive with respect to all universal being, whereas the vegetative is active with respect to one particular being: the body that forms a composite with the soul. As a result, nothing prevents this sort of passive power from being loftier than that kind of active power.

*Article 3. Should we posit an agent intellect?*

It seems that we should not posit an agent intellect:

I. Just as the senses are related to sensible things, so our intellect is related to intelligible things. But because the senses are in potentiality for sensible things, we do not posit an agent sense, but only a passive sense. Therefore, since our intellect is in potentiality for intelligible things, it seems that we should not posit an agent intellect, but only a possible intellect.<sup>4</sup>

1. Themistius, *De anima* 3.5; see Ibn Rushd, *De anima* III.20.

2. Ibn Rushd, *De anima* III.20.

3. *De an.* 3.4, 429a22.

4. This and the next argument appear in William of Auvergne, *Tractatus de anima* 7.4.

2. Suppose someone says that there is an agent in the sensory case as well, namely, light.

On the contrary, light is required for sight inasmuch as it makes the medium actually luminous. For color is capable in its own right of moving a luminous medium. But in the case of the intellect's operation, no medium is posited that needs to be actualized. Therefore there is no need to posit an agent intellect.

3. An agent's likeness is received in the thing affected according to the mode of the thing affected. But the possible intellect is an immaterial power. Therefore its immateriality suffices for forms to be received in it immaterially. But a form is actually intelligible as a result of its being immaterial. Therefore there is no need to posit an agent intellect for actualizing intelligible species.

**On the contrary.** The Philosopher says in *De anima* 3 [430a10–15] that, as in every nature, so too in the soul there is something "with which all things are made" and something "with which it makes all things." Therefore we should posit an agent intellect.

**Reply.** On Plato's view, there is no need to posit an agent intellect for actualizing intelligible things, although perhaps it is needed for supplying an intelligible light to someone using his intellect, as will be said below. For Plato claimed that the forms of natural things subsist without matter, and as a consequence he claimed that they are intelligible, since a thing is actually intelligible as a result of being immaterial. Forms of this sort he called *Species* or *Ideas*. He said that by participation in these, corporeal matter is formed, so that individuals are established naturally in their proper genera and species. By this, too, our intellects [are formed], so that we have knowledge of the genera and species of things.

But because Aristotle did not claim that the forms of natural things subsist without matter, and because forms existing in matter are not actually intelligible, it followed that the natures or forms of sensible things (the things that intellect understands) are not actually intelligible. But nothing is brought from potentiality to actuality except through something that is actual — as the senses are actualized by something actually

sensible. Therefore he needed to postulate a power on the side of intellect to actualize intelligible things by abstracting the species from material conditions. And this is why it is necessary to posit an agent intellect.

**Response to 1.** Sensible things occur in actuality outside the soul, and so there was no need to posit an agent sense. And in this way it is clear that in the nutritive part all the capacities are active, whereas in the sensory part they are all passive, and in the intellectual part there is an active and a passive component.

**Response to 2.** There are two views on the effect of light. Some say that light is required for sight in order to make colors actually visible. On this view, an agent intellect would be required for thinking in the same way and for the same reason that light is required for seeing. According to others, light is required for seeing not because it makes colors actually visible, but because it makes the medium actually luminous, as the Commentator says in *De anima* 2 [67]. On this view, the likeness that Aristotle draws between agent intellect and light is to be considered as follows: Just as the one is necessary for seeing, so the other is necessary for thinking, but not for the same reason.

**Response to 3.** Supposing there is an agent, then it is indeed the case that the agent's likeness is differently received in different things on account of their different states. But if the agent does not already exist, then the state of the recipient will do nothing in this regard. Now nothing existent in the natural world is actually intelligible (speaking of the nature of *sensible* things, which do not subsist outside of matter). As a result, the possible intellect's immateriality does not suffice for thought unless there is an agent intellect, which actualizes intelligible things by means of abstraction.

## Question 82 Will

*Article 1. Does the will have appetites for anything of necessity?*

It seems that the will has appetites for nothing of necessity:

1. Augustine says in *City of God* 5 [10] that if something is necessary it is not voluntary. But everything that the will has an appetite for is voluntary. Therefore nothing that the will has an appetite for is necessarily desired.

2. Rational capacities, according to the Philosopher, are open to opposites.<sup>1</sup> But the will is a rational capacity, since (as is said in *De anima* 3 [432b5]) the will is in reason. Therefore the will is open to opposites. Therefore it is determined to nothing of necessity.

3. We are in control of our acts because of the will. But we are not in control of that which occurs of necessity. Therefore an act of will cannot occur of necessity.

**On the contrary.** Augustine says in *De trinitate* 8 [4.7] that everyone has an appetite for happiness with a single will. If this were not necessary, but contingent, then there would be at least a few exceptions. Therefore there is something that the will wills of necessity.

**Reply.** Necessity is spoken of in a number of ways. For the necessary is that which cannot not be. This holds of a thing in one way as the result of an internal principle:

- either *material*, as when we say that everything composed of contraries is necessarily corrupted;
- or *formal*, as when we say that it is necessary for a triangle to have three angles equal to two right angles.

This is natural and absolute necessity. That a thing cannot not be holds in another way as the result of an external principle, either an end or an agent:

- It holds as the result of an end when, for instance, someone cannot pursue some end without this, or cannot effectively pursue some end—as food is said to be necessary for life, and a horse for a journey. This is called *the necessity of the end*, which is sometimes also called *utility*.

1. *Metaphysics* 9.2, 1046b5.

- It holds as the result of an agent when, for instance, someone is forced by some agent in such a way that he cannot do the opposite. This is called *the necessity of force*.

So this necessity of force is entirely incompatible with the will. For we call that violent that is contrary to the inclination of a thing.<sup>2</sup> But the will's motion is itself a certain inclination toward something. And so just as that which occurs in keeping with the inclination of nature is called natural, so that which occurs in keeping with the inclination of will is called voluntary. So just as it is impossible for something to be at once violent and natural, so it is impossible for something to be, without qualification, forced or violent and also voluntary.

Necessity of the end is not incompatible with the will, when one can reach the end in only one way. As a result of willing to cross the sea, for instance, the necessity arises in will of wanting a boat. Likewise, natural necessity is also not incompatible with will. It is in fact necessary that just as the intellect adheres of necessity to first principles, so the will adheres of necessity to its ultimate end, which is happiness [*beatitudo*]. For in practical matters the end stands just as a principle does in speculative matters (as is said in *Physics* 2 [200a19–22]). For that which holds of a thing naturally and immovably must be the foundation and principle of all the rest, since the nature of a thing comes first in all things, and every movement comes out of something immovable.

**Response to 1.** Augustine's claim should be understood to concern the necessity of force. Natural necessity, on the other hand, does not take away the will's freedom, as he himself says in the same book [5.10].

**Response to 2.** The will, considered as it naturally wills a thing, corresponds more to the intellection of natural principles than to reason, which is open to opposites. Considered in this way, then, it is an intellectual capacity more than a rational one.

**Response to 3.** We are in control of our acts inasmuch as we can choose this or that. But choice concerns not the end, but the things that are for the end, as is said in *Ethics* 3 [1111b26–29]. So our appetite for our ultimate end is not one of the things we are in control of.

*Article 2. Does the will have appetites for all things of necessity?*

It seems that whatever the will wills, it wills it all of necessity:

1. Dionysius says in *On the Divine Names* 4.32 that what is bad is "beyond will." Therefore the will tends of necessity to the good proposed to it.

2. The will's object is related to the will as mover to movable. But the movement of the movable follows necessarily from the mover. Therefore it seems that the will's objects move it of necessity.

3. Just as what is apprehended by sense is the object of sensory appetite, so what is apprehended by intellect is the object of intellectual appetite, which is called the will. But what is apprehended by sense moves sensory appetite of necessity: for as Augustine says in *De Genesi ad litteram* [9.14.24], animals "are moved by the things they see." Therefore it seems that things apprehended by intellect move the will of necessity.

**On the contrary.** Augustine says that "the will is that by which one sins and lives rightly,"<sup>3</sup> and so it is open to opposites. Therefore it does not will of necessity all that it wills.

**Reply.** The will does not will of necessity all that it wills. To make this clear, consider that just as the intellect adheres naturally, of necessity, to first principles, so the will adheres to its ultimate end (as was already said [Q. 82, a. 1]). There are some objects of intellect, however, that have no necessary connection to first principles—such as contingent propositions, from whose denial the denial of first principles does not follow. The intellect does not assent to these of necessity. Other propositions are necessary; these have a necessary connection with first principles—

2. First Part of the Second Part Q. 6; Aristotle, *Ethics* 3.1, 1110a1–3, b15–16.

3. *Reconsiderations* 1.9 (page 62).

such as demonstrable conclusions from whose denial the denial of first principles follows. To objects of this sort the intellect does assent of necessity, once it grasps the necessary connection of the conclusions to the principles by deducing a demonstration. But it does not assent of necessity before it grasps through a demonstration this sort of necessary connection.

Much the same holds in the case of the will. For there are some particular goods that have no necessary connection with happiness, because a person can be happy without these. The will does not adhere to such things of necessity. Other things have a necessary connection with happiness: those through which a human being adheres to God, in whom alone true happiness consists. Still, before the necessity of such a connection is demonstrated through the certainty of the divine vision, the will adheres of necessity neither to God nor to things involving God. But the will of one who sees God through the divine essence adheres to God of necessity, just as we now will of necessity to be happy. Therefore it is clear that the will does not will of necessity all that it wills.

**Response to 1.** The will can tend toward a thing only under the aspect of the good. But because the good is multifaceted, it follows that the will is not determined of necessity to one thing.

**Response to 2.** The mover causes movement in the movable of necessity when the power of the mover exceeds the movable, so that its entire potential [*possibilitas*] is subject to the mover. But because the will's potential extends to the universal and complete good, its entire potential is not subject to any particular good. And thus it is not moved by it of necessity.

**Response to 3.** A sensory power is not a power that compares various things, in the way that reason does. It rather apprehends without distinction a single thing, and so in respect of that one thing it moves the sensory appetite in a determinate way. But reason compares several things, and so the intellectual appetite, will, can be moved by several things, not by one of necessity.

*Article 3. Is the will a loftier capacity than intellect?*

It seems that the will is a higher capacity than intellect:

1. The will's objects are what is good and the will's end. But its end is the first and highest of causes. Therefore the will is the first and highest of capacities.

2. Natural things are found to progress from the less to the more perfect. This is also evident in the soul's capacities, which progress from sense to intellect, the superior capacity. But there is a natural progression from an act of intellect to an act of will. Therefore the will is a more perfect and superior capacity than intellect.

3. Dispositions are proportioned to capacities as perfections to the things they perfect. But the disposition by which the will is perfected, charity, is superior to the dispositions by which the intellect is perfected. For it is said in I Corinthians 13:2 that "even if I were to know all mysteries, and even if I were to have all faith, still if I do not have charity, I am nothing." Therefore the will is a higher capacity than intellect.

**On the contrary.** The Philosopher holds in *Ethics* 10 [1177a20] that the intellect is the highest capacity of the soul.

**Reply.** The loftiness of one thing compared to another can be viewed in two ways: either absolutely [*simpliciter*] or relatively [*secundum quid*]. A thing is considered to be such absolutely inasmuch as it is such in its own right, whereas it is considered to be such relatively inasmuch as it is said to be such with respect to another.

So if intellect and will are considered in their own right, then the intellect is found to be loftier. This is evident from comparing their objects to one other. The object of intellect is simpler and more unconditioned than the object of will: for the object of intellect is the *nature* of what is good and worthy of appetite, whereas the object of will is what is good and worthy of appetite, the thing whose nature is in intellect. But a thing is superior and higher in its own right to the extent that it is simpler and more abstract, and so the object of intellect is higher than the object of

will. Therefore, since the proper nature of a capacity is determined by its relationship to its object, it follows that the intellect is in its own right and absolutely higher than and superior to the will.

Relatively, however, and by association with another, will is sometimes found to be higher than intellect—namely, as a result of the will’s object being found in a thing that is higher than what the intellect’s object is found in. I might say, for example, that hearing is superior to sight relatively, inasmuch as the thing that has sound is superior to the thing that has color—even though color is superior to and simpler than sound. For, as was said above [Q. 81, a.1], the action of intellect consists in this, that the nature of the thing understood is within the one understanding, whereas an act of will is completed by the will’s being inclined to that thing as it is in itself. Thus the Philosopher says in *Metaphysics* 6 [1027b25–27] that good and bad, the objects of will, are in things, whereas true and false, the objects of intellect, are in the mind. Therefore when the thing that has goodness within it is superior to the soul that has the understood nature within it, then will is higher than intellect, by association with that thing. When, in contrast, the thing that has goodness within it is beneath the soul, then intellect is higher than will, even by association with that thing. Thus the love of God is better than the cognition of God, whereas the cognition of corporeal things is better than the love of such things. Absolutely, however, intellect is superior to will.

**Response to 1.** The nature of a cause is taken from the relationship of one thing to another, and in such a relationship the character of goodness is found to be pre-eminent. But truth is spoken of more unconditionally, and it signifies the character of that goodness. Thus what is good is something true. On the other hand, what is true itself is also something good, inasmuch as the intellect is a certain thing, and what is true is its end. And compared to other ends, this one is more excellent, just as the intellect is, compared to other capacities.

**Response to 2.** That which is prior in generation and time is less perfect, because in one and the same thing, potentiality temporally precedes actuality, and imper-

fection precedes perfection. But what is prior absolutely and with respect to the order of nature is more perfect: for this is how actuality is prior to potentiality. And in this way the intellect is prior to the will, just as what produces movement is prior to the movable, and the active to the passive. For the good that is an object of intellect moves the will.

**Response to 3.** That argument holds for the will in virtue of its association with what is above the soul. For the virtue of charity is that by which we love God.

### Question 84 What Does the Soul Cognize Bodies Through?

*Article 5. Does our soul see all the things that it understands in their eternal natures?*

It seems that the intellectual soul does not cognize material things in their eternal natures:

1. That in which a thing is cognized is itself cognized better and in advance. But the human intellectual soul, in its state of life at present, does not cognize eternal natures, because it does not cognize God himself, in whom the eternal natures exist. (The soul is instead joined to him as to the unknown, as Dionysius says in *The Mystical Theology* 1.3.) Therefore the soul does not cognize all things in their eternal natures.

2. It is said in Romans 1:20, “the invisible things of God are clearly seen through the things that have been made.” But included among the invisible things of God are the eternal natures. Therefore the eternal natures are cognized through material creatures, not conversely.

3. Eternal natures are nothing other than ideas. For Augustine says in his book *On Eighty-three Questions* [46] that ideas are the stable natures of things existing in the divine mind. So if it is said that the intellectual soul cognizes all things in their eternal natures, then we are returning to the view of Plato, who held that all knowledge is derived from Ideas.

**On the contrary** is what Augustine says in *Confessions* 12 [25.35]: “if we both see that what you say is true,

and we both see that what I say is true, then where do we see that? Not I in you, nor you in me, but both of us in that unalterable truth that is above our minds.” But unalterable truth is contained in the eternal natures. Therefore the intellective soul cognizes all true things in their eternal natures.

**Reply.** As Augustine says in *On Christian Doctrine* 2 [40.60], “if the so-called philosophers happened to say anything true and befitting our faith, we should appropriate that for our own use, taking it from them as if they were its unjust possessor. For the teachings of the pagans contain a number of spurious and superstitious inventions, which each one of us who is leaving pagan society has to avoid.” So Augustine, drenched as he was in the teachings of the Platonists, if he found anything in their words befitting the faith, he took it, whereas the things he found contrary to the faith he changed into something better. Now Plato, as was said above, posited that the Forms of things subsist on their own [per se], separate from matter. He called these Ideas, and said that through participation in them our intellect cognizes all things. So just as corporeal matter is made to be a stone through participation in the Idea of Stone, so our intellect has a cognition of stone through participation in that same Idea. But it seems foreign to the faith that the forms of things should subsist on their own outside of things, without matter, in the way that the Platonists maintained, saying that Life per se or Wisdom per se are certain creative substances (as Dionysius says in *On the Divine Names* 11.6). So in place of these Ideas that Plato had introduced, Augustine posited in his book *On Eighty-three Questions* [46] that the natures of all creatures exist in the divine mind; in virtue of these all things are formed, and in virtue of these the human soul has cognition of all things.

So when one asks whether the human soul cognizes all things in their eternal natures, the reply should be that a thing is said to be cognized *in* something in two ways:

- First, in an object that is itself cognized, as someone sees in a mirror the things whose images are reflected in the mirror. In this way the soul, in its present state of life, cannot see all things in their

eternal natures, whereas the blessed do in this way cognize all things in their eternal natures. They see God and see all things in God.

- Second, something is said to be cognized in something as in the source of the cognition—as when we say that things are seen in the sun that are seen through the sun. And in this way it is necessary to say that the human soul does cognize all things in their eternal natures: we cognize all things through participation in these eternal natures. For the intellectual light that is in us is nothing other than a certain participating likeness of the uncreated light, in which the eternal natures are contained. Thus it is said in Psalm 4:6, “many say, Who shows us good things?” To this question the Psalmist replies, saying “the light of your face, Lord, is imprinted upon us.” This is as if to say, through that seal of the divine light on us, all things are displayed to us.

Still, in order to have knowledge about material things, we require, in addition to the intellectual light within us, intelligible species taken from things. As a result, we do not have knowledge of material things solely through participation in their eternal natures, in the way that the Platonists held that mere participation in the Ideas suffices for having knowledge. Thus Augustine says in *De trinitate* 4 [16.21], “since the philosophers establish through the most certain proofs that all temporal things are brought about by their eternal natures, could they on that account perceive in these natures, or infer from these natures, how many kinds of animals there are, and what the origins are of each? Have they not sought all of these out through the history of places and times?”

That Augustine did not understand all things to be cognized in their eternal natures (or in the unalterable truth) in such a way that the eternal natures themselves are seen, is clear from what he himself says in *On Eighty-three Questions* [46], that not each and every rational soul is asserted to be worthy of that vision (that is, a vision of the eternal natures) but only those that have been holy and pure—as the souls of the blessed are.

From this the reply to the objections [1–3] is clear.

## Question 85

### How the Intellect Understands Bodily Things, and in What Order

*Article 1. Does our intellect understand by abstracting species from phantasms?*

It seems that our intellect does not understand bodily and material things through abstraction from phantasms:

1. Any intellect that understands a thing otherwise than it is is false. But the forms of material things do not exist abstracted from the particulars that phantasms are likenesses of. Therefore if we understand material things by abstracting species from phantasms, there will be falseness in our intellect.

2. Material things are natural things, which contain matter in their definition. But nothing can be understood without what is contained in its definition. Therefore material things cannot be understood without matter. But matter is the principle of individuation. Therefore material things cannot be understood by abstracting the universal from the particular, which is to abstract intelligible species from phantasms.

3. It is said in *De anima* 3 [431a14–15] that phantasms are related to the intellective soul as colors are related to sight. But sight occurs not through the abstraction of certain species from colors, but through the colors’ making an impression on sight. Therefore understanding comes about not through something’s being abstracted from phantasms, but through the phantasms’ making an impression on intellect.

4. As is said in *De anima* 3 [430a13–15], the intellective soul has two components, the possible and the agent intellect. But abstracting intelligible species from phantasms is not the role of the possible intellect: it receives species already abstracted. Neither does abstraction seem to be the role of the agent intellect: it is related to phantasms as light is to colors, and light does not abstract anything from colors, but instead issues toward them. Therefore there is no way in which we understand by abstracting from phantasms.

5. The Philosopher says in *De anima* 3 [431b2] that the intellect “understands species *in* phantasms,” and therefore not by abstracting species from phantasms.

On the contrary. It is said in *De anima* 3 [429b21–22] that “as things are separable from matter, so do they concern intellect.” Therefore it must be that material things are understood to the extent that they are abstracted from matter and from material likenesses, which are phantasms.

Reply. As was said above, the object of cognition is proportioned to the cognitive power. There are, however, three levels of cognitive powers. One kind of cognitive power, sense, is the actuality of a bodily organ, and so the object of any sensory capacity is a form as it exists in bodily matter. And because this sort of matter is the principle of individuation, every capacity of the sensory part is cognitive of particulars only. There is another kind of cognitive power that is neither the actuality of a bodily organ, nor in any way connected to bodily matter—this is what an angelic intellect is. So the object of this cognitive power is a form subsisting without matter. For even if angels cognize material things, still this is so only if they intuit them in immaterial things—either in themselves or in God.

The human intellect falls in between. For as is clear from things said above, it is not the act of any organ [Q. 75, a. 2], but yet it is one of the powers of the soul, which is the form of a body [Q. 76, a. 1]. And so it is proper to it to cognize a form existing individually in bodily matter, but not as it is in such matter. But to cognize that which is in individual matter, not as it is in such matter, is to abstract the form from the individual matter that the phantasms represent. And so it is necessary to say that our intellect understands material things by abstracting from phantasms. And through material things considered in this way we come to some degree of cognition of immaterial things—just as, conversely, angels cognize material things through immaterial things.

Plato, however, focusing only on the immateriality of the human intellect, and not on the fact that it is in some way united to a body, claimed that separated Ideas are the object of intellect, and that we understand not by abstracting, but rather by participating in abstract things, as was said above.

**Response to 1.** Abstracting takes place in two ways. First, by way of composition and division, as when we

understand something not to be in another or to be separated from it. Second, by way of a simple and unconditioned consideration, as when we understand one thing while not considering the other at all. So to abstract through intellect things that are not abstract in reality—by abstracting in the first way—is not without falseness. But there is nothing false in the second way of abstracting through intellect things that are not abstract in reality, as is clearly apparent in sensory cases. For if we understand or say that a color is not present in a colored body, or is separate from it, there will be falseness in the opinion or the statement. If, on the other hand, we consider the color and its characteristics, considering the colored apple not at all, or even if we verbally express what we understand in this way, there will be nothing false in the opinion and statement. For the apple is not part of the nature [*ratione*] of the color, and so nothing prevents one from understanding the color while understanding nothing about the apple. Likewise, I say that what pertains to the nature of the species of any material thing (of a stone, a human being, or a horse, for example) can be considered without the individual principles, which do not belong to the nature of the species. And this is to abstract the universal from the particular, or an intelligible species from phantasms: to consider the nature [*naturam*] of the species without considering the individual principles that are represented by the phantasms.

Therefore, when it is said that an intellect that understands a thing otherwise than it is is false,<sup>1</sup> this is true if ‘otherwise’ refers to the thing being understood. For the intellect is false when it understands a thing to be otherwise than it is. Thus the intellect would be false if it were to abstract the stone’s species from matter in such a way as to understand it not to be in matter (as Plato claimed). But the assertion is not true if ‘otherwise’ is taken with reference to that which understands. For there is nothing false in one’s having a manner of understanding that differs from the thing’s manner of being. For that which is understood exists

in that which understands immaterially (in the manner of intellect) rather than materially (in the manner of a material thing).

**Response to 2.** Some claimed that the species of a natural thing is its form alone, and that the matter is not part of the species. But on this view, matter would not be included in the definitions of natural things. So we should say instead that there are two kinds of matter: common matter and signate or individual matter. Common matter is, for instance, flesh and bones, whereas individual matter is *this* flesh and *these* bones. Therefore the intellect abstracts the species of a natural thing from sensible individual matter, but not from sensible common matter. It abstracts the species of a human being, for instance, from this flesh and these bones, which do not belong to the nature of the species but are parts of the individual (as is said in *Metaphysics* 7 [1035b28–36a11]) and so [the species] can be considered without them. But the intellect cannot abstract the species of a human being from flesh and bones.

Intellect can abstract mathematical species from sensible matter—not just from individual but also from common sensible matter. Yet it cannot abstract such species from common intelligible matter, but only from individual intelligible matter. For sensible matter is said to be bodily matter as it underlies sensible qualities such as hot and cold, hard and soft, etc. Intelligible matter, on the other hand, is said to be the substance as it underlies quantity. But it is clear that quantity is in the substance before the sensible qualities are. As a result, quantities such as numbers and dimensions, and also shapes (which are the limits of quantities) can be considered without their sensible qualities, which is for them to be abstracted from sensible matter. But they cannot be considered without understanding the substance underlying the quantity, which would be for them to be abstracted from common intelligible matter. Still, they can be considered without this or that substance, which is for them to be abstracted from individual intelligible matter.

Now there are some [species] that can be abstracted even from common intelligible matter, such as being, one, potentiality and actuality, and others of this sort. These can exist without any matter at all, as

1. Obj. 1. The objection, and the following reply, closely follow Boethius’ *Second Commentary on Porphyry’s “Isagoge”* 1.10–11.

is clear in immaterial substances. And because Plato did not consider what was said [response to 1] about the two ways of abstracting, he claimed that all the things we have said are abstracted by intellect are abstract in reality.

**Response to 3.** Colors, as they are in individual bodily matter, have the same manner of existence as does the visual capacity, and so they can impress their likeness on sight. But phantasms, since they are the likenesses of individuals, and exist in bodily organs, do not have the same manner of existence that the human intellect has, as is clear from what has been said. So they cannot, through their own power, make an impression on the possible intellect. But through the power of the agent intellect a certain likeness occurs in the possible intellect, as a result of the agent intellect’s turning toward the phantasms; this likeness represents what the phantasms represent only with respect to the nature of the species. And in this way an intelligible species is said to be abstracted from phantasms. It is not that numerically the same form that once was in the phantasms is later made in the possible intellect, in the way that a body is taken from one place and transferred to another.

**Response to 4.** The agent intellect both illuminates phantasms and abstracts intelligible species from phantasms. Phantasms are *illuminated*, because just as the sensory part is made more powerful by its connection to the intellective part, so phantasms, through the power of the agent intellect, are made ready to have intelligible concepts abstracted from them. The agent intellect *abstracts* intelligible species from phantasms insofar as through the power of the agent intellect we can take into our consideration the natures of the species without the individual conditions. These likenesses inform the possible intellect.

**Response to 5.** Our intellect both abstracts intelligible species from phantasms, inasmuch as it considers the natures of things universally, and yet it also understands those natures *in phantasms*, because it cannot understand even the things whose species it abstracts, except by turning toward phantasms, as was said above.

*Article 2. Are the intelligible species abstracted from phantasms related to our intellect as that which is understood or as that by which something is understood?*

It seems that intelligible species abstracted from phantasms are related to our intellect as that which is understood:

1. That which is actually understood is within that which understands, because what is actually understood is the actualized intellect itself. But of the thing understood all that is within the actually understanding intellect is the abstracted intelligible species. Therefore such a species is the very thing actually understood.

2. What is actually understood must exist within something—otherwise it would be nothing. But it does not exist within the thing that is outside the soul, because the thing outside the soul is material, and so nothing that is in it can be actually understood. It follows, therefore, that what is actually understood exists within the intellect, and so is nothing other than the intelligible species in question.

3. The Philosopher says in *On Interpretation* 1 [16a3] that spoken words “are symbols of states in the soul.” But spoken words signify the things that are understood: for with a spoken word we signify that which we understand. Therefore these states of the soul, intelligible species, are the things that are actually understood.

**On the contrary.** An intelligible species is related to intellect just as a sensible species is related to sense. But a sensible species is not that which is sensed, but rather that by which sense senses. Therefore an intelligible species is not that which is actually understood, but that by which the intellect understands.

**Reply.** Some have claimed that the cognitive powers in us cognize nothing other than their own states—for example, that a sense senses nothing other than the state of its organ.<sup>2</sup> On this view, the intellect under-

2. Aristotle ascribes this view to various Presocratics (*De anima* 3.2, 426a20–21; *Metaphysics* 4.5, 1009b1–38; 9.3, 1047a4–6).

stands nothing other than its own state — that is, the intelligible species received in it. Also, on this view such a species is the very thing that is understood. But this view is clearly revealed to be false in two ways.

- First, because the things we understand are the same as what knowledge [*scientiae*] is concerned with. So if the things that we understand were only species in the soul, then it would follow that all knowledge would concern only the intelligible species in the soul, rather than things outside the soul (just as, according to the Platonists, all knowledge concerns Ideas, which they claimed to be actually understood).
- Second, because the error would follow of those ancients who said that everything that seems is true, and that therefore contradictory claims might be true at the same time.<sup>3</sup> For if a capacity cognizes nothing other than its own state, then it judges that alone. But how a thing seems is determined by how the cognitive capacity is affected. Therefore a cognitive capacity's judgment will always concern that which it judges, its own state, according to the way it is. Hence every judgment will be true. For example, if taste senses only its own state, then when someone with a healthy sense of taste judges that honey is sweet, he will be judging truly. Likewise, if someone who has an infected sense of taste judges that honey is bitter, he will be judging truly. For each one judges according to how his own sense of taste is affected. And so it follows that every opinion will be equally true and, more generally, so will every assent.

And so it should be said that an intelligible species is related to the intellect as that *by which* the intellect understands. The following makes this clear:

Action is of two kinds (as is said in *Metaphysics* 9 [1050a23–b2]):

- one that remains in the agent, like seeing and understanding;

3. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 4.5, 1009b1–38; *De anima* 1.2, 404a27–28.

- one that passes into external things, like heating and cutting.

Each occurs in virtue of some form. An action reaching toward an external thing occurs in virtue of a form that is a likeness of the action's object. The heat of the thing heating, for instance, is a likeness of the thing heated. Likewise, an action remaining in the agent occurs in virtue of a form that is a likeness of its object. So the likeness of a visible thing is that in virtue of which sight sees, and the likeness of the thing that is understood, an intelligible species, is the form in virtue of which the intellect understands.

But when the intellect reflects on itself, it understands, in virtue of the same reflection, both its own understanding and the species by which it understands. And in this way the intellectual species is secondarily that which is understood. But that which is understood first is the thing that the intelligible species is a likeness of.

This is clear even on the view of the ancients, who claimed that like is cognized by like. For they claimed that the soul, through the earth that is in it, cognizes the earth that is outside of it, and so on in other cases. Therefore, if we postulate a species of earth in place of earth (in keeping with the doctrine of Aristotle, who said that “it is not the stone that is in the soul, but a species of the stone”<sup>4</sup>), then it will follow that the soul, through intelligible species, cognizes things that are outside of it.

**Response to 1.** That which is understood is within that which understands through its likeness. And the saying that “what is actually understood is the actualized intellect” holds in this way: insofar as a likeness of the thing understood is the intellect's form. (Similarly, a likeness of a sensible thing is the form of the actualized sense.) Accordingly, it does not follow that an abstracted intelligible species is that which is actually understood, but that it is a likeness of that.

**Response to 2.** Two things are implied when one speaks of that which is actually understood: namely,

4. *De anima* 3.8, 431b29.

the *thing* that is understood, and the fact of its being understood. Likewise, when one speaks of an abstracted universal, two things are meant: namely, the very nature of a thing, and the abstraction or universality. Therefore, the nature that is in fact being understood or abstracted, or to which the intention of universality applies, exists only in singular things. But its being understood or abstracted, or the intention of universality, exists within intellect.

We can see this through a comparison in the sensory case. For sight sees the color of an apple without its smell. So if one asks where the color is that is seen without the smell, it is clear that the color that is seen exists only in the apple. But its being perceived without the smell holds true of it due to sight, inasmuch as sight contains a likeness of the color and not of the smell. Likewise, the humanity that is understood exists only in this human being or in that one. But the fact that this understood humanity is apprehended without individual conditions, which is for it to be abstracted, and from which an intention of universality follows, this holds of humanity insofar as it is perceived by intellect, in which there is a likeness of the nature of the species and not of the individual principles.

**Response to 3.** There are two operations in the sensory part. One occurs solely in virtue of an impression; in this way the operation of a sense is completed by its receiving an impression from something sensible. The other operation is the forming by which the imaginary power forms for itself an image of an absent thing, or even of something never seen. These two operations are combined within intellect. For we can first consider the possible intellect's being affected insofar as it is informed by an intelligible species. Once formed by this species, it secondly forms either a definition or a division or composition, which is signified through a spoken word. And so the account that a name signifies is the definition,<sup>5</sup> and a statement signifies the composition and division of intellect. Therefore spoken words signify not the intelligible species themselves, but the things that the intellect forms for itself, in order to make judgments about external things.

5. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 4.7, 1012a25.

## Question 86 What Our Intellect Cognizes in Material Things

### *Article 1. Does our intellect cognize singulars?*

It seems that our intellect does cognize singulars:

1. Whoever cognizes a composition cognizes the terms of the composition. But our intellect cognizes this composition, *Socrates is a human being*, because it belongs to intellect to form a proposition. Therefore our intellect cognizes the singular that is Socrates.

2. Practical intellect directs action. But acts concern singulars. Therefore it has cognition of singulars.

3. Our intellect understands itself. But it is something singular—otherwise it would not have any act, since acts belong to singulars. Therefore our intellect cognizes the singular.

4. Whatever a lower power can do a higher power can do. But the senses cognize singulars. Therefore, a fortiori, so does intellect.

On the contrary. The Philosopher says in *Physics* 1 [189a6–7] that “the universal is known by reason, the singular by sense.”

**Reply.** In the case of material things, our intellect cannot directly and primarily cognize the singular. The reason for this is that the basis of singularity in material things is individual matter, whereas our intellect, as was said above [Q. 85, a. 1], operates by abstracting an intelligible species from such matter. But that which is abstracted from individual matter is universal. Consequently our intellect is directly cognitive only of universals. Indirectly, however, and through a kind of reflection, as it were, it can cognize the singular. For as was said above, even after it has abstracted intelligible species, it cannot actually understand through them except by turning toward phantasms, in which it understands the intelligible species, as is said in *De anima* 3 [431b2]. In this way, then, it directly understands the universal itself through an intelligible species, whereas it indirectly understands the singulars that the phantasms concern. This is how it forms the proposition *Socrates is*

a human being. In this way the response to the first objection is clear.

**Response to 2.** The choice of a particular course of action serves as the conclusion to a syllogism of practical intellect, as is said in *Ethics* 7 [1147a24–31]. But something singular can be the direct conclusion of a universal proposition only on the mediating assumption of some singular proposition. So the universal reasoning of practical intellect produces movement only through the mediation of a particular apprehension belonging to the sensory part, as is said in *De anima* 3 [434a16–21].

**Response to 3.** The singular is incompatible with intelligibility not insofar as it is singular but insofar as it is material. For nothing is understood except immaterially. So if a singular is immaterial, as the intellect is, then it is not incompatible with intelligibility.

**Response to 4.** A higher power can do what a lower power can, but in a superior way. So that which the senses cognize materially and concretely, the intellect cognizes immaterially and abstractly. The former is to cognize the singular directly; the latter is to cognize the universal.

## 42. *Summa Theologiae* First Part of the Second Part Selections from the “Treatise on Happiness”

### Question 2 The Things in Which Happiness Consists

*Article 8. Does human happiness consist in any created good?*

It seems that human happiness consists in some created good:

1. Dionysius says in Chapter 7 of *On the Divine Names* that divine wisdom “joins the ends of first things to the beginnings of second things.” From this we can gather that what is highest for a lower nature is to attain to what is lowest in a higher nature. Now the highest good for human beings is happiness. So, since in the order of nature angels are above human beings, as was shown in the First Part, it appears that human happiness consists in somehow attaining to [what is lowest in] an angel.

2. The ultimate end of any given thing is in its completeness. Hence, a part is for the sake of the whole, as

for the sake of its end. Now the totality of creatures, which is called a macrocosm, is related to the human being, who in *Physics* 8 is called a microcosm, as complete to incomplete. Therefore, human happiness consists in the totality of creatures.

3. Human beings are made happy through that which satisfies their natural desire. Now natural human desire does not extend to a good that surpasses human capacity. Therefore, since human beings do not have the capacity for a good that goes beyond the limits of the whole realm of creatures, it appears that human beings can be made happy through some created good; and thus human happiness consists in some created good.

**On the contrary.** Augustine says in *City of God* 19, “As the soul is the life of the flesh, God is the happy life of the human being. Of God it is said, ‘Happy is the people whose God is the Lord.’”

**Reply.** It is impossible for human happiness to be in any created good. For happiness is a complete good, one that totally satisfies desire; for otherwise, if there were still something left to be desired, happiness

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Translated for this volume by Thomas Williams from the Leonine edition.

would not be the ultimate end. Now the object of the will—that is, of human desire—is the universal good, just as the object of the intellect is the universal true. From this it is evident that nothing but the universal good can satisfy the human will. And the universal good is not found in any created thing, but only in God, since every creature has goodness by participation. For this reason God alone can fully satisfy the human will, as is said in Psalm 102: “who satisfies your desire with good things.”

**Response to 1.** What is highest in human beings does indeed attain to what is lowest in angelic nature in terms of a certain likeness. But human beings do not stop there, as though that were their ultimate end; instead they proceed to that universal fount of good which is the universal object of happiness for all who are happy, as being an infinite and perfect good.

**Response to 2.** If some whole is not an ultimate end but is ordered to a further end, the ultimate end of its part will not be the whole but something else. Now the totality of creatures, of which human beings are a part, is not an ultimate end. Rather, it is ordered to God as its ultimate end. Hence, it is not the good of the universe that is the ultimate end of human beings, but God himself.

**Response to 3.** As something intrinsic to human beings and inhering in them, a created good does not fall short of the human capacity for good; but as an object, it does fall short. Human beings have the capacity for an object that is an infinite good. By contrast, the participated good that is in an angel, and in the whole universe, is a finite and restricted good.

### Question 3 What Is Happiness?

*Article 4. Given that happiness is an operation of the intellective part, is it an operation of the intellect or of the will?*

It appears that happiness consists in an act of the will:

1. Augustine says in *City of God* 19 that human happiness consists in peace. That’s why it is said in

Psalm 147, “He has established peace in your ends.” Now peace belongs to the will, so human happiness resides in the will.

2. Happiness is the highest good. Now good is the object of the will. Therefore, happiness consists in an operation of the will.

3. The ultimate end corresponds to the first mover. For example, the ultimate end of the whole army is victory, which is the end of the general who moves all the soldiers. Now the first mover toward acting is the will, which moves the other powers [of the soul], as will be explained below. Therefore, happiness pertains to the will.

4. Assuming that happiness is an operation, it has to be the noblest operation of human beings. Now love of God, which is an act of will, is a nobler operation than knowledge, which is an operation of intellect. This is evident from the Apostle in 1 Corinthians 13. Therefore, it appears that happiness consists in an act of will.

5. Augustine says in *On the Trinity* 8 that “those who are happy are those who have everything they want, and want nothing bad.” And a little further on he adds, “those who, in whatever they will, will rightly are approaching those who are happy; for good things make people happy, and those who will rightly already have one of those good things: a good will.” Therefore, happiness consists in an act of will.

**On the contrary.** The Lord says in John 17, “This is eternal life, that they may know you, the one true God.” Now eternal life is the ultimate end, as has been said. Therefore, human happiness consists in the knowledge of God, which is an act of intellect.

**Reply.** As was said above, two things are required for happiness. One is the essence of happiness; the other is, as it were, the proper accident of happiness, namely, the delight conjoined with it. I therefore say that, with respect to what happiness essentially is, it is impossible for happiness to consist in an act of will. For it is evident from what has been set forth that happiness is the attainment of the ultimate end, but the attainment of the ultimate end does not consist in the will’s act itself. For a will is drawn even to an absent end, when it desires it, and to a present end, when it

rests in the end and consequently delights in it. Now it is obvious that the mere desiring of the end is not the attaining of the end, but a movement toward the end. Delight accrues to the will in virtue of the end's being present. But the converse is not true: the will's delighting in something does not make that thing present. So there must be something through which the end is made present to the will, other than the will's own act.

This is clearly true in the case of sensible ends. If attaining money were merely a matter of the will's act, a greedy person would have money from the outset, as soon as he wanted it. But in fact the money is not with him from the outset; he attains it by grabbing it with his hand or something like that. Only then does he delight in possessing the money. And so it is with an intelligible end. We will from the outset to attain an intelligible end, but we actually attain it through its being made present to us by an act of intellect. And the will rests with delight in the end that has now been attained. In this way, therefore, the essence of happiness consists in an act of intellect; but the delight consequent upon happiness belongs to the will. This is what Augustine means in *Confessions* 10 when he says that happiness is joy in truth: joy itself is the consummation of happiness.

**Response to 1.** Peace belongs to the ultimate end of human beings, but not as though peace is, essentially, happiness itself. Rather, peace is related to happiness both antecedently and consequently: antecedently, insofar as all disturbances and impediments to the ultimate end have now been removed, and consequently, insofar as human beings who have now attained their end abide in a state of peace because their desire has been satisfied.

**Response to 2.** The first object of the will is not its act, just as the first object of sight is not seeing, but the visible. Hence, from the very fact that happiness belongs to the will as its first object, it follows that happiness does not belong to the will as its act.

**Response to 3.** The intellect apprehends the end before the will does, even though the movement toward the end begins in the will. And so the final conse-

quence of attaining the end—namely, delight or enjoyment—belongs to the will.

**Response to 4.** Love outranks knowledge when it comes to moving one toward the end, but knowledge is prior to love when it comes to attaining the end. After all, only what is known is loved, as Augustine says in *On the Trinity* 9. And therefore we first attain an intelligible end through an action of the intellect, just as we first attain a sensible end through an act of the senses.

**Response to 5.** Those who have everything they want are happy in virtue of having what they want, and of course their having what they want comes through something other than an act of will. But their not wanting anything bad is required for happiness as the appropriate disposition for happiness. Now a good will is counted among the good things that make them happy insofar as a good will is an inclination toward those good things, in the same way that a movement is reduced to the category of its terminus: for example, an alteration is reduced to the category of quality.

*Article 5. Is happiness an operation  
of the speculative or of the practical intellect?*

It seems that happiness consists in an operation of the practical intellect:

1. The ultimate end of every creature consists in becoming like God. Now human beings become like God through the practical intellect, which is a cause of things understood, rather than through the speculative intellect, which derives its knowledge from things. Therefore, human happiness consists in an operation of the practical intellect rather than of the speculative intellect.

2. Happiness is the perfect human good. Now it is the practical intellect that is ordered to the good, rather than the speculative intellect, which is ordered to the true. Hence, we are also said to be good according to the perfection of the practical intellect, not according to the perfection of the speculative intellect—instead, in that latter respect we are said to be knowledgeable or intelligent. Therefore, human happiness consists in an act of the practical intellect rather than of the speculative intellect.

3. Happiness is a good of human beings themselves. Now the speculative intellect is occupied chiefly with things that are outside human beings, whereas the practical intellect is occupied with things that belong to human beings themselves, namely, with human operations and passions. Therefore, human happiness consists in an operation of the practical intellect rather than of the speculative intellect.

**On the contrary.** Augustine says in *On the Trinity* 1, "To us is promised contemplation: the end of all our actions and the eternal perfection of our joys."

**Reply.** Happiness consists in an operation of the speculative intellect rather than an operation of the practical intellect, as is evident from three considerations. First, given that human happiness is an operation, it must be the best human operation. Now the best human operation is the operation of the best capacity with respect to its best object. The best human capacity is the intellect, and the intellect's best object is the divine good, which is certainly not an object of the practical intellect but of the speculative intellect. Hence, happiness chiefly consists in such an operation, that is, in the contemplation of divine things. "And since," as is said in *Ethics* 9 and 10, "it appears that all people *are* that which is the best in them," such an operation is most proper to human beings and most delightful to them.

Second, the same conclusion is evident from the fact that contemplation above all else is sought for its own sake, whereas an act of the practical intellect is not sought for its own sake, but for the sake of action. Also, acts of the practical intellect are ordered to some end. Hence, it is evident that the ultimate end cannot consist in the active life, which belongs to the practical intellect.

Third, the same conclusion is evident from the fact that in the contemplative life human beings have something in common with higher beings, namely, God and the angels, and happiness makes them like God and the angels. But even the other animals share with human beings in some way, though imperfectly, in the things that pertain to the active life.

Therefore, the ultimate and perfect happiness for which we look in the life to come consists entirely in

contemplation. But the imperfect happiness that can be possessed here consists first and foremost in contemplation but secondarily in the operation of the practical intellect directing human actions and passions, as is said in *Ethics* 10.

**Response to 1.** The practical intellect's likeness to God is according to proportionality: the practical intellect is to what it knows as God is to what he knows. But the speculative intellect's likeness to God is a matter of being united to God or informed by God, and that is a much greater likeness. Nonetheless, it can be said that with respect to his primary object of knowledge, which is his own essence, God does not have practical knowledge, but only speculative knowledge.

**Response to 2.** The practical intellect is ordered to a good that is outside itself, whereas the speculative has its good—namely, the contemplation of truth—within itself. And if that good is perfect, the whole human being is perfected by it and becomes good. The practical intellect, of course, does not *have* this good, but directs human beings toward it.

**Response to 3.** That argument would work if human beings were their own ultimate ends; in that case, their attending to and directing their own acts and passions would be their happiness. But since the ultimate end of human beings is something extrinsic to them—namely, God, whom we attain through an operation of the speculative intellect—human happiness consists in an operation of the speculative intellect rather than an operation of the practical intellect.

*Article 8. Does human happiness consist in the vision of the divine essence?*

It seems that human happiness does not consist in the vision of the divine essence:

1. Dionysius says in Chapter 1 of *The Mystical Theology* that through what is highest in their intellects, human beings are joined to God as to something utterly unknown. Now what is seen in its essence is not utterly unknown. Therefore, the ultimate perfection of the intellect—in other words, happiness—does not consist in seeing God in his essence.

2. To a higher nature belongs a higher perfection. Now seeing God's essence is the perfection proper to the divine intellect. Therefore, the ultimate perfection of the human intellect does not extend to this, but stops somewhere short of it.

**On the contrary.** We read in 1 John 3, "When he appears, we will be like him, and we shall see him as he is."

**Reply.** Ultimate and perfect happiness cannot consist in anything other than a vision of the divine essence. In order to make this evident, we need to consider two things. First, human beings are not perfectly happy as long as something is left for them to desire and seek. Second, the perfection of each capacity is determined by the nature of its object. Now the object of the intellect is what-something-is, that is, the essence of a thing, as is said in *De anima* 3. Hence, the intellect attains perfection just insofar as it knows the essence of some thing. If, then, an intellect knows the essence of some effect through which the essence of the cause cannot be known (in other words, through which the intellect cannot know *what* the cause is), the intellect is not said to reach the cause in an unqualified sense, even though it can know *that* the cause is. And so when human beings know an effect, and know that it has a cause, there remains a natural desire in them to know what the cause is. That desire is a kind of wonder, and it causes inquiry, as is said at the beginning of the *Metaphysics*. For example, if someone sees a solar eclipse, he reflects that it has some cause. And because he does not know what that cause is, he wonders about it, and out of his wondering he proceeds to inquire. And this inquiry does not come to an end until he arrives at a knowledge of the cause. So if the human intellect, through knowing the essence of some created thing, knows of God merely *that* he is, the perfection of that intellect has not yet reached the First Cause in an unqualified sense; instead, there remains a natural desire to seek the cause. Hence, one is not yet perfectly happy. So perfect happiness requires the intellect to reach the very essence of the First Cause. And in this way it will have its perfection by being united with God as the only object in which human happiness consists, as stated above.

**Response to 1.** Dionysius is speaking of the knowledge of those who are still on the way, journeying toward happiness.

**Response to 2.** As was said above, 'end' can be understood in two ways. Understood in one way, an end is the thing itself that is desired. In this way, the end of a higher nature is the same as the end of a lower nature—the same, indeed, as the end of all things, as was said above. Understood in the other way, an end is the attaining of the thing that is desired. In this way, the happiness of God, who comprehends his essence through his intellect, is in fact greater than the happiness of a human being or angel, who sees the divine essence but does not comprehend it.

## Question 5 The Attainment of Happiness

*Article 5. Can human beings attain happiness through their natural powers?*

It seems that human beings can attain happiness through their natural powers.

1. Nature is not deficient in necessary things. Now nothing is more necessary for human beings than that through which they attain the ultimate end. Therefore, that is not lacking from human nature. Therefore, human beings can attain happiness through their natural powers.

2. Since human beings are nobler than irrational creatures, it seems they must be more self-sufficient. Now irrational creatures can attain their end through their natural powers. All the more, then, can human beings attain happiness through their natural powers.

3. According to the Philosopher, happiness is a perfect operation. Now the undertaking of an operation belongs to the same capacity as the perfecting of the operation. Therefore, since imperfect operation, which is, as it were, the starting point in human operations, is under the sway of the natural power in virtue of which human beings are in control of their own actions, it appears that through their natural powers they can achieve the perfect operation that is happiness.

On the contrary. Human beings are naturally the origin of their own actions through intellect and will. But the ultimate happiness that has been prepared for the saints outstrips human intellect and will. As the Apostle says in 1 Corinthians 2, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the human heart, what things God has prepared for those who love him." Therefore, human beings cannot attain happiness through their natural powers.

**Reply.** The imperfect happiness that can be possessed in this life can be acquired by human beings through their natural powers, in the same way that virtue, in the exercise of which such happiness consists, can be; I shall speak to this subject later. But perfect human happiness, as was stated above, consists in the vision of the divine essence. Now to see God in his essence is above not only human nature, but also the nature of any creature, as was shown in the First Part. For the natural knowledge of any creature accords with the mode of its substance; as is said of intelligence in the *Book of Causes*, "it knows the things that are above it, and the things that are below it, according to the mode of its substance." Now any knowledge that is according to the mode of a created substance falls short of a vision of the divine essence, which infinitely surpasses every created substance. Hence, neither human beings nor any other creature can attain ultimate happiness through their natural powers.

**Response to 1.** Nature did not fail in providing necessary things for human beings, even though it did not give us weapons and coverings as it gave to other animals, because it gave us reason and hands by which

we can obtain these things for ourselves. And in the same way, nature did not fail in providing necessary things for us, even though it did not give us any principle by which we could attain happiness; for that was impossible. But it did give us free choice, by which we can turn to God, who will make us happy. For as is said in *Ethics* 3, "what we can do through our friends, we can in a certain way do by ourselves."

**Response to 2.** A nature that can attain a perfect good, even if it requires outside help in order to attain it, is of a nobler status than a nature that can only attain an imperfect good, even if it needs no outside help in order to attain it, as the Philosopher says in *On the Heavens* 2. By way of analogy, someone who can attain perfect health, albeit with the help of medicine, is better disposed toward health than is someone who can attain only imperfect health, though without the help of medicine. Therefore, a rational creature, who can attain the perfect good of happiness, though needing divine help, is more perfect than an irrational creature, which does not have the capacity for such a good, but attains some imperfect good by its natural power.

**Response to 3.** When the imperfect and the perfect are of the same species, they can be caused by the same power. But this need not be the case when they are of different species: for not everything that can cause a disposition of matter can confer its final perfection. Now the imperfect operation that is under the sway of natural human power is not of the same species as that perfect operation that is human happiness, since the species of an operation is determined by its object. Hence, the argument is invalid.

# 43. *Summa Theologiae*

## First Part of the Second Part

### Selections from the “Treatise on Virtue”

#### Question 61

#### The Cardinal Virtues

*Article 1. Should moral virtues be called cardinal or principal virtues?*

It seems that moral virtues should not be called cardinal or principal virtues:

1. As is said in the *Categories*, opposed members of a division are naturally on a par with each other, and thus no one of them is principal any more than another. Now all the virtues are opposed members of the division of the genus of virtue. Therefore, none of them should be called principal.

2. An end outranks the things that are for the end. Now theological virtues have to do with the end, whereas moral virtues concern things that are for the end. So it is not moral virtues that should be called principal or cardinal, but instead theological virtues.

3. That which is a certain way essentially outranks that which is that way by participation. Now intellectual virtues belong to what is rational essentially, whereas moral virtues belong to what is rational by participation. Therefore, it is not moral virtues that are principal, but instead intellectual virtues.

**On the contrary.** In his *Commentary on Luke*, Ambrose, in expounding the words “Blessed are the poor in spirit,” says, “We know that there are four cardinal virtues: temperance, justice, practical wisdom, and courage.” Now these are moral virtues. Therefore, moral virtues are cardinal virtues.

**Reply.** When we speak without qualification about virtue, we are understood to mean human virtue. Now

human virtue, as was said above, is called virtue in accordance with the complete notion of virtue, which requires rightness of desire; for human virtue not only confers the ability to act well but also causes the actual exercise of good action. By contrast, something that does not require rightness of desire, because it only confers the ability to act well and does not cause the actual exercise of good action, is called a virtue in accordance with an incomplete notion of virtue. Now it is clear that the complete is principal, rather than the incomplete, and so virtues that include rightness of desire are called principal virtues. And it is the moral virtues that are like this, and among the intellectual virtues only practical wisdom, which is also a moral virtue in a way, according to its subject-matter, as is evident from what was said earlier. Accordingly, practical wisdom is appropriately placed among those moral virtues that are called principal or cardinal.

**Response to 1.** When a univocal genus is divided into its species, the elements of the division are all on an equal footing with each other in terms of the notion of the genus, even if one is more principal and more perfect than another in terms of the nature of the thing itself (as, for example, human beings are by comparison with the other animals). But when there is a division of something analogous that is predicated of a plurality of things according to priority and posteriority, then there is nothing to prevent one element’s being more principal than another, even in terms of the notion that is common to both (as, for example, substance is a more principal being than accident). The division of the virtues into diverse genera of virtues is of this latter sort, because the good of reason is not found in all of them in the same way.

**Response to 2.** Theological virtues are above human beings, as was said above. For this reason they are not

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Translated for this volume by Thomas Williams from the Leonine edition.

properly called human virtues, but superhuman or divine virtues.

**Response to 3.** Although the intellectual virtues other than prudence outrank the moral virtues in terms of their subject, they do not outrank them in terms of the notion of virtue, which has to do with the good that is the object of desire.

*Article 2. Are there four cardinal virtues?*

It seems that there are not four cardinal virtues:

1. Practical wisdom directs the other moral virtues, as is evident from what was said above. Now something that directs other things outranks them. Therefore, prudence alone is a principal virtue.

2. The principal virtues are in some way moral virtues. Now we are directed to moral actions through practical reason and right desire, as is said in *Ethics* 6. Therefore, there are only two cardinal virtues.

3. Among the other virtues, one outranks another. Now in order for a virtue to be called principal, it need not outrank all other virtues, but only some. Therefore, it seems that there are quite a few principal virtues.

**On the contrary.** Gregory says in *Morals* 2, "The whole structure of good works is built on four virtues."

**Reply.** There are two possible ways of enumerating things: according to their formal principles or according to their subjects. And in either way we find that there are four cardinal virtues.

The formal principle of the virtue of which we are speaking now is the good of reason, which can be considered in two ways. The first way is insofar as the good of reason consists in reason's own consideration; and in this way there is one principal virtue, which is called practical wisdom. The second way is insofar as reason's ordering is imposed on something else. This has to do either with actions, and thus we have justice, or with passions, in which case there have to be two virtues, because reason's ordering of the passions has to be considered in light of their resistance to reason. A passion can resist reason in either of two ways. One way is for a passion to impel someone to something contrary to reason; in such a case the passion needs to

be restrained, and temperance gets its name from this. The other way is for a passion, such as fear of dangers or effort, to make someone shy away from what reason dictates; in such a case human beings need to be strengthened so that they do not abandon what reason dictates, and courage gets its name from this.

If we consider the subjects of virtue, we find the same number of cardinal virtues. For there are four subjects of the virtue of which we are now speaking: that which is essentially rational, which practical wisdom perfects; and that which is rational by participation, which is divided into three: the will, which is the subject of justice, the concupiscible, which is the subject of temperance, and the irascible, which is the subject of courage.

**Response to 1.** Practical wisdom is the principal virtue in an unqualified sense, outranking all the others; but each of the other cardinal virtues is called the principal virtue in its own genus.

**Response to 2.** That which is rational by participation is divided into three, as was said earlier.

**Response to 3.** All those other virtues of which one outranks another are traced back to the above four, both in terms of their subjects and in terms of their formal notions.

## Question 62 The Theological Virtues

*Article 1. Are there any theological virtues?*

It seems that there are no theological virtues:

1. As is said in *Physics* 7, "Virtue is a disposition of something perfect to that which is best; and by something perfect, I mean what is disposed according to nature." But what is divine is above human nature. Therefore, theological virtues are not human virtues.

2. Theological virtues are called quasi-divine virtues. But the divine virtues are exemplars, as has been said; and of course they are not in us, but in God. Therefore, theological virtues are not human virtues.

3. The virtues that are called theological are those by which we are directed to God, who is the first principle and ultimate end of things. But human beings are directed to the first principle and ultimate end by the very nature of reason and will. Therefore, there is no need for any habits of theological virtue by which reason and will are directed to God.

**On the contrary.** The precepts of the law concern acts of the virtues. But precepts are given in the divine law concerning acts of faith, hope, and charity. For it says in Ecclesiasticus 2, “You who fear God, believe in him”; and again, “hope in him”; and again, “love him.” Therefore, faith, hope, and charity are virtues that direct us to God; consequently, they are theological virtues.

**Reply.** By means of virtue human beings are perfected with respect to the acts by which they are directed to happiness, as is evident from what was said earlier. Now human happiness or felicity is twofold, as was said above. One happiness is proportionate to human nature; this is the happiness that human beings can achieve through the principles of their nature. But there is another happiness that exceeds human nature; and human beings can achieve this happiness only by divine power, according to a sort of participation in the divine nature. 2 Peter 1 speaks of this, when it says that through Christ we have been made “partakers of the divine nature.” And because this sort of happiness goes beyond any proportion to human nature, the natural principles of human beings by which they act well according to their capacity are not sufficient to direct them to such happiness. Hence, human beings need some additional principles to be bestowed on them by God, so that by these principles they may be directed to supernatural happiness just as they are directed to their connatural end by their natural principles, though not without God’s help. Principles of this sort are called theological virtues, for three reasons: because they have God as their object, insofar as through them we are directed toward God in the right way; because they are poured into us by God alone; and because such virtues are made known to us only by divine revelation in Holy Scripture.

**Response to 1.** A nature can be attributed to something in two ways: essentially, and in that way such theological virtues do exceed human nature; or by participation, as a piece of wood that has been ignited participates in the nature of fire, and in that way human beings do participate somehow in the divine nature, as has been said. It is in this latter way that the theological virtues characterize human beings, in terms of the nature in which they participate.

**Response to 2.** The theological virtues are not called divine in the sense that they are the virtues by which God is virtuous, but in the sense that by them we are made virtuous by God and are directed toward God. Hence, they are not exemplars, but patterned after the exemplars.

**Response to 3.** Reason and will are ordered to God as the principle and end of nature, but only in keeping with some proportion to nature. But insofar as God is the object of supernatural happiness, reason and will are not directed to him sufficiently according to their own nature.

*Article 2. Are the theological virtues distinct from the intellectual and moral virtues?*

It seems that the theological virtues are not distinct from the intellectual and moral virtues:

1. If theological virtues are in the human soul, they must perfect it either according to its intellective part or according to its appetitive part. But the virtues that perfect the intellective part are called intellectual virtues, and the virtues that perfect the appetitive part are moral virtues. Therefore, the theological virtues are not distinct from the moral and intellectual virtues.

2. The virtues that direct us to God are called theological. But among the intellectual virtues there is one that directs us to God, namely wisdom, which concerns divine matters insofar as it considers the highest cause. Therefore, theological virtues are not distinct from intellectual virtues.

3. In *On the Morals of the Church* Augustine makes it clear that the four cardinal virtues are an ordering of love. But love is charity, and charity is classified as a

theological virtue. Therefore, the moral virtues are not distinct from the theological virtues.

**On the contrary.** What is above human nature is distinct from what accords with human nature. But the theological virtues are above human nature, whereas the intellectual and moral virtues accord with human nature, as is evident from what was said above. Therefore, the theological virtues are distinct from the intellectual and moral virtues.

**Reply.** As was said earlier, habits belong to distinct kinds according to the formal difference of their objects. Now the object of the theological virtues is God himself—the ultimate end of things—insofar as he exceeds our reason's knowledge. By contrast, the object of the intellectual and moral virtues is something that can be grasped by human reason. Hence, the theological virtues are different in kind from the moral and intellectual virtues.

**Response to 1.** The intellectual and moral virtues perfect human intellect and appetite in a way proportionate to human nature, whereas the theological virtues do so supernaturally.

**Response to 2.** The wisdom that the Philosopher classifies as an intellectual virtue considers divine things insofar as they can be investigated by human reason, whereas theological virtue concerns divine things insofar as they surpass human reason.

**Response to 3.** Although charity is love, not all love is charity. So when it is said that all virtue is an ordering of love, this can be understood either of love in its broadest sense or of the love that is charity. If we are speaking of love in its broadest sense, then every virtue is said to be an ordering of love insofar as well-ordered emotion is required for each of the cardinal virtues, and love is the root and principle of every emotion, as was said above. But if we are speaking of the love that is charity, saying that virtue is an ordering of love should not be taken as meaning that every other virtue is, essentially, charity, but rather that all the other virtues in some way depend on charity, as will become clear below.

*Article 3. How many theological virtues are there, and what are they?*

It seems that it is not right to say that there are three theological virtues: faith, hope, and charity:

1. The ordering of the theological virtues to divine happiness is parallel to the inclination of nature to its connatural end. But among the virtues ordered to our connatural end, there is only one natural virtue: the understanding of principles. Therefore, there should be only one theological virtue.

2. Theological virtues are more perfect than intellectual and moral virtues. But faith is not included among the intellectual virtues; rather, it is something less than a virtue, because it is imperfect cognition. Similarly, hope is not included among the moral virtues; rather, it is something less than a virtue, because it is a passion. Much less, then, should they be accounted theological virtues.

3. Theological virtues direct the human soul to God. But the human soul can be directed to God only through its intellectual part, which contains the intellect and will. Therefore, there should be only two theological virtues: one that perfects the intellect and another that perfects the will.

**On the contrary.** The Apostle says in 1 Corinthians 13, "Now abide faith, hope, and charity, these three."

**Reply.** As was said above, the theological virtues direct human beings to supernatural happiness in the same way that natural inclination directs human beings to an end that is connatural to them. Now the latter happens in two ways: first, according to reason or intellect, insofar as it contains the first universal principles known by us through the natural light of the intellect, from which reason proceeds in both speculative and practical matters; and second, through rightness of will inclining naturally to the good of reason. But these two things are lacking in our ordering to supernatural happiness, as we read in 1 Corinthians 2: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the human heart, what good things God has prepared for those who love him." Hence, it was necessary in both respects that something additional be given to human

beings in order to direct them to their supernatural end. First, as regards the intellect, human beings were given certain supernatural principles that are grasped by a divine light; these are the objects of belief, with which faith is concerned. Second, the will is directed to that end both with respect to the movement of intention, by striving for it as something possible to attain, which is the role of hope, and with respect to a certain spiritual union, through which the will is in a certain way transformed into that end, which is accomplished through charity. For a thing's desire is naturally moved toward and strives for the end connatural to the thing, and this movement is born of a certain conformity of the thing to its end.

**Response to 1.** The intellect requires intelligible species, through which it understands, and so it needs a natural habit in addition to the power. But the very nature of the will suffices for its natural ordering to the end, whether with respect to its intention of the end or with respect to conformity to the end. But in its or-

dering to things that are above nature, the nature of the power is not sufficient for either of these. Consequently, in both respects there is a need for an additional supernatural habit.

**Response to 2.** Faith and hope imply a certain incompleteness, since faith concerns things that are not seen and hope concerns things that are not possessed. Hence, to have faith and hope about things that are under the sway of human power is to fall short of the notion of virtue. But to have faith and hope about things that surpass the capacity of human nature is to go beyond every virtue that is proportionate to human beings, as we read in 1 Corinthians 1: "The weakness of God is stronger than human beings."

**Response to 3.** Two things pertain to desire: moving toward the end and becoming conformed to the end through love. And thus there have to be two theological virtues in human desire: hope and charity.

## 44. *Summa Theologiae* First Part of the Second Part Selections from the "Treatise on Law"

### Question 92 On the Effects of Law

*Article 1. Is the effect of law  
to make human beings good?*

It seems that it does not belong to law to make human beings good, for the following reasons:

1. Virtue makes human beings good, since "virtue makes those possessing it good," as the *Ethics* says.<sup>1</sup> But human beings have virtue only from God, since he "produces virtue in us apart from our efforts,"<sup>2</sup> as I have said before regarding the definition of virtue.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, it does not belong to law to make human beings good.

2. Law benefits human beings only if they obey law. But goodness causes human beings to obey law.

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From Aquinas, *Treatise on Law*, tr. Richard J. Regan (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2000). Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

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1. Aristotle, *Ethics* 2.6, 1106a15–16.

2. Cf. Peter Lombard, *Sentences* 2.27.5.

3. First Part of the Second Part, Q. 55, a. 4.

Therefore, human beings first need goodness in order to obey law. Therefore, law does not make them good.

3. Law is ordained for the common good, as I have said.<sup>4</sup> But some ill disposed regarding their own good are well disposed regarding what belongs to the common good. Therefore, it does not belong to law to make human beings good.

4. Some laws are tyrannical, as the Philosopher says in the *Politics*.<sup>5</sup> But a tyrant strives for his own good, not the good of his subjects. Therefore, it does not belong to law to make human beings good.

**On the contrary.** The Philosopher says in the *Ethics* that it is "the will of every lawmaker to make his citizens good."<sup>6</sup>

**Reply.** As I have said before,<sup>7</sup> law is simply a ruler's dictate of reason that governs his subjects. And the virtue of every subject is to be duly subject to the ruler. Just so, we perceive that the virtue of the irascible and concupiscible powers consists of being duly obedient to reason. And accordingly, "the virtue of every subject consists of being duly subject to the ruler," as the Philosopher says in the *Politics*.<sup>8</sup> And every law is ordained to be obeyed by those subject to it. And so it evidently belongs to law to induce subjects to their requisite virtue. Therefore, since virtue makes those possessing it good, the proper effect of law is consequently to make its subjects good, either absolutely or in some respect. For if the aim of the lawmaker strives for real good, that is, the common good regulated by divine justice, law consequently makes human beings absolutely good. But if the aim of lawmakers is set upon what is not absolutely good but what is useful or desirable for themselves or contrary to divine justice, then law makes human beings relatively, not absolutely, good, namely, in relation to such a regime. So also does good belong to things in themselves evil. For ex-

ample, we speak of a good robber, since he acts suitably to accomplish his end.

**Response to 1.** There are two kinds of virtue, namely, acquired virtues and infused virtues, as is evident from what I have said before.<sup>9</sup> And habitual action contributes something to both but in different ways. For habitual action causes acquired virtue, and disposes persons to receive infused virtue, and preserves and augments infused virtues already possessed. And because laws are laid down to direct human actions, law makes human beings good as much as their actions conduce to virtue. And so also the Philosopher says in the *Politics* that "lawmakers make subjects good by habituating them to good deeds."<sup>10</sup>

**Response to 2.** People do not always obey law out of the perfect goodness of virtue. Rather, they sometimes indeed obey law out of fear of punishment and sometimes only out of dictates of reason, which cause virtue, as I have maintained before.<sup>11</sup>

**Response to 3.** We weigh the goodness of any part in relation to the whole to which it belongs. And so also Augustine says in his *Confessions* that "every part is base that is in discord with the whole to which it belongs."<sup>12</sup> Therefore, since every human being is part of a political community, no human being can be good unless rightly related to the common good. Nor can a whole be rightly constituted except by parts rightly related to it. And so the common good of a political community can be rightly disposed only if its citizens, at least those entrusted with ruling, are virtuous. But it suffices as regards the good of the community that other citizens be virtuous enough to obey the commands of the law. And so the Philosopher says in the *Politics* that "the virtue of a ruler and that of a good man are the same, but the virtue of any ordinary citizen and that of a good man are not."<sup>13</sup>

4. First Part of the Second Part, Q. 90, a. 2.

5. *Politics* 3.6, 1282b12.

6. *Ethics* 2.1, 1103b3-4.

7. First Part of the Second Part, Q. 90, a. 1, Response to 2; a. 3 and 4.

8. *Politics* 1.5, 1260a20-24.

9. First Part of the Second Part, Q. 63, a. 2.

10. Actually, *Ethics* 2.1, 1103b3-4.

11. First Part of the Second Part, Q. 63, a. 1.

12. *Confessions* 3.8 (PL 32.689).

13. *Politics* 3.2, 1277a20-23.

**Response to 4.** A tyrannical law, since it is not in accord with reason, is not a law, absolutely speaking. Rather, it is a perversion of law. And yet such a law strives to make citizens good inasmuch as it partakes of the nature of law. For it only partakes of the nature of law insofar as it is a ruler's dictate for his subjects and strives to make them duly obedient, that is, to make them good in relation to such a regime, not absolutely good.

### Question 94 On the Natural Law

#### Article 1. *Is the natural law a habit?*

It seems that the natural law is a habit, for the following reasons:

1. "Three things belong to the soul: powers, habits, and emotions," as the Philosopher says in the *Ethics*.<sup>1</sup> But the natural law is neither a power of the soul nor an emotion. Therefore, the natural law is a habit.

2. Basil says that conscience, that is, *synderesis*, is "the law of our intellect,"<sup>2</sup> and we can only understand such regarding the natural law. But *synderesis* is a habit, as I maintained in the First Part.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the natural law is a habit.

3. The natural law always abides in human beings, as I shall make clear later.<sup>4</sup> But human beings' reason, to which that law belongs, is not always thinking about the natural law. Therefore, the natural law is a habit, not an act.

**On the contrary.** Augustine says in his work *On the Marital Good* that "habits are the means whereby we do things when we need to."<sup>5</sup> But the natural law is not such, since that law belongs to infants and the damned, who cannot act by reason of its presence. Therefore, the natural law is not a habit.

1. *Ethics* 2.5, 1105b20–21.

2. *On the Six Days of Creation* homily 7, n. 5 (PG 29.157).

3. First Part, Q. 79, a. 12.

4. a. 6 (page 535).

5. *On the Marital Good* 21 (PL 40.390).

**Reply.** We can speak about habits in two ways. We speak of them in one way in the strict sense and essentially, and then the natural law is not a habit. For I have said before that the natural law is constituted by reason,<sup>6</sup> just as propositions are works of reason. And what one does, and the means whereby one does it, are not the same. For example, one makes a fitting speech by means of the habit of grammar. Therefore, since habits are the means whereby one does things, the natural law cannot be a habit in the strict sense and essentially.

We can speak of habits in a second way as what we possess by reason of habits. For example, we call faith what we have by reason of the habit of faith. And so, as reason sometimes actually considers precepts of the natural law and sometimes only habitually possesses them, we can in the latter way say that the natural law is a habit. Just so, the indemonstrable first principles in theoretical matters are principles belonging to the habit of first principles, not the very habit.

**Response to 1.** The Philosopher in the cited text is attempting to discover the genus of virtues. And since virtues are evidently sources of activity, he posits only things that are sources of human activity, namely, powers, habits, and emotions. But other things belong to the soul besides the latter three. For example, certain acts belong to the soul: willing to those willing, and things known to those knowing. And the natural properties of the soul, such as immortality and the like, belong to the soul.

**Response to 2.** Basil calls *synderesis* the law of our intellect insofar as it is the habit that contains the precepts of the natural law, that is, the first principles of human actions.

**Response to 3.** The argument of this objection reaches the conclusion that we possess the natural law in a habitual way, and we concede this.

*Qualification to the argument in the section "On the contrary."* Sometimes, due to an impediment, one can-

6. First Part of the Second Part, Q. 90, a. 1, Response to 2.

not make use of what one possesses habitually. For example, human beings cannot make use of habitual knowledge when they are asleep. And likewise, children cannot make use of habitual understanding of first principles, or even of the natural law, which they possess habitually, due to their immature age.

*Article 2. Does the natural law include several precepts or only one?*

It seems that the natural law includes only one precept, not several, for the following reasons:

1. Law belongs to the genus of precept, as I have maintained before.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, if there were to be many precepts of the natural law, it would follow logically that there would also be many natural laws.

2. The natural law results from the nature of human beings. But human nature as a whole is one, although multiple regarding its parts. Therefore, either there is only one precept of the natural law because of the unity of the whole, or there are many precepts because of the many parts of human nature. And so even things that regard inclinations of the concupiscible power will need to belong to the natural law.

3. Law belongs to reason, as I have said before.<sup>8</sup> But there is only one power of reason in human beings. Therefore, there is only one precept of the natural law.

**On the contrary.** The precepts of the natural law in human beings are related to action as the first principles in scientific matters are related to theoretical knowledge. But there are several indemonstrable first principles of theoretical knowledge. Therefore, there are also several precepts of the natural law.

**Reply.** As I have said before,<sup>9</sup> the precepts of the natural law are related to practical reason as the first principles of scientific demonstrations are related to theoretical reason. For both the precepts of the natural law and the first principles of scientific demonstrations are self-evident principles. And we speak of things

being self-evident in two ways: in one way as such; in a second way in relation to ourselves. We indeed speak of self-evident propositions as such when their predicates belong to the nature of their subjects, although such propositions may not be self-evident to those who do not know the definition of the subjects. For example, the proposition "Human beings are rational" is by its nature self-evident, since to speak of something human is to speak of something rational, although the proposition is not self-evident to one who does not know what a human being is. And so, as Boethius says in his work *De hebdomadibus*,<sup>10</sup> there are axioms or universally self-evident propositions, and propositions whose terms all persons know (e.g., "Every whole is greater than one of its parts" and "Things equal to the same thing are themselves equal") are such. But some propositions are self-evident only to the wise, who understand what the proposition's terms signify. For example, for those who understand that angels are not material substances, it is self-evident that angels are not circumscriptively in a place, something not evident to the uneducated, who do not understand the nature of angels.

And there is a priority regarding the things that fall within the understanding of all persons. For what first falls within our understanding is being, the understanding of which is included in everything that one understands. And so the first indemonstrable principle is that one cannot at the same time affirm and deny the same thing. And this principle is based on the nature of being and nonbeing, and all other principles are based on it, as the *Metaphysics* says.<sup>11</sup> And as being is the first thing that without qualification falls within our understanding, so good is the first thing that falls within the understanding of practical reason. And practical reason is ordered to action, since every efficient cause acts for the sake of an end, which has the nature of good. And so the first principle in practical reason is one based on the nature of good, namely, that good is what all things seek. Therefore, the first precept of the natural law is that we should do

7. First Part of the Second Part, Q. 92, a. 2.

8. First Part of the Second Part, Q. 90, a. 1.

9. First Part of the Second Part, Q. 91, a. 3.

10. This work is otherwise known as *How Substances as Existing Things Are Good*.

11. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 3.3, 1005b29–34.

and seek good, and shun evil. And all the other precepts of the natural law are based on that precept, namely, that all the things that practical reason by nature understands to be human goods or evils belong to precepts of the natural law as things to be done or shunned.

And since good has the nature of end, and evil the nature of the contrary, reason by nature understands to be good all the things for which human beings have a natural inclination, and so to be things to be actively sought, and understands contrary things as evil and to be shunned. Therefore, the ordination of our natural inclinations ordains the precepts of the natural law.

First, for example, human beings have an inclination for good by the nature they share with all substances, namely, as every substance by nature seeks to preserve itself. And regarding this inclination, means that preserve our human life and prevent the contrary belong to the natural law.

Second, human beings have more particular inclinations by the nature they share with other animals. And so the *Digest* says that things “that nature has taught all animals,”<sup>12</sup> such as the sexual union of male and female, and the upbringing of children, and the like, belong to the natural law.

Third, human beings have inclinations for good by their rational nature, which is proper to them. For example, human beings by nature have inclinations to know truths about God and to live in society with other human beings. And so things that relate to such inclinations belong to the natural law (e.g., that human beings shun ignorance, that they not offend those with whom they ought to live sociably, and other such things regarding those inclinations).

**Response to 1.** All the precepts of the natural law, insofar as they relate to one first precept, have the nature of one natural law.

**Response to 2.** All the inclinations of any part of human nature (e.g., the concupiscible and irascible powers), insofar as reason rules them, belong to the natural law and are traced to one first precept, as I have said.<sup>13</sup>

12. Justinian, *Digest* I, title 1, law 1.

13. In the body of the article.

And so there are many precepts of the natural law as such, but they share a common foundation.

**Response to 3.** Reason, although as such one power, ordains everything that concerns human beings. And so the law of reason includes everything that reason can rule.

*Article 4. Is the natural law the same for all human beings?*

It seems that the natural law is not the same for all human beings, for the following reasons:

1. The *Decretum* says that “the natural law is contained in the [Old] Law and the Gospel.”<sup>14</sup> But what is contained in the Law and the Gospel is not in the common possession of all, since Romans 10:16 says: “Some do not heed the Gospel.” Therefore, the natural law is not the same for all human beings.

2. “We call things in accord with law just,” as the *Ethics* says.<sup>15</sup> But the same work says that nothing is so universally just that it is not otherwise for some.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, even the natural law is not the same for all human beings.

3. Things to which human beings’ nature inclines them belong to the natural law, as I have said before.<sup>17</sup> But nature inclines different human beings to different things. For example, nature inclines some to desire pleasures, others to desire honors, others to desire other things. Therefore, the natural law is not the same for all human beings.

**On the contrary.** Isidore says in his *Etymologies*: “The natural law is common to all nations.”<sup>18</sup>

**Reply.** Things to which nature inclines human beings belong to the natural law, as I have said before,<sup>19</sup> and

14. Gratian, *Decretum* I, dist. 1, preface.

15. Aristotle, *Ethics* 5.1, 1129b12.

16. *Ibid.* 5.7, 1134b32.

17. a. 2 and 3.

18. *Etymologies* 5.4.

19. a. 2 and 3.

one of the things proper to human beings is that their nature inclines them to act in accord with reason. And it belongs to reason to advance from the general to the particular, as the *Physics* makes clear.<sup>20</sup> And regarding that process, theoretical reason proceeds in one way, and practical reason in another way. For inasmuch as theoretical reason is especially concerned about necessary things, which cannot be otherwise disposed, its particular conclusions, just like its general principles, are true without exception. But practical reason is concerned about contingent things, which include human actions. And so the more reason goes from the general to the particular, the more exceptions we find, although there is some necessity in the general principles. Therefore, truth in theoretical matters, both first principles and conclusions, is the same for all human beings, although some know only the truth of the principles, which we call universal propositions, and not the truth of the conclusions. But truth in practical matters, or practical rectitude, is the same for all human beings only regarding the general principles, not regarding the particular conclusions. And not all of those with practical rectitude regarding particulars know the truth in equal measure.

Therefore, the truth or rectitude regarding the general principles of both theoretical and practical reason is the same for all persons and known in equal measure by all of them. And the truth regarding the particular conclusions of theoretical reason is the same for all persons, but some know such truth less than others. For example, it is true for all persons that triangles have three angles equal to two right angles, although not everybody knows this.

But the truth or rectitude regarding particular conclusions of practical reason is neither the same for all persons nor known in equal measure even by those for whom it is the same. For example, it is correct and true for all persons that they should act in accord with reason. And it follows as a particular conclusion from this principle that those holding goods in trust should return the goods to the goods' owners. And this is indeed true for the most part, but it might in particular cases

be injurious, and so contrary to reason, to return the goods (e.g., if the owner should be seeking to attack one's country). And the more the particular conclusion goes into particulars, the more exceptions there are (e.g., if one should declare that entrusted goods should be returned to their owners with such and such safeguards or in such and such ways). For the more particular conditions are added to the particular conclusion, the more ways there may be exceptions, so that the conclusion about returning or not returning entrusted goods is erroneous.

Therefore, we should say that the natural law regarding general first principles is the same for all persons both as to their rectitude and as to knowledge of them. And the natural law regarding particulars, which are, as it were, conclusions from the general principles, is for the most part the same for all persons both as to its rectitude and as to knowledge of it. Nonetheless, it can be wanting in rather few cases both as to its rectitude and as to knowledge of it. As to rectitude, the natural law can be wanting because of particular obstacles, just as natures that come to be and pass away are wanting in rather few cases because of obstacles. And also as to knowledge of the natural law, the law can be wanting because emotions or evil habituation or evil natural disposition has perverted the reason of some. For example, the Germans of old did not consider robbery wicked, as Caesar's *Gallic Wars* relates,<sup>21</sup> although robbery is expressly contrary to the natural law.

**Response to 1.** We should not understand the cited statement to mean that all the matters included in the Law and the Gospel belong to the natural law, since the Law and the Gospel transmit to us many things above nature. Rather, we should understand the statement to mean that the Law and the Gospel completely transmit to us the things that belong to the natural law. And so Gratian, after saying that "the natural law is contained in the Law and the Gospel," immediately adds by way of example: "And everyone is thereby commanded to do unto others what one wishes to be done to oneself."

20. Aristotle, *Physics* 1.1, 184a16–27.

21. Julius Caesar, *Gallic Wars* 6.23.

**Response to 2.** We should understand the cited statement of the Philosopher regarding things just by nature as conclusions derived from general principles, not as the general principles. And such conclusions are correct for the most part and are wanting in rather few cases.

**Response to 3.** As the power of reason in human beings rules and commands other powers, so reason needs to direct all the natural inclinations belonging to other powers. And so it is universally correct for all persons to direct all their inclinations by reason.

*Article 5. Can the natural law vary?*

It seems that the natural law can vary, for the following reasons:

1. A gloss on Sirach 17:9, “He [God] supplied them with instruction and the law of life,” says: “He wanted the [Old] Law to be written in order to correct the natural law.”<sup>22</sup> But what is corrected is changed. Therefore, the natural law can vary.

2. The killing of innocent human beings as well as adultery and theft are contrary to the natural law. But God altered these precepts. For example, God on one occasion commanded Abraham to slay his innocent son, as Genesis 22:2 relates. And God on another occasion commanded the Jews to steal vessels the Egyptians had lent them, as Exodus 12:35–36 relates. And God on another occasion commanded Hosea to take a fornicating wife, as Hosea 1:2 relates. Therefore, the natural law can vary.

3. Isidore says in his *Etymologies* that “the common possession of all property and the same freedom for all persons belong to the natural law.”<sup>23</sup> But we perceive that human laws have altered these prescriptions. Therefore, it seems that the natural law can vary.

**On the contrary.** The *Decretum* says: “The natural law originates with rational creatures. It does not vary over time and abides without change.”<sup>24</sup>

22. *Glossa ordinaria*, on Sir. 17:9.

23. *Etymologies* 5.4.

24. Gratian, *Decretum*, dist. 5, preface.

**Reply.** We can understand the mutability of the natural law in two ways. We can understand it in one way by things being added to it. And then nothing prevents the natural law changing, since both divine law and human laws add to natural law many things beneficial to human life.

We can understand the mutability of the natural law in a second way by way of subtraction, namely, that things previously subject to the law cease to be so. And then the natural law is altogether immutable as to its first principles. And as to its secondary precepts, which we said are proper proximate conclusions, as it were, from the first principles,<sup>25</sup> the natural law is not so changed that what it prescribes is not for the most part completely correct. But it can be changed regarding particulars and in rather few cases, due to special causes that prevent observance of such precepts, as I have said before.<sup>26</sup>

**Response to 1.** We say that written law has been given to correct the natural law either because the written law supplements what the natural law lacked, or because the natural law in the hearts of some regarding particulars had been corrupted insofar as they thought that things by nature evil were good. And such corruption needed correction.

**Response to 2.** All human beings, without exception, both the innocent and the guilty, die when natural death comes. And God’s power indeed inflicts such natural death on human beings because of original sin, as 1 Samuel 2:6 says: “The Lord causes death and life.” And so, at the command of God, death can without any injustice be inflicted on any human being, whether guilty or innocent.

Likewise, adultery is sexual intercourse with another man’s wife, whom the law handed down by God has allotted to him. And so there is no adultery or fornication in having intercourse with any woman at the command of God.

And the argument is the same regarding theft, which consists of taking another’s property. One does

25. a. 4.

26. *Ibid.*

not take without the consent of the owner (i.e., steal) anything that one takes at the command of God, who is the owner of all property.

Nor is it only regarding human affairs that everything God commands is owed to him. Rather, regarding things of nature, everything God does is also in one respect natural, as I said in the First Part.<sup>27</sup>

**Response to 3.** We speak of things belonging to the natural law in two ways. We speak of them belonging in one way because nature inclines us to them. For example, one should not cause injury to another. We speak of them belonging in a second way because nature did not introduce the contrary. For example, we could say that it belongs to the natural law that human beings are naked, since nature did not endow them with clothes, which human skill created. And it is in the latter way that we say that "the common possession of all property and the same freedom for all persons" belong to the natural law, namely, that the reason of human beings, not nature, introduced private property and compulsory servitude. And so the natural law in this respect varies only by way of addition.

*Article 6. Can the natural law be excised from the hearts of human beings?*

It seems that the natural law can be excised from the hearts of human beings, for the following reasons:

1. A gloss on Romans 2:14, "When the Gentiles, who do not have the law," etc., says: "The law of righteousness, which sin had wiped out, is inscribed on the inner human being renewed by grace."<sup>28</sup> But the law of righteousness is the natural law. Therefore, the natural law can be wiped out.

2. The law of grace is more efficacious than the law of nature. But sin destroys the law of grace. Therefore, much more can the natural law be wiped out.

3. What law establishes is rendered just, as it were. But human beings have established many things contrary to the natural law. Therefore, the natural law can be excised from the hearts of human beings.

27. First Part, Q. 105, a. 6, Response to 1.

28. *Glossa ordinaria*, on Rom. 2:14; Peter Lombard, *Glossa*, on Rom. 2:14.

**On the contrary.** Augustine says in his *Confessions*: "Your law is inscribed on the hearts of human beings, and indeed no wickedness wipes it out."<sup>29</sup> But the law inscribed on the hearts of human beings is the natural law. Therefore, the natural law cannot be wiped out.

**Reply.** As I have said before,<sup>30</sup> there belong to the natural law, indeed primarily, very general precepts, precepts that everyone knows, and more particular, secondary precepts, which are like proximate conclusions from first principles. Therefore, regarding the general principles, the natural law in general can in no way be excised from the hearts of human beings. But the natural law is wiped out regarding particular actions insofar as desires or other emotions prevent reason from applying the general principles to particular actions, as I have said before.<sup>31</sup>

And the natural law can be excised from the hearts of human beings regarding the other, secondary precepts, either because of wicked opinions, just as errors in theoretical matters happen regarding necessary conclusions, or because of evil customs or corrupt habits. For example, some did not think robbery a sin, or even sins against nature to be sinful, as the Apostle also says in Romans 1:24–28.

**Response to 1.** Sin wipes out the natural law regarding particulars but not in general, except perhaps regarding secondary precepts of the natural law, in the way I mentioned.<sup>32</sup>

**Response to 2.** Although grace is more efficacious than nature, nature is nonetheless more essential to human beings and so more abiding.

**Response to 3.** The argument of this objection is valid regarding the secondary precepts of the natural law, contrary to which some lawmakers have passed wicked statutes.

29. *Confessions* 2.4 (page 66).

30. a. 4 and 5.

31. First Part of the Second Part, Q. 77, a. 2.

32. In the body of the article.

## Question 95 On Human Law

### *Article 1. Was it beneficial that human beings establish laws?*

It seems that it was not beneficial that human beings establish laws, for the following reasons:

1. The purpose of every law is to make human beings good, as I have said before.<sup>1</sup> But admonitions induce human beings willingly to live rightly more than laws do coercively. Therefore, there was no need to establish laws.

2. The Philosopher says in the *Ethics*: “Human beings have recourse to judges as justice-in-the-flesh.”<sup>2</sup> But justice-in-the-flesh is better than the inanimate justice contained in laws. Therefore, it would have been better to commit the execution of justice to the decisions of judges than to establish laws to supplement their decisions.

3. Every law directs human actions, as is evident from what I have said before.<sup>3</sup> But since human acts regard particular things, which are potentially infinite, no one except wise persons, who regard particulars, can sufficiently contemplate the things that belong to the direction of human acts. Therefore, it would have been better that the decisions of wise persons direct human actions than that any established law should. Therefore, there was no need to establish human laws.

On the contrary. Isidore says in his *Etymologies*: “Laws were established so that fear of them curb human audacity, and that innocence be safe in the midst of the wicked, and that the fear of punishment restrain the ability of the wicked to inflict harm.”<sup>4</sup> But the human race most needs such things. Therefore, it was necessary to establish human laws.

Reply: As is evident from what I have said before,<sup>5</sup> human beings by nature have a capacity for virtue, but

they need to arrive at the very perfection of virtue by some training.<sup>6</sup> Just so, we perceive that industriousness helps them regarding their necessities (e.g., food and clothing). And nature gives them the sources to provide these necessities, namely, reason and hands, not the full complement of the necessities that nature gives other animals, for whom nature has sufficiently provided covering and food.

But human beings are not readily self-sufficient in regard to this training, since the perfection of virtue consists chiefly of human beings’ restraint from excessive pleasures, toward which they are most prone. And this is especially true of youths, for whom training is more efficacious. And so human beings receive such training, whereby they arrive at virtue, from others. And indeed regarding youths prone to virtuous acts by good natural disposition or habituation (or, rather, a gift from God), paternal training, which consists of admonitions, suffices.

But some persons are wicked and prone to vices, and cannot be easily persuaded by words. Therefore, force and fear were needed to restrain them from evil. Consequently, at least desisting from evil deeds, they would both leave others in peace and be themselves at length brought by such habituation to do voluntarily what they hitherto did out of fear, and so become virtuous. But such training, which compels by fear of punishment, is the training administered by laws. And so it was necessary to establish laws in order that human beings live in peace and have virtue. For, as the Philosopher says in the *Politics*: “As human beings, if perfect in virtue, are the best of animals, so are they, if cut off from law and justice, the worst of all animals.”<sup>7</sup> This is because human beings, unlike other animals, have the tools of reason to satisfy their disordered desires and bestial rages.

Response to 1. Voluntary admonitions induce well-disposed human beings to virtue better than compul-

1. First Part of the Second Part, Q. 92, a. 1 (page 529).

2. *Ethics* 5.4, 1132a22.

3. First Part of the Second Part, Q. 90, a. 1 and 2.

4. *Etymologies* 5.20 (PL 82.202).

5. First Part of the Second Part, Q. 63, a. 1; Q. 94, a. 3.

6. Thomas Aquinas generally uses the Latin word *disciplina* to mean “instruction.” But the instruction at issue here and elsewhere in reference to human law is practical and formative, with coercion the punishment for noncompliance. I accordingly translate *disciplina* in this context as “training.”

7. *Politics* 1.1, 1253a31–33.

sion does, but there are some who are not induced to virtue unless they be compelled.

**Response to 2.** The Philosopher says in the *Rhetoric*: "It is better that law direct all things than that they be left to the decisions of judges."<sup>8</sup> And this is so for three reasons. First, indeed, it is easier to find the few wise persons sufficient to establish right laws than the many wise persons necessary to judge rightly about particular matters. Second, lawmakers consider over a long time what to impose by law, but judges reach decisions about particular deeds as cases spontaneously arise. And human beings can more easily perceive what is right by considering many instances than they can by considering only one deed. Third, lawmakers decide in general and about future events, but presiding judges decide current cases, and love or hatred or covetousness affects such decisions. And so their decisions are perverted.

Therefore, since few embody the justice required of a judge, and since that justice can be perverted, it was necessary that law determine, whenever possible, what judges should decide, and commit very few matters to the decisions of human beings.

**Response to 3.** "We need to commit to judges" certain particular details which laws cannot encompass, as the Philosopher also says in the *Rhetoric*<sup>9</sup> such as, "whether alleged deeds have or have not been done," and the like.

*Article 2. Is every human law  
derived from the natural law?*

It seems that not every human law is derived from the natural law, for the following reasons:

1. The Philosopher says in the *Ethics* that "it does not at all matter originally whether one effects legal justice in this or that way."<sup>10</sup> But regarding obligations to which the natural law gives rise, it does matter whether one effects justice in this or that way. Therefore, not all the things established by human laws are derived from the natural law.

8. *Rhetoric* 1.1, 1354a31–34.

9. *Ibid.* 1.1, 1354b13.

10. *Ethics* 5.7, 1134b20.

2. Positive law differs from natural law, as Isidore makes clear in his *Etymologies*<sup>11</sup> and the Philosopher makes clear in the *Ethics*.<sup>12</sup> But things derived as conclusions from the general principles of the natural law belong to the natural law, as I have said before.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, things proper to human law are not derived from the natural law.

3. The natural law is the same for all persons. For the Philosopher says in the *Ethics* that "natural justice has the same force everywhere."<sup>14</sup> Therefore, if human laws were to be derived from the natural law, human laws would likewise be the same for all persons. But such a conclusion is evidently false.

4. We can assign reasons for things derived from the natural law. But "one cannot assign reasons for all the statutes rulers have decreed," as the Jurist says.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, some human laws are not derived from the natural law.

**On the contrary.** Cicero says in his *Rhetoric*: "Fear and reverence for the laws have prescribed things derived from nature and approved by custom."<sup>16</sup>

**Reply.** Augustine says in his work *On Free Choice*: "Unjust laws do not seem to be laws."<sup>17</sup> And so laws have binding force insofar as they have justice. And we say regarding human affairs that things are just because they are right according to the rule of reason. But the primary rule of reason is the natural law, as is evident from what I have said before.<sup>18</sup> And so every human law has as much of the nature of law as it is derived from the natural law. And a human law diverging in any way from the natural law will be a perversion of law and no longer a law.

But we should note that we can derive things from the natural law in two ways: in one way as conclusions

11. *Etymologies* 5.4 (PL 82.199).

12. *Ethics* 5.7, 1134b18–19.

13. First Part of the Second Part, Q. 94, a. 4 (page 533).

14. *Ethics* 5.7, 1134b19–20.

15. *Digest* I, title 3, law 20.

16. *Rhetoric* 2.53.

17. *On Free Choice of the Will* 1.5.

18. First Part of the Second Part, Q. 91, a. 2, Response to 2.

from its first principles; in a second way as specifications of certain general principles. Indeed, the first way is like the way in which we draw conclusions from first principles in theoretical sciences. And the second way is like the way that craftsmen in the course of exercising their skill adapt general forms to specific things. For example, a builder needs to adapt the general form of a house to this or that shape of a house. Therefore, some things are derived from general principles of the natural law as conclusions. For example, one can derive the prohibition against homicide from the general principle that one should do no evil to anyone. And some things are derived from general principles of the natural law as specifications. For example, the natural law ordains that criminals should be punished, but that criminals be punished in this or that way is a specification of the natural law.

Therefore, human laws are derived from the natural law in both ways. Things derived from the natural law in the first way are not only contained in human laws as established by those laws, but they also have part of their binding force from the natural law. But things derived from the natural law in the second way have all of their binding force from human law.

**Response to 1.** The Philosopher is speaking about the things laws decreed by determining or specifying one of the precepts of the natural law.

**Response to 2.** The argument of this objection is valid regarding things derived from the natural law as conclusions.

**Response to 3.** The general principles of the natural law cannot be applied to all peoples in the same way because of the great variety of human affairs. And so there are different positive laws for different peoples.

**Response to 4.** We should understand the Jurist's statement to regard things decreed by rulers about particular specifications of the natural law. And the judgments of experienced and prudent persons are indeed related to such specifications as certain principles underlying their judgments, namely, inasmuch as they immediately perceive what is the most fitting particular specification. And so the Philosopher says in the *Ethics* that "we should" in such matters "attend to the intuitive statements and opinions of the experienced and the mature or prudent no less than to their arguments."<sup>19</sup>

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19. *Ethics* 6.11, 1143b11–13.

# The Condemnation of 1277

Almost from the beginning of the availability of the physical and metaphysical works of Aristotle and his Muslim interpreters there were Christian theologians and prelates who were profoundly suspicious of those works. William of Auvergne, for instance, whose major writings were completed before 1240, had enough respect for the autonomy of philosophy to recommend referring to philosophers when philosophical matters were at stake. But he criticized many positions held by Aristotle and Ibn Sīnā, the major interpreter then available, including the basic assumption that natures have their own power. The power of natures is only that of the Creator, he maintained, thus underscoring the difference between the Aristotelian prime mover and the omnipotent Christian Creator. In 1210, 1215, and 1231, the teaching of certain Aristotelian works at Paris was prohibited by bishop, cardinal, and pope respectively. The works were read privately, however, and from 1240 on, the prohibitions seem to have been forgotten. Ibn Rushd replaced Ibn Sīnā as the major interpreter, and Aristotelian theses inspired much of the controversy of the period. Not all the arts masters who taught the works of Aristotle went on to the theological program or were even theologically oriented, and it has been remarked that in such leading arts masters as Siger of Brabant, the figure of the professional philosopher makes his first medieval appearance. By 1267, Bonaventure was protesting against excessive daring in philosophical investigation; and in 1268, Thomas Aquinas was back in Paris, surely because his superiors thought that the University of Paris was undergoing an intellectual emergency. Aquinas himself did not escape criticism

in the decade of acrimonious but not easily discernible controversy that ensued.

On December 10, 1270, the hierarchy intervened once more. Etienne Tempier, the bishop of Paris, condemned thirteen propositions concerning the unity of the intellect, the necessity of events, the eternity of the world, and various limitations on the divine power and knowledge. This move apparently did not make a very deep impression on some of the arts masters, and in 1272 and 1276 the university itself took steps, forbidding masters of arts to deal with theological subjects and forbidding secret teaching. There can be little doubt that, just as in the earlier period, the doctrinal situation at the leading theological center in Christendom was of extreme interest to the papacy, especially to the new pope, John XXI. On January 18, 1277, he asked Bishop Tempier for a report on the situation at the University of Paris. It is not known whether such a report was sent or whether the pope authorized the steps then taken. On March 7, 1277, Bishop Tempier condemned 219 propositions. The document below presents all 219 condemned propositions. On March 18, Archbishop Kilwardby of Canterbury, himself a former Dominican theologian at Paris, condemned thirty related propositions.

Bishop Tempier's list includes many so-called Averroistic commonplaces on the role of philosophy, the eternity of the world, the necessity of divine action, and the unity of the intellect in all men. But it also includes a few positions derived from the writings of Thomas Aquinas. In the selection that follows, the propositions stemming from Aquinas are identified by an "A" after the number. The numbering is that of

Mandonnet, who attempted to organize the list by major topics. The Thomistic propositions have mostly to do with the theory of individuation through matter and the relation of intellect to will. It is interesting that Aquinas's very controversial thesis that man has but one substantial form was not included. It is often remarked that the list was compiled hurriedly and represents a rather crude version of the doctrines it purports to condemn. Thus, no one seems actually to have taught that there are two types of truth that can be contradictory to one another. Views on this subject seem to have ranged from holding that the offending positions merely represent what Aristotle said, to holding that they are what natural reason, based on the senses and ignoring miracles, would have to say. Some distortion may have resulted from quoting or paraphrasing out of context, but many of the propositions seem to be such that distortion or misinterpretation is hardly conceivable.

Most scholars agree that these condemnations had a profound effect on the history of medieval thought, but they disagree as to the nature and significance of that effect. The condemnations have been called a brutal victory for Augustinianism over Aristotelianism,

but Aristotle flourished in the schools after as well as before. It has been said that by freeing the later Middle Ages from the domination of a rigid Averroistic Aristotelianism, the way was opened for the development of natural science as the inquiry into nature rather than the dogmatic reiteration of the Aristotelian corpus. But surely this exaggerates the monolithic character of the acceptance of Aristotle even by masters such as Siger of Brabant, and underestimates the continued influence of Aristotle and Ibn Rushd on the development of natural science. A more general, and once widely accepted, view is that with the Condemnation of 1277 the scholastic effort to incorporate and renovate philosophy came to an end. But this surely underestimates the philosophical advances, especially the methodological ones, of the later period. Whatever the wider significance, there can be little doubt of the immediate impact. The reader will discern many echoes of this document in Duns Scotus, especially in the treatments of individuation and the will, and the "Parisian Articles" figure prominently in the writings of other late medieval figures. In 1325, after the canonization of Thomas Aquinas, the condemnation of his positions was revoked by the then bishop of Paris.

## 45. Condemnation of 219 Propositions

Stephen, by divine permission unworthy servant of the church of Paris, sends greetings in the Son of the glorious Virgin to all those who will read this letter.

We have received frequent reports, inspired by zeal for the faith, on the part of important and serious persons to the effect that some students of the arts in Paris are exceeding the boundaries of their own faculty and are presuming to treat and discuss, as if they were debatable in the schools, certain obvious and loathsome errors, or rather “vanities and lying follies” [Ps. 39:5], which are contained in the roll joined to this letter. These students are not hearkening to the admonition of Gregory, “Let him who would speak wisely exercise great care, lest by his speech he disrupt the unity of his listeners,” particularly when in support of the aforesaid errors they adduce pagan writings that—shame on their ignorance—they assert to be so convincing that they do not know how to answer them. So as not to appear to be asserting what they thus insinuate, however, they conceal their answers in such a way that, while wishing to avoid Scylla, they fall into Charybdis. For they say that these things are true according to philosophy but not according to the Catholic faith, as if there were two contrary truths and as if the truth of Sacred Scripture were contradicted by the truth in the sayings of the accursed pagans, of whom it is written, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise” [1 Cor. 1:19; cf. Isa. 29:14], inasmuch as true wisdom destroys false wisdom. Would that such students listen to the advice of the wise man when he says: “If you have understand-

ing, answer your neighbor; but if not, let your hand be upon your mouth, lest you be surprised in an unskillful word and be confounded” [Ecclus. 5:14].

Lest, therefore, this unguarded speech lead simple people into error, we, having taken counsel with the doctors of Sacred Scripture and other prudent men, strictly forbid these and like things and totally condemn them. We excommunicate all those who shall have taught the said errors or any one of them, or shall have dared in any way to defend or uphold them, or even to listen to them, unless they choose to reveal themselves to us or to the chancery of Paris within seven days: in addition to which we shall proceed against them by inflicting such other penalties as the law requires according to the nature of the offense.

By this same sentence of ours we also condemn the book *De Amore*, or *De Deo Amoris*, which begins with the words, *Cogit me multum*, and so on, and ends with the words, *Cave, igitur, Galtere, amoris excedere mandata*, and so on, as well as the book of geomancy that begins with the words, *Existimaverunt Indi*, and so on, and ends with the words, *Ratiocinare ergo super eum invenies*, and so on. We likewise condemn the books, scrolls, and leaflets dealing with necromancy, or containing experiments in fortunetelling, invocations of devils or incantations endangering lives, or in which these and similar things evidently contrary to orthodox faith and good morals are treated. We pronounce the sentence of excommunication against those who shall have taught the said scrolls, books, and leaflets, or listened to them, unless they reveal themselves to us or to the chancery of Paris within seven days in the manner described earlier in this letter; in addition to which we shall proceed to inflict such other penalties as the gravity of the offense demands.

Given in the year of the Lord 1276, on the Sunday on which *Laetare Jerusalem* is sung at the court of Paris.

1. That there is no more excellent state than to study philosophy.

2. That the only wise men in the world are the philosophers.

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Propositions appearing in the Second Edition translated by E. L. Fortin and P. D. O’Neill from the edition by P. Mandonnet, *Siger de Brabant et l’averroïsme latin au XIII<sup>me</sup> siècle, 2<sup>me</sup> partie, Textes inédites*, 2nd ed., Louvain, 1908, pp. 175–191. Reprinted from *Medieval Political Philosophy: A Sourcebook*, R. Lerner and M. Mahdi, eds., by permission of Cornell University Press. The remaining propositions were translated from the same source by Paul Vincent Spade and are reprinted by permission of the translator.

3. That for a man to have any certainty about any conclusion, he must ground himself on self-evident principles. [This is] an error, because it speaks in general both about the certainty of apprehension and that of adherence.

4. That one should not hold anything unless it is self-evident or can be manifested from self-evident principles.

5. That man should not be content with authority to have certitude about any question.

6. That there is no rationally disputable question that the philosopher ought not to dispute and determine, because reasons are derived from things. It belongs to philosophy under one or another of its parts to consider all things.

7. That all the sciences are necessary, over and above the philosophical disciplines, and that they are necessary only because of human custom.

8. That our intellect by its own natural power can attain to a knowledge of the first cause. — This does not sound well and is erroneous if what is meant is immediate knowledge.

9. That we can know God by His essence in this mortal life.

10. That nothing can be known about God except that He is, or His existence.

11. That it is unintelligible for God to be a being through himself positively. Rather, he is privatively a being through himself.

12. That the understanding according to which God understands himself is in its [very] notion other than [that by which he understands] other things. [This is] an error because, while the notion *by* which he understands is other [in the first case than it is in the second], nevertheless the understanding [itself is] not other according to its [very] notion.

13. That God does not know things other than himself.

14. That God cannot know contingent beings immediately except through their particular and proximate causes.

15. That the first cause does not have science of future contingents. The first reason is that future contingents are not beings. The second is that future contingents are singulars, but God knows by means of

an intellectual power, which cannot know singulars. Hence, if there were no senses, the intellect would perhaps not distinguish between Socrates and Plato, although it would distinguish between a man and an ass. The third reason is the relation of cause to effect; for the divine foreknowledge is a necessary cause of the thing foreknown. The fourth reason is the relation of science to the known; for even though science is not the cause of the known, it is determined to one of two contradictories by that which is known; and this is true of divine science much more than of ours.

16. That the first cause is the most remote cause of all things. — This is erroneous if so understood as to mean that it is not the most proximate.

17. That what is impossible absolutely speaking cannot be brought about by God or by another agent. — This is erroneous if we mean what is impossible according to nature.

18. That what is self-determined, like God, either always acts or never acts; and that many things are eternal.

19. That an active power that is able to exist without operating is mixed together with a passive power. [This is] an error if it is meant with respect to every operation.

20. That God of necessity makes whatever comes immediately from Him. — This is erroneous whether we are speaking of the necessity of coercion, which destroys liberty, or of the necessity of immutability, which implies the inability to do otherwise.

21. That from an old [act of] willing [something] new cannot proceed without a preceding transmutation.

22. That God cannot be the cause of a newly-made thing and cannot produce anything new.

23. That God cannot move anything irregularly, that is, in a manner other than that in which He does, because there is not diversity of will in Him.

24. That God is eternal in acting and moving, just as He is eternal in existing; otherwise He would be determined by some other thing that would be prior to Him.

25. That God has infinite power, not because He makes something out of nothing, but because He maintains infinite motion.

26. That God has infinite power in duration, not in action, since there is no such infinity except in an infinite body, if there were such a thing.

27A. That the first cause cannot make more than one world.

28. That from one first agent there cannot proceed a multiplicity of effects.

29. That, unless it tempered its own power, the first cause could produce an effect equal to itself.

30. That the first cause cannot produce something other than itself, because every difference between maker and made is through matter.

31. That there are three principles for celestial things: the subject of eternal motion, the soul of the celestial body, and the first mover, [which moves things] insofar as [it is] desired. This is an error with respect to the first two.

32. That the eternal principles are two, namely, the body of the heaven and its soul.

33. That the immediate effect of the first being has to be one only and most like unto the first being.

34. That God is the necessary cause of the first intelligence, which cause being posited, the effect is also posited; and both are equal in duration.

35. That God never *did* create an intelligence more than he now does create [it].

36. That the first simply immobile [thing] does not move [anything else], except by means of some moved intermediary, and that such an immobile mover is part of [what is] moved of itself.

37. That the first principle is not the proper cause of eternal things except metaphorically, because it conserves them—that is, because unless it existed, they would not exist.

38. That the intelligences, or separated substances, which they say are eternal, do not have an efficient cause properly speaking, but only metaphorically, insofar as they have a cause conserving them in existence; but they were not newly-made, because then they would be mutable.

39. That all the separated substances are coeternal with the first principle.

40. That everything that does not have matter is eternal, because that which was not made through a change in matter did not exist previously; therefore it is eternal.

41. That the separated substances, because they have no matter through which they are in potency before [they are] in act, and [because they] are from a cause that always stays the same way, are therefore eternal.

42A. That God cannot multiply individuals of the same species without matter.

43A. That God could not make several intelligences of the same species because intelligences do not have matter.

44. That in separated substances no transmutation is possible. Neither are they in potency to anything, because they are eternal and immune from matter.

45. That an intelligence is completely made by God from eternity, because it is immutable as a whole. The soul of heaven, however, is not [completely made from eternity].

46. That the separated substances are their essence, because in their case that *by* which [a thing] is is the same as *what* it is.

47. That the knowledge of an intelligence does not differ from its substance. For where there is no diversity between the understood [object] and what understands [it], there is [likewise] no diversity among understood [objects].

48. That an angel understands nothing new.

49. That separated substances are actually infinite [in number]. For infinity is not impossible except for material things.

50A. That if there were any separated substance that did not move some body in this sensible world, it would not be included in the universe.

51. That everlasting substances [that are] separate from matter [already] have [all] the good possible to them when they are [first] produced. Neither do they desire anything that they lack.

52A. That the separated substances, insofar as they have a single appetite, do not change in their operation.

53A. That an intelligence or an angel or a separated soul is nowhere.

54A. That the separated substances are nowhere according to their substance.—This is erroneous if so understood as to mean that substance is not in a place. If, however, it is so understood as to mean that substance is the reason for being in a place, it is true that they are nowhere according to their substance.

55A. That the separated substances are somewhere by their operation, and that they cannot move from one extreme to another, or to the middle except insofar as they can will to operate either in the middle or in the extremes. — This is erroneous if so understood as to mean that without operation a substance is not in a place and that it does not pass from one place to another.

56. That through their understanding, the separated substances create things.

57. That an intelligence receives its being from God through intermediary intelligences.

58. That superior intelligences create rational souls without [any] celestial motion. But inferior intelligences create the vegetative and sensitive [souls] by means of a celestial motion.

59. That an angel cannot [do] immediately opposite acts, but rather [only] mediated [opposite] acts, with [something] else, like a [celestial] sphere, in between.

60. That superior intelligences are not the cause of anything new in inferior [ones], and that [superior] intelligences are the cause of eternal cognition in inferior [intelligences].

61. That since an intelligence is full of forms, it impresses these forms on matter by using the heavenly bodies as instruments.

62. That outward matter obeys a spiritual substance. [This is] an error if it is meant absolutely and with respect to every kind of transmutation.

63. That the higher intelligences impress things on the lower, just as one soul impresses things on another and even on a sensitive soul; and that through such an impression a spellbinder is able to cast a camel into a pitfall just by looking at it.

64. That God is the necessary cause of the motion of the higher bodies and of the union and separation occurring in the stars.

65. That if all causes should be at rest at some time, [then] we must claim that God is movable.

66. That God could not move the heaven in a straight line, the reason being that He would then leave a vacuum.

67. That the first principle cannot produce generable things immediately because they are new effects and a new effect requires an immediate cause that is capable of being otherwise.

68. That the first principle cannot be the cause of diverse products here below without the mediation of other causes, inasmuch as nothing that transforms, transforms in diverse ways without being itself transformed.

69. That God cannot produce the effect of a secondary cause without the secondary cause itself.

70. That God can do contraries, that is, by means of a celestial body that is in different places.

71. That the nature that is a principle of motion in celestial bodies is a moving intelligence. [This is] an error if the intrinsic nature, which is an act or form, is [what is] meant.

72. That celestial bodies of themselves have the eternity of their substance, but not an eternity of [their] motion.

73. That the heavenly bodies are moved by an intrinsic principle which is the soul, and that they are moved by a soul and an appetitive power, like an animal. For just as an animal is moved by desiring, so also is the heaven.

74. That an intelligence moves the heavens only by [an act of] will.

75. That the celestial soul is an intelligence, and the celestial spheres are not instruments of intelligences but rather [their] organs, as the ear and the eye are the organs of a sensitive power.

76. That the intelligence moving the heaven influences the rational soul, just as the body of the heaven influences the human body.

77. That the heavens never rest, because the generation of inferior things, which is the goal of celestial motion, ought not to stop. Another reason [is] that the heaven has its being and its power from its mover, and it conserves these [things] by its motion. Thus, if it stopped moving, it would stop being.

78. That there would be nothing new unless the heavens were changed with respect to the matter of generable things.

79. That if the heaven stood still, fire would not burn flax because God would not exist.

80. That the reasoning of the Philosopher proving that the motion of the heaven is eternal is not sophistic, and that it is surprising that profound men do not perceive this.

81. That for all forms the immediate efficient cause is a [celestial] sphere.

82. That if in some humor by the power of the stars such a proportion could be achieved as is found in the seed of the parents, a man could be generated from the humor; and thus a man could be adequately generated from putrefaction.

83. That the world, although it was made from nothing, was not newly-made, and, although it passed from nonbeing to being, the nonbeing did not precede in duration but only in nature.

84. That the world is eternal because that which has a nature by which it is able to exist for the whole future has a nature by which it was able to exist in the whole past.

85. That the world is eternal as regards all the species contained in it, and that time, motion, matter, agent, and receiver are eternal, because the world comes from the infinite power of God and it is impossible that there be something new in the effect without there being something new in the cause.

86. That eternity and time have no existence in reality but only in the mind.

87. That nothing is eternal from the standpoint of its end that is not eternal from the standpoint of its beginning.

88. That time is infinite at both ends. For even though it is impossible for an infinitude [of things] to have been traversed, some one of which had to be traversed, nevertheless it is not impossible for an infinitude [of things] to have been traversed, none of which had to be traversed.

89. That it is impossible to refute the arguments of the Philosopher concerning the eternity of the world unless we say that the will of the first being embraces incompatibles.

90. That the universe cannot stop, because the first agent has [the ability] to transmute in succession eternally, now into this form, now into that one. And likewise, matter is naturally apt to be transmuted.

91. That there has already been an infinite number of revolutions of the heaven, which it is impossible for the created intellect but not for the first cause to comprehend.

92. That with all the heavenly bodies coming back to the same point after a period of thirty-six thousand years, the same effects as now exist will reappear.

93. That some things can come about by chance as

far as the first cause is concerned, and that it is false that all [things] are preordained by the first cause. For then they would come about of necessity.

94. That fate, which is the arrangement of the universe, does not proceed immediately from divine providence, but rather by means of the motion of the higher bodies, and that this fate does not impose necessity on lower things, because they have contrariety. But [it does impose necessity] on higher things.

95. That in order for all effects to be necessary as far as the first cause is concerned, it is not enough that the first cause cannot itself be impeded. Rather, it is required that the intermediary causes cannot be impeded. [This is] an error. For then God could not make a necessary effect without the later causes.

96. That beings depart from the order of the first cause considered in itself, although not in relation to the other causes operating in the universe. — This is erroneous because the order of beings to the first cause is more essential and more inseparable than their order to the lower causes.

97. That in the case of the higher causes, it is part of [their] dignity to be able to make mistakes and [to make] monstrosities that are not intended. For nature can do this.

98. That, in the case of efficient causes, the secondary cause has [some] action it did not receive from the first cause.

99. That there is more than one prime mover.

100. That, among the efficient causes, if the first cause were to cease to act, the secondary cause would not, as long as the secondary cause operates according to its own nature.

101. That no agent is in potency to one or the other of two things; on the contrary, it is determined.

102. That nothing happens by chance, but everything comes about by necessity, and that all the things that will exist in the future will exist by necessity, and those that will not exist are impossible, and that nothing occurs contingently if all causes are considered. — This is erroneous because the concurrence of causes is included in the definition of chance, as Boethius says in his book *The Consolation of Philosophy*.

103. That from a diversity of places the necessities of events are acquired.

104. That, from different signs in the heavens, the different conditions of men are indicated, both of spiritual gifts and of temporal things.

105. That when a man is generated as to his body, and consequently as to [his] soul, which follows the body, there is a disposition in the man [coming] from the order of superior and inferior causes, [and] inclining [him] to such and such actions or events. [This is] an error unless it is meant [to apply only] in the case of natural events and [for an inclination] by way of disposition.

106. That one who says that if fortune glances toward him he will live, [and] if it does not glance [toward him], he will die, attributes health, sickness, life and death to the position of the stars and to the glance of fortune.

107. That God was unable to have made prime matter except by means of a celestial body.

108. That just as from matter nothing can come without an agent, so neither can anything come from an agent without matter, and that God is not an efficient cause, except with respect to what has being in the potency of matter.

109. That a form that has to be and become in matter cannot be actively [produced] by what does not act on matter.

110A. That forms are not divided except through matter.—This is erroneous unless one is speaking of forms educed from the potency of matter.

111. That by a primal generation the elements were made out of chaos. But [nevertheless], they are eternal.

112. That the elements are eternal. They were nevertheless newly produced in the disposition that they now possess.

113. That man is man over and above [his] rational soul.

114. That a man is able, through nutrition, to become another [man] numerically and individually.

115A. That God could not make several numerically different souls.

116A. That individuals of the same species differ solely by the position of matter, like Socrates and Plato, and that since the human form existing in each is numerically the same, it is not surprising that the same being numerically is in different places.

117. That the intellect is numerically one for all, for although it may be separated from this or that body, it is not separated from every body.

118. That the agent intellect is a certain separated substance superior to the possible intellect, and that it is separated from the body according to its substance, power, and operation and is not the form of the human body.

119. That celestial motions are for the sake of the intellectual soul. And the intellectual soul, or the intellect, cannot be brought forth except by means of a body.

120. That the form of man is not from outside, but is [rather] drawn out from the potency of matter. For otherwise there would not be a univocal generation.

121. That no form coming from outside can make [something] one with matter. For what is separable does not make [something] one with what is corruptible.

122. That from the sensitive and intellectual parts of man there does not result a unity in essence, unless it be a unity such as that of an intelligence and a sphere, that is, a unity in operation.

123. That the intellect is not the form of the body, except in the manner in which a helmsman is the form of a ship, and that it is not an essential perfection of man.

124. That humanity is not the form of the thing but [rather the form] of the reason.

125. That the operation of the non-united understanding is coupled with the body in such a way that the operation belongs to a thing that does not have the form by which it operates. [This is] an error, because it maintains that the understanding is not the form of a man.

126. That the intellect, which is man's ultimate perfection, is completely separated.

127. That the human soul can in no way be moved in place, either through itself or accidentally. And if it is put somewhere through its substance, it will never be moved from here to there.

128. That the soul would never be moved unless the body were moved, just as the heavy or the light would never be moved unless the air were moved.

129. That the substance of the soul is eternal, and that the agent intellect and the possible intellect are eternal.

130. That the human understanding is eternal, because it is from a cause that always stays the same way, and because it does not have matter through which it is in potency before [it is] in act.

131. That the speculative intellect is simply eternal and incorruptible; with respect to this or that man, however, it is corrupted when the phantasms in him are corrupted.

132. That the understanding, when it wants to, puts the body aside, and when it wants to, it puts it on.

133. That the soul is inseparable from the body, and that the soul is corrupted when the harmony of the body is corrupted.

134. That the rational soul, when it leaves an animal, still remains a live animal.

135. That the separated soul is not alterable, according to philosophy, although according to the faith it is altered.

136. That the intellect can pass from body to body, in such a way that it is successively the mover of different bodies.

137. That the generation of man is cyclic, insofar as the form of a man comes back several times onto the same part of matter.

138. That there was no first man, nor will there be a last; indeed, the generation of man from man always was and always will be.

139. That although the generation of men can stop, [nevertheless] in virtue of the first [sphere] it *will* not stop. For the first sphere not only moves for the sake of the generation of the elements, but also of men.

140. That the agent intellect is not united to our possible intellect, and that the possible intellect is not united to us substantially. And if it were united to us as a form, it would be inseparable.

141. That the possible intellect is nothing in act before it understands, because in the case of an intelligible nature, to be something in act is to be actually understanding.

142. That the possible intellect is absolutely inseparable from the body, as far as the act is concerned that is the reception of species, and as far as the judgment is concerned that occurs through the simple attainment of species or the putting together of intelligibles. [This is] an error if it is meant for reception of all kinds.

143. That a man is said to understand to the same extent that the heaven is said to understand, or to live, or to move of itself, that is, because the agent performing these actions is united to him as mover to moved and not substantially.

144. That out of what understands and the [object] understood, there comes to be one substance, insofar as the understanding formally *is* the understood [objects].

145. That the intellective soul knows all other things by knowing itself. For the species of all things are created together with it. But this cognition is not due to our intellect insofar as it is ours, but rather insofar as it is the agent intellect.

146A. That the fact that we understand less perfectly or more perfectly comes from the passive intellect, which he says is a sensitive power. This statement is erroneous because it asserts that there is a single intellect in all men or that all souls are equal.

147A. That it is improper to maintain that some intellects are more noble than others because this diversity has to come from the intelligences, since it cannot come from the bodies; and thus noble and ignoble souls would necessarily belong to different species, like the intelligences. — This is erroneous, for thus the soul of Christ would not be more noble than that of Judas.

148. That the knowledge of master and student is numerically one. Now the reason that the intellect is so one: because a form is not multiplied except because it is drawn out of the potency of matter.

149. That the dead Socrates' intellect does not have knowledge of the things of which he did have knowledge.

150. That that which by its nature is not determined to being or nonbeing is not determined except by something that is necessary with respect to itself.

151. That the soul wills nothing unless it is moved by another. Hence the following proposition is false: the soul wills by itself. — This is erroneous if what is meant is that the soul is moved by another, namely, by something desirable or an object in such a way that the desirable thing or object is the whole reason for the movement of the will itself.

152. That all voluntary motions are reduced to the first mover. [This is] an error unless it is meant [that

they are reduced] to the absolutely first, non-created mover, and meaning motions according to substance, not according to deformity.

153. That the will and the understanding are not actually moved by themselves but by an everlasting cause, namely, the celestial bodies.

154. That our will is subject to the power of the heavenly bodies.

155. That a sphere is the cause of a doctor's will to cure.

156. That the effects of the stars upon free choice are hidden.

157. That when two goods are proposed, the stronger moves more strongly.— This is erroneous unless one is speaking from the standpoint of the good that moves.

158. That in all his actions man follows his appetite and always the greater appetite.— This is erroneous if what is meant is the greater in moving power.

159. That the appetite is necessarily moved by a desirable object if all obstacles are removed.— This is erroneous in the case of the intellectual appetite.

160. That it is impossible for the will not to will when it is in the disposition in which it is natural for it to be moved and when that which by nature moves remains so disposed.

161. That in itself the will is undetermined to opposites, like matter, but it is determined by a desirable object as matter is determined by an agent.

162A. That the science of contraries alone is the cause for which the rational soul is in potency to opposites, and that a power that is simply one is not in potency to opposites except accidentally and by reason of something else.

163A. That the will necessarily pursues what is firmly held by reason, and that it cannot abstain from that which reason dictates. This necessitation, however, is not compulsion but the nature of the will.

164. That man's will is necessitated by his knowledge, just as the appetite of a brute [animal is].

165. That after a conclusion has been reached about something to be done, the will does not remain free, and that punishments are provided by law only for the correction of ignorance and in order that the correction may be a source of knowledge for others.

166. That if reason is rectified, the will is also

rectified.— This is erroneous because contrary to Augustine's gloss on this verse from the Psalms: "My soul hath coveted too long," and so on [Ps. 118:20], and because according to this, grace would not be necessary for the rectitude of the will but only science, which is the error of Pelagius.

167. That there can be no sin in the higher powers of the soul. And thus sin comes from passion and not from the will.

168. That a man acting from passion acts by compulsion.

169A. That as long as passion and particular science are present in act, the will cannot go against them.

170. That every good possible to a man consists in intellectual virtues.

171. That a man who is [well-]ordered as far as [his] understanding and emotions are concerned, to the extent that the intellectual virtues and other, moral [virtues], about which the Philosopher speaks in the *Ethics*, are sufficient to bring this about, is well-enough disposed for eternal happiness.

172. That happiness is had in this life and not in another.

173. That happiness cannot be imparted immediately by God.

174. That after death man loses every good.

175. That because Socrates was made unable to receive eternity, [therefore] if he is going to be eternal, it is necessary that he be transmuted in nature and species.

176. That God or an intelligence does not infuse knowledge into the human soul in a dream, unless by means of a celestial body.

177. That raptures and visions are caused only by nature.

178. That men's intentions, and the changes in [their] intentions, are known by certain signs, and whether the intentions are to be accomplished, and that through such figures the arrivals of strangers are known, [and also] the capture of men, the release of captives, and whether they are learned men or thieves.

179. That the natural law prohibits killing irrational animals, although not only that.

180. That the Christian law impedes learning.

181. That there are fables and falsehoods in the Christian law just as in others.

182. That one does not know anything more by the fact that he knows theology.

183. That the teachings of the theologian are based on fables.

184. That the absolutely possible or impossible (that is, in all ways), is the possible or impossible according to philosophy.

185. That God is not three and one, because trinity is inconsistent with maximal simplicity. For where there is a real plurality, there necessarily there is addition and putting together. For example, a pile of stones.

186. That God cannot generate [anything] like himself. For what is begotten has a principle in something on which it depends. And that, in God, to generate would not be a sign of perfection.

187. That creation ought not to be called a change to being. [This is] an error if it is meant for change of every kind.

188. That it is not true that something comes from nothing or was made in a first creation.

189. That creation is not possible, even though the contrary must be held according to the faith.

190. That he who generates the world as a whole sets up a vacuum. For place necessarily precedes what is generated in a place. And then, before the world's generation, there would have been a place without [anything] placed [in it]. That is a vacuum.

191. That the natural philosopher has to deny absolutely the newness of the world because he bases himself on natural causes and natural reasons, whereas the faithful can deny the eternity of the world because he bases himself on supernatural causes.

192. That the theologians who say that the heavens sometimes are at rest argue from a false assumption. And that to say that the heavens exist and are not moved is to say contradictory things.

193. That it is possible for there naturally to occur a universal flood of fire.

194. That material form cannot be created.

195. That a man could not be made by God without [the man's] own agent [cause], to wit, [his] "father," and "a man."

196. That to make there be an accident without [its] subject has the aspect of the impossible that implies a contradiction.

197. That God cannot make there be an accident without [its] subject, or several dimensions be together.

198. That an accident existing without [its] subject is not an accident, unless equivocally [speaking]. And that it is impossible for a quantity or a dimension to be by itself. For this would be for it to be a substance.

199. That since God is not to be compared to beings after the fashion of a material or formal cause, he does not make there be an accident without [its] subject. It belongs to the notion of [an accident] to inhere actually in a subject.

201. That if something is said to be heretical because it is contrary to the faith, [then] one should not care about the faith.

202. That one ought not pray.

203. That one ought not to confess, except for show.

204. That one ought not to care about being buried.

205. That simple fornication, for instance, between an unmarried man and an unmarried woman, is not a sin.

206. That a sin contrary to nature—for instance, perversion during sex—even though it is contrary to the nature of the species, nevertheless is not contrary to the nature of the individual.

207. That pleasure in sexual acts does not prevent the act or use of the understanding.

208. That [sexual] continence is not essentially a virtue.

209. That chastity is not a greater good than complete abstinence.

210. That complete abstinence from the carnal act corrupts virtue and [corrupts] the species.

211. That humility, to the extent that someone does not display the things he has, but reviles and humbles himself, is not a virtue. [This is] an error if it is meant: neither a virtue nor a virtuous act.

212. That a pauper as to the goods of fortune cannot do well in moral affairs.

213. That death is the end of terrible things. [This is] an error if it rules out hell's terror, which is the final one.

214. That God cannot give perpetuity to a transmutable and corruptible thing.

215. That a corrupted body cannot come back the

same in number. Neither will it rise again the same in number.

216. That a philosopher must not concede the resurrection to come, because it cannot be investigated by reason.— This is erroneous because even a philosopher must “bring his mind into captivity to the obedience of Christ” [cf. 2 Cor. 10:5].

217. That to say that God gives happiness to one [person] and not to another is [to speak] without reason and [to utter a mere] figment.

218. That nothing can be known about the understanding after its separation [from the body].

219. That the separated soul does not suffer at all from fire.

# LATIN PHILOSOPHY IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY

The most popular way to interpret the movement of philosophy in the fourteenth century is to contrast it with the previous century as a period of disintegration and decline. The division of philosophy into official schools such as Thomism, Scotism, Albertism, and nominalism is placed in the context of the disruption of Christendom by heresies, schisms, and rampant nationalist monarchies. But heresy, schism, and royal ambition did not first appear on the medieval scene in the fourteenth century, and one could hardly describe the philosophical situation of any medieval period as tranquil. Nor should one obscure the earlier fourteenth century by displacing to it conditions which only later came to the fore. Thomism was the official doctrine of the Dominicans as early as 1278, but as late as the 1350s the leading nominalists show little sense of membership in a school of their own. There seems, then, to have been no more than the usual disintegration in the intellectual life of the first half of the fourteenth century, and controversy in any event is as much a sign of life as of decay. Another argument for decline is sometimes drawn from the rise of the critical mentality, which is strikingly expressed in Duns Scotus and finds technical formulation in the analytic methods of the nominalists. These critically oriented thinkers found much that had been accepted as demonstrated to be probable at best, often by ap-

plying the argument from divine omnipotence, which appealed from the order God *has* ordained to the limits of what He *could* ordain, as the test of necessity. The remarkable vogue of this argument is traced to the wish, stimulated in part by the Condemnation of 1277, to defend the doctrine of divine freedom from any philosophically conceived necessities based on the order of nature. And so it came to be doubted that God could be proved to exist, that the soul could be proved to be immortal, that the world could be proved to have teleological unity, and that many other positions belonging to natural theology could be proved. In the eyes of many, this amounts to the divorce of religion and philosophy, and hence the end of medieval scholasticism.

But divorce or not, mere criticism of assumptions that had made it plausible to attempt the synthesis of Catholic dogma and Aristotelian philosophy is not a decline of philosophy in any very obvious sense. A few scholars see this as the giving up of metaphysical pretensions to knowledge of the supersensible world and applaud this critical movement as an anticipation of later empiricism. The issue of decline would thus seem to hinge on the preconceptions of the interpreter, and one may wish to turn to the texts without this distraction. They are difficult texts, and since this period has only been closely studied by a few scholars, sometimes

the bearing of the points being made or even the meaning of the terminology employed is hard to understand. But since recent scholarship in the history of science and logic has shown how misguided Erasmus and Rabelais and other humanists were to ridicule such topics as the intension and remission of forms or the modes of supposition as mere barbaric nonsense, perhaps one may now confront such strange-sounding philosophical topics as the intuitive cognition of non-existents with some faith in their significance, especially since they appear in attenuated guise in Descartes and other seventeenth-century figures. As the wedding of religion and philosophy was carried out through discussions centering on the soul and knowledge as a kind of activity, the divorce was executed through discussions centering on evidence and knowledge as a kind of claim to validity. Both discussions were protracted, acute, and instructive.

By the fifteenth century, the philosophical situation in northern Europe consisted in large measure of a conflict between the *via antiqua*, the "older way," often called realism, and the *via moderna*, the "modern way," usually called nominalism. The authorities for the former were Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, and Duns Scotus, and for the latter, William of Ockham and John Buridan. Our selections largely reflect this situation, and so we begin with Duns Scotus. He left a movement of continental dimensions, some of whose prominent figures are Antonius Andreas, Francis of Meyronnes, William of Alnwick, and John of Ripa. The second figure presented here is William of Ockham, who gave

decisive formulation to lines of thought already well advanced by Durand of St. Pourçain, Peter Auriol, and Henry of Harclay, and within the circle of his enormous influence numbered Adam Wodeham and Robert Holcot as authentic disciples. Sometimes Gregory of Rimini is brought into this inner circle, but his views on propositional reference seem to preclude this. The position of our next figure, Nicholas of Autrecourt, illustrates the difficulty of the historian in achieving a sense of the structure of the period, for although Autrecourt and his fellow anti-Aristotelian John of Mirecourt were not disciples of Ockham, they are often assimilated to nominalism merely on the strength of their skeptical conclusions. Marsilius of Padua is included here as an epitome of an entire range of political discussion in which papalist positions were taken by Giles of Rome and James of Viterbo, monarchist positions by Dante and Ockham, and an effort after balance and moderation was made by John of Paris, among others. The background to our last figure, John Buridan, can be found in Ockham and to some extent in the scientific movement at Oxford. His tradition was carried into Germany by Albert of Saxony and Marsilius of Inghen, and was carried on at Paris by Nicholas of Oresme. Reviewing this list, one must regret limitations of space that have made it impossible to include such prominent and independent thinkers as Walter Burley and Thomas Bradwardine, and anyone from the entire line of German mysticism whose fountainhead was Eckhart. Limitation of space must also stand as the justification for ending with Buridan.

# John Duns Scotus, 1265/66–1308

The Subtle Doctor—and, by the transvaluation of things medieval, the original dunce—Duns Scotus has sustained several interpretations in the career of his difficult and elaborate thought. During the later Middle Ages, when his influence was at its height, he was thought of as the Prince of Realists, standing beside Thomas Aquinas and Albert the Great against the novelties of William of Ockham and other nominalists. Realism was also called the *via antiqua*, and the folios of “old-fashioned” Scotism were abandoned to the winds in the quads of Reformation Oxford. It was in this period that the name “Duns” turned into a slur, directed at Scotus’s followers, who imitated their master’s subtlety but lacked his keen insight. These “Dunsmen,” soon to become “dunces,” embodied all that was thought to be sterile and overblown and ridiculous in Scholastic philosophy. (The dunce *cap*, incidentally, arose much later, and despite what one sometimes reads, it had nothing to do with any Scotist theories about the intellect.) Yet Richard Hooker, the leading theologian of the English Reformation, quoted Scotus with approval and called him “the wittiest of the school-divines.”

Scotus wrote a generation after the Condemnation of 1277, and some of his characteristic doctrines, most notably concerning individuation and the will, reflect the theological direction encouraged by the Condemnation. But if Thomas Aquinas was a primary target of the Condemnation (a matter, still, of considerable controversy), he was certainly not a primary target of John Duns Scotus. That honor is reserved for Henry of Ghent, an “Augustinian” theologian who had a great deal to do with the Condemnation by virtue of his advice to Bishop Tempier. No one has

produced a more devastating refutation of the “Augustinian” shibboleth of illuminationism than Duns Scotus, and Henry of Ghent was his immediate target. One puts “Augustinian” in quotation marks here, not least because Scotus argued vehemently that Henry’s version of illuminationism was contrary to Augustine’s actual views about knowledge; Scotus was as much interested in defending what he took to be an authentically Augustinian position as he was in destroying Henry’s theory of knowledge.

Scotus has often been called a voluntarist, and in his characteristically Franciscan emphasis on the will as the root of freedom and the noblest human power, he certainly is one. Whether his voluntarism implies that voluntary action, be it divine, angelic, or human, is in some respect arbitrary or inexplicable, remains hotly contested. Which combinations of mutually consistent essences are to be individualized through creation are freely chosen by the divine will, but the essences themselves are not the products of any will, and, of course, the immutability of the divine will guarantees the permanence of contingent regularities. And although the free act of the human will is not totally caused by the intellect’s knowledge, there is no free action apart from some intellectual judgment about what ought to be done. The key claim of Scotus’s celebrated voluntarism is that in order for the will to be free, it must be capable in some sense of choosing other than it does. For this to be true, the act of will must not be determined by the intellect, human or divine. But for that in turn to be true does not require that the will be construed as some kind of anti-rational power. It does, however, require that nature and will be quite distinct kinds of beings. And it enforces

an interest in modal propriety, in clearly marking out what is contingent from what is truly necessary. This in turn goes together with an effort to defend the validity of cognitive activities, since an emphasis on contingency can easily lead to skepticism, as the successors of Duns Scotus soon discovered. This effort leads to some of the most characteristic of his doctrines, including the reality of common natures and the doctrine of univocal predication.

John Duns, called “Scotus” (the Scot), was born in late 1265 or early 1266 in Duns, Scotland, a few miles from the English border. He was ordained to the priesthood at Saint Andrew’s Priory in Northampton, England, in 1291, by which time he was already studying with the Franciscans. Although firm information about Scotus’s schooling is hard to come by, we do know that Scotus was lecturing on the *Sentences* at Oxford around the year 1300 and that he began lecturing at the University of Paris in the fall of 1302. In 1303, together with other foreign friars who sided with Pope Boniface VIII in a dispute with King Philip the Fair, he was required to leave France; we are not absolutely certain where Scotus went during his exile. In late 1304 he was back at Paris. Scotus was made Franciscan regent master of theology in early 1305. He was sent to Cologne in 1307 and died there on November 8, 1308.

Scotus’s texts have come down to us in a state of considerable disarray, and older editions are frequently unreliable, including spurious material and many doubtful readings. Fortunately, all of Scotus’s philosophical works have now been critically edited, and the critical edition of the *Ordinatio*—the version of his Oxford lectures that Scotus revised and edited for publication—has reached the end of Book III. Thus in this Third Edition we are able to present translations from critically edited texts, many of them published here for the first time.

The first selection presents Scotus’s remarks about the nature of self-evidence, followed by his justly famous proof of the existence of an infinite being. The prominence of the concept of infinity—which will be noticed in the second selection as well—is characteristic, since Scotus considers “infinite being” the most perfect concept of God that human beings can possess in this life; for “infinite being” includes all the

other perfections that belong to God. Scotus also devotes some attention to what he calls a *coloratio* (here translated “rehabilitation,” though “refurbishment” or “gloss” would also do) of Anselm’s argument in the *Proslogion*.

In the second selection Scotus considers the prospects for a natural knowledge of God. After setting aside several commonly made distinctions and insisting that negative theology makes no sense unless it is founded on affirmative theology, he defends the doctrine of univocal predication. Not only is univocal predication possible, he argues, but it is presupposed by any argument that derives conclusions about God from premises about creatures. To deny univocal predication, then, is to reject entirely the prospect of natural knowledge of God.

Scotus’s commitment to avoiding skepticism—in this case, skepticism about the possibility of natural theology—is even more clearly at work in the third selection, in which Scotus argues against the theory of illumination as he found it in Henry of Ghent. Scotus argues that taking Henry’s theory of knowledge seriously leads inevitably to a pervasive skepticism, and he contends that, contrary to skeptical claims, certainty is possible. We can have certainty with respect to self-evident principles and the conclusions that follow from them, some things known from experience, and our own acts. Certainty about our own acts would appear to depend on some form of intuitive cognition, which Scotus discusses in the fourth selection.

Next comes an extensive selection from Scotus’s questions on individuation. In dialogue with the views of his predecessors, he defends a kind of realism about universals according to which common natures are indifferent to being in the intellect and to being in a particular concrete object. In a particular concrete object, the common nature is “contracted,” made individual, not by quantity, but by an ultimate formal reality that he elsewhere calls a *haecceitas*: “thisness.” Another metaphysical doctrine associated with Scotus, his notion of synchronic contingency, is taken up in the next reading.

The readings from Scotus conclude with three texts on ethics and moral psychology. In the first, Scotus draws on Anselm to discuss the sin of the first angels. Although the official question is whether the first

angelic sin was an instance of pride, Scotus uses the question to examine the different kinds of acts that wills can perform and how they are related to each other. There follows a brief selection in which Scotus sketches his metaphysics of goodness in general and of

moral acts in particular. In the final selection Scotus lays out his account of natural law, which is very different from the account we find in Aquinas, and applies his understanding of contingency and necessity to determining the status of the moral law.

## 46. The Existence of an Infinite Being

*Ordinatio* I, distinction 2, part 1, questions 1–2

Question 1: Is there an actually existing infinite being?

Question 2: Is it self-evident that something infinite exists?

### I. Concerning the Second Question

The Philosopher says in *Metaphysics* 2 that “it is absurd to raise questions about knowledge and about the mode of knowing at the same time.” Accordingly, I shall reply first to the second question, which asks about the mode of knowing “God exists.” And by way of answering the question, I first offer an account of self-evident propositions, as follows:

When a proposition is called “self-evident” [literally: “known through itself”], the expression “through itself” does not rule out every cause whatsoever, since it does not rule out the terms of the proposition; after all, no proposition is known apart from knowledge of the terms. So a self-evident proposition is not known apart from knowledge of the terms, since we cognize first principles insofar as we cognize their terms. What is excluded by the expression “through itself” is any cause and notion that is outside the per se concept of the terms of the self-evident proposition. Therefore, a proposition is said to be “self-evident” that has evident truth through nothing else outside its own terms (which are, after all, part of the proposition itself).

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Translated for this volume by Thomas Williams from the Vatican edition of *Ordinatio* I, d. 2, pars 1, qq. 1–2.

Furthermore, what are “its own terms”—those in virtue of which it is supposed to be evident? I say that for our present purposes one term is a definition and the other what is defined, whether one takes “terms” as the utterances having signification or as the concepts signified.

I prove this on the basis of *Posterior Analytics* 1: the what-something-is or, in other words, the definition, is the middle term in demonstration; therefore, one or the other premise would not differ from the conclusion except as what is defined differs from the definition, and yet a premise is a self-evident principle, whereas a conclusion is not self-evident, but demonstrated. Therefore, with respect to the notion of a self-evident proposition, the concept of the definition is other than what is defined, since if the concept of the definition and the concept of what is defined were the same, there would be begging the question in the most powerful demonstration; moreover, there would be only two terms in such a demonstration, which is false.

A second proof of this is as follows. Aristotle says in *Physics* 2 that names bear the same relation to a definition as a whole bears to its parts. That is, an indistinct name is known before the definition. Now the name expresses in an indistinct way what the definition expresses distinctly, since a definition divides a thing into its discrete components. Therefore, the concept of a quiddity as it is expressed by a name in an indistinct way is prior in knowledge, according to the order of nature, to the concept of the quiddity as it is expressed distinctly by a definition; and in this way there are two different concepts and two different extremes. A corollary: since a proposition that has evident truth in virtue of its own terms is self-evident, and the concept of a quiddity as expressed distinctly by the definition is not the same term as the concept of a quiddity as expressed indistinctly by the name, it follows that if a proposition is known only through a definition in which a quiddity is distinctly conceived, a proposition about that same quiddity taken indistinctly will not be self-evident.

Another proof of this conclusion: otherwise, any other proposition that is necessary and per se in the

first mode (for example, “Man is an animal,” “Man is a body,” and so on for whatever is predicated substantially of man) would be self-evident; for if the notion of each extreme is assigned from the distinctly conceived notions of the extremes, it is apparent that one extreme will include the other. Similarly, otherwise any proposition that a metaphysician could have as self-evident would be self-evident in the special sciences. This is not true. A geometer does not use any principles as self-evident unless they have evident truth in virtue of terms conceived indistinctly (say, by conceiving *line* indistinctly); it is an evident truth that a line is a length without breadth, without yet conceiving distinctly to what category line belongs, which is how the metaphysician considers it. But otherwise, the propositions that a metaphysician could consider—say, that a line is a quantity, and suchlike—are not self-evident for the geometer.

Third, this is evident because demonstrating some predicate of what is defined is perfectly compatible with its being self-evident that that predicate belongs to the definition.

Therefore, all and only those propositions that have, or are by nature suited to have, evident propositional truth [*veritatem complexionis*] in virtue of their terms as conceived in a particular way are self-evident.

From this it is evident that there is no distinction between a self-evident proposition and a proposition that is *knowable* through itself. They are the same. A proposition is not called self-evident because it is actually cognized through itself by some intellect—if that were the case, then if no intellect were actually cognizing, no proposition would be self-evident—but instead a proposition is called self-evident because as far as the nature of the terms goes, it is by nature suited to have evident truth contained in its terms and in any intellect that conceives the terms. If, however, a given intellect does not conceive, and thus does not conceive the proposition, the proposition itself is no less self-evident. And that is the way we speak of self-evidence.

It is also evident from this that there is no distinction between what is self-evident in itself, self-evident by nature, and self-evident to us. For whatever is intrinsically self-evident is self-evident to any given intellect, even if not actually cognized [by that intellect],

insofar as in virtue of its terms it is evidently true and known if the terms are conceived.

Likewise, the distinction between self-evident propositions of the first order and those of the second order is illegitimate, since any propositions that are self-evident when their own terms are conceived have evident truth in their order.

On the basis of these remarks my answer to the question is that the proposition that conjoins these extremes—namely, existence and the divine essence as it is this particular thing, or (in other words) God and the existence proper to God—is self-evident according to the way in which God sees that essence and existence, under the most proper notion according to which this existence is in God—which is not the way in which either his existence or his being is understood by us, but by God himself and by the blessed. For that proposition has evident truth for the intellect in virtue of its terms, since it is not *per se* in the second mode (as though the predicate were outside the notion of the subject) but *per se* in the first mode, and it is immediately evident in virtue of its terms, since it is the most immediate proposition to which all propositions that express anything about God, however he is conceived, are traced back. Therefore, “God exists” or “This essence exists” is self-evident, since the extremes are by nature suited to bring about evidentness with respect to the proposition composed of them for any intellect that perfectly apprehends those extremes, since there is nothing more perfectly characterized by existence than is this essence. In this way, then, understanding by the name ‘God’ something that we do not perfectly cognize or conceive as this divine essence, “God exists” is indeed self-evident.

But if the question is whether existence is intrinsic to any concept that *we* conceive concerning God in such a way that a proposition affirming existence with respect to such a concept is self-evident—say, a proposition whose extremes we can conceive; for example, if in our intellect there can be a concept said of God but not common to God and creatures, such as necessary being or infinite being or supreme good, and we can predicate existence of such a concept *as it is conceived by us*—I say that no such proposition is self-evident. There are three reasons:

First, any such proposition is a demonstrable conclusion, and *propter quid*. Proof: whatever primarily and immediately characterizes something can be demonstrated *propter quid* of anything that is in that thing, using as a middle term the thing that it primarily characterizes. For example, if a triangle primarily has three angles equal to two right angles, it can be demonstrated of anything contained in [the notion of] the triangle by a *propter quid* demonstration that it has three angles, using triangle as the middle term: say, that some figure has three angles [equal to two right angles], etc., and it can be similarly demonstrated of any species of triangle that it has three angles [equal to two right angles], although not primarily. Now existence primarily characterizes this [divine] essence as this, *as the divine essence is seen by the blessed*; therefore, by a demonstration *propter quid* using this essence as the middle term, existence can be demonstrated with respect to anything that is in this essence that can be conceived by us (whether it is quasi-superior or a quasi-passion), just as it can be demonstrated by means of “A triangle has three angles [equal to two right angles]” that some figure has three angles [equal to two right angles]. Consequently, it is not known in virtue of its terms; for if it were, it would not be demonstrated *propter quid*.

Second, as follows: A self-evident proposition is self-evident to any intellect on the basis of its terms' being cognized. But the proposition “An infinite being exists” is not evident to our intellect in virtue of its terms. Proof: we do not even conceive the terms before we either believe the proposition or know it by demonstration, and in that prior moment it is not evident to us, since we do not hold it with certainty in virtue of its terms otherwise than through faith or demonstration.

Third, because nothing concerning a concept that is not unqualifiedly simple is self-evident unless it is self-evident that the parts of that concept are united. Now no concept that we can have of God that is proper to God and not applicable to a creature is unqualifiedly simple—or at any rate no concept that we distinctly perceive to be proper to God is unqualifiedly simple. Therefore, nothing concerning such a concept is self-evident unless it is self-evident that the parts of that concept are united. But that is not self-evident,

since the union of those parts requires demonstration, as the two arguments show.

The major premise is evident from what the Philosopher says in the chapter “On the False” in *Metaphysics* 5: that a notion false in itself is false with respect to everything. Therefore, no notion is true of anything unless it is true in itself. So in order for it to be known that something is true of some notion, or that the notion itself is true of something, one must know that the notion is true in itself; and a notion is not true in itself unless its parts are united. And just as, in the case of quidditative predications, one must know that the parts of the notion can be united quidditatively (say, that one part formally contains the other), in the case of the truth of a proposition affirming existence one must cognize that the parts of the subject or predicate are actually united. For example: just as “An irrational man is an animal” is not self-evident taken as a quidditative predication, since the subject includes within itself something false, so too “A man is white” is not self-evident if it is not self-evident that man and white are conjoined per se in actuality. For if they are not conjoined in actual existence, “Nothing is a white man” is true; and consequently its converse, “No man is white,” is true; therefore, its contradictory, “A man is white,” is false.

Proof of the minor premise: whatever concept we conceive, whether of something good or of something true, is not a proper concept of God unless it is contracted through something in such a way that it is not an unqualifiedly simple concept. Now what I mean by “unqualifiedly simple concept” is a concept that cannot be analyzed into other simple concepts, each of which can be distinctly cognized in a simple act.

This last argument provides the basis for an obvious response to two objections: [a] the argument that “Necessary being exists” is self-evident because the opposite of the predicate is incompatible with the subject, since if it does not exist, it is not necessary being; and [b] that “God exists” is self-evident, because according to every exposition of the name ‘God’ that Damascene puts forward in Chapter 9 [of *De fide orthodoxa*], ‘God’ is said on the basis of actual operation—namely, from fostering or burning or seeing; therefore, on every interpretation, “God exists” is equivalent to “Something actually operating exists,” which

seems to be self-evident, since (as before) the opposite of the predicate is incompatible with the subject.

I therefore respond in a different way to these objections. Neither of these propositions is self-evident — neither “Necessary being exists” nor “Something actually operating exists”—because it is not self-evident that the parts that are in the subject are actually united. As for the claim that “the opposite of the predicate is incompatible with the subject,” I say that it does not follow from that that the proposition is self-evident unless that incompatibility is evident and, in addition, it is evident that each extreme has an unqualifiedly simple concept or else that the concepts of the parts are unqualifiedly united. . . .

## II. Concerning the First Question

Accordingly, I proceed to the first question. The existence of an infinite being cannot be demonstrated by a demonstration *propter quid* as far as our capacities go, though from the nature of its terms the proposition is demonstrable *propter quid*. But the proposition is indeed demonstrable for us by a demonstration *quia* starting from creatures. Now the properties of an infinite being that relate to creatures are more immediately connected with the middle terms of a demonstration *quia* than are its absolute properties, in such a way that conclusions concerning those relative properties can be reached more immediately on the basis of those middle terms in a demonstration *quia* than conclusions concerning absolute properties. For from the existence of one relative follows immediately the existence of its correlative. Therefore, I shall first prove the existence of the relative properties of an infinite being; second, I shall prove the existence of an infinite being, because those relative properties characterize only an infinite being. Thus, there will be two main headings for this part of the discussion.

As for the first, I say that the properties of an infinite being that are relative to creatures are properties of either causality or eminence; and there are two kinds of properties of causality, namely, of efficient causality and of final causality. The “exemplar cause” added [by Henry of Ghent] is not a kind of cause distinct from the efficient cause, since if it were, there

would be five kinds of causes. So an exemplar cause is a particular variety of efficient cause, since it is something that acts through intellect as opposed to something that acts through nature. More on that elsewhere.

### A. Proof of the Existence of the Relative Properties of an Infinite Being

Under the first main heading I shall draw three main conclusions. First, then, I will show that in the domain of efficient causality a being exists that is unqualifiedly first in terms of efficient causality, and that something also exists that is unqualifiedly first in terms of the notion of an end, and that something exists that is unqualifiedly first in terms of eminence. Second, I show that that which is first in terms of one of these primacies is also first in terms of the other two. And third, I show that this triple primacy pertains to only one nature, in such a way that it does not pertain to a plurality of natures differing in species or quidditatively. And thus in this first main section there will be three subsections.

#### I. Proof of the Three Primacies

##### a. The First Efficient Cause

The first subsection includes three main conclusions, one for each primacy, but each of these three conclusions has three [intermediate conclusions] on which it depends: the first is that something is first, the second is that it is uncausable, and the third is that it actually exists among beings. And so in the first subsection there are nine conclusions, but three main ones.

The first of these nine conclusions is this: something with efficient-causal power is unqualifiedly first in such a way that it cannot be effected and it does not exercise efficient causality by the power of anything other than itself. Proof: some being can be effected. So it can be effected either by itself, or by nothing, or by something other than itself. Not by nothing, because that which is nothing is a cause of nothing, and not by itself, because there is no thing that makes or generates itself, according to *On the Trinity* I.1. Therefore,

by something other than itself. Call that thing *a*. If *a* is first, in the sense just explained, then I have my conclusion. If *a* is not first, then it has efficient-causal power in a posterior way, because it can be effected by something else or exercise efficient causality by the power of something other than itself (since to negate a negation is to posit the corresponding affirmation). So let that other thing be *b*, and the same argument that was made about *a* now gets made about *b*. Either we proceed in this way to an infinity in which any given thing is subsequent to something prior, or else we come to a stopping point with something that does not have anything prior to it. Now infinity is impossible in ascending, so a primacy is necessary, since what has nothing prior to it is not posterior to anything posterior to it; for a circle in causes is absurd.

Two objections are raised against this argument. First, according to philosophers, an infinity is possible in ascending; they give the examples of infinite generations, where no generation is first but each is subsequent to another. And yet they posit this without any circle.

Second, it appears that this argument proceeds from contingents and thus is not a demonstration. Proof of the antecedent: the premises assume the existence of something caused, and any such thing exists contingently.

By way of ruling out the first objection I say that the philosophers did not posit a possible infinity in essentially ordered causes but only in accidentally ordered causes, as is evident from Avicenna, *Metaphysics* VI.5, where he speaks of an infinity of individuals in a species.

For a better proof of the conclusion it is important to know what essentially ordered and accidentally ordered causes are. It is important to note here that it is one thing to speak of *per se* causes and *per accidens* causes and another thing to speak of essentially (or *per se*) ordered causes and accidentally ordered causes. In the former there is only a comparison of one thing, a cause, to one thing, what is caused. A *per se* cause is one that causes in accordance with its own nature and not in accordance with something accidental to it, and a *per accidens* cause is the converse. In the latter there is a comparison of two causes with respect to each other insofar as what is caused is from them.

*Per se* (or essentially) ordered causes differ from *per accidens* (or accidentally) ordered causes in three ways:

The first difference is that in *per se* ordered causes the second cause depends on the first insofar as it causes. In *per accidens* ordered causes this is not the case, although the second cause may depend on the first in some other respect.

The second difference is that in *per se* ordered causes there is causality of a different kind and of a different order, because the superior cause is more perfect. In accidentally ordered causes, by contrast, this is not so. And this difference follows from the first, since no cause depends essentially in causing on a cause of the same kind, since one thing of a kind suffices in causing something.

The third difference is that all the essentially and *per se* ordered causes are required simultaneously in order to cause; otherwise some essential and *per se* efficient causality will be absent. In accidentally ordered causes, by contrast, this is not so; simultaneity of such causes is not required for causing.

On the basis of these differences it is shown that an infinity of essentially ordered causes is impossible. Similarly, a second argument: an infinity of accidentally ordered causes is impossible unless a stopping point in essentially ordered causes is posited; therefore, an infinity in essentially ordered causes is impossible no matter what. Also, if an essential order is denied, an infinity is still impossible; therefore, no matter what, there is something necessarily and unqualifiedly first in efficient causality.—For the sake of brevity, let the first of these three propositions be called *a*, the second *b*, and the third *c*.

First *a*, the claim that an infinity of essentially ordered causes is impossible. Proof: first, because the whole collection of essentially ordered effects is from some cause that is not a member of that collection, since otherwise something would be its own cause. For the whole collection of dependent things is dependent, and not dependent on anything belonging to that collection. Second, because [if there were an infinity of essentially ordered causes], infinitely many causes—essentially ordered causes, that is—would be in actuality simultaneously, as follows from the third difference above; no philosopher allows for this. Third, because what is prior is nearer the beginning, accord-

ing to *Metaphysics* 5; therefore, where there is no beginning, nothing is essentially prior. Fourth, because a superior cause is more perfect in causing, as follows from the second difference; therefore, what is infinitely superior is infinitely more perfect and thus has an infinity of perfection in causing and consequently does not cause in virtue of the power of anything else, for whatever causes in virtue of the power of something else causes imperfectly, since it depends in causing on something else. Fifth, because efficient-causal power does not necessarily imply any imperfection; therefore, it can exist in something without any imperfection. But if there is no cause that is without any dependence on something prior, efficient-causal power does not exist in anything without any imperfection. Therefore, a non-dependent power of efficient causality can exist in some nature, and that nature is unqualifiedly first; therefore, an unqualifiedly first power of efficient causality is possible. This is sufficient, since it will be argued below on this basis that if a first efficient cause of this sort is possible, it exists in reality. From these five arguments, *a* is evident.

Proof of *b*, the claim that an infinity in accidentally ordered causes is impossible unless a stopping point in essentially ordered causes is posited: if an accidental infinity is posited, this is not simultaneous, as is evident, but merely successive, one after the other, in such a way that the subsequent in some way flows from the prior. But the subsequent does not depend on the prior *in causing*; for it can cause whether the prior exists or does not, as a son generates whether his own father is dead or alive. Such an infinity of succession is impossible unless it depends on some nature of infinite duration, on which the whole succession and each member of it depends. For no change of form is perpetuated except by the power of something enduring that is not a member of the succession, since all the elements of that succession are of the same kind; rather, that enduring thing is something essentially prior, since each member of the succession depends on it; and that dependency is of a different order from its dependence on a proximate cause that is a member of that succession. Therefore, *b* is evident.

Proof of *c*, the claim that if an essential order is denied, an infinity is still impossible. Proof: from the first argument presented here, namely, that nothing can

exist from nothing, it follows that some nature has efficient-causal power. If an essential order of active causes is denied, then that nature with efficient-causal power causes in the power of nothing other than itself. And even if we say that in some individual this nature is caused, nonetheless, in some individual it is not caused. This is what I intend to show is true concerning this nature. If we say that in every individual it is caused, we immediately run into a contradiction with the denial of an essential order, since we cannot posit that any nature is caused in every individual in such a way that there is an accidental order under that nature without an essential order to some other nature.

As for the second objection raised above, which says that the argument proceeds from contingents and thus is not a demonstration, I reply that one could argue as follows: some nature is an effect, because some subject undergoes change, and thus the terminus of the change begins to exist in the subject, and thus that terminus, or the composite, is produced or effected; therefore, by the nature of correlatives, there is something with efficient-causal power. Put in such a way, the first argument can in truth be contingent, and yet evident. — Nonetheless, one could argue as follows in proving the first conclusion: “Some nature can be effected; therefore, some nature has efficient-causal power” is true. Proof of the antecedent: some subject is mutable, since among beings there is something possible, understanding “possible” as distinguished from “necessary.” In this way the argument proceeds from necessary things. Put in such a way, the proof of the first conclusion concerns quidditative being or possible being, not actual existence. But at present we are merely showing the possibility of actual existence; actual existence will be proved in the third conclusion. . . .

The third conclusion concerning the first efficient cause is this: the first efficient cause exists in actuality, and it is a nature that truly exists in actuality just as it exercises efficient causality in actuality. Proof: If it is conceptually impossible for a given thing to exist from another, then if that thing can exist, it can exist from itself. But it is conceptually impossible for an unqualifiedly first efficient cause to exist from another, as is evident from the second conclusion. And that such a thing can exist is evident from the fifth argument given for *a*, which seems to have the weakest conclusion and

yet still concludes at least this much. . . . Therefore, the unqualifiedly first efficient cause can exist from itself. And what does not exist from itself cannot exist from itself, since if it could, a non-being would produce something's existence, which is impossible; and what's more, it would cause itself, and thus it would not be altogether uncausable. —This last point, concerning the existence of the first efficient cause, is shown in another way, in that it is unsuitable that there be nothing in the universe with the highest possible degree of being.

In addition to these three conclusions concerning the first efficient cause, note a certain corollary, which in a way contains the three conclusions that have been proved. The first efficient cause is not merely prior to others; it is such that anything's being prior to it involves a contradiction. Thus, it exists insofar as it is first. This is proved like the preceding conclusion, for being uncausable belongs especially to the notion of what is first in this way, as the second argument shows; therefore, given that it can exist (since it does not contradict being, as is proved from the first conclusion), it follows that it can exist from itself, and thus that it does exist from itself.

#### b. The First Final Cause

In addition to the first three conclusions, which concern efficient causality, I present three similar conclusions concerning final causality.

[The first conclusion is that] something that can serve as a final cause is unqualifiedly first: that is, it cannot be ordered to anything else, and it is not apt to be an end for other things in the power of something other than itself. This is proved by five proofs similar to those offered for the first conclusion concerning the first efficient cause.

The second is that the first final cause is uncausable. Proof: it can have no further end, since otherwise it would not be first [in final causality]; and further, it cannot be effected. This inference is proved as follows. Every *per se* agent acts on account of an end, according to *Physics* 2. (In that passage the Philosopher means this to apply to nature, but it seems to apply all the more to purposive agents.) But if something has no *per se* efficient cause, it cannot be effected, since in

no genus can something *per accidens* be first, as is evident in the matter at hand in particular with regard to causes acting *per accidens*, which are chance and luck. According to Aristotle in *Physics* 2, chance and luck are necessarily reduced to causes acting *per se*—namely, to nature and intellect or purpose—as prior causes. So if something has no *per se* agent cause, it has no agent cause at all; and if something has no end, it has no *per se* agent cause; therefore, it cannot be effected. For an end surpasses in goodness, and consequently in perfection, something that can be for the sake of an end. . . .

The third conclusion is that the first final cause exists in actuality and that primacy belongs to some nature that actually exists. This is proved in the same way as the parallel conclusion in the case of efficient causality.

Corollary: it follows that the first final cause is first in such a way that there cannot be any final cause prior to it. This is proved in the same way as the corollary in the discussion of efficient causality.

#### c. The Most Eminent Being

In addition to the three conclusions about each order of extrinsic causality that have already been set forth, I put forward three similar conclusions about the order of eminence.

[The first conclusion is that] some eminent nature is unqualifiedly first in terms of perfection. This is evident because there is an essential order among essences, since according to Aristotle in *Metaphysics* 8, forms are disposed just as numbers are. There is a stopping point in this order, which is proved by the five arguments given above for the stopping point in efficient causality.

The second conclusion is that the supreme nature is uncausable. Proof: it cannot have an end, [as is evident] from the foregoing [arguments]; therefore, it cannot be effected; and further, it is therefore uncausable. These two inferences are proved in the second conclusion concerning efficient causality. Another proof that the supreme nature cannot be effected: everything that can be effected has some essentially ordered cause, as is evident from the proof of *b* in the first conclusion concerning the first efficient cause.

The third conclusion is that the supreme nature is something actually existing. This is proved on the basis of the foregoing.

Corollary: There being any nature more eminent than or superior to the supreme nature involves a contradiction. This is proved in the same way as the corollaries about efficient and final causality.

## 2. Proof That Each of the Primacies Implies the Others

As for the second main point, I say that the first efficient cause is the ultimate end. Proof: every per se efficient cause acts for the sake of an end, and a prior efficient cause acts for the sake of a prior end; therefore, the first efficient cause acts for the sake of the ultimate end. But the first efficient cause acts principally and ultimately for the sake of nothing other than itself; therefore, it acts for its own sake as its own end. Therefore, the first efficient cause is the first end.

Similarly, the first efficient cause is the first eminent. Proof: the first efficient cause is not univocal, but equivocal, with respect to other natures with efficient-causal power; therefore, it is more eminent and nobler than they. Therefore, the first efficient cause is supremely eminent.

## 3. Proof That Exactly One Nature Possesses the Triple Primacy

As for the third main point, I say that since that in which the triple primacy exists is one and the same thing—since if one primacy exists in something, the others do too—there is also in such a thing a triple identity such that the first efficient cause is exactly one in quiddity and nature. In order to show this, I first present a preliminary conclusion and then the main conclusion.

The preliminary conclusion is that the efficient cause that is first in terms of this triple primary is of itself a necessary being. Proof: it is completely uncausable, for a contradiction is involved in anything else's being prior to it in the genus of efficient or final causality, and consequently in terms of any cause of what-

ever genus; therefore, it is completely uncausable. On this basis I argue as follows: nothing can fail to exist unless something positively or privatively impossible with it can exist; now nothing can exist that is positively or privatively impossible with what is from itself and completely uncausable; therefore, etc. The major premise is evident, because no being can be destroyed except by something positively or privatively impossible with it. Proof of the minor premise: that impossible thing can exist either from itself or from another; if it can exist from itself, either it does in fact exist from itself, in which case two impossible things will exist simultaneously, or else neither exists, because each destroys the other's existence; if from another, no cause can destroy a being because of an incompatibility with its effect unless it gives its effect a more perfect and more intense being than the being of the other thing that is to be destroyed. But no being that is from another derives from its cause a nobler existence than the existence of what is necessary from itself, because everything that is caused has dependent existence, whereas what exists from itself has independent existence.

On the basis of this preliminary conclusion I proceed further to prove the unity of the first nature, which is the principal conclusion I mean to defend in this third section. I offer three arguments to prove it.

First, if two natures have necessary existence, they are distinguished by some real features belonging to them. Let's call those features *a* and *b*. Either those features are formally necessary or they are not. If they are, then each of those features has necessary existence, which is impossible, for since neither of them intrinsically includes the other, both of them taken individually would have necessary existence. But if neither is formally necessarily existent through those distinguishing features, then those features are not grounds for necessary existence, and thus neither nature will be included among the necessarily existent, since any entity that is not necessarily existent is possible in itself, and nothing possible is included among the necessarily existent.

Second, there cannot be two supremely eminent natures in the universe; therefore, neither can there be two first efficient causes. Proof of the antecedent: species are disposed as numbers are, according to

*Metaphysics* 8, and consequently there cannot be two in the same order. Therefore, much less can there be two firsts or two supremely eminent.

This is also evident, third, by means of an argument from the nature of an end. If there were two ultimate ends, they would have two independent orders of things toward themselves, in such a way that these beings would have no ordering toward those, since they would have no ordering toward the end of those other beings. For things that are ordered toward one final cause cannot be ordered toward another, since it is impossible for one caused being to have two total and complete causes in the same order; otherwise there would be a *per se* cause in some order such that, if the cause is not posited, the caused being would nevertheless exist. Therefore, things ordered toward one end are in no way ordered to the other; nor, consequently, are they ordered to the things that are ordered to that other end. And thus the totality of such things would not constitute a universe. . . .

## B. Proof of God's Infinity

With these preliminary conclusions established, I argue for infinity in four ways.

First, on the basis of efficient causality, which provides two proofs of the conclusion: first, because the being that possesses the triple primacy is the first efficient cause of all things; second, because it is an efficient cause that distinctly cognizes all things that can be made. Third, infinity is shown on the basis of final causality. Fourth, it is proved on the basis of eminence.

The Philosopher touches on the first way in *Physics* 8 and *Metaphysics* 12, where he argues that the first cause moves with an infinite motion and therefore has infinite power.

This argument is strengthened as to its antecedent as follows: the conclusion is established just as well if the first cause *can* move infinitely as if it *does* move infinitely. For the fact that the first being must be in actuality exactly what it can be is evident insofar as the first cause exists from itself. So even if it does not in fact move with an infinite motion, as Aristotle holds, nonetheless, if one takes the antecedent as meaning that, for its part, it *can* so move, the an-

tecedent comes out true and is equally sufficient for inferring the conclusion.

The inference is proved as follows: Given that the first being is from itself, it does not depend on the power of something else in moving with an infinite motion. Therefore, it does not receive from something else its moving in this way; rather, it has its entire effect all at once in its active power, because it has it independently. But what has an infinite effect in its power all at once is infinite. Therefore, etc. . . .

Now follows the second way, from the fact that the first being distinctly understands all possible things that can be made. In this connection I argue as follows: intelligibles are infinite, and actually so, in an intellect that understands all things; therefore, an intellect that understands them all simultaneously is infinite. And the intellect of the first being is like this.

I prove the antecedent and the inference of this enthymeme. Things that are potentially infinite in such a way that, taking one after another, they cannot have any end are actually infinite if they are all actual simultaneously. It is obvious enough that intelligibles are potentially infinite for a created intellect, and those things that are understood successively by a created intellect are all actually understood by the divine intellect simultaneously. Therefore, infinitely many things are actually understood by the divine intellect. I prove the minor premise of this syllogism (though it certainly seems obvious enough): all such things that can be taken one by one are, when they exist simultaneously, either actually finite or actually infinite. If they are actually finite, then by taking one after another, one can eventually get through them all; therefore, if they cannot actually all be got through, it follows that if they all actually exist simultaneously, they are actually infinite. I prove the inference of the first enthymeme as follows. Where many-ness requires or demonstrates greater perfection than few-ness, numerical infinity demonstrates infinite perfection. . . .

The third way, based on final causality, is argued as follows. Our will can desire and love something greater than any finite thing, just as our intellect can understand something greater than any finite thing. And it seems, moreover, that there is a natural inclination to love supremely an infinite good. For the evidence that there is in the will a natural inclination to something

is that a free will of itself, without habituation, wills that thing readily and with pleasure. And this, it seems, is how we experience the act of loving an infinite good. Indeed, it does not appear that the will is completely satisfied with anything else. And if there were something opposed to the will's object, how could the will help but naturally hate it, as (according to Augustine in *On Free Choice of the Will* 3.8) the will naturally hates non-existence? Also, it seems that if infinity were incompatible with goodness, the will would by no means be satisfied with a good under the aspect of infinity and would not readily tend toward it, just as it does not tend toward anything incompatible with its object. . . .

Fourth, the conclusion is shown on the basis of eminence. I argue as follows: the existence of something more perfect than it is impossible with a supremely eminent being, as became evident earlier. Now the existence of something more perfect than it is not impossible with a finite being. Therefore, etc.

Proof of the minor premise: infinite is not incompatible with being, but any infinite is greater than any finite. There is another argument for this claim, which amounts to the same thing: that with which intensively infinite being is not incompatible is not supremely perfect unless it is in fact infinite; for if it is finite, it can be exceeded or excelled, since infinite being is not incompatible with it. Infinity is not incompatible with being. The minor premise of this argument, which is accepted in the preceding argument, does not appear to be provable a priori, since just as contradictories contradict each other in virtue of their proper notions, and their contradiction cannot be proved more evidently through anything else, so too it appears that non-compatible things are non-incompatible in virtue of their proper notions and that their non-incompatibility cannot be shown otherwise than by explicating their notions. Being is not explicated through anything better-known, and we understand the infinite through the finite. (Using everyday language, I explain it like this: the infinite is what exceeds any given finite thing not by any determinate measure, but by more than any such measure one might assign.)

Nonetheless, here is another persuasive argument. Just as anything that does not appear impossible should be taken to be possible, so too anything that

does not appear impossible [with something else] should be taken to be compossible [with that other thing]. In the present case there appears to be no impossibility, since finiteness is not part of the notion of being and it is not apparent from the notion of being that finiteness is an attribute convertible with being. One or the other of these two would have to be the case in order for the incompatibility mentioned earlier to obtain, for it is sufficiently well-known that the primary and convertible attributes of being are in the first being.

Another persuasive argument is that the infinite in its way is not incompatible with quantity, that is, with being taken one part after another. Therefore, neither is the infinite in its way incompatible with entity, that is, with existing simultaneously in its completeness.

Moreover, if the quantity of a power is unqualifiedly more perfect than the quantity of a mass, how could it turn out that something infinite is possible in mass but not in power? Now if something infinite in power is possible, it exists in actuality, as is evident from the third conclusion above concerning the primacy of efficient causality; it will also be proved below.

Moreover, the intellect, whose object is being, finds no incompatibility in understanding something infinite; indeed, the infinite seems to be the most perfect intelligible. Now it would be quite bizarre if such a contradiction were not evident to any intellect concerning its primary object, given that a discordant sound so easily offends the sense of hearing. For if something unsuitable gives offense as soon as it is perceived, why does no intellect flee naturally from an infinite intelligible as from something unsuitable that destroys its primary object?

On this basis Anselm's argument in the *Proslogion* about the supreme cognizable good can be rehabilitated. Anselm's characterization should be understood as follows: God is the being such that, having been cognized without contradiction, a greater than he cannot be thought without contradiction. It is clear that one needs to add "without contradiction," since if the cognition or thought of something includes a contradiction, that thing is said to be not thinkable. For in that case there are two opposed thinkable things that in no way make a single thinkable thing, since neither qualifies the other.

This supreme thinkable thing, without contradiction, can be in reality. This is proved first for quidditative being, on the grounds that in such a thinkable thing the intellect is supremely satisfied. Therefore, that thing includes the notion of the first object of intellect, which is being, and that in the highest degree. And going on from here, it is argued further that it is, speaking now of the being of existence: the supremely thinkable thing does not exist merely in the intellect that thinks it, since in that case it would be able to exist (since a thinkable thing is possible) and also not able to exist (since it is incompatible with the notion of such a being that it should be from some cause, as was evident earlier, in the second conclusion concerning the first efficient cause). Therefore, what exists in reality is a greater thinkable thing than what exists only in the intellect. Now we should not take this as meaning that if something is thought, that very same thing is a greater thinkable thing if it exists, but as meaning that anything that exists in reality is greater than anything that exists only in the intellect.

Another way of rehabilitating Anselm's argument goes like this. That which exists is a greater thinkable thing; that is, it is more perfectly cognizable, because it can be seen or understood by intuitive intellection; when it does not exist, it cannot be seen, either in itself or in something nobler to which it adds nothing. Now what can be seen is more perfectly cognizable than what cannot be seen or what is intelligible only abstractively. Therefore, the supremely perfect cognizable thing exists. In distinction 3 I shall touch upon the difference between intuitive and abstractive intellection and how intuitive intellection is more perfect. . . .

### C. Summary

From what has been said, the answer to the question is clear. Section A establishes that some existing being is unqualifiedly first according to the triple primacy of efficient causality, final causality, and eminence, and thus unqualifiedly such that it is impossible for anything else to be prior to it. And in this way the existence of God is proved as far as God's properties in relation to creatures are concerned, or as far as he is characterized by dependency relations of creatures toward him.

Section B provides a fourfold proof that this first being is infinite: first, because this being is the first efficient cause; second, because the first being cognizes all things that can be made . . . ; third, because the first being is the ultimate end; and fourth, because it is eminent. . . . In connection with the fourth proof, we expounded Anselm's argument in the *Proslogion* that "God is that than which a greater cannot be thought." . . .

On the basis of the foregoing conclusions, which have been proved and demonstrated, I give the following argument by way of answering the question. Some being that is first among beings in this threefold way actually exists among beings. That triply first being is infinite. Therefore, some infinite being actually exists. And this—that God is infinite—is the most perfect conceivable and the most perfect absolute concept that we can have naturally of God, as will be explained in distinction 3. And thus it has been proved that God exists in terms of the concept or being of God that is the most perfect we can conceive or possess concerning God.

## 47. The Possibility of Knowing God

From *Ordinatio* I, distinction 3, part 1, questions 1–2  
Question 1: “Is God knowable naturally by a wayfarer?”

### I. The Sense of the Question

In answering this question one should make no distinction between God’s being known negatively and his being known affirmatively, since a negation is known only in virtue of an affirmation, according to *On Interpretation* 2, near the end, and *Metaphysics* 4. It is also evident that we do not know negations about God except through affirmations: on the basis of those affirmations, we negate other things that are incompatible with those affirmations.

Also, we do not have supreme love for negations.

Similarly, a negation is conceived either in isolation or as said of something. If a negation—say, non-stone—is conceived in isolation, it is just as applicable to nothing as it is to God, since a pure negation is said of being and of non-being. So in such a case God is no more being understood than is nothing or a chimera. If we are talking about a negation said of something, then I ask about the underlying concept of which this negation is understood to be true: is it an affirmative concept or a negative concept? If it is an affirmative concept, my point is made. If it is a negative concept, I ask as before: is that negation conceived in isolation or as said of something? If in isolation, it is just as applicable to nothing as it is to God; if as said of something, I ask as before. And however far we might keep going with these negations, either God will not be understood any more than nothing is, or we eventually come to a stopping point in some affirmative concept that is first.

Second, one should make no distinction between the knowledge of what something is and the knowl-

edge of whether something is, because what I am asking about in this investigation is a simple concept concerning which “exists” is known through an act of an intellect composing and dividing. For I never know whether something is unless I have some concept of that subject whose existence I know about. That concept is what I am asking about here.

Third, there is also no need to distinguish two senses of the question whether something is: a question about the truth of a proposition and a question about the existence of God. For if there can be a question about the truth of a proposition in which ‘exists’ is predicated of a subject, in order to conceive the truth about that question or proposition one must first conceive the terms of the question, and our present investigation is about whether a simple concept of that subject is possible.

Fourth, there is no value in distinguishing between a natural concept and a supernatural concept. We’re looking for a natural concept.

Fifth, there is no value in distinguishing between ‘naturally’ as referring to nature taken absolutely and ‘naturally’ as referring to nature in its present condition. We’re asking exclusively about cognition in our present condition.

Sixth, there is no value in distinguishing between cognition of God in a creature and cognition of God in himself. If our cognition is drawn from a creature in such a way that discursive cognition *begins* from a creature, I ask, how far does that discursive cognition ultimately reach? If it reaches God in himself, my point is made, since I am looking for that concept of God in himself. If it does not reach God in himself but stops short with a creature, then the end of the discursive process will be the same as the beginning, and no knowledge of God will be possessed—at any rate, the intellect has not arrived at the end-point of its discourse if it stops short with some object that is the starting-point of its discourse. . . .

The sense of the question, then, is this: can the intellect of a wayfarer naturally possess a simple concept in which God is conceived?

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Translated for this volume by Thomas Williams from the Vatican edition of *Ordinatio* I, d. 3, pars 1, qq. 1–2.

## II. A Quidditative Concept of God Can Be Possessed

I say that a concept can be possessed naturally in which God is conceived not merely quasi-accidentally (say, in some attribute) but *per se* and quidditatively. Proof: according to Henry of Ghent, in conceiving 'wise,' one conceives a property or quasi-property in second actuality perfecting a nature. Therefore, in order to understand 'wise' I must first have a prior understanding of some 'what' in which I understand this quasi-property to inhere. And thus, prior to all concepts of attributes or quasi-attributes one must look for a quidditative concept to which one understands all those things to be attributed. This other concept will be a quidditative concept of God, since there cannot be a stopping point in any other concept.

## III. A Concept Univocal to God and Creatures

Second, I say that God is conceived not merely in a concept analogous to creatures—that is, a concept completely different from that which is said of a creature—but in a concept that is univocal to God and creatures. And so that there is no dispute over the word 'univocal,' by a univocal concept I mean a concept that is one in such a way that its unity is sufficient for a contradiction if it is both affirmed and denied of the same thing. Its unity is also sufficient for it to serve as the middle term of a syllogism, so that if the extreme terms are united by a middle term that is one in this way, it can be concluded without committing the fallacy of equivocation that they are united to each other.

I prove univocity, so understood, in five ways.<sup>1</sup> First: any intellect that is certain of one concept and in doubt about others has a concept of that about which it is certain that is distinct from the concepts of the things about which it is in doubt. The subject includes the predicate. But the intellect of a wayfarer can be certain concerning God that he is a being while it is unsure whether he is a finite being or an infinite being. Therefore, the concept of the being of God is distinct from the concept of finite being and from the concept of infinite being. In itself it is not identical with either of

them, and it is included in each of them. Therefore, it is univocal. Proof of the major premise: one and the same concept is not both certain and subject to doubt. Therefore, either the certain concept is a different concept from the doubtful one, which is my point, or there is no certain concept at all, in which case there will not be certainty with respect to any concept. Proof of the minor premise: every philosopher was certain that what he identified as the first principle is a being. For example, one was certain that fire was a being, another that water was a being. But not one of them was certain that it was first, for if any had been, he would have been certain of something false, and what is false is not knowable. Nor was any of them certain that this being was *not* first, since if any had been certain, he would not have claimed that it *was* first.

Confirmation: someone taking note of the philosophers' disagreement could be certain, with respect to anything that someone identified as the first principle, that it is a being, and yet because of this variance of opinions he could remain in doubt about whether it is this being or that. And if a demonstration were offered to such a doubter that either established or refuted some inferior concept—for example, a proof that fire is not the first being, but a being posterior to the first being—that first concept that he is certain about, his concept of being, would not be undermined; it would be preserved in the particular concept proved about fire. And by this the proposition assumed in the last inference of the argument is established: the concept about which he is certain, a concept that is not identical with either of the concepts about which he is doubtful, is preserved in both of those concepts.

Now you may not care to rely on authority by arguing from the disagreements of the philosophers. You may say that anyone has two very close concepts in his intellect that, owing to the closeness of the analogy, appear to be a single concept. On the contrary: this maneuver appears to destroy any possible way of proving the unity of any univocal concept. For if you say that human beings have one concept for Socrates and Plato, anyone can contradict you and say that there are actually two concepts, but they appear to be one because they are so very similar. . . .

The second argument in favor of univocity is as follows. No concept of something real is naturally caused

1. The fifth way is omitted.

in a wayfarer's intellect except by things that naturally move our intellect: namely, phantasms, or the object represented in a phantasm, and the agent intellect. Therefore, no simple concept is produced in our intellect in its present state other than what can be produced by their power. But a concept that would not be univocal to the object represented in a phantasm, but is a wholly distinct and prior concept to which the latter is related by analogy, cannot be produced by the power of the agent intellect and the phantasm. Therefore, this other, analogous concept that is posited will never be naturally in a wayfarer's intellect; and thus it will not be possible for any wayfarer to have any concept of God naturally, which is false.

Proof of the assumption: any object, whether represented in a phantasm or in an intelligible species, with the cooperation of the agent or possible intellect, produces, when acting up to the limit of its power, an effect that is proportionate to itself: its proper concept and the concept of everything essentially or virtually included in it. But that other concept, the supposed analogous concept, is not essentially or virtually included in it and is not identical with it. Therefore, the supposed analogical concept is not produced by any such mover. . . .

The third argument is as follows. The proper concept of some subject is a sufficient basis for concluding about that subject all the conceivable features that necessarily belong to it. But we have no concept of God by which we can sufficiently know all the things we conceive about God that belong to him necessarily—this is evident in the case of the Trinity and other matters of belief that are necessarily true. Therefore, etc. . . .

Likewise, fourth, the following argument can be made. Either some unqualified perfection has a notion common to God and creatures, in which case my point is made, or else it does not. If it does not, then either the unqualified perfection is proper to creatures alone—which means that the notion of the unqualified perfection is formally inapplicable to God, which is absurd—or it has a notion that is altogether proper to God—in which case it follows that nothing is to be attributed to God on the grounds that it is an unqualified perfection, since that is simply to say that the notion of that perfection as it applies to God states an

unqualified perfection. And that will destroy Anselm's teaching in the *Monologion*, where he states that, leaving aside relatives, in all other [predicates] whatever is unqualifiedly better to be than not to be should be attributed to God, just as everything that is not like that is to be denied of God. So according to Anselm, one first knows that something is like this and then attributes it to God; therefore, it is not like this exclusively as it is in God. Confirmation: otherwise, no unqualified perfection would be in a creature. The inference is obvious, because (on this assumption) no concept of any such perfection would also characterize a creature; only an analogous concept would be applicable to a creature. . . . And it is not true of that notion [as it applies to a creature] that it is in every respect better to be such than not, because if it *were* true, that perfection would be attributed to God in accordance with that analogical notion.

This fourth argument is also confirmed as follows. Every metaphysical inquiry concerning God proceeds by considering the formal notion of something, removing from that formal notion every imperfection that it has in creatures, purifying that formal notion and attributing utterly supreme perfection to it, and in this way attributing it to God. Take, for example, the notion of wisdom (or understanding) or of will. First that notion is considered in itself and according to itself. And because that notion does not formally entail any imperfection or limitation, all the imperfections that accompany it in creatures are removed. Thus purified, that same notion of wisdom or will is attributed to God in the most perfect way. Therefore, every inquiry about God presupposes that the intellect has the same, univocal concept that it derives from creatures.

Now you might say that the formal notion of the perfections that belong to God is different [from the formal notion of the perfections that belong to created things]. But this leads to the absurd result that no conclusion can be drawn about God from any notion proper to these perfections as they are in creatures, because the two sorts of notions are wholly distinct. Indeed, the conclusion that God is formally wise would no more follow from the notion of wisdom that we grasp in creatures than would the conclusion that God is formally a stone. After all, some concept distinct from the concept of a created stone could be formed, and

the created stone could bear some analogical relationship to the concept of the stone as it is an idea in God, and thus in accordance with this analogous concept it could be said formally that God is a stone, just as it is said formally that God is wise, according to that analogous concept. . . .

#### IV. God Cannot Be Known through a Notion Proper to Him

Third, I say that God is not known naturally by a wayfarer in particular and properly, that is, under the notion of this essence as this and in itself. . . .

An argument for this conclusion: God, as this essence in itself, is not naturally known by us, because qua such an object of knowledge God is a voluntary object, not a natural object, except for his own intellect. And therefore God cannot be known by any created intellect under the notion of this essence as this; nor does any essence that is naturally knowable by us sufficiently manifest this essence as this, by any likeness of either univocity or imitation. For there is univocity only in general notions; and imitation, too, falls short because it is imperfect, since creatures imitate God imperfectly. . . .

#### V. The Concept of Infinite Being

Fourth, I say that we can arrive at many concepts proper to God that do not apply to creatures. The concepts of all unqualified perfections in the highest degree are concepts of this sort. And the most perfect concept, in which we most perfectly know God as though by a certain description, comes by conceiving all the unqualified perfections in the highest degree. Yet a concept that is at once more perfect and simpler is possible for us: the concept of infinite being. This concept is simpler than the concept of good being, true being, and similar concepts, because 'infinite' is not a quasi-property or quasi-attribute of being or of that of which it is said; it states an intrinsic mode of that entity. Thus, when I say 'infinite being,' I do not have a quasi-accidental concept consisting of a sub-

ject and its attribute, but a per se concept of a subject with a certain degree of perfection, namely, infinity—just as 'intense whiteness' does not state an accidental concept like 'visible whiteness'; instead, intensity states the intrinsic degree of whiteness in itself. And thus the simplicity of the concept of infinite being is evident.

The perfection of this concept is proved in two ways. First, of all the concepts we can conceive, this one virtually includes the most. For just as being virtually includes in itself true and good, so infinite being includes infinite truth and infinite good along with every unqualified perfection qua infinite. Second, the existence of an infinite being is the final conclusion of a demonstration *quia*, as is clear from the first question of Distinction 2 (p. 564), and things that are known as the final conclusion of a demonstration *quia* based on creatures are more perfect, because, owing to their remoteness from creatures, they are the most difficult conclusions to reach from creatures.

#### VI. God Is Known through Species of Creatures

Fifth, I say that what is known of God is known through species of creatures. For whether the more universal and the less universal are known through one and the same species, that of the less universal, or whether instead each has its own intelligible species proper to it, in any event, that which can impress a species of something less universal in the intellect can also cause a species of anything more universal. And thus creatures, which impress their proper species on the intellect, can also impress species of transcendentals that are applicable in common to them and to God. And then the intellect, by virtue of its own power, can make use simultaneously of many species—for example, the species of good and of supreme and of actuality—in order to conceive a supreme and perfectly actual good. This is evident from the topic *a minori*, since the imaginative power can make use of species of various sensibles in order to imagine something composed of those various things, as is obvious in imagining a golden mountain.

## 48. Against Illumination and Skepticism

From *Ordinatio* I, distinction 3, part 1, question 4

Finally, with respect to the business of knowability, I ask whether any certain and pure truth can be naturally known by the intellect of [someone] in this life without a special illumination from the uncreated light. . . .

[Henry of Ghent's Theory]

Now if a question arises about knowledge of a being, or of that which is true, it is said that the intellect, from its purely natural powers, can understand the "true" in this way. This is proved, because it is absurd "for there to be a nature that lacks its proper operation," according to [John] Damascene [*De fide orthodoxa* 3.15]. And this is all the more absurd in the case of a more perfect nature, according to the Philosopher, *On the Heavens and the World* 2, [the passage] on stars [2.8, 290a29–31]. Therefore, since the proper operation of the intellect is to understand the "true," it seems absurd for nature not to have granted to the intellect the things that suffice for this operation.

But if we are talking about the cognition of *truth* [as distinct from *what is true*], the answer given is that, just as there are two [kinds of] exemplar, the created and the uncreated (according to Plato in the *Timaeus* [27d–28d], namely, the made exemplar and the non-made one, or the created and the non-created one—the "created exemplar" is the universal species caused by the thing, [while] the "uncreated exemplar" is the Idea in the divine mind), so [too] there are two [kinds of] conformity to an exemplar, and two [kinds of] truth.

One [kind] is the conformity to the created exemplar. In this sense Aristotle held that the truths of

things are known through their conformity to the intelligible species. Augustine too seems to hold this in *On the Trinity* 8.7, where he says we have a general and a special knowledge of things, gathered from the senses, according to which we judge the truth of whatever happens, that it is such and such.

But that through such an acquired exemplar in us we should have an entirely certain and infallible knowledge of the truth of the thing—that seems altogether impossible. And this is proved with three reasons, according to them. The first is taken from the side of the thing from which the exemplar is extracted, the second from the side of the subject in which it exists, and the third from the side of the exemplar in itself.

The first reason is this: The object from which the exemplar is abstracted is mutable. Therefore, it cannot be the cause of anything immutable. But someone's certain knowledge about something under the aspect of truth is had in him by means of an immutable aspect. Therefore, it is not had by means of such an exemplar. This is said [to be] Augustine's reasoning in *On Eighty-three Questions*, question 9, where he says that "truth is not to be expected from sensibles" because "sensibles are continually being changed."

The second reason is this: The soul of itself is mutable and subject to error. Therefore, it cannot be corrected or regulated, so that it not fall into error, by anything more mutable than it [is]. But such a [created] exemplar in [the soul] is more mutable than the soul itself is. Therefore, that exemplar does not completely regulate the soul so that it does not fall into error. This is said [to be] Augustine's reasoning in *On True Religion* [30.56]: "The light of all the arts," and so on.

The third reason [is this]: No one has a certain and infallible knowledge of truth unless he has the means of distinguishing the true from the apparently true. For if he cannot distinguish the true from the false or from the apparently true, he can doubt whether he is mistaken. But by means of the aforesaid created exemplar he is not able to distinguish the true from the apparently true. Therefore, and so on.

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Translated by Paul Vincent Spade from the Vatican edition of *Ordinatio* I, d. 3, pars 1, q. 4. Reprinted by permission of the translator.

Proof of the minor [premise]: Such a species can represent itself as itself, or else, in another way, [it can represent] itself as the object, as happens in dreams. If it represents itself as the object, there is falsehood. If [it represents] itself as itself, there is truth. Therefore by means of such a species there is nothing had sufficient to distinguish when it represents itself as itself from [when it represents itself] as the object, and so nothing sufficient to distinguish the true from the false.

From these [arguments] it is concluded that if a man should happen to have certain knowledge and to know the infallible truth, this does not happen to him in virtue of [his] looking to an exemplar taken from the thing by the senses, no matter how much it is purified and made universal. Rather it is required that he look back to the uncreated exemplar.

The way [they] maintain [this works] is as follows: God does not have the aspect of an exemplar as “what is known,” by looking to which the pure truth is known. For he is known [only] in [terms of some] general attribute. Rather, he is the “reason for knowing” as the bare exemplar and the proper reason of the created essence.

An example is given how he can be the “reason for knowing” and [yet] not known. For, just as a ray from the sun sometimes comes from its source at a reflected angle, as it were, [and] sometimes directly, [and] what is seen in the ray that comes in the first way, even though the sun is the “reason for seeing” it, nevertheless [the sun] is not seen in itself, but the sun is the “reason for knowing” what is seen in the second way, in such a way that it is seen too, therefore, when this uncreated light illumines the intellect directly, as it were, it is, as seen [itself], the “reason for seeing” other things in it. But it illumines our intellect in this life as it were at a reflected angle. And therefore to our intellect it is an unseen “reason for seeing.”

Here then is how it is claimed [this uncreated exemplar] has a threefold relation to the act of seeing, namely, the relation of (a) an actualizing light, (b) an altering species, and (c) a configuring stamp or exemplar. From this it is concluded further that a special influence is required [for seeing, and analogously for knowing]. For just as the [divine] essence is not naturally seen by us in itself, so [too] it is not seen naturally

insofar as that essence is an exemplar with respect to some creature. [This is] in accordance with Augustine in [his] *On Seeing God*. For it is in his power to be seen. “If he wishes, he is seen; if he does not wish, he is not seen” [*Letter 147, to Paulinus, On Seeing God* 6.18].

Finally, it is added that a perfect knowledge of the truth occurs when the two exemplary species concur in the mind, the one inhering [in the mind], namely, the created one, and the other descending into [it], namely, the uncreated one. And in this way we arrive at the word<sup>1</sup> of perfect truth.

### [Criticism of Henry of Ghent’s Theory]

Against this opinion, first I show that these [three] reasons are not reasons that form the basis for any true opinion. Neither [are they] in accordance with Augustine’s meaning. Rather they favor the [skeptical] opinion of the Academics. Second, I show how the opinion of the Academics, which seems to be concluded on the basis of these arguments, is false. Third, I reply to these reasons insofar as they are not conclusive. Fourth, I argue against the conclusion of this opinion. . . .

#### [Article 1]

First, these [three] reasons seem to imply the impossibility of [any] certain natural knowledge.

The first one [does so], because if the object is continually being changed, we cannot have any certitude about it under the aspect of the immutable. Indeed [such] a certitude could not be had in any light, because there is no certitude when the object is known otherwise than it is. Therefore, there is no certitude in knowing the mutable as immutable. It is clear also that the antecedent of this [first] reason, namely, that

1. That is, a completed act of knowing. The term ‘mental word’ is frequently used in connection with the theory of concept formation. It is meant to suggest both the relation of thought to outward speech and also the Augustinian theory of the Trinity, in which the second person, as a kind of intellectual product, is called “the Word.” See also John 1:1, “In the beginning was the Word.”

“sensibles are continually being changed” is false. For this is the opinion attributed to Heraclitus in *Metaphysics* 4 [5, 1010a7–11].

Likewise [for the second reason]. If, because of the mutability of the exemplar that is in our soul, there could be no certitude, [then] since whatever is put in the soul as in a subject is mutable, even the very act of understanding, it follows that *nothing* in the soul corrects the soul so that it not fall into error.

Likewise, according to this opinion the created species inhering [in the soul] concurs with the species that descends into [it]. But when something that is inconsistent with certitude concurs, no certitude can be had. For just as from one [premise] about [what is] necessary and another about [what is] contingent no conclusion follows except about [what is contingent], so [too] from the certain and the uncertain, concurring in some cognition, no certain cognition follows.

The same thing is clear in the case of the third reason. For if the species abstracted from the thing concurs in every knowledge, and [if] it cannot be judged when it represents itself as itself and when [it represents] itself as the object, therefore, whatever else concurs, no certitude can be had through which the true might be distinguished from the apparently true.

Therefore, these [three] reasons seem to imply every *un*-certainty, and the opinion of the Academics. . . .

It is to be noted that there are four [kinds] of cognitions in which there is necessary certitude for us, namely, [cognition] (a) about absolutely knowable things, [that is, first principles and conclusions drawn from them]; (b) about things known through experience; (c) about our [own] acts; and (d) about things known by us “as of now” through sensation. (The first [kind] is plain. The third [kind] is concluded to be self-evident; otherwise, we could not judge what would be self-evident. The second and fourth [kinds] include an infinitude of self-evident [truths], to which others are joined from the several senses.) An example [of the first kind is], “A triangle has three [angles equal to two right angles],” [of the second kind] “The moon is eclipsed,” [of the third kind] “I am awake,” [and of the fourth kind] “That is white.” The first and third [kinds] need sensation only as an occasion, because there is absolute certitude even if all the senses were in error. The second and fourth [kinds] hold through the [rule]

“Whatever often comes about from something non-free, has that [non-free thing] as [its] natural cause through itself.” From this the point follows. Both in the second and in the fourth [kinds] sometimes a necessary proposition is added [as a further premise]. . . .

[Article 2]

With respect to the second article, in order that the Academics’ mistake may not find a foothold in [any] knowable things, we must see what is to be said in the case of [each of] the aforesaid three [kinds of] knowable [objects], namely, [first] for self-evident principles and for conclusions, secondly for things known through experience, and thirdly for our [own] acts: whether an infallible certitude can be had naturally.

[First Principles]

Therefore, with respect to certitude about principles, I say this: The terms contained in self-evident principles have such an identity that plainly the one necessarily includes the other. And therefore when the intellect puts those terms together [in a statement of the principle], from the very fact that it apprehends them it has before itself the necessary cause of [that] act of composition’s<sup>2</sup> conformity with the very terms of which it is an [act of] composition. And [it] also [has before itself] the *evident* cause of such a conformity. And therefore this conformity, the evident cause of which [the intellect] apprehends in the terms, is necessarily plain to it.<sup>3</sup> Therefore the apprehension of the terms, and their composition, cannot be in the intellect without having the conformity of that composition with [its] terms, just as there cannot be [one] white thing and [another] white thing without there being a similarity [that arises between them].

Now this conformity of the composition with its terms is the *truth* of that composition. Therefore, there

2. The word ‘composition’ in this passage means either the mind’s *act* of putting terms together to form a judgment stating the principle, or else the *product* of that act, the actual judgment or statement of the principle.

3. The words “And [it] also . . . plain to it” are a later annotation in Scotus’s own hand.

cannot be a composition of such terms without being true. And so there cannot be a perception of that composition and a perception of the terms without there being a perception of the conformity of the composition to [its] terms, and so the perception of truth. For when the former are perceived, they evidently include the perception of this truth.

This reasoning is confirmed with an analogy by the Philosopher, in *Metaphysics* 4 [3, 1005b29–32], where he says that the opposite of a first principle cannot come into anyone's intellect, namely, of the [principle] "It is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be," because then contrary opinions would be together in the mind. This is in fact true about contrary opinions, that is, about those that are formally inconsistent, because the opinion attributing being to something and the opinion attributing non-being to the same thing are formally inconsistent.

So in the present case I will argue [that there is] some inconsistency of intellections in the mind, even though not a formal one. For if the conception of "whole" and "part" is in the intellect, and their composition, [then] since these, as a necessary cause, include the conformity of the composition to [its] terms, [therefore] if the opinion that this composition is false should be in the intellect, there will be inconsistent conceptions—not formally, but rather the one conception will be there with the other, and yet will be a necessary cause of the conception opposite to it, which is impossible. For just as it is impossible for white and black to be together, because they are formally contraries, so it is impossible for white to be so necessarily together with that which is precisely the cause of black, that the former cannot be without the other without contradiction.

Once certitude is had about first principles, it is clear how it will be had about conclusions inferred from them because of the evidence of the form of the perfect syllogism, since the certitude of the conclusion depends only on the certitude of the principles and on the evidentness of the inference.

But will the intellect not err in this knowledge of principles and conclusions if all the senses are deceived about the terms?

I reply, as far as this kind of knowledge is concerned, that the intellect does not have the senses as a

cause but only as an occasion, because the intellect cannot have the knowledge of the simple [terms of a judgment] unless [they are] taken from the senses. Yet as soon as they are taken [from the senses], [the intellect] can put [those] simple [terms] together. And if there should be an evidently true complex [made up] of such simple [terms], the intellect will assent to that complex in virtue of itself and of the terms, not in virtue of the sense from which it takes those terms from outside.

For example, if the notion of "whole" and the notion of "greatness" are taken from sensation, and the intellect puts together the [proposition] "Every whole is greater than its part," the intellect, in virtue of itself and of these terms, will assent without doubt to this complex—and not only because it saw the terms conjoined in reality, as it assents to this [proposition] "Socrates is white" because it saw the terms united in reality.

Indeed, I say that [even] if all the sensations from which such terms are taken were false—or, which is more apt to cause deception, some sensations false and some sensations true—the intellect would not be deceived about such principles. For it would always have before itself the terms that would be the cause of truth. Hence, if the species of whiteness and of blackness were miraculously impressed in a dream on someone blind from birth, and they stayed there afterwards when he was awake, [his] intellect, abstracting from these [notions], would put together the [proposition] "The white is not black." And [his] intellect would not be deceived on this matter, even though the terms are taken from an errant sense. For the formal aspect of the terms, to which he has arrived, is the necessary cause of the truth of this negative [judgment].

#### *[Things Known through Experience]*

About the second [kind] of knowable [objects], namely, [those] known through experience, I say that even though experience is not had about all the singulars, but [only] about several of them, neither is it had always but [only] often, nevertheless one who is experienced [in some matter or other] knows infallibly that it is so both always and in all cases. [He knows] this

through the following proposition dormant in the soul: “Whatever comes about in most cases<sup>4</sup> by some non-free cause is a natural effect of that cause.” This proposition is known to the intellect even though its terms might be taken from an errant sense. For a non-free cause cannot non-freely produce “in most cases” an effect to the opposite of which it is [naturally] ordained, or to which it is not ordained by its form. But a chance cause is ordained to producing the opposite of a chance effect or not producing it. Therefore, nothing is a chance cause of an effect that is frequently produced by it, and so, if it is not free, it will be a natural cause. Now the effect [under discussion here] comes about from such a cause “in most cases.” This is taken from experience. For by finding such a nature now with this kind of accident, now with that, [but in both cases associated with a given effect,] we have found that no matter how great the diversity of accidents might be, it was always from this nature that such an effect followed. Therefore, such an effect follows, not through some accidental feature of this nature, but through the very nature in itself.

But further, it is to be noted that sometimes experience is had of a conclusion—for instance, the moon is frequently eclipsed—and then, assuming that the conclusion is so, the cause of such a conclusion is sought by the method of analysis. Sometimes too, from an experienced conclusion one arrives at principles known through [their] terms. In that case, on the basis of such a principle known from [its] terms, the conclusion [that was] formerly known only through experience is known [even] more certainly, namely, by the first kind of cognition, [discussed in the previous section of this article], because [it is known] as deduced from a self-evident principle.

For instance, this is self-evident, that an opaque [object] interposed between a visible [object] and a light-source prevents the light from reaching the visible [object]. And if it is found by an analysis that the earth is such a body interposed between the sun and the moon, [then] it is known most certainly, through a *propter quid* demonstration (because through the

cause), [that the moon is eclipsed], and not only through experience, as this conclusion was known before the discovery of the principle.

But sometimes there is experience of a principle such that one cannot by the method of analysis find a further principle known from [its] terms [from which the original principle can be derived]. Rather we come to a halt with something true “in most cases,” the extremes of which are known by experience to be frequently united—for instance, that this herb of such and such a species is hot. Neither is there found any other prior middle [term] through which [this] attribute might be demonstrated *propter quid* of [this] subject. Rather we come to a halt with this as the primary [fact], known through experiences. In that case, even though the uncertainty and fallibility might be removed by means of the proposition “An effect ‘in most cases’ of some non-free cause is a natural effect of it,” nevertheless this is the last [and lowest] degree of scientific knowledge. And perhaps in such a case no knowledge of the *actual* uniting of the extremes is had, but only of an *aptitude* [for such a uniting of the extremes]. For if the attribute is an absolute thing<sup>5</sup> other than the subject, it could without contradiction be separated from the subject, and [then] the experienced [person] would not have a knowledge that [the uniting] is [really] the case, but [only] that it is naturally apt to be.

#### [Our Own Acts]

About the third [kind of] knowable [objects], namely, our [own] acts, I say that there is certainty about many of them just as [there is] about first and self-evident [principles]. This is clear in *Metaphysics* 4 [6, 1011a3–9], where the Philosopher says about arguments claiming that all appearances are true, that those arguments ask “whether we are now awake or sleeping. But all such doubts come to the same thing. For they think it fitting that there be a reason for all things.” And he goes on, “They seek a reason for things of which there is no reason. For there is no demonstration of the principles of demonstration” [ibid.,

4. “In most cases” = *ut in pluribus*. The phrase is a kind of technical expression in contexts like this.

5. “Absolute” things are to be contrasted with “relative” or “respective” things, such as relations.

1011a12–13]. Therefore, according to him in that passage, it is self-evident that we are awake, like a principle of demonstration.

Neither is there any problem about the fact that this is contingent. For, as was said elsewhere,<sup>6</sup> there is an order among contingencies such that one is first and immediate. Otherwise there would be an infinite regress of contingencies, or else some contingency would follow from a necessary cause. Both of these are impossible.

And just as there is certitude about being awake, as about [something] self-evident, so too for many other acts that are in our power—for instance, that I understand, that I hear—and about others that are completed acts. For even though there is no certitude that I see a white thing placed outside me or in such and such a subject or at such and such a distance, because there can arise an illusion in the medium [between the object and the sense organ] or [in] the [sense] organ, and in many other ways [too], nevertheless there is certitude that I see, even if there does arise an illusion in the organ. (This seems to be the greatest [kind of] illusion. For instance, when an act [of sensation] arises in the organ itself, not from [any] object present [to it], [but] such as naturally arises from a present object.) And so, supposing such an assumed case, if the power had its action [in it], there would truly be there what is called “vision,” whether that is an action or a passivity or [a combination of] both.

But if an illusion occurred not in the organ proper but in something nearby that *seems* [to be] the organ—for example, if the illusion did not occur in the gathering of nerves, but rather there arose in the eye itself an impression of a species such as naturally arises in it—the [sense of] sight would still see. For that species would be seen, or what is naturally seen *in* it [would be seen], since it is far enough from the organ of sight, which is in the gathering of these nerves.<sup>7</sup> Thus it ap-

pears from Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 11.2, that after-images are seen remaining in the eye when the eyes are closed. And [it appears] from the Philosopher, *On Sense and Sensibilia* [2, 437a23–36] that the flash is seen that is generated by violently raising the eye and is transmitted to the closed eyelid. These are true “visions,” although not the most perfect ones, because here there are great enough distances between the species and the main organ of sight.

But how is there certitude about things that come under acts of sensation [as their objects], for instance that something external is white or hot, just as it appears [to be]?

I reply: In the case of such an object of knowledge, either the same things appear opposite to distinct senses, or else [they do] not, but rather all the senses that know it have the same judgment about it.

If [it happens] in the second way, then there is certitude about the truth of the known [object], based on the senses and based on this prior proposition “What comes about ‘in most cases’ from something [else], has the latter as its natural cause if it is not a free cause.” Therefore, since from this [thing] present [to the senses], the transformation of the sense comes about “in most cases,” it follows that the transformation (the generated species) is a natural effect of such a cause. And so, the external [object] will be white or hot, or something such as is naturally presented through the species generated by it “in most cases.”

But if distinct senses have distinct judgments about something seen externally—for instance, sight says the stick is broken, part of which is in water and part is in air, [and] sight always says that the sun is of smaller size than it [really] is and that everything seen from afar is less than it [really] is—in such cases there is certitude [about] which is true and [about] which sense is in error. [This certitude is] based on a proposition latent in the soul, more certain than any judgment of sensation, as well as on the combined acts of

6. In the Prologue to the *Ordinatio*.

7. The point here is that in order to sense, there must be some separation between the sense organ and its object. If the illusion arises in the organ itself, then although there is really a sensory activity taking place, there is nothing *sensed*—not even something *illusory*. But if the illu-

sion arises somewhere else, then not only is there sensory activity, there is also something sensed, although it is illusory. The difference is roughly the difference between an out-and-out hallucination, on the one hand, and seeing the (apparently) bent oar in the water, on the other.

several senses. Thus [there is] always some proposition [that] corrects the intellect about which of [our] acts of sensation is true and which false. In the case of this proposition the intellect does not depend on sensation as on a cause but as on an occasion.

For example, the intellect has this proposition latent [in it], “Nothing harder is broken by contact with something soft that yields to it.” This is so self-evident on the basis of [its] terms that, even if they were taken from errant senses, the intellect can have no doubt about it. Indeed, the opposite includes a contradiction. But that the stick is harder than the water, and the water yields to it—both senses say that, both sight and touch. It follows therefore: the stick is not broken as the [one] sense judges it [to be] broken. And so in the case of the broken stick, the intellect judges on the basis of [something] more certain than every act of sensation which sense is in error and which not.

Likewise, in the other case. That a quantity, [when] applied [as a measure] to [another] quantity, is [nevertheless always] altogether equal to itself, this is known to the intellect no matter how much the knowledge of the terms is taken from an errant sense. But that the same quantity can be applied to the seen [object] when nearby and when far away—both sight and touch say that. Therefore, the quantity is equal, whether seen from nearby or from afar. Therefore, the [sense of] sight that says it is less is in error.

This conclusion is inferred from self-evident principles and from the acts of two senses that know it to be so “in most cases.” And so, wherever reason judges a sense to be in error, it judges this not through some knowledge taken precisely from the senses as a cause, but through some knowledge occasioned by sensation (in which [knowledge] it is not deceived even if all the senses are deceived), and through some other knowledge taken from the sense or from the senses “in most cases.” The latter they know to be true by means of the proposition frequently cited [above], namely, “What comes about ‘in most cases,’” and so on.

### [Article 3]

As for the third article, on the basis of [all] these things [said above], we must reply to the three reasons [cited earlier in favor of Henry of Ghent’s theory].

To the first [reason], [that is] to the one about change in the object. The antecedent is false. Neither is it Augustine’s view. Rather it is the error of Heraclitus and his disciple Cratylus, who did not want to speak but [only] to move his finger, as it is said in *Metaphysics* 4 [5, 1010a7–15]. [Furthermore, even] granting that the antecedent were true, the inference is invalid. For, according to Aristotle, certain cognition could still be had about the fact that everything is continually being moved.

Also, it does not follow: “If the object is mutable, therefore what arises from it is not representative of anything under the aspect of the immutable.” For it is not the *mutability* in the object [that is] the reason for [its] giving rise [to the representation]. Rather, it is the *nature* of the mutable object itself. Therefore, what arises from [the object] represents the nature in itself. Therefore, if the nature qua nature has some immutable relation to [something] else, that other [thing] through its exemplar, as well as the nature itself through its exemplar, are represented as immutably united. And so through two exemplars, generated from two mutable [objects] not insofar as they are mutable but insofar as they are natures, knowledge of their immutable union can be had.

[But], even though it does not generate [a representation] insofar as it is mutable, nevertheless if it *is* mutable, how is its relation to [something] else immutable?

I reply [that] a relation is immutable in this sense, because the opposite relation cannot hold between the extremes [of the relation]. Neither can this one *not* hold, given the extremes. Nevertheless, through the destruction of [one] extreme or of [both] extremes, [the relation itself] is destroyed, [and so it is not immutable in that sense].

To the contrary: How can a proposition be affirmed [to be] necessary, if the identity of [its] extremes can be destroyed?

I reply: When a thing does not exist, it has no real identity. But in that case, if it exists in an intellect, there is an identity insofar as it is an object of the intellect, and [this identity] is necessary in a certain respect, because in such [mental] being the extremes cannot exist without that identity [between them]. But that [identity] can fail to exist, just as the extremes can fail to be understood.

Therefore, a proposition is “necessary” in our intellect [only] in a certain respect, because it cannot be changed into [something] false. But [a proposition] is not “absolutely necessary” except in the divine intellect, just as [its] extremes do not have their [mutual] identity with absolute necessity in any [kind of] “being” except in that “understood being” [in God’s mind].<sup>8</sup>

It is plain also that a representative [that is] mutable in itself can represent something under the aspect of the immutable. For God’s essence is represented to the intellect under the aspect of the immutable by something entirely mutable, whether that is a species or an act [of the mind]. This is clear from an analogy, because something can be represented under the aspect of the infinite by a finite [thing].

To the second [reason], I say that two kinds of mutability can be understood [to belong] to the soul: one from affirmation to negation, and conversely—for instance, from ignorance to knowledge or from non-intellection to intellection—and the other from contrary to contrary—for instance from correctness to deception or conversely.

Now with respect to any object whatever, the soul is changeable by the first [kind of] mutability. This kind of mutability is not removed from it by anything existing formally in [the soul]. But it is not changeable by the second [kind of] mutability except with respect to those complexes that do not have [their] evidence from their [very] terms. With respect to those, however, that *are* evident from their terms, [the intellect] cannot be changed by the second [kind of] mutability. For when these terms are apprehended, they are the necessary and evident cause of the conformity of the produced composition to those terms. Therefore, [even] if the soul is absolutely changeable from correctness to error, it does not follow that it cannot be made correct by something other than itself. It can at least be made correct for those objects for which the intellect cannot be in error.

As for the third [reason], I say that if it held any persuasiveness [at all], it would count more *against* the view that denies the intelligible species (which is the

8. The passage “[But] even though . . . [in God’s mind]” is a later annotation in Scotus’s own hand.

view of the one who holds this opinion here<sup>9</sup>). For the species that in dreams can represent a sensible as an object would be a phantasm, not an intelligible species.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, if the intellect used only a phantasm through which the object is presented to it, and not any intelligible species, it does not seem that it would be able to distinguish the true from the apparently true by means of something in which the object shines forth. But if we assume a species in the intellect, the reasoning is invalid. For the intellect cannot use that [species] as an object, because it cannot use it [at all] in sleep.<sup>11</sup>

Suppose you object: If the phantasm can represent itself as an object, therefore the intellect can be in error because of the error in the imaginative faculty—or at least it can be bound up so that it cannot operate—as is clear in the case of dreams and in madmen.

It can be said [in response to this] that, even if it is [so] bound up when there is such an error in the imaginative faculty, nevertheless the intellect is not in error, because in such a case it does not have any action [at all].

But then how will the intellect know or be certain when the imaginative faculty is not in error? Yet in order for the intellect not to be in error, it is required that [the imaginative faculty] not be in error.<sup>12</sup>

9. The words in parenthesis are an annotation in Scotus’s own hand. The reference is to Henry of Ghent.

10. In an act of intellection, the intelligible species is not an object of thought. Rather it is that representation in the mind *through* which the object is presented. A phantasm or “image,” however, *is* an object of thought, even if it represents some further object of thought as well. Henry of Ghent rejected the theory of intelligible species and appealed to phantasms or images instead.

11. The point is that, on Henry’s theory, there would be no way to distinguish infallibly between the phantasm or image and what it represents. Since both are objects of thought, the one may sometimes be confused with the other, as for instance in dreams. Scotus’s point is that this cannot happen if we substitute a theory of intelligible species for phantasms, because the intelligible species in a given act of intellection is never an object of thought presented in that act.

12. If the imaginative faculty is presenting mere phan-

I reply: The following truth is latent in the intellect, that a power does not fall into error about its corresponding object, unless it is malfunctioning. And it is known to the intellect that the imaginative faculty does not malfunction while awake to such an extent that it makes the phantasm represent itself as the object. For it is self-evident to the intellect that he who understands is awake, so that the imaginative power is not bound up while awake as it is in dreams.<sup>13</sup>

But there is still an objection against the aforesaid certitude about [our own] acts, as follows: [Sometimes] it seems to me that I see or hear, when nevertheless I do not see or hear. Therefore, there is no certitude about this.

I reply: It is one thing, against [one who] denies some proposition, to show it to be true. It is [quite] another thing to show someone who grants it *how* it is true. For example, in *Metaphysics* 4 [3, 1005a29–1006a18], [arguing] against [one who] denies the first principle [of demonstration], the Philosopher does not lead [him] into the absurdity that contrary opinions would exist together in the soul. They would grant that as a premise. Rather, he leads them into other absurdities that are more obvious to them, although not [more obvious] in themselves.

But to those who accept [that] first principle, he shows *how* it is known, because [it is known] in such a way that its opposite cannot come into the mind. He proves this because [if its opposite *could* come into the mind], then contrary opinions could exist together [in the mind]. This conclusion is more absurd there than the hypothesis [is].

So [too] here. If you grant that nothing is self-evident, I do not want to argue with you, because it is obvious you are just being captious and are not convinced [of what you say], as your own actions make plain (as the Philosopher objects in *Metaphysics* 4 [5,

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tasms as though they were real objects, the intellect, which judges about these matters, might very well be fooled.

13. But earlier he said it was the intellect, not the imaginative power, that was bound up in dreams. That would make better sense here too. Otherwise the argument, which is difficult enough in any case, would be a blatant non sequitur. But the edition has it the way I have translated it.

1010b3–11]). For when you dream of being in the process of obtaining [some] nearby [object], and wake up afterwards, you do not pursue it as you would pursue [it] if you were that close to reaching it while awake.

But if you grant that some proposition is self-evident, and that a malfunctioning faculty can fall into error about any [proposition] whatever, as is plain in dreams, therefore in order for some [proposition] to be recognized as self-evident, one has to be able to recognize when the faculty is functioning properly and when not. Consequently, in the case of our [own] acts, knowledge can be had of when a faculty is so functioning that what appears to it to be self-evident is [indeed] self-evident.

As for the [actual] formulation of this quibbling [objection], I say then that just as it appears to a dreamer that he sees, so [too] the opposite of a speculative self-evident principle can appear to him. And yet it does not follow that that principle is not self-evident. So too it does not follow that it is not self-evident to the hearer that he hears. For a malfunctioning faculty can fall into error in either case, but not a properly functioning one. And when it is functioning properly and when not—that is self-evident. Otherwise no other [proposition] could be recognized to be self-evident. For it could not be recognized which [proposition] is self-evident, whether the one to which the intellect would give its assent while disposed in the one way, or [the one to which it would give its assent while disposed] in the other.

[Article 4]

As for the fourth article, I argue against the conclusion of [Henry of Ghent's] opinion as follows. I ask what he means by “certain and pure truth”? Either [he means] infallible truth, that is, without doubt and deception. And it was proved and explained above, in the second and the third article, that that can be had on the basis of our purely natural powers. Or else he means the truth that is an attribute of being [*entis*]. In that case, since “being” can be naturally understood, therefore so [can] “true” insofar as [that] is its attribute. Therefore, “truth” too [can be understood], by a [process of] abstraction. For whatever form can be understood as in a subject can [also] be understood in itself and in abstraction from a subject.

Or else, in [yet] another way, he means by “truth” a conformity to an exemplar. If [it is conformity] to the created [exemplar], the point is clear. But if [it is conformity] to the uncreated exemplar, the conformity to that cannot be understood except in [terms of] that exemplar as known, because a relation is not knowable unless [its] extreme is known. Therefore, what is claimed [by Henry’s theory] is false, that the eternal exemplar is the reason for knowledge but not an [object] known.

Furthermore, secondly [I argue] as follows: An [act of] simple understanding can [come to] know by way of definition everything that it understands [at first only] confusedly. [It can do this] by seeking the definition of that known [object] by the method of analysis. This defining [kind of] knowledge seems to be the most perfect [kind] pertaining to simple understanding. But from this most perfect knowledge of the terms, the intellect can most perfectly understand the principle [based on those terms], and from the principle [it can understand] the conclusion. At that point intellectual knowledge seems to be complete, so that there does not seem [to be any] necessary knowledge of truth beyond the truths mentioned.

Again, [I argue] thirdly: Either the eternal light that you call necessary for having pure truth causes something naturally prior to the act [of knowledge], or else [it does] not. If so, therefore [what it produces] is either in the object or in the intellect. Not in the object, because the object, insofar as it has being in the intellect, does not have real being but only intentional [being]. Therefore, it is not capable of [having] any real accident.

If [what the eternal light produces] is in the intellect, therefore the uncreated light does not transform [the mind] to know the pure truth except by means of its effect. And so the common view seems to hold that

knowledge [takes place] in the uncreated light just as fully as this opinion [of Henry’s does]. For [the common view] holds that [knowledge] is seen in the agent intellect, which is an effect of the uncreated light—and a more perfect one than that accidental created light [of Henry’s theory] would be.

But if [the eternal light] causes nothing naturally [prior] to the act [of knowing], therefore either the light alone causes the act, or else the light together with the intellect and the object [does]. If the light alone [does it], therefore the agent intellect has no operation [to perform] in the knowing of pure truth, which seems absurd. For this operation is the most noble [act] of our intellect. Therefore, the agent intellect, which is the most noble [factor] in the soul, concurs in some manner in this action.

And the absurdity that is inferred here is also concluded in another way on the basis of the aforesaid opinion. For, according to the one who holds this view, an agent that makes use of an instrument cannot perform an action that exceeds the action of [that] instrument. Therefore, since the power of the agent intellect cannot [reach] knowledge of pure truth, it follows that the uncreated light, using the agent intellect, cannot perform the action of this knowing of pure truth in such a way that the agent intellect would play there the role of an instrument.

If you say that the uncreated light causes this pure truth<sup>14</sup> together with the intellect and the object, that is [just] the common theory, which holds that the eternal light, as a remote cause, causes every certain truth. Therefore, either this view [of Henry’s] will be absurd or else it will not disagree with the common view. . . .

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14. Rather, the knowledge of the pure truth.

## 49. Intuitive and Abstractive Cognition

From *Ordinatio* II, distinction 3, part 2, question 2

... There are two kinds of intellection. For there can be a cognition of an object insofar as the cognition abstracts from any actual existence, and there can be another cognition of the object insofar as it exists and insofar as it is present in some actual existence.

This distinction is proved by argument and by analogy.

The first alternative is evident from the fact that we can have scientific knowledge of certain quiddities. Now scientific knowledge is of an object insofar as it abstracts from actual existence; otherwise, such knowledge would exist at some times and not at others, and thus it would not be constant. Instead, if the thing known ceased to exist, the scientific knowledge of that thing would cease, which is false.

The second alternative is proved as follows. That which belongs to an inferior power in its fully actualized state seems to exist in a more eminent way in the superior power of the same kind. Now sense is a cognitive power, and it belongs to sense in its fully actualized state to cognize a thing insofar as it is present according to its own existence; therefore, this is possible in the intellect, which is the highest cognitive power. Therefore, the intellect can have this sort of intellection of a thing as present.

And in order to speak concisely, I call the first kind of cognition “abstractive,” because it is of the quiddity itself insofar as it abstracts from actual existence and

non-existence. The second kind of cognition, which is of a thing according to its actual existence (or which is of a present thing in accordance with such existence), I call “intuitive intellection” — not in the sense in which “intuitive” is contrasted with “discursive” (for in that sense some abstractive cognition is intuitive), but intuitive without qualification, in the way in which we are said to “see” [*intueri*] a thing as it is in itself.

This second kind of cognition is also made clear by the fact that we do not look forward to a cognition of God of the sort that we could have of him even if (*per impossibile*) he did not exist or were not present by his essence. Rather, we look forward to an intuitive cognition, which is called “face to face” [1 Corinthians 13:12]; for just as sensory cognition involves getting “face to face” with a thing as present, so too does the cognition of God that we await.

The second way of showing the legitimacy of this distinction is by an analogy with the sensory powers. A particular sense does not cognize an object in the same way the imagination does. A particular sense cognizes an object as existing in itself; the imagination cognizes the same object as present through a species, and that species of the object could exist even if the object does not exist or is not present. Thus, imaginative cognition is abstractive by comparison with the particular sense. Now things that are distributed across lower powers are sometimes united in higher powers. Thus, these two modes of sense, which are distributed across the sensory powers on account of their respective organs (because there is no one organ that is apt for receiving an object of a particular sense and also apt for receiving an object of imagination), are united in the intellect, which as one and the same power is capable of either sort of act.

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Translated for this volume by Thomas Williams from the Vatican edition of *Ordinatio* II, d. 3, pars 2, q. 2.

## 50. Universals and Individuation

From *Ordinatio* II, distinction 3, part 1, questions 1, 4, and 6

**Question 1:** Is a material substance individual or singular from itself—that is, from its nature?

With Distinction 3, we must ask about the personal distinction among angels.<sup>1</sup> But to see this distinction among them, we must first ask about the individual distinction among material substances. For just as different people say different things about the latter topic, so consequently they say different things about the plurality of individuals in the same angelic species. In order for the various views concerning the distinction or nondistinction of material substance to be seen distinctly, I ask one by one about the various ways of setting up that distinction. First: Is a material substance individual or singular from itself—that is, from its nature?

Yes: In *Metaphysics* 7 [13, 1038b10–11], the Philosopher argues against Plato that “the substance of anything whatever is proper to what it belongs to, and is not in anything else”; therefore, etc. Therefore, a material substance from its nature, disregarding everything else, is proper to what it is in, so that from its nature it is unable to be in anything else; therefore, from its nature it is individual.

To the contrary: Whatever from its own notion is in something per se is in it in every instance; therefore, if the nature of stone were of itself a “this,” then whatever the nature of stone were in, that nature would be “this stone.” The consequent is nonsense if we are

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From *Five Texts on the Mediaeval Problem of Universals*, tr. Paul Vincent Spade (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1994). Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

1. Scotus returns to the topic of the personal distinction among angels in q. 7 (not translated here).

speaking about a determinate singularity,<sup>2</sup> which is what the question is about.

Furthermore what one opposite belongs to of itself, the other opposite is of itself incompatible with it. Therefore, if a nature is of itself numerically one, then numerical multitude is incompatible with it.

Here it is said that just as a nature is formally a nature from itself, so too it is singular from itself. Thus one does not have to look for any other cause of singularity than the cause of the nature, as if a nature is a nature before (temporally or naturally) it is singular, and only then is contracted by something added on to it so that it becomes singular.

This is proved by a simile. For of itself a nature has true being outside the soul. But it does not have being in the soul except from something else—that is, from the soul itself. The reason is that true being belongs to it absolutely, whereas being in the soul is its being only in a certain respect. So too likewise, universality does not belong to a thing except according to its being in a certain respect—namely, in the soul—whereas singularity belongs to a thing according to its true being, and so belongs to it from itself and absolutely. Therefore, one should look for a cause why the nature is universal (the intellect is to be assigned as the cause of that), but one should not look for any cause why the nature is singular—a cause that would be other than the thing’s own nature and mediating between the thing and its singularity. Rather the same causes that are the causes of the unity of a thing are also the causes of its singularity. Therefore, etc.

Against this view, one argues like this: An object, insofar as it is an object, is naturally prior to the act itself. And in that prior state, according to you, the object is of itself singular. For this always belongs to a nature not taken in only a certain respect or accord-

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2. That is, such that every stone would be identical with the same stone. Scotus means to be contrasting this with the innocuous claim that every stone is a “this” in the sense of there being a different “this” for each stone.

ing to the being it has in the soul. Therefore, the intellect, understanding that object under the aspect of a universal, understands it under an aspect *opposite* to the object's very notion. For insofar as the object precedes the act, it is determined of itself to the opposite of that aspect—namely, to the opposite of the aspect of a universal.

Furthermore, anything with a real, proper, and sufficient unity less than numerical unity is not of itself one by numerical unity—that is, it is not of itself a “this.” But the proper, real or sufficient unity of the nature existing in this stone is less than numerical unity. Therefore, etc.

The major premise is plain in itself, because nothing is one of itself by a unity greater than the unity sufficient for it. Now if the proper unity, which belongs to something of itself, is less than numerical unity, then numerical unity does not belong to that something from its own nature and according to itself. Otherwise precisely from its nature it would have both the greater and the lesser unity, which are opposites when applied to the same item and with respect to the same item. For the multitude opposed to the greater unity can go together with the lesser unity without contradiction. But this multitude cannot go together with the greater unity, because it is incompatible with it. Therefore, etc.

Proof of the minor premise: If there is no real unity of a nature less than singularity, and every unity other than the unity of singularity and the unity of the specific nature is less than a real unity, therefore there will be no real unity less than numerical unity. The consequent is false, as I shall now prove in five or six ways. Therefore, etc.

The first way is this: According to the Philosopher, *Metaphysics* 10 [1, 1052b18], “In every genus there is something one and primary that is the metric and measure of all that are in that genus.”

This unity of what first measures is a real unity, because the Philosopher proves [ibid. 19–24], that the primary notion of measuring belongs to “one.” He explains in sequence how in every genus, that to which the notion of measuring belongs is one. Now this unity belongs to something insofar as it is first in the genus. Therefore, it is real, because what are measured are real and are really measured. But a real being cannot

be really measured by a being of reason. Therefore, this unity is real.

But this real unity is not numerical, because in a genus there is no singular that is the measure of all that are in that genus. For according to the Philosopher, *Metaphysics* 3 [3, 999a12–13], “Among individuals of the same species, this one is not prior and that one posterior.” . . .

Moreover second, I prove that the same consequent is false, because according to the Philosopher, *Physics* 7 [4, 249a3–8], in an indivisible species comparison occurs, because it is one nature. But in a genus it does not, because a genus does not have such a unity.

This difference is not a difference in unity according to reason alone, because the concept of a genus is just as numerically one for the intellect as the concept of a species is. Otherwise no one concept would be said *in quid* of many species, and so no one concept would be a genus. Rather there would be as many concepts said of the various species as there are concepts of those species. In that case, in each of the predications the same item would be predicated of itself. Likewise, the unity of a concept or of a non-concept is irrelevant to the Philosopher's meaning in that passage—that is, it is irrelevant to whether there is a comparison or not. Therefore, the Philosopher means there that the specific nature is one by the unity of a specific nature. But he does not mean that it is one like this by a numerical unity. For in numerical unity there is no comparison. Therefore, etc.

Moreover third: According to the Philosopher, *Metaphysics* 5 [15, 1021a9–12], (the chapter on relation), the same, the similar, and the equal are all based on the notion of one, so that even though a similarity has for its foundation a thing in the genus of quality, nevertheless such a relation is not real unless it has a real foundation and a real proximate basis for the founding. Therefore, the unity required in the foundation of the relation of similarity is a real one. But it is not numerical unity, since nothing one and the same is similar or equal to itself.<sup>3</sup>

3. This is a terminological matter. For medieval authors, similarity, equality, and identity are irreflexive relations. A thing *x* is not (qualitatively) similar to *itself* (a dyadic re-

Moreover fourth: For one real opposition there are two primary real extremes. But contrariety is a real opposition. This is clear, because one contrary really destroys the other, even disregarding any operation of the intellect. And this happens only because they are contraries. Therefore, each primary extreme of this opposition is real and one by some real unity. But not a numerical unity, because in that case precisely this white thing or precisely that white thing would be the primary contrary of this black thing, which is nonsense. For then there would be as many primary contrarieties as there are individuals. Therefore, etc.

Moreover fifth: For one action of a sense power there is one object, according to some real unity. But not numerical unity. Therefore, there is some other real unity than numerical unity. . . .

Moreover sixth: If every real unity is numerical unity, therefore every real diversity is numerical diversity. The consequent is false. For every numerical diversity, insofar as it is numerical, is equal. And so all things would be equally distinct. In that case, it follows that the intellect could not abstract something common from Socrates and Plato any more than it can from Socrates and a line. Every universal would be a pure figment of the intellect. . . .

Moreover, even if no intellect existed, fire would still generate fire and destroy water. And there would be some real unity of form between generator and generated, according to which unity univocal generation would occur. For the intellect that considers a case of generation does not *make* the generation be univocal, but *recognizes* it to be univocal.

Therefore, I reply to the question: Granting the conclusions of the two arguments, I say that a material substance from its nature is *not* of itself a “this.” For in that case, as the first argument deduces, the intellect could not understand it under the opposite aspect unless it understood its object under an intelligible aspect incompatible with the notion of such an object.

lation), but just has a quality. Similarly, *x* is not (quantitatively) equal to itself, but just has a quantity. So too, *x* is not numerically identical *with itself*, but is just “numerically one.” In each case the dyadic way of expressing the situation is replaced by a monadic one.

Also, as the second argument deduces together with its proofs, even without any operation of the intellect there is some real unity in a thing, less than numerical unity—that is, less than the proper unity of a singular. This lesser unity belongs to the nature by itself. In accordance with this unity, which is proper to the nature insofar as it is a nature, the nature is indifferent to the unity of singularity. Therefore, it is not of itself one by that unity—that is, by the unity of singularity.

In a way, one can see how this should be understood from Avicenna, *Metaphysics* V [I (86va)], where he says “Equinity is only equinity. Of itself it is neither one nor several, neither universal nor particular.” I understand: It is not from itself one by numerical unity, or several by the plurality opposite to that unity. It is neither actually universal—that is, in the way something is universal insofar as it is an object of the intellect—nor is it particular of itself.

For although it is never really *without* some one of these features, yet it is not any of them *of itself*, but is naturally prior to all of them. In accordance with this natural priority, the [quiddity or] what-the-thing-is is the per se object of the intellect and is per se, as such, considered by the metaphysician and expressed by the definition. Propositions true [per se] in the first mode are true by reason of the quiddity so taken. For nothing is said of a quiddity per se in the first mode unless it is included in it essentially, insofar as the quiddity is abstracted from all features naturally posterior to it.

But not only is the nature itself indifferent of itself to being in the intellect and to being in a particular—and therefore also to being universal and to being particular or singular. It does not primarily of itself have universality even when it does have being in the intellect. For even though it is understood under universality (as under the mode of understanding it), nevertheless universality is not a part of its primary concept, since it is not a part of the metaphysical concept, but of the logical concept. For the logician considers second intentions applied to first ones according to him.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the first intellection is an intellection of the nature without there being any co-understood mode,

4. It is not known who is being referred to here. One manuscript has ‘the Philosopher’ for ‘him.’

either the mode it has in the intellect or the one it has outside the intellect. Although universality is the mode of understanding what is understood, that mode is not itself understood.

Just as a nature, according to its being, is not *of itself* universal but rather universality is *accidental* to the nature according to its primary aspect according to which it is an object, so too in the external thing where the nature is together with singularity, the nature is not *of itself* determined to singularity but is naturally prior to the aspect that contracts it to that singularity. And insofar as it is naturally prior to that contracting aspect, it is not incompatible with it to be without that contracting aspect.

Just as, according to its abovementioned primacy, the object in the intellect had truly intelligible being, so too in the thing the nature according to that entity has true real being outside the soul. And according to that entity, it has a unity proportional to it. That unity is indifferent to singularity, so that it is not incompatible with that unity of itself that it be found together with some unity of singularity. In this way, then, I understand a nature to have a *real unity less than numerical unity*. Granted, it does not have this lesser unity of itself in such a way that the unity is contained within the notion of the nature. For “Equinity is only equinity,” according to Avicenna, *Metaphysics V* [1 (86va)]. Nevertheless that unity is a proper attribute of the nature according to its primary entity. Consequently, the nature is intrinsically “this” neither from itself nor according to its proper unity, which is necessarily included in the nature according to its primary entity.

But there appear to be two objections against this. First, because it seems to claim the universal is something real in the thing. (This is contrary to the Commentator, *On the Soul I*, comm. 8. [25–28 (on 402b5–9)], who says “the intellect makes universality in things, so that universality does not exist except through the intellect.” So universality is only a being of reason.) For this nature, insofar as it is in this stone and yet naturally prior to the singularity of the stone, is indifferent to this singular and that one, from what has been said.

Moreover [John] Damascene, [*On the Orthodox Faith*] Ch. 8, [42], “One must know that it is one thing to be considered in reality, and another to be consid-

ered in reason and thought. Therefore and more especially, in all creatures the division of hypostases is considered in reality. For in reality Peter is considered as separate from Paul. But their community and connection is considered only in the intellect, reason, and thought. For we understand by the intellect that Peter and Paul are of one nature and have one common nature.” Again [ibid., 43], “For these hypostases are not in one another. Rather each one is partitioned off separately—that is, separated according to reality.” And later on, [ibid.]: “But in the holy and supersubstantial Trinity it is the other way around. For there the common is considered as one in reality.” Again, [ibid., 44]: “but afterwards divided in thought.”

To the first argument I say that the universal in act is what has some indifferent unity according to which it itself, the very same, is in proximate potency to being *said of each suppositum*. For according to the Philosopher, *Posterior Analytics I* [4, 73b26–33], the universal is what is one in many and said of many.

Nothing in reality, according to any unity at all, is such that according to that precise unity it is in proximate potency to each *suppositum* by a predication that says “This is this.” For although it is not incompatible with something existing in reality for it to *be* in another singularity than the one it is in, nevertheless it cannot be truly *said of each* of its inferiors that each one is it. This is possible only for an object, the same in number, actually considered by the intellect. This object as understood has also the numerical unity of an object, according to which it itself, the very same, is predicatable of every singular by saying “this is this.”

The disproof of the statement that “the agent intellect makes universality in things” is apparent from this, both from the fact (a) that it can be said of every what-the-thing-is existing in the phantasm that it is such that it is not incompatible with it to be in something else, and also from the fact (b) that the agent intellect strips the what-the-thing-is existing in the phantasm. For wherever it is before it has objective being in the possible intellect, whether in reality or in the phantasm, whether it has certain being or being that is derived by reasoning (and so not by any [divine] light), it is always such a nature of itself that it is not incompatible with it to *be* in something else. Nevertheless it is not such that it pertains to it by a proximate

potency to be *said* of every individual. Rather it is in that proximate potency only in the possible intellect.

Therefore, there is in reality something common that is not of itself a “this.” Consequently it is not incompatible with it of itself to be “not-this.” But that common something is not a universal in act, because it lacks that indifference according to which the universal is completely universal—that is, the indifference according to which it itself, the very same, is predicable by some identity of each individual in such a way that each is it.

To the second objection about Damascene, I say that what is common in creatures is not really one in the way in which what is common is really one in the divine. For there the common is singular and individual because the divine nature itself is of itself a “this.” And it is plain that with creatures no universal is really one in that way. For to maintain this would be to maintain that some created, undivided nature would be predicated of many individuals by a predication that says “this is this,” just as it is said that the Father is God and the Son is the same God.

Yet in creatures there is something common that is one by a real unity less than numerical unity. This common something is not common in such a way that it is predicable of many, although it is common in such a way that it is not incompatible with it to be in something other than in what it is in.

Therefore, it is clear in two ways how Damascene’s text does not count against me. First, because he is speaking about the unity of singularity in the divine. And in this sense, not only is a created *universal* not one, but what is *common* in creatures is not one either.

Second, because he is speaking about what is common and predicable, not precisely about the common that is determinate in fact even though it is not incompatible with it to be in something else. What is common in the latter sense can be really posited precisely in creatures.

From what has been said the reply to the main argument is clear. For the Philosopher refutes the fiction he attributes to Plato. That is, he shows that “this man” existing by himself, which is maintained as an “Idea” [by Plato], cannot by itself be universal to every man. For “every substance existing by itself is proper to what

it belongs to” [cf. p. 582]. That is, it is either proper from itself or else *made* proper by something contracting it. Once this contracting principle is posited, the substance cannot be in anything else, even though it is not incompatible with it *of itself* to be in something else.

This gloss is true even speaking about substance insofar as the term is taken for “nature.” In that case it follows that the Idea will not be the substance of Socrates, because it is not the nature of Socrates. For it is neither of itself proper nor made proper to Socrates so that it is in him only. Rather it is also in someone else, according to Plato.

But if ‘substance’ is taken for first substance, then it is true that every substance is of itself proper to what it belongs to. And in that case it follows all the more that the Idea, which is posited as a substance existing by itself, cannot in that sense be the substance of Socrates or Plato. But the first alternative, [in the preceding paragraph], suffices for the point.

To the confirmation of the opposing view, it is clear that community and singularity are not related to the nature like being in the intellect and true being outside the soul. For community belongs to the nature outside the intellect, and so does singularity. Community belongs to the nature from itself, while singularity belongs to the nature through something in the thing that contracts the nature. But universality does not belong to the thing from itself.

Therefore, I grant that one must look for a cause of universality, but one need not look for a cause of community other than the nature itself. Once community has been established in the nature itself according to its own entity and unity, one must necessarily look for the cause of singularity, which adds something over and above the nature it belongs to.

**Question 4:** Is a material substance individual or singular through quantity?

Fourth, I ask whether a material substance is individual or singular through quantity.

Yes. Boethius in *On the Trinity* [1.24–31]: “The variety of accidents is what makes difference in number. For three men differ neither by species nor by genus,

but by their accidents. If in the mind we separate out all the accidents, nevertheless place is diverse for each of them. We can in no way suppose that it is one for two men. For two bodies will not occupy the same place, which is an accident. Therefore, they are numerically as several as their accidents are several." Among all accidents, the first accident is quantity, which seems to be implied in a special sense even in the notion of "place" (in saying "we cannot suppose it is the same place"). Place pertains to bodies insofar as they are quantified.

Furthermore, [John] Damascene in the *Elementarium*, Ch. 5 (not counting the prologue) [= Ch. 4, col. 103]: "Every thing by which a hypostasis differs from another hypostasis of the same species is called an adventitious difference, and a characteristic peculiarity, and a hypostatic quality. Now this is an accident. For example, a man differs from another man because this one is tall while that one is short."

Furthermore, Avicenna in *Metaphysics* 5. 2 [87va]: "A nature that needs matter is such that for its being there come together accidents and dispositions from outside, by which it is individuated."

To the contrary: As was argued in the second question, first substance is per se generated and per se operates, and this insofar as it is distinguished from second substance, to which these features do not belong per se. Now they do not belong by accident to a being. This is clear for being generated, from *Metaphysics* 6 [2, 1026b22–24]; it is also clear for operating, because one per se agent is one being per se, [not one being accidentally]. This holds within one order of cause.

Here it is said<sup>5</sup> that yes, a material substance is singular and individual through quantity.

The following reason is offered for this [Godfrey VII. 5, 333]: What primarily and per se belongs to something belongs to anything else by reason of that something. Now substance and accident do not make

up something one per se, but only one by accident. Therefore, to whichever of these it is that divisibility into parts of the same kind belongs primarily and per se, singularity will belong to that. Quantity is like this, because of itself it is able to be divided to infinity (*Metaphysics* 5 [13, 1020a7–8]). Therefore, what belongs to quantity primarily and per se does not belong to anything else except by reason of quantity. For example, the division of a species into its individuals, because these dividing individuals are not formally of another kind, as the species that divide a genus are.

From this it is argued further [Godfrey VII. 5, 328]: To be divisible into parts of the same kind belongs to something by reason of quantity (from *Metaphysics* 5 [13, 1020a7–8]). And the principle of division in any nature is the same as the principle of distinction in what are divided. Therefore, individuals are distinguished individually from one another by quantity. From this it is concluded that it is through quantity that division into individuals belongs to whatever thing such a distinction belongs to. Therefore, an individual is individual through quantity.

Furthermore, this fire does not differ from that fire except because the one form differs from the other form. And the one form does not differ from the other form except because it is received in one or another part of matter. Neither does a part of matter differ from another part except because it is under another part of quantity. Therefore, the whole distinction of this fire from that fire is reduced to quantity as to what primarily distinguishes. . . .

I argue against the conclusion in four ways. First, from the identity of the numerical aspect—that is, of individuation or singularity; second, from the ordering of substance to accident; third, from the notion of a categorical hierarchy. These three ways will prove in general that no accident can by itself be the reason by which a material substance is individuated. The fourth way will be against quantity in particular, with respect to the conclusion of the theory.

Fifth, it will be argued in particular against the reasons for that theory.

As for the first way, first I explain what I understand by individuation or numerical unity or singularity: Certainly not the indeterminate unity by which anything

5. Here and throughout the question, the critical edition cites several passages from Aquinas, but also especially the *Quodlibets* by Giles of Rome and Godfrey of Fontaines. Scotus seems to be thinking mainly of the latter two.

in the species is said to be one in number. Instead I mean signate unity as a “this,” so that just as it was said above that an individual is impossible with being divided into subjective parts and the reason for that impossibility is asked there, so too I say here that an individual is impossible with not being a designated “this” by *this* singularity and the cause is asked not of singularity in general but of *this* designated singularity in particular—that is, as it is determinately “this.”

Understanding singularity in this sense, I argue from the first way in a twofold manner:

First: An actually existing substance, not changed by any substantial change, cannot from “this” become “not this.” For this singularity, according to what was just said, cannot be one singularity and another in the same substance that remains the same and is not substantially changed. But an actually existing substance, even if there is no substantial change made or changed in it, can be under one or another quantity without contradiction, and under any absolute accident whatever. Therefore, by no such accident is this substance formally designated by this singularity.

The minor premise is clear. For it is not a contradiction that God preserve the same substance, now quantified by this quantity, and inform it by another quantity. The actually existing substance will not for this reason be changed by a substantial change, because there will be no change except from one quantity into another quantity. Likewise, if it is changed from *any* accident it now has, the substance will not be changed by a substantial change. Whether this is possible or impossible,<sup>6</sup> the substance will not for this reason be formally “not this.”

If you say the described situation is a miracle and therefore does not argue against natural reason, to the contrary: A miracle does not occur with respect to contradictions; there is *no* power that can do that. But it is a contradiction for the same remaining substance to be two substances without a substantial change. It is impossible both successively and at once. Yet this follows if the substance were *this* substance through some accident. For in that case, when one accident follows an-

6. The purpose of the clause is unclear.

other accident, the same substance, without being changed, would be two substances in succession. . . .

Perhaps in order to avoid the arguments of these two ways, the theory about quantity is also held in another version—namely, in the sense that just as the extension of matter itself is by nature other than the nature<sup>7</sup> of the quantity of the matter itself, and adds nothing to the essence of the matter, so too the designation of the matter itself, which it has causally through the quantity, is other than the designation of the quantity itself and naturally prior to the designation the matter has through the quantity. This designation of the matter is other than the one that belongs to the quantity, but it is not other than substance. Thus just as matter does not have parts through the nature of quantity, because a part of matter is matter, so designated substance is nothing but substance. For “designation” only indicates a mode of being.<sup>8</sup>

To the contrary: This position seems to include contradictories in two ways. First because it is impossible for something that depends on what is naturally posterior to be the same as what is naturally prior. For in that case it would be both prior and not prior. But substance is naturally prior to quantity, according to them. Therefore, nothing in any way presupposing the nature of quantity can be the same as substance. Therefore, the designation is not both the designation of substance and yet also caused by quantity.

Proof of the major premise: Wherever there is a true and real identity between this and that (even though it is not formal identity), it is impossible for this to be and that not to be. For in that case what is really the same would both be and not be. But it is possible for the naturally prior to be without the naturally posterior. Therefore, consequently it is all the more possible for the naturally prior to be without what is left behind<sup>9</sup> or caused by the naturally posterior.

7. Thus the edition (436.7). ‘Extension’ would seem better. The edition shows no relevant variants.

8. The paragraph is virtually unintelligible as it stands.

9. The metaphor here is one of “impressions,” as from a seal ring. Just as the ring leaves a shape impressed in the wax, even though the shape of the wax is numerically dis-

Furthermore, what is a necessary condition for a cause's causing cannot be had from the caused. For in that case the cause, insofar as it is sufficient for the causing, would be caused by the caused. And so the caused would be the cause of itself and to that extent could give to its cause the causing of the caused itself. But singularity—that is, designation—is a necessary condition in a substance for causing quantity because, as has been argued, a singular caused requires a singular cause. Therefore, it is impossible for this designation of a designated or singular substance to be from a singular quantity (or to be from the caused) and not from a substance insofar as it is singular.

Furthermore, what is it for quantity to leave behind or cause such a mode in a substance? If there is nothing but what was there before the quantity, then in no way does the designation come about through the quantity. For in that case the substance's designation would naturally precede the quantity absolutely. But if there is something else, I ask how it is caused by the quantity and in what genus of cause? It does not seem that any genus can be assigned except the genus of efficient cause. But quantity is not an active form. Therefore, etc.

**Question 6:** Is a material substance individual through some entity that by itself determines the nature to singularity?

To the question therefore, I reply: Yes.

To this I add the following reasoning: Just as unity in common follows per se on entity in common, so too does any unity follow per se on some entity or other. Therefore, absolute unity (like the unity of an individual frequently described above—that is, a unity with which division into several subjective parts is incompatible and with which not being a designated “this” is incompatible), if it is found in beings (as every theory assumes), follows per se on some per se entity.

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tinct from the shape of the ring, so too, the theory holds, the individuation (or “designation”) of the quantity leaves behind a kind of impression in matter, even though the individuation of the matter is distinct from that of the quantity.

But it does not follow per se on the entity of the nature, because that has a certain per se real unity of its own, as was proved in the solution of the first question. Therefore, it follows on some other entity that determines this one. And that other entity makes up something per se one with the entity of the nature, because the whole to which this unity belongs is perfect of itself.

Again, every difference among the differing is reduced ultimately to some items that are diverse primarily. Otherwise there would be no end to what differ. But individuals [in the same species] differ, properly speaking, because they are diverse beings that are yet something the same. Therefore, their difference is reduced to some items that are diverse primarily. Now these primarily diverse items are not the nature in this individual and the nature in that one, because what items formally agree by is not the same as what they really differ by, even though the same item can be really distinct from something and yet really agree with it. For there is a big difference between being distinct and being that by which something is primarily distinguished. Therefore, so it will be with unity.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, besides the nature [that is the same] in this individual and in that one, there are some primarily diverse items by which this and that individual differ, this one in this respect and that one in that. They are not negations, from the second question. Neither are they accidents, from the fourth question. Therefore, there are certain positive entities that per se determine the nature.

There is an objection against the first line of reasoning. For if there is some real unity less than numerical unity, it belongs to something that is either in what is numerically the same or in something else. Not in what is numerically the same, because whatever is in what is numerically the same is numerically one. Neither is it in two, because there is nothing really one in those two. For that is a property of the divine *supposita*, as the passage from Damascene was explained above.

I reply: Just as it was said in the solution to the first question on this topic that “nature” is naturally prior to “this” nature, so too the proper unity that follows on

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10. The role of this sentence in the argument is not clear.

the nature as a nature is naturally prior to the nature's unity as "this" nature. The metaphysical consideration of the nature comes under this aspect, and under this aspect too its definition is assigned, and there are propositions per se in the first mode about it. Therefore, in the same item that is one in number there is some kind of entity from which there follows a unity less than numerical unity is. Such unity is real, and what such unity belongs to is of itself formally one by numerical unity. I grant therefore that this real unity does not belong to anything existing in two individuals, but in one.

If you still object, "Whatever is in what is numerically the same is numerically the same," I reply first by giving another argument that is similar but plainer: "Whatever is in what is specifically one<sup>11</sup> is specifically one. Therefore, color in whiteness is specifically one. Therefore, it does not have a unity less than the unity of the species."

That does not follow. For it was said elsewhere—namely, in Book I [of this *Ordinatio*, d. 8], the question on divine attributes, before the solution of the main argument about attributes, in solving the first doubt—that something can be called "animate" denominatively (for example a body), or per se in the first mode (for example a man), and so too a surface is called "white" denominatively, while a white-surface is called "white" per se in the first mode, because the subject includes the predicate. So too I say here that what is potential and contracted by the actual is informed by the actual, and for this reason is informed by the unity that follows on that actuality—that is, on that act. So it is one by the proper unity of the actual, but it is only denominatively one in this sense. It is not however of *itself* one in this sense, either in the first mode or through an essential part.

Therefore, color in whiteness is specifically one, but it is not so of itself or per se or primarily but only denominatively. But a specific difference is primarily one, because it is primarily incompatible with it to be divided into what are several in species. Whiteness is specifically one per se but not primarily, because it is specifically one through something intrinsic to it (for example, through the difference).

11. Following the variant reading 'uno' for 'una.'

So I grant that whatever is in this stone is numerically one, either primarily or per se or denominatively. Primarily, say, as that through which such a unity belongs to this composite. Per se, the stone itself, of which what is primarily one with this unity is a per se part. Only denominatively, what is potential and is perfected by the actual and is so to speak denominatively related to its actuality.

In explaining this solution further, what this entity is by which that [individual] unity is completed can be explained through a comparison to the entity the specific difference is taken from. Now the specific difference—that is, the entity from which the specific difference is taken—can be compared to what is below it, to what is above it, or to what is alongside it.

In the first case, it is per se incompatible with the specific difference and with that specific entity to be divided essentially into what are several in species or nature. Because of this, such division is also incompatible with a whole of which that entity is a per se part. So too here, it is primarily incompatible with this individual entity to be divided into any subjective parts. And through this entity such a division is per se incompatible with a whole of which that entity is a part. The only difference is in the fact that the former unity, the unity of the specific nature, is less than the latter unity. Because of this, the former does not exclude every division according to quantitative parts, but only a division into essential parts. The latter however excludes every division according to quantitative parts.

From this consideration alone, the present point is already confirmed well enough. For on the basis of the fact that every unity less than this [numerical] unity has its own entity on which it per se follows, it does not seem a likely story to deny to this most perfect kind of unity its own entity on which it follows.

But comparing the specific nature to what is above it, I say the reality the specific difference is taken from is actual with respect to the reality the genus or the notion of the genus is taken from, in such a way that the latter reality is not formally the former one. Otherwise there would be unnecessary repetition in a definition; the genus alone, or the difference, would sufficiently define the species. For it would indicate the whole

being of the defined. Yet sometimes this contracting difference is other than the form from which the notion of the genus is taken, namely, when the species adds some reality over and above the nature of the genus. But sometimes it is not another *thing*, but only another formality or another formal concept of the same thing. For this reason, one kind of specific difference has a concept that is not absolutely simple—that is, one taken from a form—and another specific difference has a concept that is absolutely simple, which is taken from the ultimate abstraction of the form. Concerning this distinction among specific differences, it was stated in Distinction 3 of Book I [of this *Ordinatio*] how some specific differences include a being and some do not.

So too the reality of an individual is like a specific reality in this respect: It is so to speak an act determining the reality of the species, which is as it were possible and potential. But it is unlike it in this respect: It is never taken from an added form, but rather precisely from the last reality of the form.

It is unlike it in another respect too, because the specific reality constitutes the composite it is a part of in its quidditative being. For the specific reality is itself a certain quidditative entity. On the other hand, this reality of an individual is primarily diverse from every quidditative entity. (This is proved from the fact that whatever quidditative entity is understood—speaking now about limited quidditative entity only—it is common to many and it is not inconsistent for it to be said of many items each of which is it itself.) Therefore, this [individual] entity, which of itself is another entity than the quiddity or the quidditative entity, cannot constitute the whole

of which is it a part in its quidditative being, but only in another kind of being. . . .

If you ask me what this individual entity is that the individual difference is taken from—is it matter or form or the composite?—I reply: Every quidditative entity (whether partial or total) in some genus is of itself indifferent as a quidditative entity to this individual entity and that one, in such a way that as a quidditative entity it is naturally prior to this individual entity insofar as it is “this.” As naturally prior, just as it does not belong to it to be a “this,” so the opposite of being a “this” is not incompatible with it from its very notion. And just as a composite does not insofar as it is a nature include its individual entity by which it is formally a “this,” so neither does matter insofar as it is a nature include its individual entity by which it is “this matter,” nor does form insofar as it is a nature include its individual entity by which it is “this form.”

Therefore, this individual entity is not matter or form or the composite, inasmuch as each of these is a nature. Rather it is the ultimate reality of the being that is matter or that is form or that is the composite. Thus whatever is common and yet determinable can still be distinguished (no matter how much it is one thing) into several formally distinct realities of which this one is not formally that one. This one is formally the entity of singularity and that one is formally the entity of the nature. These two realities cannot be distinguished as “thing” and “thing,” as can the reality the genus is taken from and the reality the difference is taken from. (The specific reality is taken from these.) Rather when in the same thing, whether in a part or in the whole, they are always formally distinct realities of the same thing. . . .

## 51. Contingency and the Divine Will

From *Lectura 1*, distinction 39,  
questions 1–5

Some say that there is contingency in beings with respect to their proximate causes but necessity with respect to the first cause. This is proved from what Boethius says in *Consolation of Philosophy* 5, prose 6. He claims that one and the same future thing is necessary as related to the first cause, yet in itself—and thus as related to its proximate cause—it partakes of contingency. . . . This is confirmed by the following argument. Some imperfection can be in an effect from its proximate cause even though it is not from the first cause: for example, sins and privations and so forth. So since contingency is a kind of imperfection in the being of a thing, contingency itself can be from a proximate cause even though it is not from the first cause.

But I argue against this view. If the first cause necessarily causes and moves the proximate cause and has a necessary relationship to it, then that secondary cause necessarily moves what it moves and causes, since a secondary cause does not move except insofar as it is moved by the first cause. So if it is necessarily moved and caused by the first cause, it in turn moves necessarily, and so on, all the way down to the effect that is to be produced. And thus the whole order of causes will move necessarily, and it will follow that causes cannot produce any effect contingently. Hence, if there is to be contingency in things, it must be the case either that the first cause moves a secondary cause contingently or that the first cause moves an effect contingently. Thus, contingency comes about as a result of the action of the first cause. Therefore, if everything were necessary in relation to the first cause, nothing would come about contingently. . . .

So it must be said, first, that there is contingency in beings. Second, one must identify God as the cause of

this contingency. And third, we must say what it is in God that is the cause of contingency in beings.

### I. There Is Contingency in Beings

As for the first point, that there is contingency in beings: the fact that being is divided by “necessary” and “possible” cannot, I think, be proved on the basis of anything better known. Nor can it be proved a priori. And just as a passion that immediately inheres in some subject is convertible with that subject and cannot be proved on the basis of anything better known, so too a disjunctive passion cannot be proved of a subject in which it inheres immediately on the basis of anything better known. Now if one disjunct of that disjunctive passion is said of some appropriate subject, then if that disjunct is the less noble member of the disjunctive passion, from the fact that it inheres in its subject one can conclude that the nobler member of the passion inheres in an appropriate subject, but not vice versa (for the less noble disjunct of the passion cannot inhere in anything unless the nobler one inheres in something, but the nobler one can inhere in something even if the less noble one does not). Hence it follows that if a caused being is finite, some being is infinite, but the reverse inference—that if some being is infinite, some being is finite—does not hold; for the truth of the second is not required for the truth of the first. And thus it also follows that if some being is contingent, some being is necessary, but not vice versa.

And for that reason I do not see how that whole disjunctive passion could be shown *a priori* of its immediate subject, or even how the less noble disjunct in such a passion could be shown of its subject. Hence, that there is contingency in beings must be taken as something self-evident. Someone who denies it lacks sense and needs punishment, and that is why Avicenna in his *Metaphysics* [1.9] teaches that such people should be exposed to fire, since to those who deny what is evident to the senses, being burned is the same thing as not being burned. Hence the Philosopher, arguing against those who say that all things hap-

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Translated for this volume by Thomas Williams from the Vatican edition of *Lectura 1*, d. 39, qq. 1–5.

pen necessarily, does not have recourse to propositions that are even more impossible but to truths that are better known to us in our acts, arguing that if everything happened necessarily, “there would be no point in deliberating or taking counsel.”

## II. Contingency in Beings Derives from the Divine Will

So, assuming that there is contingency in beings, we need to see, second, how there can be contingency in beings. And I say that the cause of this contingency must be located in God’s causality, because no effect can proceed contingently from a secondary cause unless the first cause in its order moves contingently. For in movers and things moved, if a subsequent cause is moved necessarily by a prior cause, and the subsequent cause moves only insofar as it is moved, then it moves necessarily; and thus if the first cause moved necessarily, all causes would move necessarily. And so the cause of contingency in beings is from the fact that the first cause moves contingently and not necessarily.

And therefore we must inquire, third, what it is in God by reason of which he moves beings contingently. Now God moves through intellect and will. . . . So we must look for the cause of contingency in beings either in the divine intellect or in the divine will. But this contingency is not in the divine intellect insofar as it presents anything to the will, because whatever it cognizes before an act of will, it cognizes necessarily and naturally, in such a way that there is no contingency in it with respect to opposites. This is why there is no practical knowledge in God. For if, before any act of will, his intellect apprehended that something was to be done or produced, would his will will that necessarily or not? If necessarily, then God is necessitated to produce it. If he does not will it necessarily, then he wills contrary to a dictate of the intellect; and in that case, his will would be bad, since that dictate could not be otherwise than right. Now this is not the way things are for speculative knowledge, since his will necessarily wills that his intellect entertain speculative truths.

Hence, when the divine intellect apprehends “This is to be done” before an act of will, it apprehends

it as neutral,<sup>1</sup> just as when I apprehend “There is an even number of stars.” But when by an act of will it is produced in existence, then it is apprehended by the divine intellect as a true object in accordance with one member of a pair of contradictories. So one must locate the cause of contingency in things in the divine intellect.

### A. Contingency and the Human Will

Now in order to see how the divine will is the cause of contingency, we must first examine how our will is a cause of some contingents. Our will, after all, is free with respect to opposite acts (for example, with respect to willing and willing-against, and with respect to loving and hating). And second, it is free, by means of these opposite acts, with respect to opposite objects, in such a way that it tends toward them freely. And third, it is free with respect to the effects that it produces, whether immediately or by moving the other executive powers.

Now in this matter of the will’s freedom there is an element of imperfection as well as an element of perfection. The fact that it has freedom with respect to opposite actions is an element of imperfection, because in keeping with this the will is necessarily receptive and as a consequence changeable (since it does not have opposed acts simultaneously). But its freedom with respect to opposite objects is an element of perfection, since the will’s being able to act with respect to opposite objects manifests not imperfection but perfection, just as the intellect’s being able to understand opposite objects manifests perfection. Now its third freedom is not primary, but it does not imply imperfection.

How, then, does contingency result from this freedom of the will? I say that a twofold contingency and a twofold possibility follows from this freedom. . . . One contingency and possibility is for the will to be drawn successively to opposite objects, and this possibility and contingency follows from its mutability. In keeping with this possibility we draw a distinction in propositions concerning the possible that are formulated regarding contrary and opposite extremes, such

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1. *neutral*: neither true nor false.

as “The white can be black.” In the divided sense, in which the proposition is taken to assert that the extremes have that possibility at different times—as “What is white at time *a* can be black at time *b*”—the proposition is true. Hence, that possibility follows from succession. And in the divided sense the following is also true: “A will that loves this can hate this.”

But from that freedom of the will there follows some power, which is a logical power (to which there corresponds also a real power). There is no logical power except when the extremes are possible in such a way that they are not incompatible with each other but can be united, even if there is no possibility in the thing. This is how “The world can exist” was true before the world actually existed. And if there had been any created intellect at that point, it could have said, and with truth, “The world can exist”; and yet there was no reality in a thing corresponding to the extremes.

Now this logical possibility is not a matter of the will’s having acts successively but of [its power] in one and the same instant. For in the same instant in which the will has one act of willing, in and for that very same instant it can have an opposite act of willing. Thus, if we conceive a will that exists for only one instant and in that instant wills something, then it cannot will and will-against in succession, and yet in and for that instant in which it wills *a*, it can will-against *a*. After all, its willing in and for that instant does not belong to the essence of the will and is not a natural passion of the will; therefore, that willing inheres in the will *per accidens*. But the opposite of a *per accidens* accident is not incompatible with the subject for that instant. And so a will that wills *a* in and for this instant can will-against *a* in and for that very same instant. And this is logical possibility with respect to non-incompatible extremes.

To this logical possibility corresponds a real power, for every cause is prior in understanding to its effect. And thus the will, in that instant in which it elicits an act of willing, is naturally prior to its volition and is related freely to it. Hence, in that instant in which it elicits the volition, it is related contingently to willing and it is related contingently to willing-against: not because it had a contingent relation to willing *before* its volition, because before its volition it was not a cause, but *now*, when it is a cause eliciting its act of willing,

it has a contingent relation to its act, in such a way that “What wills *a* can will-against *a*.” One has to distinguish between the divided sense and the composed sense. In the composed sense, understanding the predicate with its ascription of possibility to be attributed to the whole expression “What wills *a*,” the proposition is false. But in the divided sense, the proposition is true, not because the extremes are understood as holding for different times . . . but because it implicitly contains two propositions. In one proposition an act of willing is attributed to the will; in the other proposition an opposite act of will is attributed, with an ascription of possibility, to a will taken absolutely. Thus, the [divided] sense is “A will wills *a*” and “A will can will-against *a*.” And this is true, since a will that wills *a* freely elicits its act of willing; and that act is not a passion of the will. . . .

## B. Contingency and the Divine Will

Now let us turn to the divine will. The divine will is free with respect to producing opposite effects. But this is not its primary freedom. It requires another, prior freedom. Now the divine will cannot have the primary freedom that is in us, which is with respect to opposite acts, since this freedom is a matter of imperfection and implies mutability, whereas the divine will can have only one volition, and so that one volition can will opposite objects. For its one volition is sovereign over all volitions of created wills with respect to diverse things, just as God’s one intellect is with respect to all the intellects of creatures. Hence, God’s one volition is sovereign with respect to all volitions directed at diverse objects, since any volition of ours is limited to its object. So if one posits an unlimited volition, which is the divine volition, it will be able to have opposite objects. The freedom of the divine will, therefore, is that by its one volition it can tend to opposite objects; and it is infinitely freer than our will, [which tends to opposite objects only] by diverse volitions.

From this it is clear how there is contingency in the effect of the divine will. Consider the analogy with our will. Our will can be considered insofar as it is prior to its volition, as it is in first actuality, and thus as it is in first actuality it has freedom with respect to its second actuality, so that in and for that instant in which it has

one volition with respect to something, it can will-against that thing and have an opposite act. In the same way, although the divine will cannot have opposite acts (since the divine will is identical with its volition), it nonetheless both wills eternally by its one volition that a stone exists and eternally has the power to will that a stone does not exist or to will-against a stone's existing. Thus, the divine will, insofar as it operates within God and is thus prior to its effect, can produce and not produce an effect. And just as there is both logical and real possibility in our will with respect to an act of willing, so too the divine will, which as operative precedes itself as productive, can, in and for one and the same instant of eternity, will and will-against something, and accordingly produce it or not

produce it. And then, just as in our case we had to distinguish two senses of "A will that wills *a* can will-against *a*," in God's case we must also distinguish two senses of "The divine will that wills in eternity that a stone exists can in that same instant will-against a stone's existing." In the divided sense it is not true if you take the extremes according to diverse measures (as willing in one instant and willing-against in another), since for the divine volition there is no succession. But taking it in the way that was explained earlier in the case of the human will, it is true in the divided sense. For on that interpretation the divided sense is "The divine will wills in the instant of eternity that a stone exists" and "The divine will can in the instant of eternity will-against a stone's existing." . . .

## 52. Freedom and the Fall

From *Ordinatio* II, distinction 6,  
question 2

Question 2: Was the angel's first sin  
formally pride?

The usual answer to the question is in the affirmative. . . . But in order to get at the truth of the question, we must show, first, what the badness was in the first angel who sinned. . . .

### I. Ordered and Disordered Acts of the Will

Regarding the first question, we must examine the order of the acts of the will. On that point I hold that there are, at the most general level, two sorts of acts of will: willing and willing-against. For willing-against is a positive act of will by which it spurns what is unsuitable or draws back from an unsuitable object. Willing,

by contrast, is an act by which the will accepts some suitable object. There are, further, two sorts of willing, which we can call friendship-willing and desire-willing. Friendship-willing is the name for the willing of an object for which I will good, and desire-willing is of an object that I will for some other loved thing.

The order of these acts is clear. Every willing-against presupposes some willing. After all, I don't spurn anything unless it is incompatible with something that I accept as suitable. This is what Anselm says in *On the Fall of the Devil* 3, giving his example of the miser, the coin, and the bread. And the order of the two willings is also clear, since desire presupposes friendship-willing. For since the thing loved is, with respect to the thing desired, like the end for which I will the good (since it is on account of the thing loved that I desire for it the good that I will for it), and since the end is the primary object of will, it is evident that friendship-willing precedes desire-willing.

And from what has been proved it follows, further, that there is a similar progression in *disordered* acts of will. For no willing-against is the first disordered act of

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a will, since the will can have an act of willing-against only in virtue of some willing. And if that willing were well ordered, accepting an object with the appropriate circumstances, then any willing-against that the will would have consequent upon that willing would likewise be well ordered. In the same way, if a friendship-willing is well ordered, the desire-willing consequent upon it will also be well ordered. For if my love for the thing for which I will good is well ordered, my desiring the good for that thing will also be well ordered.

## II. The First Disordered Friendship-Willing

It follows, therefore, that the very first disordered act of will was the first friendship-willing of that for which the angel willed good. Now that object was not God, since the angel could not have had a friendship-love toward God that was disordered in terms of its intensity, since God is so much worthy of love that by his very nature alone, as an object, he makes an act of friendship-love directed to himself—even a maximally intense one—completely good. Nor is it plausible that the angel loved something other than himself too intensely by an act of friendship, for three reasons: because his natural inclination inclined him to love himself more than it inclined him to love any other created thing, because it does not seem that he understood any other created thing in the way he understood himself, and because friendship is founded on oneness (*Ethics* 8) and things that are worthy of love for the sake of another derive from those that are worthy of love for one's own sake (*Ethics* 9). Therefore, his first disordered act was an act of friendship toward himself.

This is what Augustine says in the last chapter of *City of God* 14: “Two loves created two cities. Love of God, to the point of contempt for self, created the city of God; love of self, to the point of contempt for God, created the city of the devil.” So the ultimate root of the city of the devil was his disordered friendship-love for himself, a root that grew into contempt for God, in which that wickedness reached its pinnacle. Thus it is clear what the very first disorder of the will was in the very first inordinate willing.

## III. The First Disordered Desire-Willing

We still need to determine what the disorder was in his desire-willing.

### A. Scotus's View

On that score, it seems we ought to say that he first desired happiness for himself immoderately. I argue for this as follows. First, his first disordered desire did not proceed from the affection for justice, as indeed no sin proceeds from the affection for justice. Therefore, it proceeded from the affection for the advantageous, since every elicited act of the will is elicited either in accordance with the affection for justice or in accordance with the affection for the advantageous, according to Anselm. The maximal advantageous thing is maximally desired by a will that does not follow the rule of justice, and so such a thing will be desired by it first, since nothing regulates that non-upright will other than its disordered and immoderate desire for that maximal advantageous thing. Now the maximal advantageous thing is complete happiness. Therefore, etc. This argument is derived from Anselm, *On the Fall of the Devil* 4: look for it there.

Second, the first sin in desiring was a willing, since nothing spurns something for itself (that is, takes care to avoid getting or experiencing something) unless it desires the opposite for itself. Now its desire for that thing was a case of love for the honorable, for the useful, or for the pleasant, since there is no love other than these three. It was not a case of love for the honorable, since if it had been, the angel would not have sinned. Nor was it a case of love for the useful, since that is not a first love; for since what is useful is useful for something, no one desires what is useful prior to desiring the thing that it's useful for. Therefore, he first sinned by loving something excessively as a supremely pleasant thing. Now the supremely pleasant thing is the honorable good, i.e., happiness itself. Therefore, etc. This argument can be derived from the Philosopher, *Ethics* 8, and from the generally accepted distinction of the good as useful, pleasant, and honorable. . . .

So as to this second step, that is, as to the angel's sin [of desire],<sup>1</sup> it seems that the angel first desired happiness. For just as the first sin of the visual appetite would be in desiring the most beautiful thing that is visible to its cognitive power, in which it takes the most com-

1. The first step was the sin of inordinate friendship-love for himself; the second step is the sin of inordinate desire-love of his own happiness.

plete pleasure and its desire would be fully satisfied, so also for a will conjoined to a sensitive appetite, when that will does not follow justice or the rule of reason, its first object of desire would seem to be something supremely pleasant to that sensitive appetite with which the will, in acting, is especially in conformity. So in human beings, which of the sensitive appetites is in control varies with the variety of temperaments. If indeed each cognitive power has its own appetite, and the variety of temperaments results in different cognitive powers and their corresponding appetites being predominant in different people, then in any given person, I say, the will is principally inclined to its act in accordance with the predominant sensitive appetite. Therefore, one person who follows his first inclination apart from the rule of justice will be inclined first to lust, while another will be inclined first to pride, and another to something else.

Therefore, a will entirely separated from sensitive appetite, and consequently not inclined to anything on account of sensitive appetite, will, if it departs from justice, follow the absolute inclination of the will qua will. And that inclination appears to be toward the greatest object suited to the will or its cognitive power [i.e., the intellect]. For that in which a cognitive power is most fully perfected is that in which the appetitive power corresponding to it is most fully perfected. Therefore, [the angel's first sin of desire] was an immoderate desire of happiness, since happiness is the object of the will.

#### B. Objections to Scotus's View

Now you might argue against this view. First, according to Augustine in *On the Trinity* 8.5, "Happiness is desired by all." Now whatever exists uniformly in all seems to be natural. Therefore, happiness is naturally desired. Now natural desire is always correct, because it is from God. Therefore, a will consonant with natural desire is always correct, since what is consonant with something correct is itself correct. Therefore, no one sins in desiring happiness.

Furthermore, according to *Metaphysics* 2, no intellect errs concerning first principles. Therefore, neither does the will err concerning the ultimate end. The inference is proved through the analogy drawn by the Philosopher in *Ethics* 7 and *Physics* 2: "What a

principle is in speculative matters, the end is in matters of operation." . . .

#### C. Replies to the Objections

In order to make clear how these arguments are to be answered, I first distinguish what is meant by the affection for justice and the affection for the advantageous, of which Anselm speaks in *On the Fall of the Devil* 4.

Justice can be understood as infused justice, which is called gratuitous; or as acquired justice, which is called moral; or as innate justice, which is the will's freedom itself. Now imagine, in keeping with Anselm's thought-experiment in *On the Fall of the Devil*, that there is an angel who has only the affection for the advantageous and not the affection for justice—that is, an angel having intellectual appetite merely as such, and not as free. Such an angel would not be able not to will advantageous things, or even not to will them supremely. Nor would this willing be imputed to the angel as a sin, since that appetite would be related to its associated cognitive power as the visual appetite is in fact related to vision: it would necessarily follow what is shown by its cognitive power and its own inclination to the best thing shown to it by that power, since it would not have the wherewithal to restrain itself. So that affection for justice, which is the first controller of the affection for the advantageous—both as to the fact that the will need not actually desire that to which the affection for the advantageous inclines it, and as to the fact that it need not desire that thing supremely—that affection for justice, I say, is the will's innate freedom, since it is the first controller of the affection for the advantageous.

Now Anselm frequently speaks not only of the act of acquired justice but also of the act of infused justice; for he says that justice is lost through mortal sin, which is true only of infused justice. Nevertheless, in distinguishing the two primary features of these two affections—the one inclining the will above all to what is advantageous, and the other controlling it so that it need not follow that inclination in eliciting its act—he makes it clear that they are nothing other than the will insofar as it is strictly intellectual appetite and the will insofar as it is free. For, as has been said, insofar as the will is strictly intellectual appetite, it is actually

supremely inclined to the best intelligible thing, just as the visual appetite is supremely inclined to the best visible thing. But insofar as the will is free, it can restrain itself in eliciting its act so that it does not follow that inclination either as to the substance of the act, or as to the intensity, to which the power is naturally inclined. . . .

Now there are three ways in which a will that is capable of restraining itself can will immoderately the happiness that pertains to it: with respect to intensity (that is, by willing happiness with greater fervor than is appropriate), with respect to precipitance (that is, by willing happiness for itself more hastily than is appropriate), or with respect to its cause (that is, by willing happiness for itself in a way that is not appropriate for it, say, apart from merits). Or perhaps there are other ways that we need not concern ourselves with here.

It is probable that the angel's will transgressed in one of these ways. The first possible way was by desiring happiness for himself insofar as it is his own good more than he loved happiness in itself, in other words, by desiring his own possession of that good as beatific object—as *his* good—more than he desired it to be in another, as in his God. And in this is the supreme perversity of the will, which is enjoying things that ought to be used and using things that ought to be enjoyed, according to Augustine in *Question 30 of On Eighty-three Diverse Questions*. A second possible way is that he could have desired to have happiness immediately, whereas God wanted him to have it only after some time as a wayfarer. And a third way was by desiring to have it through his own natural powers, rather than by grace, whereas God wanted him to have it on the basis of merits.

His free will, then, ought to have moderated its affection in these respects, which it was the job of right reason to discern. For he ought to have desired happiness less for himself than for God, and at the time at which God willed him to have it, and on the basis of merits as God willed him to desire it. Therefore, if in any of these respects he followed the affection for the advantageous and did not restrain it in accordance with justice (through infused justice, if he had it, or through acquired justice, or through the innate or natural justice that is the very freedom of the will), he sinned.

On this basis, then, I reply to the objections. To the first: Natural will is not immoderate of itself. It merely inclines in the manner of nature, and there is no immoderateness in that, since it inclines in just the way that it has been given the power to incline, and it has no power to do anything else. But it is in the power of the will as free to follow that inclination in its elicited act or not.

I concede the claim that there is a natural will for happiness. But this is not a will that is actually immoderate in an elicited act, since the inclination of natural appetite is not an elicited act, but merely a first perfection. And this first perfection is not immoderate, just as the nature to which it belongs is not immoderate. Nonetheless, the natural will is inclined to its object by the affection for the advantageous in such a way that if it did have an elicited act from itself, it would not be able to restrain itself from eliciting the act to the highest degree possible for it. But in fact that will as having only the natural affection for the advantageous is not the cause of any elicited act. Only the will as free is the cause of any elicited act; and so, as eliciting an act, the will has the wherewithal to restrain its passion.

As for the premise that a will consonant with natural desire is always correct, because natural desire is always correct, I reply that if a will is consonant with what natural will would elicit if it acted by itself, it is not correct. For the will has a rule in acting that a natural will acting on its own would not have, and the will is bound to follow this higher will. Consequently, the will has the power to restrain that natural inclination and the power not to restrain it, since it is in the will's power to stop short of doing everything it has the power to do.

To the second objection I say, on the same basis, that it is not in the intellect's power to withhold its assent from the truths that it apprehends, for insofar as the truth of principles is evident from their terms or the truth of conclusions is evident from principles, it has to assent, because it lacks freedom. But the will has the power, with respect to both itself and inferior powers, to prevent that inclination from having complete sway in eliciting an act, or even to prevent the act from being elicited at all. For the will can avert the intellect from considering the speculative matters concerning

which it has an inclination, and it is bound to avert the intellect if speculating about those things is a sin materially for the intellect or formally for the will. In the same way, the will is bound to restrain its inclination toward the ultimate end so that it does not will it immoderately, that is, in some way other than how it ought to will it. . . .

Alternatively, it can be said that just as an act of intellect considering principles in themselves cannot be false, so too an act of will loving the end in itself cannot be bad; and this act is an act of friendship, not an act of desire. Nonetheless, just as an act of intellect can be false by attributing the truth of the first cause to some created principle to which such truth does not belong, so too an act of will can be bad by desiring the goodness of the end for something other than the ultimate end, in a way that is not appropriate for that other thing. . . .

#### IV. The Desire for Superiority

Now that we have seen what the angel's first disordered desire was for, it can be stated that he went on

to desire, in a disordered way, a certain good for himself: namely, superiority over others. Or else he had a disordered willing-against by willing against the opposite of what he desired: namely, by willing against happiness being in himself less than being in God (in fact, being God), or willing against waiting for happiness until his period of wayfaring had passed, or willing against having it on the basis of merits rather than from himself, and consequently willing against being subordinate to God—and finally, willing against the very being of God, in which his wickedness appears to have reached its pinnacle. For just as no act is formally better than loving God, so too no act is formally worse than hating God.

[Scotus goes on to argue that the angel's first sin, the disordered friendship-willing, was a sin of presumption, which is a kind of pride. The angel's second sin, the disordered desire for happiness, was a kind of *luxuria*—usually translated as “lust,” though Scotus says that any immoderate desire for pleasure (not merely sexual pleasure) counts as *luxuria*. The various willings-against in the third stage were forms of avarice or envy.]

## 53. The Goodness of Moral Acts

*Ordinatio* II, distinction 40

The single question: “Is every act good in virtue of its end?”

Regarding distinction 40, I ask whether every act is good in virtue of its end.

For the affirmative:

Augustine, *Exposition on Psalm 31*, Chapter 3, as cited in the text of the *Sentences*: “The intention makes the act good.”

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Translated for this volume by Thomas Williams from the Vatican edition of *Ordinatio* II, d. 40, q. un.

Furthermore, an act of understanding is true in virtue of the principle. Now the end is in acting what the principle is in understanding. Therefore, etc.

Furthermore, goodness is from some one cause, and no other cause can be given but the end. Therefore, etc. On the contrary:

Augustine says in *On Lying* (and this is cited in the text of the *Sentences*) that many acts cannot be good, even if they are done for the sake of a good end.

I reply, we must look first at natural goodness and second at moral goodness.

As to the first, I say that just as beauty in a body is a result of the aggregation of all the things that befit that body and each other—for example, quantity, color, and

figure—as Augustine claims in *On the Trinity* 8.4 (“a good face,” etc.), so natural goodness—not that which is coextensive with being, but that which has evil as its opposite—is the secondary perfection of some thing, integrated from all the things that befit it and each other. And when all of those things are present together, there is perfect goodness, in accordance with the dictum of Dionysius, “The good is from a perfect and integral cause.” When all of these things are lacking, but the nature that ought to be perfected by them remains, it is altogether bad. When just some of them are taken away, the nature is bad, but not altogether so, as is true also of beauty and ugliness in a body. Now an act is by nature apt to bear an appropriate relationship to its efficient cause, its object, its end, and its form. It is therefore naturally good when it has all the appropriate things, as far as those that are apt to concur in its being.

As to the second, I say that the goodness of a moral act is from the aggregation of all the things that befit the act, not absolutely, in virtue of its nature, but according to right reason. Therefore, since right reason dictates that a determinate object, a determinate mode, and the other circumstances must be appropriate to the act, complete goodness does not come from the end alone.

In fact, the first aspect of its goodness is from the act’s bearing the appropriate relationship to its efficient cause. An act is said to be moral because it is elicited freely. This is common to good and bad acts alike: indeed, no act deserves either praise or reproach unless it is from the will. The second condition is from the object. If the object is appropriate, the act is generically good. This generic goodness is indifferent with respect to further goodnesses, which are derived from the special circumstances, just as a genus is indifferent with respect to a number of differences.

After the object, the first circumstance is the first end. Nor does the end suffice without the other cir-

cumstances, such as the circumstance of the form (for example, that the act is performed in the requisite manner, which pertains to the fourth circumstance). Then come the more extrinsic circumstances, namely, the when and where.

It is therefore evident that solely the goodness of the end, even when it is intended in accordance with right reason, is not sufficient for the goodness of the act, but the other circumstances are required, in the aforesaid order, if the act is to be good.

The reply to the argument from Augustine is evident from the passage cited from him in support of the opposite view. Even if the end is a more important condition pertaining to the goodness of the act, it is nevertheless not sufficient. This is true even of meritorious goodness, which adds something over and above moral goodness. Meritorious goodness does come principally from the end, since (presupposing complete moral goodness) meritorious goodness is added in virtue of the requisite relation of the act to the end, which requisite relation comes about insofar as the act is elicited by charity. In this way one can interpret the authorities as teaching that *meritorious* goodness is from the end.

To the second I say that the efficient cause of an act of understanding—that which is on the part of an act of understanding—acts naturally. Nor can it act in two different ways with respect to the same object. Therefore, it always acts rightly. But the will does not always act conformably to its object, since it is a free, not a natural, cause. Therefore, when there is rightness in an act of understanding on the part of the principle that moves the intellect, the whole act is right; but that is not the case in an act of will [when there is rightness] on the part of the end [that moves the will].

As to the third, I say that this one goodness integrates in itself all the perfections that befit the act, and that it is not any single thing, just as beauty in a body is not any single thing.

## 54. The Decalogue and the Natural Law

From *Ordinatio* III, distinction 37  
The single question: “Do all the precepts of the Ten Commandments belong to the natural law?”

For the negative:

It does not appear that God can make dispensations when it comes to precepts that belong to the law of nature. But God did make dispensations that appear to be contrary to precepts of the Ten Commandments. Therefore, etc. Proof of the major premise: Precepts belonging to the law of nature are either practical principles known from their terms or conclusions that follow necessarily from such principles. In either case, they have necessary truth. Therefore, God cannot make them false. Therefore, he cannot make what they mark out as good to be anything but good, and he cannot make what they prohibit to be anything but bad. Proof of the minor premise: Killing, stealing, and adultery are contrary to precepts of the Ten Commandments, as is clear from Exodus 20, “Thou shalt not kill,” [and so forth]. Yet apparently God gave dispensations from those precepts. In the case of murder, this is evident from Genesis 22 in the story of Abraham and his son, whom he was commanded to sacrifice. As for theft, this is evident from Exodus 11 and 12, in which God commands the children of Israel to despoil the Egyptians; this despoiling is “the taking of someone else’s property without the owner’s consent,” which is the definition of theft. As for adultery, see Hosea 1: “Make children of fornications.”

Moreover, in Romans 7 the Apostle says, “I would not have known covetousness if the law had not said, ‘Thou shalt not covet.’” But things that are known on the basis of the law of nature are known to be required or prohibited even if they are not written down, just as in speculative matters things that are known naturally

would be known naturally even if they weren’t revealed, and so on.

Moreover, the law of nature is obligatory in every state, since what such a nature ought to do or not do is known. But the Ten Commandments were not obligatory in every state: they were not obligatory in the state of innocence, because at that point no law had been given, and it does not seem that a law is obligatory before it is given. . . .

There is one view that holds that the whole of the Ten Commandments belongs to the natural law. The reasoning behind that view goes like this. The natural law proceeds from principles—from first-known principles—concerning possible actions. These are first practical principles, known from their terms, which are the primary seeds of the truth to which the intellect is naturally inclined on the basis of their terms; and the will is naturally inclined to assent to such a dictate from the intellect. All the precepts that are contained in the Ten Commandments follow either immediately or mediately from such principles. For all the things commanded in the Decalogue have a formal goodness by which they are ordered, in and of themselves, toward the ultimate end, so that through them human beings are directed toward that end. And all the things prohibited in the Decalogue have a formal badness that turns people away from the ultimate end. Thus, the things commanded by the Decalogue are not good merely because they are commanded, but rather the reverse: they are commanded because they are good. And the things prohibited by the Decalogue are not bad merely because they are prohibited; rather, they are prohibited because they are bad. Consequently, it appears that the right reply to the first argument above is that God cannot give dispensations from such precepts, period. For what is illicit in and of itself cannot, it seems, be made licit by any will. For example, if killing, in virtue of being an act that has its external effect on such-and-such an object (namely, one’s neighbor) is a bad act, then, so long as that cause is what it is, the act will always be bad. And thus no willing that leaves the essential elements [i.e., the

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Translated for this volume by Thomas Williams from the Vatican edition of *Ordinatio* III, d. 37, q. un.

nature of the act and its object] intact can bring it about that the act is good. Of course then you have to give some interpretation of the Scriptural passages that seem to say God made dispensations from such precepts. One way of interpreting them goes like this: Even if a dispensation for an act could be given insofar as that act falls under some general description, there can be no dispensation for an act insofar as it is prohibited, contrary to the intention of the one commanding; and thus, there can be no dispensation contrary to the prohibition. Another way goes like this: An act that remains inordinate cannot be made well ordered. Now insofar as an act is contrary to a prohibition, it is inordinate. Therefore, God cannot give a dispensation for an act insofar as it is contrary to a prohibition.

Now these interpretations—which may well amount to the same thing—seem to fail to uphold the intended conclusion. Giving a dispensation doesn't mean keeping the precept intact but allowing someone to act contrary to it. Giving a dispensation means either revoking the precept or else setting forth how it ought to be understood. For there are two kinds of dispensation: revocation of the law and clarification of the law. My question, then, is this: leaving all the circumstances in the act “killing a human being” just as they are, except for the one circumstance of the act's being prohibited or not, can God bring it about that that act, which with those very circumstances<sup>1</sup> is at some time prohibited and illicit, is, at some other time, but with those same circumstances, not prohibited, but licit? If the answer is yes, then God has the power, without qualification, to give dispensations in just the same way that he changed the old law when he gave the new law. With respect to the ceremonial law, he didn't make it the case that the precepts about

1. “with . . . those circumstances”: As the selection on the moral goodness of acts makes clear, Scotus uses the term ‘circumstances’ to include not merely external circumstances but also intrinsic features of the act, such as its having a particular object or its being done for a particular end. So for him an act is not done “under” certain circumstances—such language would suggest conditions external to the act—but “with” certain circumstances, that is, having certain features.

ceremonial matters remained in force but were not to be observed; instead, he brought it about that the *act* remained the same but people were not required to perform it as they had been required before. This is also how any legislator makes unqualified dispensation when he revokes a precept of law that he had established, making it so that the prohibited or illicit act remains the same in itself but the characteristic of being-prohibited or being-illicit is removed, and the act is made licit. But if God cannot make it the case that this act, which with such-and-such circumstances was prohibited, is no longer prohibited, with the circumstances remaining exactly the same, then he cannot bring it about that killing is not prohibited. But it is perfectly clear that God did just that in the case of Abraham as well as in many other cases.

Moreover, propositions that are true in virtue of their terms—whether they are necessary in virtue of their terms or follow from such necessary truths—have their truth prior to any act of will; or at any rate they have their truth even if, *per impossibile*, there is no willing. Therefore, if the precepts of the Ten Commandments (or those practical propositions that can be formed from them) had such necessity—say, if the following were necessary: “One's neighbor is not to be killed or hated,” “Theft is not to be done,” and so on—it would follow that, independently of any willing whatsoever, they would be necessary for any intellect apprehending such propositions. The divine intellect, apprehending such propositions, would necessarily apprehend them as true in and of themselves. And then the divine will would necessarily conform to the apprehended propositions; otherwise, it would not be upright. And then one would have to posit practical knowledge in God, which was denied in the question on praxis in Book I, distinction 1.<sup>2</sup> One would also have to posit that his will is determined in an unqualifiedly necessary way with respect to possible objects of willing other than himself, which is the opposite of what I said in Book I, distinction 2, where I discussed the fact that God's will tends only contingently to anything other than himself. . . .

2. Scotus actually discusses this in his prologue to Book I.

In reply to the question, therefore, I say that there are two ways in which things can be said to belong to the law of nature. The first way is as first practical principles known in virtue of their terms or as conclusions that necessarily follow from them. These belong to the law of nature in the strictest sense. The arguments given against the first opinion prove that no dispensations can be given from such precepts . . . and I concede those arguments. But this is not what we should say in general about the precepts of the second table,<sup>3</sup> since the nature (*ratio*) of the things that they command or prohibit does not ground unqualifiedly necessary practical principles or unqualifiedly necessary conclusions. For the goodness in the things that those precepts command is not necessary for the goodness of the ultimate end, and the badness of the things they prohibit does not necessarily turn one aside from the ultimate end; accordingly, if that good were not commanded, the ultimate end could still be attained and loved, and if that evil were not prohibited, the attainment of the ultimate end would still be possible.

It is otherwise with the precepts of the first table because they have to do directly with God as their object. Indeed, if we understand the first two commandments as purely negative—the first as “You shall not have other gods” and the second as “You shall not take up the name of your God wantonly,” that is, “You shall not do irreverence to God”—they belong to the law of nature strictly speaking, because this follows necessarily: “If God exists, he alone is to be loved as God.” And it likewise follows that nothing else is to be worshiped as God and that no irreverence is to be done to him. Consequently, God himself cannot give dispensations from these precepts so that someone could [licitly] act contrary to this or that prohibition. . . .

The third precept of the first table, which concerns Sabbath observance, is affirmative insofar as it requires that some worship be given to God at a specific time, but insofar as it specifies this or that particular time, it

does not belong to the law of nature in the strict sense. The same goes for its negative part, which prohibits servile work during the specified time that would interfere with the worship to be offered to God at that time, since such work is prohibited only because it impedes or restricts the worship that is commanded. But there is some uncertainty about whether the precept concerning Sabbath observance, insofar as it requires that worship be offered to God at *some* specified time or other, belongs to the law of nature in the strict sense. If it does not, then God could grant absolute dispensation so that a person would not be required to have any good motion toward God through the whole course of his life. And that doesn't seem probable, since without some good willing of the ultimate end, one cannot have any unqualifiedly good willing of things that are for the sake of the end; and thus one would never be obligated to have any unqualifiedly good willing of any kind. . . . But if this third precept does not belong to the natural law in the strict sense, then we should regard it in the same way that we regard the precepts of the second table.

There is a second way in which some precepts are said to belong to the law of nature, in that they are highly consonant with that law, though they do not follow necessarily from first practical principles that are known in virtue of their terms and necessarily known to any intellect [that understands their terms]. And in this way it is certain that all the precepts even of the second table belong to the law of nature, since their rectitude is highly consonant with first practical principles that are known necessarily. An example will serve to make this distinction clear. Assuming the principle of positive law that people ought to live together peaceably in a community or state, it does not necessarily follow that everyone therefore ought to have private property, or property distinct from the property of others. For there could still be peace in communal life even if people held all things in common. Not even if we assume that those who are living together in community are of weak character does it follow necessarily that they ought to have private property. Nonetheless, private property for people of weak character is highly consonant with getting along peaceably. For people of weak character care more for their

3. The Ten Commandments are traditionally thought of as divided into two “tables” or tablets, the first containing those that prescribe how we are to act toward God and the second containing those that prescribe how we are to act toward other human beings.

own goods than for goods held in common, and they would prefer that common goods be entrusted to their own possession rather than shared with the community and those who look out for the community's well-being; and thus strife and disorder would arise. Perhaps something similar holds for all positive laws: that although there is some one principle that is the basis for all those laws or edicts, positive laws do not follow with unqualified necessity from that principle; instead, they elucidate or explicate the principle as it bears on

particular matters, and those explications are highly consonant with the general first principle.

So, to sum up: first, I deny that all the precepts of the second table belong to the law of nature in the strict sense. Second, I concede that the first two precepts of the first table belong to the law of nature in the strict sense. Third, there is some uncertainty about the third precept of the first table. And fourth, I concede that all the precepts belong to the law of nature in the wider sense.

# William of Ockham, c.1287–1347

The Venerable Inceptor. An inceptor was a student who had completed most of the requirements for teaching as a master in theology, and Ockham was prevented from exercising the mastership. But an inceptor is also an initiator; and so the title was later taken to refer to Ockham's supposed role as the founder of the nominalist movement, the "modern way" which dominated many universities in the fifteenth century. Ockham himself seems not to have been conscious of founding a new movement—at least he does not associate himself with those he calls "the moderns." Nonetheless, he was the one to whom later nominalists looked for their program. Some care should be taken in interpreting this fact, since if nominalism is the doctrine that only the name is common to the many things called by that name, then Ockham, like Abelard, ought rather perhaps to be called a conceptualist. And it may seem strange that a position on this one issue should generate a movement with distinctive treatments of a great range of problems. It may be of some interest, then, to discover what those who called themselves nominalists and venerated the great Inceptor thought they stood for. Fortunately, we have a letter that the nominalist masters of the University of Paris sent to King Louis XI in 1473 or 1474, setting forth the persecution of their movement by erring popes and princes, and offering the following self-characterization:

Those doctors are called nominalists who do not multiply the things principally signified by terms in accordance with the multiplication of the terms. Realists, however, are those who contend on the contrary that things are multiplied ac-

ording to the multiplicity of terms. For example, nominalists say that divinity and wisdom are one and the same thing altogether, because everything which is in God, is God. But realists say that the divine wisdom is divided from divinity.

Again, those are called nominalists who show diligence and zeal in understanding all the properties of terms on which the truth and falsity of a sentence depends, and without which the perfect judgment of the truth and falsity of propositions cannot be made. These properties are: supposition, appellation, ampliation, restriction, explicable distribution. They especially understand obligations and the nature of the insoluble, the true foundation of dialectical arguments and of their failure. Being instructed in these things, they easily understand concerning any given argumentation whether it is good or bad. But the realists neglect all these things, and they condemn them, saying, "We proceed to things, we have no concern for terms." Against them Master John Gerson said, "While you proceed to things, neglecting terms, you fall into complete ignorance of things themselves." This is in his treatise on the Magnificat; and he added that the said realists involve themselves in inexplicable difficulties, since they seek difficulty where there is none, unless it is logical difficulty.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Translated by James J. Walsh from the text on pp. 322–323 of F. Ehrle, *Der Sentenzen-kommentar Peters von Candia* (Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung,

This manifesto proposes two criteria for nominalism: the refusal to multiply entities and the systematic employment of technical devices from the logic of terms. Some of these devices will be explained in the selections below. The first criterion recalls the so-called Ockham's Razor and suggests that the refusal to posit *universal* entities, for which Ockham is most famous, is only part of a wider controversy. It has often been pointed out that the Razor, which in one of Ockham's formulations runs, "Plurality is not to be posited without necessity," was common in the Middle Ages, and so is hardly distinctive of Ockham. Indeed, where Ockham employs the Razor against Duns Scotus, Duns Scotus himself employs it against Thomas Aquinas.<sup>2</sup> Realist and nominalist alike believed that entities should not be posited without necessity—the deeper issues arose over what counts as necessary, and why. In Ockham's case, the controlling conviction was that everything outside the mind is singular; and much of his effort goes to show that with correct logical analysis, entities such as real universals, relational beings, and Scotistic formalities need not be posited.

There is another prominent element of Ockham's method which is difficult to assess with any exactitude. This is a striking concern for the divine omnipotence, grounded in the first article of the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed. This concern is formulated in the distinction between the absolute and ordained power of God. The ordained power governs the system which God has decreed, and the reservation of the absolute power expresses the fact that God is not necessitated or limited by this system—that God *could* decree otherwise than He has. For the most part, this distinction is applied to theological topics such as the order of grace and salvation; but two related principles are employed in more purely philosophical subjects. The first is that

God can do anything except that which involves contradiction, and the second is that God can perform directly what He now performs through the activity of created causes. These principles could work together with the Razor to give rise to a highly skeptical critique, as have many other philosophical programs limiting necessity to logical necessity alone. But there are only occasional manifestations of such a critique in Ockham. Indeed, he says that God employs more means than He requires; and we find in him no effort to denigrate the concepts of substance and causation such as we find in the more radical critique of Nicholas of Autrecourt. We have, then, the Razor, terminist analysis, the reservation of the divine omnipotence, and the master conviction of the singularity of real existents; and none of these can be omitted as fundamental to Ockhamism.

William of Ockham was born, probably in late 1287 or early 1288, in the village of Ockham, not far from London. He apparently joined the Franciscan order early, and pursued a normal course of study, lecturing on the *Sentences* at Oxford from 1317 to 1319. Ockham was thus a *baccalaureus formatus*, needing only to complete a four-year probationary period of preaching and disputations to become a regent master in theology. During this period, however, one John Lutterell, sometimes described as "an overzealous Thomist," succeeded, after some controversy in the university and some political delay, in accusing Ockham of heresy before Pope John XXII at Avignon. In 1324, Ockham was summoned to the papal court; and shortly thereafter a commission began a lengthy examination of his works. Two lists of suspect theses were compiled, but apparently were not formally condemned. At any event, by 1328 Ockham was involved in affairs of greater urgency. The Franciscan order and the pope were engaged in a controversy over the value of poverty, which had raged in and around the order almost since its beginning. A crucial question was whether Jesus and his disciples possessed property. At the request of Michael of Cesena, the general of his order, Ockham investigated the issue. He subscribed to the doctrine of evangelical poverty against the pope; and on May 26, 1328, escaped with Cesena to Italy, where they later took refuge with another papal opponent, Emperor Louis of Bavaria. After moving to Munich, Ockham gradually expanded his opposition

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1925). A translation of the entire letter can be found in L. Thorndike, *University Records and Life in the Middle Ages* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944), pp. 355–360.

2. See Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* II, d. 16, the single question, and William of Ockham, *On the Four Books of the Sentences*, bk. II, q. 24. The topic is the reality of the distinction between the powers of the soul.

to include the relation of the papacy to secular authority and various topics concerning the fate of the soul. On evangelical poverty and secular authority he remained in opposition during the reigns of succeeding popes and wrote a series of polemical works. Ockham remained in areas under imperial control until his death on the night of April 9/10, 1347.

As was standard practice at the time, Ockham was required to lecture on the four books of Peter Lombard's *Sentences*. His lectures survive in two versions. For Book I we possess an *Ordinatio* or *Scriptum*, a version Ockham himself prepared for publication; it was completed shortly after July 1318. The remaining three books survive only in the form of a *Reportatio*, lecture notes taken down by a "reporter." The *Reportatio* dates from 1317–1318. Around 1323 Ockham produced a *Summa of Logic* (*Summa logicae*). Among many other works, he wrote expositions of Porphyry's *Isagoge* and Aristotle's *Categories*, *De interpretatione*, and *Sophistical Refutations*. Portions of the detailed but incomplete *Exposition of Aristotle's "Physics"* (1322–1324) were excerpted by a scribe and compiled as the *Tractatus de successivis*, a selection from which appears below. After fleeing Avignon he wrote entirely on political matters, including such works as *Eight Questions on the Power of the Pope* (1340–1341) and *The Work of Ninety Days* (1332–1334).

The selections that follow begin with the logic of terms. Without familiarity with the terminology of that discipline it is difficult to follow the rest of Ockham's writings, and this portion of medieval logic is of considerable philosophical interest in its own right. There follows the critique for which Ockham is most widely known, the critique of the conception of universals as entities common to their instances and yet really distinct from them. To this there is appended the critique of the more subtle Scotist conception of a formal distinction between the common nature and the individualizing difference. These selections also contain Ockham's theories of definition and science, topics which he says are always put forward by the defenders of Plato. The reader may also find the treatment of a typical *sophisma*, or logical puzzle, of interest, as these *sophismata* were extremely popular in later medieval

thought and contain some of its most advanced logical speculations. With the abandonment of realism in universals goes the abandonment of the epistemology of intelligible species based on it; the next selection contains Ockham's critique of that epistemology, and his own alternative, based on intuitive and abstractive cognition and substituting habit for species. The precedence of the intuitive cognition of singulars is clearly stated here, and the entire discussion is important for the development of British Empiricism. In this selection there are references to a "first question." This is the preceding Question, which is: "Whether an angel knows what is other than itself through its essence or through a species?" There follow selections which show the Ockhamist critique at work. The problem of the reality of relations was important in his opposition to Duns Scotus and raised severe problems for him. In the selections on motion, the term *motus* is translated as "motion" or "movement" as the context seems to require. The selections contain an interesting polemic against abstractions and should be compared with the parallel yet different treatment by John Buridan. The selection on teleological explanation sheds much light on the abandonment of the concept of the final cause in later theories of nature. The last selection concerns ethics. There Ockham clarifies the ontology of the moral act and develops an ethics of obligation based on the divine commands rather than the nature of man. But he still holds that right reason is intrinsic to moral virtue, going so far as to hold that reason must be an object of the moral act. The apparent inconsistency between this authoritarianism and rationalism is resolved by limiting the morality of right reason to the ordained power of God.

It has been justly said that William of Ockham is the most influential of later medieval philosophers; but in granting his influence, one also grants that of Duns Scotus. For Ockham's thought develops largely through critical reflection on his Franciscan predecessor; and if he opposes the Subtle Doctor on much, he also shows great respect for him, and carries his views forward on other topics. The two great Franciscans are in no small measure responsible for the persistent élan of British philosophy.

## 55. Selections from *Summa logicae*, Part One

### [Chapter 1]

All those who treat logic try to show that arguments are put together out of propositions and propositions out of terms. Thus a term is nothing else but a proximate part of a proposition. For Aristotle, when defining a term in *Prior Analytics* 1,<sup>1</sup> says “I call a term [that] into which a proposition<sup>2</sup> is resolved, such as a predicate and that of which it is predicated,<sup>3</sup> whether being or non-being is added or taken away.”<sup>4</sup>

But although every term is part of a proposition, or can be, nevertheless not all terms are of the same kind. So in order to have a complete knowledge of terms, we must first get familiar with certain divisions among terms. Now you have to know that just as, according to Boethius on *De interpretatione* I,<sup>5</sup> there are three kinds of language, namely written, spoken and conceived, [the last] having being only in the intellect, so [too] there are three kinds of term, namely written, spoken and conceived. A written term is a part of a proposition written down on some physical object, which [proposition] is seen by the bodily eye, or can be [so] seen. A spoken term is a part of a proposition spoken by the mouth and apt to be heard by the bodily ear. A conceived term is an intention or passion of the soul

naturally signifying or consignifying something [and] apt to be a part of a mental proposition and to supposit for the same thing [that it signifies]. Thus, these conceived terms and the propositions put together out of them are the “mental words” that Blessed Augustine, in *De Trinitate* 15,<sup>6</sup> says belong to no language because they abide only in the mind and cannot be uttered outwardly, although utterances are pronounced outwardly as signs subordinated to them.

Now I say that utterances are signs subordinated to concepts or intentions of the soul, not because, taking the word ‘signs’ in a proper sense, these utterances always signify those concepts of the soul primarily and properly, but rather because utterances are imposed<sup>7</sup> to signify the same things that are signified by the concepts of the mind, so that the concept primarily signifies something naturally, and the utterance secondarily signifies the same thing, to such an extent that once an utterance is instituted<sup>8</sup> to signify something signified by a concept in the mind, if that concept were to change its significate, the utterance itself would by that fact, without any new institution, change its significate. The Philosopher says as much when he says that utterances are “the marks of the passions that are in the soul.”<sup>9</sup> Boethius too means the same thing when he says that utterances “signify” concepts.<sup>10</sup> And, in general, all authors, when they say that all utterances “signify” passions [of the soul] or are the “marks” of those [passions], mean nothing else but that the utterances are signs secondarily signifying what are primarily conveyed by passions of the soul (although

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1. Aristotle, *Prior Analytics* 1.1, 24b16–18.

2. Aristotle has ‘premise’ (= *protasis*) here. The Latin is *propositio*, which sometimes means “premise” but came also—as here—to mean “proposition” more generally.

3. That is, the subject.

4. The last clause is simply a long-winded way of saying “whether it is affirmative or negative.”

5. Boethius, *In librum De interpretatione*, ed. 2a, I, (PL 54.407B). In the Middle Ages, *De interpretatione* was divided into two books. Boethius wrote two commentaries on *De interpretatione*. It is the second one that Ockham is citing here.

6. Augustine, *De Trinitate* 15.10, 19; 15.12, 22; 15.27, 50 (PL 42.1071; 1075; 1097).

7. “Imposition” is the act of assigning spoken (and written) expressions to the mental correlates they express. See also n. 8.

8. “Institution” in this sense is just another term for imposition. See n. 7.

9. Aristotle, *De interpretatione* 1, 16a3–4.

10. Boethius, *In librum De interpretatione* (PL 64.407c).

some utterances do primarily convey passions of the soul or concepts that other intentions in the soul nevertheless convey secondarily, as will be shown below<sup>11</sup>).

What was [just] said about utterances with respect to passions or intentions or concepts is to be maintained in the same way, analogously, for present purposes, for [terms] that are in writing with respect to utterances.

Now certain differences are found among these [kinds of] terms. One is that a concept or passion of the soul signifies naturally whatever it signifies. But a spoken or written term signifies nothing except according to arbitrary institution. From this there follows another difference, namely that a spoken or written term can change its significate at [the user's] will, but a conceived term does not change its significate for anyone's will.

But because of impudent quibblers, you have to know that 'sign' is taken in two senses. In one sense, [it is taken] for everything that, when apprehended, makes something else come into cognition, although it does not make the mind come to a first cognition of it, as is shown elsewhere,<sup>12</sup> but to an actual [cognition] after a habitual [one] of it. In this sense, an utterance does naturally signify, just as any effect naturally signifies at least its cause, and just as the barrel-hoop signifies wine in the tavern.<sup>13</sup> But I am not talking here about 'sign' that generally. In another sense, 'sign' is taken for that which makes something come into cognition and is apt to supposit for it, or [for what is apt] to be added to such a thing in a proposition—for instance, syncategoremata and verbs and the parts of speech that do not have a definite signification—or that is apt to be put together out of such things, like an expression. Taking the word 'sign' in this sense, an utterance is not a natural sign of anything [at all].

11. See Ch. 11.

12. William of Ockham, *Scriptum in I Sent.*, d. 3, q. 9, "Opera theologica," II (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1970), pp. 544ff.

13. This was a common symbol of wine for sale, much as a striped barber's pole is a symbol for a barber shop today. (There's a story worth telling about that, but I won't go into it here.)

## [Chapter 4]

The term, both the spoken and the mental one, is divided in still another way. For some terms are categorematic, others are syncategorematic. Categorematic terms have a definite and fixed signification. For instance, the name 'man' signifies all men, and the name 'animal' signifies all animals, and the name 'whiteness' signifies all whitenesses. But syncategorematic terms, such as 'every,' 'none,' 'some,' 'whole,' 'besides,' 'only,' 'insofar' and the like, do not have a definite and fixed signification. Neither do they signify any things distinct from the things signified by categoremata. Indeed just as, in Arabic notation,<sup>14</sup> zero put by itself signifies nothing, but when added to another digit makes the latter signify,<sup>15</sup> so [too] a syncategorema does not signify anything, properly speaking, but rather when added to another [term] makes it signify something, or makes it supposit in a determined way for some thing or things, or exercises some other function with respect to the categorema.

Thus, the syncategorema 'every' does not have any fixed significate. But when added to 'man,' it makes the latter stand or supposit actually, that is, confusedly and distributively, for all men. When added to 'stone,' however, it makes the latter stand for all stones. And when added to 'whiteness,' it makes the latter stand for all whitenesses. And just as for the syncategorema 'every,' so we have to hold the same thing analogously for the others, although distinct jobs belong to distinct syncategoremata, as will be shown for certain [syncategoremata] below.

If someone quibbles that the word 'every' is significative, [and] therefore signifies something, it has to be said that it is not called "significative" because it

14. 'Arabic notation' = *algorismo*. That is, "Arabic numerals."

15. Better, "affects the latter's signification." The other digit (unless it too is a zero) has a signification of its own. The point also applies to categoremata and syncategoremata. The latter do not *make* the former signify, as though categoremata did not already have a signification of their own. Syncategoremata only *affect* the signification of categoremata.

determinately signifies something, but rather because it makes [something] else signify or supposit or stand for something, as was explained. And just as the name ‘every’ determinately and fixedly signifies nothing [whatever], according to Boethius’ manner of speaking,<sup>16</sup> so [too] for all syncategoremata and for conjunctions and prepositions generally.

The situation is different, however, for certain adverbs. For some of them do determinately signify things that categorematic names signify, although they convey [those things] by another mode of signifying.

## [Chapter 10]

After discussing concrete and abstract names, we now have to speak about another division among the names scholastics often use. Thus, you have to know that certain names are merely absolute [and] others are connotative. Merely absolute names are those that do not signify something principally and [something] else, or even the same [thing], secondarily. Rather, whatever is signified by the name is signified equally primarily [by it]. For example, it is clear with the name ‘animal’ that it does not signify [anything] but cattle, asses, and men, and so on for other animals. It does not signify one [animal] primarily and another one secondarily in such a way that something has to be signified in the nominative and [something] else in an oblique [case]. Neither in the definition expressing what the name means<sup>17</sup> do there have to occur such distinct [terms] in different cases, or an adjectival verb.<sup>18</sup> In fact, properly speaking, such<sup>19</sup> names do not *have* a definition expressing what the name means. For, properly speaking, for a name that has a definition expressing what the name means, there is [only] *one* definition explicating what the name means—that is, in such a way

that for such a name there are not *several* expressions expressing what the name means [and] having distinct parts, one of which signifies something that is not conveyed in the same way by some part of the other expression. Instead, such names,<sup>20</sup> insofar as what they mean is concerned, can be explicated after a fashion by several expressions that do not signify the same things by their<sup>21</sup> parts. And so none of those [expressions] is properly a *definition* expressing what the name means.

For example, ‘angel’ is a merely absolute name (at least if it is not the name of a job, but of the substance<sup>22</sup> only). For this name there is not some one definition expressing what the name means. For one [person] explains what this name means by saying “I understand by an angel a substance abstracted from matter,” another [person] by “An angel is an intellectual and incorruptible substance,” and [yet] another [person] by “An angel is a simple substance that does not enter into composition with [anything] else.”<sup>23</sup> The one [person] explains what the name means just as well as the other [person] does. Nevertheless, some term occurring in the one expression signifies something that is not signified in the same way by [any] term of the other expression. Therefore, none of them is properly a definition expressing what the name means. And so it is for merely absolute names that, strictly speaking, none of them has a definition expressing what the name means. Such names are like the following: ‘man,’ ‘animal,’ ‘goat,’ ‘stone,’ ‘tree,’ ‘fire,’ ‘earth,’ ‘water,’ ‘heaven,’ ‘whiteness,’ ‘blackness,’ ‘heat,’ ‘sweetness,’ ‘smell,’ ‘taste,’ and the like.

But a connotative name is one that signifies something primarily and something secondarily. Such a name does properly have a definition expressing what

16. Boethius, *In librum De interpretatione*, ed. 2a, 4 (PL 64.552f).

17. ‘definition expressing what the name means’: that is, the “nominal definition.” ‘what the name means’ = *quid nominis*, literally, the “what of the name.”

18. An adjectival verb is any verb besides the forms of “to be.”

19. That is, merely absolute.

20. Ditto.

21. That is, the expressions’ parts.

22. Etymologically, ‘angel’ just means “messenger.” Ockham’s point is that we want a name here for a certain kind of substance, not a job description that that kind of substance happens to fill.

23. Unlike human souls, which are also simple substances, but which do enter into composition with something else, namely, the human body. The result is the composite substance we call a human being.

the name means. And often you have to put one [term] of that definition in the nominative and another [term] in an oblique case. This happens for the name 'white.' For 'white' has a definition expressing what the name means, in which one word is put in the nominative and another one in an oblique case. Thus, if you ask what the name 'white' signifies, you will say that [it signifies] the same as [does] the whole expression 'something informed by'<sup>24</sup> a whiteness' or 'something having a whiteness.' It is clear that one part of this expression is put in the nominative and another [part] in an oblique case.

Sometimes too a verb can occur in the definition expressing what a name means. For instance, if you ask what the name 'cause' signifies, it can be said that [it signifies] the same as [does] the expression 'something from the being of which [something] else follows' or 'something able to produce [something] else,' or something like that.

Now such connotative names include all concrete names of the first kind (these were discussed in Ch. 5).<sup>25</sup> This is because such concrete [names] signify one [thing] in the nominative and another in an oblique case. That is to say, in the definition expressing what the name means there should occur one nominative term, signifying one thing, and another oblique term, signifying another thing. This is clear for all [names] like 'just,' 'white,' 'animate,' 'human,' and so on.

Such [connotative] names also include all relative names. For in their definition there always occur different [terms] signifying [either] the same [thing] in different ways or else distinct [things]. This is clear for the name 'similar.' For if 'similar' is defined, it should be put like this: "The similar is something having such a quality as [something] else has," or it should be defined in some [other] way like that. I do not care much about the examples.

It is clear from this that the common [term] 'connotative name' is superior to the common [term] 'relative name.' This is so taking the common [term] 'connotative name' in the broadest sense.

Such [connotative] names also include all names pertaining to the category of quantity, according to

those<sup>26</sup> who maintain that quantity is not another thing than substance and quality. For example, 'body,' according to them, should be held [to be] a connotative name. Thus, according to them, it should be said that a body is nothing but "some thing having [one] part distant from [another] part according to length, breadth, and depth." And continuous and permanent quantity is nothing but "a thing having [one] part distant from [another] part," in such a way that this is the definition expressing what the name means. These [people] also have to maintain that 'figure,' 'curvedness,' 'rightness,' 'length,' 'breadth,' and the like are connotative names. Indeed, those who maintain that every thing is [either] a substance or a quality have to hold that all the contents in categories other than substance and quality are connotative names. Even certain [names] in the category of quality are connotative, as will be shown below.<sup>27</sup>

Under these [connotative] names there are also included all such [names as] 'true,' 'good,' 'one,' 'power,' 'act,' 'intellect,' 'intelligible,' 'will,' 'volible,'<sup>28</sup> and the like. Thus, in the case of 'intellect,' you have to know that for the meaning of the name it has this: "An intellect is a soul able to understand." So the soul is signified by the nominative [name], and the act of understanding [is signified] by the other part. On the other hand, the name 'intelligible' is a connotative name and signifies the intellect both in the nominative and in an oblique case. For its definition is "An intelligible is something apprehensible by an intellect." Here the intellect is signified by the name 'something.' And the intellect is also signified by the oblique [form] 'by an intellect.'<sup>29</sup> The same thing must be said about 'true' and 'good.' For 'true,' which is held [to be] convertible with 'being,'<sup>30</sup> signifies the same [thing] as

26. Including Ockham himself. See Ch. 44.

27. Ibid. For that matter, certain names in the category of substance can be connotative too. For example, all the names of fictitious or impossible substances, like 'goat-stag,' 'chimera,' and so on.

28. 'volible': something that can be an object of the will.

29. 'by an intellect': the Latin is one word in the ablative case.

30. That is, 'true' in the "transcendental" sense. In this sense, truth does not belong exclusively to propositions.

24. 'informed by': that is, having the form of.

25. Chapter 5 is not included in this selection.

[does] ‘intelligible.’<sup>31</sup> ‘Good’ too, which is convertible with ‘being,’<sup>32</sup> signifies the same [thing] as [does] the expression ‘something volible or lovable according to right reason.’

## [Chapter 11]

Now that we have set out the divisions that can belong both to terms signifying naturally and also to terms instituted by convention, we have to talk about certain divisions that belong [only] to terms instituted by convention.

The first such division is: Some names signifying by convention are names of first imposition, and others are names of second imposition. Names of second imposition are names imposed to signify (a) signs instituted by convention and (b) the [things] that follow on such signs—but only while they are signs.

Nevertheless, the common [term] ‘name of second imposition’ can be taken in two senses. [In the first sense, it is taken] broadly. In that sense everything that signifies utterances instituted by convention, but only when they are instituted by convention, is a name of second imposition, whether that name is also common to intentions of the soul, which are natural signs, or not. Names like ‘name,’ ‘pronoun,’ ‘conjunction,’ ‘verb,’ ‘case,’ ‘number,’ ‘mood,’ ‘tense,’ and the like, are like this—taking these words in the way the grammarian uses them. These names are called “names of names,” because they are imposed to signify only parts of speech, and this only while these parts [of speech]

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In this sense, we speak of “a true friend,” “a true coin” (as opposed to a counterfeit), and so on. In this “transcendental” sense, everything whatever is a true something or other, so that ‘true’ is convertible with ‘being.’ Of course, Ockham also recognizes the narrower sense of ‘true’ that applies only to propositions.

31. This is a traditional but significant claim, going back at least to Parmenides. Everything that is is (at least in principle) intelligible, and conversely.

32. ‘Good’ was also held to be one of the so-called “transcendental” terms. They were “transcendental” because they “transcended” or went beyond the distinction among the categories. They “cut across” all the categories.

are significative. For names that are predicated of utterances just as much when they are not significative as when they are significative are not called names of second imposition. Therefore, names such as ‘quality,’ ‘pronounced,’ ‘utterance,’ and the like, even though they signify utterances instituted by convention and are verified of them, nevertheless because they would signify those [utterances] just as much if they were not significative as they do now, therefore they are not names of second imposition. But ‘name’ is a name of second imposition, because the utterance ‘man’ (or any other) was not a name before it was imposed to signify. Likewise, ‘man’s,’ before it was imposed to signify, had no case.<sup>33</sup> And so on.

But in the strict sense, what signifies only signs instituted by convention, in such a way that it cannot be applied to intentions of the soul, which are natural signs, is called a “name of second imposition.” ‘Inflection,’ ‘conjugation,’ and such, are like this. All names other than these, namely, those that are *not* names of second imposition either in the one sense or the other, are called “names of first imposition.”

Nevertheless, ‘name of first imposition’ can be taken in two senses. [In the first sense, it is taken] broadly, and in that sense all names that are not names of second imposition are names of first imposition. In this sense, syncategorematic signs like ‘every,’ ‘no,’<sup>34</sup> ‘some,’ ‘any,’ and the like, are names of first imposition. [‘Name of first imposition’] can be taken in another sense [too], and in that sense only categorematic names that are not names of second imposition are called names of first imposition, and syncategorematic names [are] not.

Now names of first imposition, taking ‘name of first imposition’ strictly, are of two kinds. Some [of them] are names of first intention, and others are names of second intention. The names that are precisely imposed to signify (a) intentions of the soul, or precisely (b) intentions of the soul, which are natural signs, and [also] other signs instituted by convention, or the [things] that follow on such signs, are called “names

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33. ‘Man’s’ is in the genitive in the Latin.

34. That is, the universal negative quantifier, as in “No man is an island.”

of second intention.” All [names] like ‘genus,’ ‘species,’ ‘universal,’ ‘predicable,’<sup>35</sup> and so on, are such names. For these names signify only (a) intentions of the soul, which are natural signs, or else (b) signs voluntarily instituted [to signify].

Thus, it can be said that the common [term] ‘name of second intention’ can be taken in a strict sense and in a broad sense. In the broad sense, what signifies intentions of the soul, which are natural signs, whether or not it also signifies signs instituted by convention ([but] only while they are signs), is called a “name of second intention.” In this sense, some name of second intention and of first imposition is also a name of second imposition. But in the strict sense, only what precisely signifies intentions of the soul, which are natural signs, is called a “name of second intention.” Taken in that sense, no name of second intention is a name of second imposition.

All other names than those mentioned are called “names of first imposition,” namely, those that signify some things that are not signs or the [things] that follow on such signs. All [names] like ‘man,’ ‘animal,’ ‘Socrates,’ ‘Plato,’ ‘whiteness,’ ‘white,’ ‘being,’ ‘true,’ ‘good,’ and such, are like this. Some of these signify precisely things that are not signs apt to supposit for other [things], [and] others signify such signs and other things along with that.

From all these [distinctions], it can be gathered that certain names signify precisely signs instituted by convention, and only while they are signs. But others precisely signify things that are not such signs [and] that are parts of a proposition. Some indifferently signify such things as are not parts of a proposition or of an expression, and also [signify] such signs [too]. Names like ‘thing,’ ‘being,’ ‘something,’ and such, are like this.

## [Chapter 63]

Now that we have talked about the signification of terms, it remains to talk about supposition, which is a property that belongs to a term, but only when [it occurs] in a proposition.

35. That is, the five Porphyrian “predicables” described in the *Isagoge*.

Now first, you must know that supposition is taken in two senses, namely, broadly and strictly. Taken broadly, it is not distinguished from appellation. Rather, appellation is contained under supposition. In another sense it is taken strictly, insofar as it is distinguished from appellation. But I do not intend to speak about supposition in that sense, but rather only in the first sense. Thus, both the subject and the predicate supposit. And in general, whatever *can* be the subject or predicate of a proposition supposits.

Supposition is so called as, so to speak, a “positing for another,”<sup>36</sup> in such a way that when a term in a proposition stands for something, so that we use the term for something of which (or of a pronoun pointing to it) that term (or the nominative of that term, if it is in an oblique case) is verified, it supposits for that [thing]. At least this is true when the suppositing term is taken significatively. So in general, a term supposits for that of which (or of a pronoun pointing to it) the predicate is denoted by the proposition to be predicated, if the suppositing term is the subject. But if the suppositing term is the predicate, it is denoted that the subject is in subject position with respect to it (or with respect to a pronoun pointing to it) if the proposition is formed.<sup>37</sup> For example, it is denoted by ‘A man is an animal’ that Socrates truly is an animal, so that ‘This is an animal,’ pointing to Socrates, is true if it is formed. But it is denoted by ‘Man is a name’ that the utterance ‘man’ is a name, [and] therefore in this [proposition] ‘man’ supposits for the utterance [itself]. Likewise, it is denoted by ‘A white<sup>38</sup> is an animal’ that the thing that is white is an animal, so that ‘This is an animal,’ pointing to the thing that is white, is true. For this reason, the subject “supposits” for that thing. So, analogously, it must be said in the case of the predicate. For it is denoted by ‘Socrates is white’ that Socrates is this thing that has a whiteness.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, the predicate supposits for this thing that has a whiteness. And if no thing

36. *Suppositio* = *sub* + *positio* = literally, “putting under.”

37. Propositions are *tokens* for Ockham, so that their existence is very much a contingent matter.

38. That is, a white thing.

39. Ockham is implicitly assuming that the proposition is true.

but Socrates had a whiteness, then the predicate would supposit precisely for Socrates.

Therefore, there is a general rule that a term never supposits for anything in any proposition, at least when it is taken significatively, except for what it can be truly predicated of. It follows from this that what some ignorant [people] say is false, [namely,] that a concrete [term] on the part of the predicate supposits for a form. That is, that in ‘Socrates is white,’ [the term] ‘white’ supposits for whiteness. For ‘A whiteness is white’ is simply false, however the terms supposit. Therefore, such a concrete [term] never supposits for such a form signified by its [corresponding] abstract [term], according to Aristotle’s view.<sup>40</sup> But this is quite possible for other concrete [terms], which we have talked about [above]. In the same way, in ‘A man is God,’ [the term] ‘man’ truly supposits for the Son of God, because he is truly a man.<sup>41</sup>

40. See Ch. 5. The remark is odd, and would seem to go more properly with the following sentence of the text. The kind of concrete/abstract pairs referred to by the occurrences of ‘such’ in this paragraph is the kind discussed in Ch. 5. But Aristotle is not mentioned there at all. He is mentioned in Ch. 6 in connection with certain pairs of concrete and abstract terms, mainly in the category of substance. For those terms, the claim rejected in this paragraph would hold. (See also Ch. 7, where Ockham departs from the Aristotelian view for certain theological statements.)

41. The point rests on the theology of the Incarnation. The term ‘man’ here is taken to supposit for a *person*, not for a nature. According to the doctrine, God the Son, the second person of the Trinity, is Jesus the man. This one person has two natures, divine and human. If ‘man’ here supposited for the human *nature*, the proposition would be false, because *that* is not God. The example does not quite fit the topic, however, since we were talking about concrete terms on the part of the *predicate*. But the same point can be made about the predicate here. If ‘God’ supposited for the divine *nature*, the proposition would be false, since no human is the divine *nature* (even though there is one human who is a divine *person*).

## [Chapter 64]

Now you must know that supposition is first divided into personal, simple, and material supposition.

Personal supposition, in general, is that [which occurs] when a term supposits for its significate, whether that significate is (a) a thing outside the soul, whether it is (b) an utterance, or (c) an intention of the soul, whether it is (d) an inscription, or anything else imaginable. So whenever the subject or predicate of a proposition supposits for its significate in such a way that it is taken significatively, the supposition is always personal.

[Here is] an example of the first case, (a): In saying ‘Every man is an animal,’ ‘man’ supposits for its significates. For ‘man’ is imposed only to signify these men. For it does not properly signify anything common to them, but rather the men themselves, according to Damascene.<sup>42</sup>

[Here is] an example of the second case, (b): In saying ‘Every spoken name is a part of speech,’ ‘name’ supposits only for utterances. But because it is imposed to signify those utterances, therefore it supposits personally. [Here is] an example of the third case, (c): In saying ‘Every species is a universal’ or ‘Every intention of the soul is in the soul,’ either subject supposits personally. For it supposits for the [things] it was imposed to signify. [Here is] an example of the fourth case, (d): In saying ‘Every written word is a word,’ the subject supposits only for its significates, that is, for inscriptions. Therefore, it supposits personally.

It is clear from this that those who say personal supposition occurs when a term supposits for a thing<sup>43</sup>

42. John Damascene, *Dialectica*, Ch. 10 (PG 94.571a); Latin version by Robert Grosseteste, Ch. 2, n. 8.

43. For example, William of Sherwood. See his *Introduction to Logic*, Ch. 4, tr. Norman Kretzmann (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1966), p. 107: “It is personal, however, when a word supposits what it signifies, but for a thing that is subordinate [to what it signifies], as in ‘a man is running’ (*homo currit*); for running is in man because of some individual (*Cursus enim inest homini gratia alicuius singularis*).” (Kretzmann’s insertions.)

are not describing personal supposition sufficiently. Instead, this is the definition: that personal supposition occurs when a term supposits for its significate and [is taken] significatively.

Simple supposition occurs when a term supposits for an intention of the soul, but is not taken significatively. For example, in saying ‘Man is a species,’ the term ‘man’ supposits for an intention of the soul, because that intention is a species. Yet the term ‘man’ does not properly speaking signify that intention. Rather, the utterance and the intention of the soul are only signs subordinated in signifying the same [thing], in the manner explained elsewhere.<sup>44</sup> From this it is clear that those [people’s] opinion is false who say generally that simple supposition occurs when a term supposits for its significate.<sup>45</sup> For simple supposition occurs when a term supposits for an intention of the soul that is not properly a significate of the term. For such a term signifies true things and not intentions of the soul.<sup>46</sup>

Material supposition occurs when a term does not supposit significatively but supposits for an utterance or for an inscription. This is clear in ‘Man is a name.’ ‘Man’ supposits for itself, and yet it does not signify it-

self. Likewise, in the proposition ‘Man is written’ the supposition can be material, because the term supposits for what is written.

You have to know that, just as this threefold supposition belongs to a spoken utterance, so [too] can it belong to an inscribed utterance. Thus, if the four propositions ‘A man is an animal,’ ‘Man is a species,’ ‘Man is a monosyllabic utterance,’ ‘Man is a written word,’ are written down, each of them can be verified, but only for different things. For what is an animal is in no way a species or a monosyllabic utterance or a written word. Likewise, what is a species is not an animal or a monosyllabic utterance, and so on. In the last two propositions the term [‘man’] has material supposition.

But [material supposition] can be subdivided, insofar as [a term in material supposition] can supposit for an utterance or for an inscription. If there were names imposed [for this purpose], supposition for an utterance and for an inscription could be distinguished [from one another] just as supposition for a significate [is distinguished from supposition] for an intention of the soul, the one of which we call personal and the other simple. But we do not have such names.

Now just as such a diversity of [kinds of] supposition can belong to a spoken and a written term, so too can it belong to a mental term. For an intention can supposit for what it signifies, for itself, for an utterance, and for an inscription.

Now you have to know that supposition is not called “personal” because it supposits for a person, or “simple” because it supposits for [something] simple, or “material” because it supposits for matter. Rather, [they are so called] for the reasons stated. Therefore, the terms ‘material,’ ‘personal,’ ‘simple’ are used equivocally in logic and in the other sciences. Nevertheless, they are not often used in logic except with ‘supposition’ added.

44. See Ch. 1. The point is not well put here. It is not that *both* the utterance and the intention of the soul are “subordinated” signs. Rather, the former is subordinated to the latter.

45. For example, Walter Burley, *The Longer Treatise on the Purity of the Art of Logic*, Tract. 1: “On the Properties of Terms,” Part I, Ch. 3, tr. Paul Vincent Spade, par. 27–41. See also William of Sherwood, *Introduction to Logic*: “It is simple when a word supposits what it signifies for what it signifies (*supponit significatum pro significato*), as in ‘man is a species.’” (Kretzmann’s insertion.)

46. Of course, some terms do signify intentions of the soul. For example, the term ‘intention of the soul.’ Ockham is speaking very broadly here.

## 56. Universals and Individuation

From *Ordinatio*, distinction 2, questions 4 and 6

Question 4: Is a universal a thing outside the soul, in individuals, really distinct from them, and not multiplied in individuals?

As for the identity and distinction of God from creature, it must be asked whether there is something univocal common to God and creature and essentially predicable of both. But because this question, along with much of what has already been said and is about to be said in the following questions, depends on a knowledge of univocal and universal nature, therefore in order to clarify what has been and will be said I will first ask some questions about universal and univocal nature.

On this, I first ask whether what is immediately and proximately denominated by a universal and univocal intention is truly some thing outside the soul, intrinsic and essential to what it is common and univocal to, and really distinct from them.

Yes it is:

First, it is truly a thing, essential and intrinsic to what it is common to. For according to the Commentator [Ibn Rushd], *Metaphysics* 5, comm. 7, [1101], “These two men, the universal and the particular—namely, the particular man of whom music is an accident—are essentially one.” But what is essentially one with some real being outside the soul is itself truly a thing and essential to such a thing. Therefore, the universal man is truly a thing outside the soul, and essential to what it is common to.

Second, it seems it is a really distinct thing. For it is impossible for the same thing to be both corruptible and incorruptible. But universals are incorruptible,

and what they are common to are corruptible. Therefore, universals are not the same thing as singulars.

On the contrary:

The Commentator, *Metaphysics* 12, comm. 22 [=comm. 21, 307D]: “One and being are among universal things, which do not have being outside the soul.” Therefore, according to him, universals do not have being outside the soul. But nothing that does not have being outside the soul is really the same as a being outside the soul. Therefore, etc.

[Walter Burley’s Theory]<sup>1</sup>

On this question there is one theory that says every univocal universal is a certain thing existing outside the soul, really in each singular and belonging to the essence of each singular, really distinct from each singular and from any other universal, in such a way that the universal man is truly one thing outside the soul, existing really in each man, and is really distinguished from each man and from the universal animal and from the universal substance. So too for all genera and species, whether subalternate or not subalternate.

So according to this theory, however many universals are predicable *in quid* and per se in the first mode of any singular per se in a genus, there are that many really distinct things in that singular, each of which is really distinguished from the other and from the singular. All those things—not multiplied in themselves in any way, no matter how much their singulars are multiplied—are in each individual of the same species.

There are many arguments in favor of this theory.

First, from reason.

First: Definition is primarily of substance and secondarily of accident, according to the Philosopher, *Metaphysics* 7 [4, 1030b4–13]. But definition is not primarily of singular substance, according to him in the same place [15, 1039b20–1040a7]. Therefore,

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From *Five Texts on the Mediaeval Problem of Universals*, tr. Paul Vincent Spade (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1994). Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

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1. Ockham says some people attributed this theory to Scotus. But in fact the view described here is not Scotus’s, but rather Walter Burley’s. See Walter Burley, 3rb–7rb.

there is another kind of substance than singular substance, and it is what is primarily definable. But that other kind of substance is not separate from sensibles, because such a separate substance is not definable, according to the Philosopher himself in the same place. Therefore, that other kind of substance belongs to the essence of a singular. . . .

[Against This Theory]

This view is absolutely false and absurd. So I argue against it.

First: No thing one in number, not varied or multiplied, is in several sensible *supposita* or singulars, or for that matter in any created individuals, at one and the same time. But a thing such as this theory postulates, if it were granted, would be one in number. Therefore, it would not be in several singulars and belong to their essence.

The major premise is plain. For it is proper to the divine essence alone that without any division or multiplication it is really in several distinct *supposita*. The minor premise, that a thing such as this theory postulates is one in number, I prove like this: Whenever there are two equally simple really distinct things, neither of which includes in itself a greater intrinsic plurality of things than does the other, either each of those things is one in number or else neither of them is. For there is no greater reason why the one of them should be one in number than that the other one is. <Or, if one of them does include a greater plurality than the other one does, so that they are not equally simple, then if the one that includes the greater plurality and is the less simple is one in number, the one that includes in itself the lesser intrinsic plurality and is simpler will be one in number too.><sup>2</sup> But a universal thing and a singular one are, according to you, two really distinct and equally simple things, <or else the universal thing is the simpler>. . . .

Third: An individual of some species can be newly created no matter how many other individuals of the same species remain, created or produced earlier. But creation is absolutely from nothing, so that nothing es-

sential and intrinsic to a thing absolutely precedes it in real being. Therefore, no nonvaried pre-existing thing in any individual belongs to the essence of that individual, if it is newly created. For if it did, something essential to the thing would precede it, and consequently it would not be created. Therefore, there is no universal thing belonging to the essence of those individuals. For if there were, it would pre-exist every individual produced after the first one. Consequently, all those produced after the one first produced would not be created, because they would not be from nothing.

Moreover, every singular thing can be annihilated without the annihilation or destruction of any other singular thing on which it does not depend at all. Therefore, this man can be annihilated by God without any other man's being annihilated or destroyed. But in annihilation nothing intrinsic to the thing remains in real existence, either in itself or in anything else. Therefore, there is no such universal thing common to both this man and another one. For then it would be annihilated [when this man is annihilated], and consequently no other man would remain according to his whole essence. So each man would be corrupted at once, because when any part is annihilated the whole is destroyed. . . .

[Ockham's Own Theory]

Therefore, in reply to the question, I say otherwise: No thing really distinct from singular things and intrinsic to them is universal or common to them. For such a thing is not to be posited except (a) to preserve the one's essential predication of the other, or (b) to preserve our knowledge of things and (c) the definitions of things. Aristotle [*Metaphysics* 12.4, 1078b27–34] suggests these reasons for Plato's theory.

But the first of these [(a)] is not valid. For by the very fact that the universal is claimed to be intrinsic to the thing and really distinct from the singular thing, it has to be a part of the thing. But a part cannot be essentially predicated of the thing, just as neither matter nor form is essentially predicated of the composite. Therefore, if it is essentially predicated of the thing, it must not supposit for itself but for a singular thing. But such supposition can be preserved by claiming that something is predicated that is not the whole thing or

2. Angle brackets enclose material that Ockham added later in revising the *Ordinatio*.

a part of the thing. Therefore, in order to preserve such predication, one does not have to claim that such a predicate is another thing and yet intrinsic to the thing.

For example, the fact that the predication “A man is an animal” or “Socrates is an animal” is essential and *per se* in the first mode and *in quid* can be preserved just as much by claiming that the predicate is neither really the subject nor really a part of the subject as it can by claiming that the predicate is an essential part of the subject. For if it is claimed that the predicate is an essential part of the subject, then I ask: What is denoted by the proposition? Either (i) that the subject is essentially the predicate itself. And this is impossible, because a whole is never essentially or really its part. Or else (ii) it is denoted that what is truly a man is something that is truly an animal—that is to say, that what the term ‘man’ supposits for is the same as what the term ‘animal’ supposits for, no matter how much the predicate that supposits is not what it supposits for in the proposition.

But all of this can be preserved equally well by claiming that the predicate is not the subject or a part of it as it can by claiming that it is a part of it. For it is equally possible that something extrinsic to something supposits for it as it is that its parts supposit for it. Therefore, in order to preserve this predication, one does not have to claim a common predicable of something is intrinsic to it.

*Confirmation:* In the proposition “A man is an animal” either the terms supposit for themselves or not. If so, then the proposition would be false, because the terms are distinct and the one is not the other. And according to the theory reported above (and also according to the truth), if they do not supposit for themselves, then they supposit for things other than themselves. And so it can pertain to something extrinsic to supposit for something other than itself, just as it can for something intrinsic. Therefore, etc. . . .

[Replies to the Arguments in Favor of Burley’s Theory]

To the other theory’s first argument: When it is assumed that definition is primarily of substance, I say that for a definition to be “primarily” of something can be understood in two senses: Either (a) it is of that of

which the definition is primarily and adequately predicated, so that the defined and the definition are convertible. In this sense, definition is not primarily of substance. For of no substance is such a definition primarily and adequately predicated. Rather definition in this sense is primarily of some one term convertible with the definition, even though the term is not really that definition.

For a definition to be “primarily” of something can be understood in another sense too, namely (b) because there is something the parts of which are primarily expressed by such a definition. This can be understood in two ways. For ‘primarily,’ like any superlative, can be taken (i) positively or (ii) negatively.<sup>3</sup> If in the first way (i), I still say definition is of nothing primarily. For there is nothing primarily definable, because there is nothing the parts of which ought to be expressed except a singular. And the parts of one singular are not expressed by a definition more than the parts of any other singular are. In the second way (ii), I say definition is indeed primarily of substance, because the parts of a substance are primarily expressed by a definition.

When it is said that definition is not primarily of a singular substance, I say this is true in sense (a). For of no singular substance is a definition primarily or adequately predicated. Yet in this last sense (b–ii), I say a definition is indeed primarily of a singular substance, because the parts of that singular substance are primarily expressed by the definition, and such a definition is not truly predicated *per se* of any other *suppositum*.

For example, ‘rational animal’ is a definition. This definition is primarily of the term ‘man,’ because it is predicated primarily and adequately of this term. For it is predicated of nothing except what the term ‘man’ is predicated of, and for everything the term ‘man’ is predicated of when it has personal supposition, the definition (if it supposits personally) is predicated of it. So the definition and the defined are converted. For this is what it is for some things to be convertible: what-

3. In the positive sense, *x* is most *F* if and only if *x* is more *F* than anything else is. In the negative sense, *x* is most *F* if and only if nothing else is more *F* than *x* is. The difference is that in the negative sense, but not the positive, there may be more than one thing that is most *F*.

ever the one is predicated of, so too is the other, and conversely, if they supposit personally. (It is always necessary in the case of convertibles that something is predicated of the one, if it is taken as suppositing *otherwise* than personally, that is not predicated of the other, and conversely. For instance, man and risible are converted. Yet risible is an attribute of man, and man is not an attribute of man.)

In sense (a), therefore, the definition ‘rational animal’ is primarily of the term ‘man,’ and yet the parts of the term ‘man’ are not expressed by the definition. In the second sense (b–i), this definition is of nothing primarily. For nothing is expressed by the definition except the parts of Socrates and Plato. Just as nothing is a rational animal except Socrates and Plato (and so on for other singular men), so too the parts of nothing else are expressed by this definition. Yet the parts of Socrates are not expressed more than are the parts of Plato, or conversely. Therefore, the parts of none of them are expressed “primarily”—that is, in the sense that the parts of one are expressed more than are the parts of any other. In the third sense (b–ii), the parts of Socrates are indeed primarily expressed by this definition, and likewise the parts of Plato. For no one else’s parts are expressed more.

So understanding the phrase ‘primarily defined’ in this sense (b–ii), I say Socrates is primarily defined, and likewise Plato is too, and so on for every man. For of each such man the definition is truly predicated. And it is not predicated of anything else that supposit truly for itself, but only of those terms that supposit for singular men.

Hence if, in the proposition ‘Man is a rational animal,’ ‘man’ supposit for anything other than for a singular man, the proposition would be absolutely false. And so nothing imaginable is a rational animal except for this man or that one, and so on for other singular men. Consequently by the same reasoning, nothing’s real parts are expressed by this definition except the parts of this man or that one, and so on for other singular men. . . .

To the second main argument, I say real science is not always about things as about what are immediately known, but about other things that nevertheless supposit only for things. To understand this, and on account of many statements that have been and will be

made for the sake of some people inexperienced in logic, you need to know that any science, whether it is real or rational, is only about *propositions* in the sense of being about what are known. For only propositions are known. But a proposition, according to Boethius on *On Interpretation* I [37.4–41.15], has three kinds of being: in the mind, in speech, and in writing. That is to say, one kind of proposition is only conceived and understood, another kind is spoken, and another kind is written. So too, if there were any other signs instituted to signify in the same way words and letters are, there would be a proposition made up of those signs, just as there is of these.

Therefore, just as a spoken proposition is truly put together out of words and a written proposition is truly put together out of inscriptions, so too a proposition that is only conceived is put together out of things conceived or understood, <or of concepts or understandings> of the soul.<sup>4</sup> So just as every word can be part of a proposition in speech, so too everything understood can be part of a proposition in the mind, <according to one view, or a concept can be part of a mental proposition according to another view>.

A word that is part of a spoken proposition can have many kinds of supposition—material, personal, and simple—as is clear in the following propositions spoken and heard by the bodily ears: (a) ‘Man is a monosyllabic word.’ In this, the word is taken materially, because

4. “*Conceptis sive intellectis <vel conceptibus sive intellectibus> animae.*” *Conceptis* and *intellectis* are passive participles and mean “*the things* understood” and “*the things* conceived,” whereas *conceptibus* and *intellectibus* are fourth-declension nouns meaning “concepts” and “understandings.” Burley held that propositions can be made up of real things, “conceived” or “understood.” (This is the theory of “real propositions.”) By adding the extra words, Ockham distinguishes that theory from the view that mental propositions consist of purely mental concepts or “understandings,” not of external objects. The fact that *animae* was in the original text and is not part of the addition suggests that the latter theory is what Ockham originally meant anyway, and that it was only later that he realized what he had written could be taken in a Burleian sense. See also the other addition, at the end of this paragraph.

there the word, in the sense in which the proposition is true, stands and supposits for itself. Likewise (b) ‘Man runs.’ There it stands personally. For it supposits for the men themselves, not for the word, since the word cannot run. But (c) in ‘Man is a species’ the word supposits simply for something common. The same holds for a part of a similar proposition in the mind.

Disregarding every spoken word (because a mental proposition belongs to no language—as Augustine says in *On the Trinity* 15 [10. 19], there is some word that belongs to no language), I say this part of such a mental proposition can have (a) simple supposition, and then it supposits for something common; or (b) it can have personal supposition, and then it stands and supposits for the signified things themselves, if it signifies things [so that it is not an “empty” term]; or (c) it can have material supposition, and then it stands and supposits for itself.

On this basis, I reply to the argument: The spoken proposition ‘Every man is risible’ is truly known. For as it is true, so it can be truly known, because everything true can be known. Now no one but a maniac can deny that some spoken propositions are true and some false. Who would say he had never heard a lie with his bodily ears? But nothing can be heard with bodily ears but a spoken word, just as nothing can be seen by bodily eyes but color or light. Therefore, some propositions put together precisely out of spoken words are true, like ‘Every man is an animal,’ ‘Every man is risible,’ ‘Every species is predicated of several things differing numerically with respect to what they are,’ ‘Genus is predicated of several things differing in species,’ and so on for other propositions that can be known. So too the proposition in the mind, which belongs to no language, is truly known.

Now however, [no longer disregarding spoken words], the case is such that the knowledge of some such spoken propositions is real science, and of others it is rational science. Yet the known propositions and all their parts are truly spoken words. Nevertheless, because the parts of some of them supposit and stand not for themselves (that is, for the words) but for external things (that is, for their substances),<sup>5</sup> therefore the

knowledge of such propositions is called “real science.” But other parts of other propositions stand for the mental concepts themselves. Therefore, the knowledge of them can be called “rational” or “logical science.” And the knowledge of the spoken propositions “Man is a monosyllabic word” and “Animal is a trisyllabic word” can be called “grammatical science.”

Yet all such propositions and all their parts are spoken words. They are only said to pertain to different sciences because the parts of different ones of them supposit for different kinds of things. Some supposit for things, some for concepts of the mind, and some for the words themselves.

Therefore, analogously, it is the same way for propositions in the mind, which can be truly known by us in this life: All the terms of those propositions are only concepts and not the external substances themselves. Yet because the terms of some mental propositions stand and supposit personally for the external things themselves—as in ‘Every mobile thing is partly in the beginning point [and partly in the end point],’ ‘Every man is risible,’ ‘Every triangle has three [angles adding up to two right angles],’ and so on—therefore there is said to be “real” knowledge of such propositions.

But the terms of other mental propositions supposit simply—that is, for the concepts themselves. For example, ‘Every demonstration is from primary and true, etc.,’ ‘Man is a species,’ and so on. Therefore, there is said to be “rational” knowledge of them.

So it is irrelevant to “real” science whether the terms of the known proposition are things outside the soul or are only in the soul, provided they stand and supposit for the external things themselves. Hence one does not have to posit any such universal things really distinct from singular things to account for real science.

On this basis, I reply to the actual form of the argument: For science to be of things can be understood in three senses: Either (a) because the thing itself is known. And in that sense, no science is about substantial things, especially since nothing is known but a complex.<sup>6</sup> But a complex is not outside the soul, ex-

5. Following a variant reading in the edition.

6. That is, a proposition.

cept perhaps in speech or in a similar kind of sign. In another sense (b), the things are parts of what is known. In this sense, real science does not have to be about external things. In a third sense (c), the things are what the parts of the known supposit for. In *this* sense real science is about things—but not about universal things, since there is no supposition for them. For in the mental proposition ‘Every body is put together out of matter and a singular form,’ the supposition is not for any universal body, because no such body (even if there were any) is so put together out of singular matter and a singular form. Instead science in this sense is about singular things, because the terms supposit for those singulars.

It is not in this sense that the Philosopher denies science is about singulars, but in the second sense (b). For the terms of the known propositions are not singular things, but are rather the universals about which there is science in the second sense (b), because universals are the *terms* of the known propositions. If sometimes one finds it said that science is about universal *things*, this should be understood in the sense that knowledge is about universal terms predicable of things.

Therefore, in brief, as for what the Philosopher meant, it must be said that real science is not distinguished from rational science by the fact that real science is about things in such a way that these things are the known propositions or parts of the known propositions, while rational science is not about things. Instead, they are distinguished by the fact that the parts—the terms of the propositions known by a real science—stand and supposit for the things, while the terms of propositions known by a rational science do not. Rather in rational science the terms stand and supposit for other items, [namely, for concepts].

There is a clear example in ‘Every man is risible,’ ‘Every man is susceptible of learning,’ and so on for other propositions known by a real science, and in ‘Genus is predicated *in quid* of things differing in species,’ ‘A most specific species is only predicated of individuals,’ and so on for other propositions known by a rational science. . . .

Suppose a quibble is raised against this and against other things said above: ‘Someone promises he will give someone else some horse’ is true. In that case, I

ask:<sup>7</sup> Does he promise the other person some singular thing, a universal thing, or a conceived thing? Not a singular thing, because he does not promise one any more than another. Thus either he promises no horse (and so he could fulfill the promise by giving no horse at all), or else he promises every horse (and so he could not fulfill the promise except by giving every horse). If he promises a universal thing, I have my point. If he promises a concept, that is not true. For he promises a true thing. Likewise, in that case he could fulfill the promise without giving any real horse but only a certain conceived one.

This piece of sophistry would not have to be included here if certain people, who think they know logic, did not ponder such childishness and because of it maintain many absurdities about the supposition of terms. But it would be too long and boring to discuss this. So I dismiss it and say the promisor promises a true singular thing. For in the proposition ‘He promises another person a horse,’ ‘horse’ supposits personally for singular horses. Hence such a person would never fulfill the promise if he were to give some universal, unless he were to give some particular horse too. Thus just as, in saying ‘I promise you one particular horse,’ he promises a singular thing, so too in saying ‘I promise you a horse.’

When it is said he does not promise one singular thing any more than another, and therefore either he promises none or each of them, that does not follow. Instead it is a fallacy of figure of speech committed by changing one mode of suppositing into another, just as there is such a fallacy in arguing like this: “Every man is a singular man. But he is not one singular man any more than another. Therefore, every man is each singular man or none.” For in the first premise, ‘singular man’ supposits merely confusedly, and in the second premise it supposits confusedly and distributively. So it is here too: In the proposition ‘I promise you a horse,’ ‘horse’ supposits merely confusedly or in some such way, because it does not supposit confusedly and distributively. One can infer each singular under a disjunction in such a way that the consequent

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7. The speaker throughout this paragraph is the “quibbler,” not Ockham.

is a proposition with a disjoint predicate, not a disjunctive proposition. For it correctly follows: “I promise you a horse; therefore, I promise you this horse or that one or that one” and so on for all present and future horses. But the disjunctive proposition does not follow. For it does not follow: “I promise you a horse; therefore, I promise you this horse or I promise you that horse” and so on.

So too it correctly follows: “Every man is an animal; therefore, every man is this animal or that animal” and so on for singular animals. But the disjunctive proposition does not follow: “Every man is an animal; therefore, every man is this animal or every man is that animal” and so on.

So too in many other such cases. The predicate term often has merely confused supposition, or some similar kind of supposition with respect to predicates, without a preceding distributive sign. <Nevertheless I do not care for the present whether it literally has merely confused supposition or not. Therefore,> let us omit these details; they pertain to logicians. Yet ignorance about them makes for many difficulties in theology and in the other real sciences. If these and similar childish matters were fully known, such difficulties would be quite easy, or would even present no difficulty at all. . . .

#### [Question 6: Is a Universal Really Outside the Soul, Distinct from the Individual, Although Not Really Distinct?]

Third, I ask whether something universal and univocal is really outside the soul and from the nature of the thing distinct from the individual, although not really distinct.

It seems so:

For the nature of man is a this, and yet it is not *of itself* a this, because in that case it could not be in anything else. Therefore, it is a this through something added to it. Not through something really distinct, because then for the same reason the nature of whiteness would be a this through something added that is really distinct. In that case, this whiteness would be really composite, which seems false. Therefore, the nature is a this through something added that is formally distinct.

For the opposite side:

No nature that is really an individual is really a universal. Therefore, if this nature is really this individual, it will not be really a universal.

[Scotus’s Theory]

On this question, it is said that in a thing outside the soul there is a nature really the same as a difference that contracts it to a determinate individual, and yet formally distinct from that difference. This nature is of itself neither universal nor particular. Rather it is incompletely universal in the thing, and completely universal according to the being it has in the intellect. Because this theory, I believe, is the theory of the Subtle Doctor [Duns Scotus], who surpasses all others in the subtlety of his judgment, therefore without changing the words he himself uses in various places, I want here to report distinctly the whole of the theory he sets out in bits and pieces in various places.

It is part of this Doctor’s theory that, in addition to numerical unity, there is a real unity less than numerical unity. It belongs to the nature itself, which is in a sense universal. So the contractible nature can be compared first to the singular itself. Second, it can be compared to numerical unity. Third, it can be compared to being a universal. Fourth, it can be compared to that unity less than numerical unity.

If it is compared to the singular itself, then this theory maintains that the nature is not *of itself* a this, but through something added. Second, it maintains that what is added is not (question 2) a negation, or (question 3) some accident, or (question 4) actual existence, or (question 5) matter. Third, it maintains that what is added is in the genus substance and is intrinsic to the individual. Fourth, it maintains that the nature is naturally prior to the contracting difference. Thus he says: [Here Ockham quotes Scotus’s discussion almost *verbatim*]. . . .

[Against Scotus’s Theory]

One can argue against this theory in two ways.

First, because among creatures it is impossible for some things to differ formally unless they are distinguished really. Therefore, if the nature is distinguished

in any way from the contracting difference, they have to be distinguished either as thing and thing, or as a being of reason and a being of reason, or as a real being and a being of reason.

But the first alternative is denied by him, and so is the second. Therefore, the third has to be granted. Therefore, a nature distinguished in any way from an individual is nothing but a being of reason.

The antecedent is clear. For if a nature and the contracting difference are not the same in all respects, therefore something can be truly affirmed of the one and denied of the other. But among creatures the same thing cannot be truly affirmed and truly denied of the same thing. Therefore, they are not one thing. The minor is clear, because [if the same thing could be truly affirmed and truly denied of the same thing], every way of proving a distinction of things would be lost in the case of creatures. For contradiction is the strongest way to prove the distinction of things. Therefore, if among creatures entirely the same thing can be truly denied of the same thing, <or of the same term suppositing for the same thing,> and truly affirmed of it, no real distinction among them can be proven.

*Confirmation:* All contradictories are equally inconsistent. But the inconsistency between being and non-being is so great that if *a* exists and *b* does not, it follows that *b* is not *a*. Therefore, so too for any contradictories whatever.

Suppose someone says: It is true for primary contradictories that one can prove real nonidentity from them, but one cannot do this for other contradictories.

To the contrary: Syllogistic form holds equally for every subject matter. Now here is a good syllogism: 'Every *a* is *b*; *c* is not *b*; therefore, *c* is not *a*.' Consequently it is true of *a* and non-*a* that if this is *a* and this is not *a*, then this is not this,<sup>8</sup> just as it is true that if this is and this is not, then this is not this. Therefore, so too in the present case, if every individual difference is of itself proper to some individual, and the nature is not of itself proper to some individual, it follows that the nature is not the individual difference, and this non-identity is real. . . .

8. Substitute "this" for *a* and for *c*, and *a* for *b*. The "this" indicates the same thing throughout.

[Ockham's Own Answer to the Question]

Therefore, I say otherwise in response to the question.

First, I show this conclusion: Every singular thing is singular *by itself*.

I argue this as follows: Singularity immediately pertains to what it belongs to. Therefore, it cannot pertain to it through anything else. Therefore, if something is singular, it is singular by itself.

Moreover, as what is singular is related to being singular, so what is universal is related to being universal. Therefore, just as what is singular cannot become universal or common through anything added to it, so what is common cannot become singular through anything added to it. Therefore, whatever is singular is not singular through anything added to it, but by itself.

The second conclusion: Every thing outside the soul is really singular and numerically one. For every thing outside the soul is either simple or composite. If it is simple, it does not include many things. But every thing not including many things is numerically one, because every such thing and another precisely similar thing are two things. Therefore, each of them is numerically one. Therefore, every simple thing is numerically one. If it is composite, one will finally have to arrive at a certain number of parts. Consequently each of these parts will be numerically one. Consequently the whole composed of them will be either numerically one or else one by aggregation.

This can also be argued in the following way: I take the thing you claim is not a singular thing, and I ask: Does it include several things or not? If not, then I take a really distinct but similar thing and argue: These things are really distinct, and there is not an infinite number of them. Therefore, there is a finite number of them. And it is plain that this can only be a pair. Therefore, there are precisely two things here. Consequently each of them is numerically one.

But if the original thing does include several things, it does not include infinitely many, and therefore it includes finitely many. Consequently there is a number of things there. Hence each of the included things will be numerically one and singular.

From these arguments it follows that each thing outside the soul is singular by itself, so that it itself, without anything added, is what is immediately de-

nominated by the notion of singularity. Neither are any items whatever possible on the part of reality, distinct in any way at all, one of which is more indifferent than another, or one of which is more numerically one than another—unless perhaps the one is more perfect than another (as, for example, this angel is more perfect than this ass).

Hence each thing outside the soul will be by itself

as this. One does not have to look for a cause of individuation (except perhaps the extrinsic and intrinsic causes, when the individual is composite). Rather one has to look more for a cause why it is possible for something to be common and universal.

Therefore, I reply to the form of the question: What is universal and univocal is not really anything on the part of reality formally distinct from the individual.

## 57. Intuitive and Abstractive Cognition

Book II (*Reportatio*)

Question 12: Does an angel understand things other than himself through his own essence or through a species?

Question 13: Does a higher angel understand through fewer species than a lower?

To the Questions

Here I first suppose that a species is that which goes before the act of knowing and can persist before and after knowing, even with the thing absent. And consequently, it is distinguished from a habit, since a habit of the intellect follows the act of knowing; but a species precedes the act as well as the habit.

The Common Opinion on the First Question

On this assumption, and extending the first Question to our intellect as well as the angelic, there is an opinion that maintains that it is necessary to posit a species impressed on the intellect in order that it should know. . . .

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Translated for this volume by James J. Walsh from the text established by Philotheus Boehner, OFM, in “The Notitia Intuitiva of Non-existents according to William of Ockham,” *Traditio* 1 (1943): 223–275.

The Opinion of Saint Thomas on the Second Question

As to the second Question it is proved that the superior angel knows through fewer and more universal species than the inferior, since God, who is at the limit of intelligences, knows everything through one, that is, through his essence, and every intellectual nature outside of God knows what is diverse through what is diverse. But the closer a nature is to God in perfection, the fewer it requires for knowing. But the nature of a superior angel is closer to God than that of an inferior. Therefore, etc. . . .

The Subtle Doctor holds this opinion regarding the first conclusion, and he proves it through different arguments. Look in John [Duns Scotus]. But he does not hold the second conclusion.

As far as the first part of this opinion goes, it cannot evidently be disproved through natural reasons, and yet it seems to me that the opposite part is more probable; and this is because plurality should not be posited without necessity. But everything that is preserved with a species can be preserved without a species. Therefore, there is no necessity for positing it.

Concerning Intuitive and Abstractive Cognition

Hence, concerning this question, I first offer certain distinctions. One is that some cognition is intuitive, and some, abstractive. The intuitive is that by means

of which a thing is known to exist when it exists and not to exist when it does not exist. For when I perfectly apprehend any extremes intuitively, I can at once form the complex, that those extremes are united or are not united, and assent or dissent. For instance, if I should intuitively see a body and whiteness, the intellect can at once form this complex: "The body is white," or, "The body is not white"; and, these complexes having been formed, the intellect at once assents. And this is by virtue of the intuitive cognition that it has of the extremes, just as, having apprehended the terms of some principle, for instance, "Every whole, etc.," and the complex having been formed through the apprehensive intellect, at once the intellect assents by virtue of the apprehension of the terms.

But it should be known that although, given intuitive cognition through the senses as well as the intellect with respect to some incomplexes, the intellect can form a complex from those incomplexes intuitively known in the aforesaid way, and assent to such a complex, still, neither the formation of the complex nor the act of assenting to the complex is intuitive cognition. For each of these is complex cognition, and intuitive cognition is incomplex. And if these two, "abstractive" and "intuitive," were to divide all cognition, complex as well as incomplex, then these cognitions would be called abstractive cognitions, as would every complex cognition, whether in the presence of the thing, with intuitive cognition of the extremes given, or in the absence of the thing, and intuitive cognition not given. And then according to this it could be conceded that intuitive cognition, through the intellect as well as the senses, is a partial cause of abstractive cognition, which is had in the aforesaid way. And this is because every effect sufficiently depends on its essential causes which, when posited, the effect can be posited, and when they are not posited, it cannot be naturally posited; and it depends on no other, as is frequently said. But the cognition by which I evidently assent to this complex: "This body is white," whose extremes I know intuitively, cannot naturally exist unless each cognition is given, since if the thing is absent and the intuitive cognition is corrupted, the intellect does not evidently assent that the body that it previously saw is white, since it does not know whether it is or not. But with

respect to apprehensive cognition, through which I form a complex, it is not intuitive cognition, with neither a sensitive nor an intellectual partial cause. For any complex that can be formed with them can be formed without them—in absence as well as presence. So, therefore, it is obvious that through intuitive cognition we judge a thing to exist when it exists, and this generally, whether the intuitive cognition is naturally caused or supernaturally, by God alone. For if it is naturally caused, then it cannot be unless the object exists and is present in the required proximity, since there can be such a distance between the object and the power that the power cannot naturally intuit such an object. And when the object is thus present and in proximity in such a way, the intellect through the act of assenting can judge that the thing exists, in the aforesaid way. But if it is supernatural, for instance, if God should cause in me the intuitive cognition of some object existing at Rome, immediately upon the possession of the intuitive cognition of it I can judge that that which I intuit and see exists, just as well as if that cognition were had naturally.

If you say that the object is not present in this way, nor in the required proximity, I reply that although intuitive cognition cannot be naturally caused except when the object is present in the required proximity, still, it could be supernaturally. And hence the differences that John [Duns Scotus] gives between intuitive and abstractive cognition—that intuitive cognition is of what is present and existent as it is present and existent—are understood of intuitive cognition naturally caused, but not when it is supernaturally caused. Whence, speaking absolutely, no other presence is necessarily required for intuitive cognition than that which can terminate the intuitive act. And it is consistent with this that the object should be nothing, or that it should be distant by the greatest distance; and however far away the intuitively known object may be, I can by virtue of it judge at once that it exists, if it is in the aforesaid way. But still, since intuitive cognition is not naturally caused nor conserved unless the object is in the required way existing in proximity at a certain distance, I cannot judge that which is naturally intuitively known unless the object is present. In the same way, I can judge through intuitive cognition that

a thing does not exist when it does not. But this cognition cannot be natural, since such cognition never is nor is conserved naturally unless with the object present and existent. And hence this natural intuitive cognition is also corrupted through the absence of the object; and on the assumption that it persists after the destruction of the object, then it is supernatural with regard to conservation, although not with regard to causation. And hence, etc. Moreover, it is necessary that the intuitive cognition by which I know that a thing does not exist when it does not, should be supernatural with regard to causation or conservation or both. For instance, if God should cause in me the intuitive cognition of some non-existent object and should conserve that cognition in me, by means of that cognition I can judge that the thing does not exist, since I see that thing intuitively; and having formed this complex: "This object does not exist," the intellect at once assents to this complex and dissents from its opposite by virtue of the intuitive cognition, so that the intuitive cognition is the partial cause of that assent, as was said before about natural intuition. And so, consequently, the intellect assents that that which I intuit is a pure nothing with regard to supernatural conservation, and not causation. The case is this: if at first the intuitive cognition of some object is caused naturally, and after the destruction of the object God conserves the previously caused intuitive cognition, then it is natural cognition with regard to causation, and supernatural with regard to conservation. Then the same should be said here for all, just as if that cognition were supernaturally caused, since through it I can judge that a thing exists when it does, no matter how far away the object known may be, and that it does not exist when it does not, given that the object is destroyed. And so in a certain way it can be conceded that through natural intuitive cognition I judge that a thing does not exist when it does not, since it is through cognition naturally caused although supernaturally conserved. So, therefore, it is obvious that intuitive cognition is that through which I know that a thing exists when it does and that it does not when it does not.

But we do not judge through abstractive cognition that a thing exists when it does and that it does not when it does not, whether natural or supernatural. . . .

### Concerning the Reason for Knowing

Another distinction concerns the reason for knowing, which in one way is taken for all that which goes before the act of knowing; and so any partial cause of knowledge, the intellect as well as the object, and even God, is called the reason for knowing. In another way it is taken as what is distinguished from the possible intellect, so that it is the efficient cause of knowing; and thus knowledge of a principle is the reason for knowing a conclusion. In a third way it is taken as distinguished from the agent and possible intellect, which is still necessarily required for knowing, just as much as a principle.

### Conclusions

These having been seen, I prove some conclusions.

#### First Conclusion

The first is that for having intuitive cognition it is not necessary to posit anything outside the intellect and the thing known, and most of all, no species. This is proved, since it is in vain to do through many what can equally well be done through fewer; but intuitive cognition can be accomplished through the intellect and the thing seen, without any species. Therefore, etc. The assumption is proved, since given a sufficient agent and patient in proximity, the effect can be posited without anything else; but the agent intellect with the object are sufficient agents with respect to the cognition of it; and the possible intellect is a sufficient patient. Therefore, etc.

Again: Nothing should be posited as naturally necessarily required for some effect unless certain experience or a certain argument from what is self-evident leads to that; but neither of these leads to the positing of a species. Therefore, etc. The assumption is proved: Experience does not lead to that, because it includes intuitive knowledge, so that if one experienced some thing to be white, he would see whiteness to be in it. But no one sees a species intuitively. Therefore, experience does not lead to that.

If you say that in sensitive powers other than sight, interior as well as exterior, there is experiential cogni-

tion but not intuitive, I reply that in any sense at all that has some cognition by virtue of which it can know that a thing exists when it does and does not when it does not, there is intuitive as well as experiential cognition, since intuitive cognition is that through which I know that a thing exists or does not exist. And hence I concede that in every sense, interior as well as exterior, there is intuitive cognition, that is, cognition such that by virtue of it one can in the aforesaid way know that a thing exists or does not, even though it is not visual intuitive cognition. And in this many are deceived, for they believe that there is only visual intuitive cognition, which is false. Nor does any argument from what is self-evident lead to that, since no argument can prove that a species is required unless because it has efficient causality. For every effect sufficiently depends on its essential causes, according to John [Duns Scotus]. But that anything created is an efficient cause cannot be proved demonstratively, but only through experience, that is, through the fact that in its presence the effect follows, and in its absence, not. But now, without any species, on the presence of the object with the intellect, there follows the act of knowing, just as well as with the species. Therefore, etc.

Again: If a species were posited as necessarily required for intuitive cognition, as the efficient cause of it, then, since the species could be preserved in the absence of the object, it could naturally cause intuitive cognition in the absence of the thing, which is false and against experience.

### Second Conclusion

The second conclusion is that in order to have abstractive cognition it is necessary to posit something previous outside of the object and the intellect. This is proved:

For every power that can now perform some act that previously it could not, with the object and the power persisting equally now as before, has now something that it did not have before. But the intellect having intuitive knowledge can perform abstractive cognition, and not having it, cannot—and this with the object persisting in itself after the intuitive knowledge as well as before. Therefore, something is left in the intellect

by reason of which it can perform abstractive cognition and could not before. Thus outside of the object and the power it is necessary to posit something else in order to have abstractive cognition. . . .

### Third Conclusion

The third conclusion is that what is left is not a species, but a habit. This is proved:

For that which remains from acts, follows the act; but a species does not follow, it rather precedes. Therefore, etc.

Again: When something is in an accidental power with respect to cognition, it is not necessary to posit another than that through which it is in the accidental power for eliciting the act. But given a habit in the intellect, inclining toward some cognition, the intellect is in the accidental power. Thus it is not necessary to posit anything else in the intellect outside of the habit. The assumption is obvious according to the Philosopher in Book Three of the *De anima*, where he says that for the intellect to be in a power is different before learning or discovering from after, since before, it is in the essential power, and after, when through some act some habit is left, it is in the accidental power to a similar act. Thus, through the habit generated from an act, the intellect is in the accidental power. Whence only after the act of knowing does one experience himself as being in an accidental power with regard to cognition. For were a thousand species posited previous to the act of intellect, if the intellect had no act, it would no more experience itself as being in the accidental power than if there were no species there, and if not a single species were posited in the intellect. And yet, if the act of knowing is given, the intellect at once experiences itself as being in the accidental power with respect to a further cognition. And this can only be through a habit left in the intellect from the first act.

Again: Everything that can be preserved through a species can be preserved through a habit; therefore, a habit is required and a species is superfluous.

But it is obvious that a habit is necessarily required for knowing some object. For were it not required, and a species should suffice, then, if the species were corrupted after many acts of knowledge, I could not know

the object whose species it is, any more than I could before any act of knowledge at all. For a habit is not posited, and the species is corrupted. This conclusion seems absurd.

If you say that the species is strengthened through many cognitions, the reply is that then through such strengthening of the species the intellect is always more inclined to knowing; and consequently, the habit, which is posited by everyone, would be superfluous. And so, either the species or the habit is posited superfluously. Therefore, since the habit, and not the species, is posited by everyone, it seems that the species is superfluous.

Again: The species is only posited because of assimilation, or the causation of the act of knowledge, or the representation of the object, or the determination of the power, or the union of the mover and the moved. The species is posited most of all because of these; but it is not necessary to posit it because of any of these. Therefore, it should not be posited.

Not because of assimilation: Because that assimilation is either in the intellectual essence and nature through which the object known is assimilated, or else it is the assimilation of effect to cause. Not the first way, since if the intellect should know a substance, it would be more assimilated to the object in its own nature, which is substance, than through a species, which is an accident. For an accident is less assimilated to a substance than is a substance to a substance. Nor in the second way, since the assimilation of patient to agent is through the fact that it receives some effect caused by the agent; but in this way the intellect is sufficiently assimilated through the act of knowledge caused by the object and received in the intellect. Therefore, a species is not required. . . .

Nor ought a species be posited because of representation, since in intuitive knowledge nothing representative is required other than the object and the act, as is obvious above. And therefore neither is anything other than the object and the act required in abstractive, which immediately follows intuitive. The consequence is obvious, since just as the object sufficiently represents itself in the one cognition, so in the other that immediately follows intuitive.

Again: What is represented has to be previously known; otherwise, what represents would never lead to the cognition of what is represented as in a likeness. For example, a statue of Hercules would never lead me to the cognition of Hercules unless I had previously seen Hercules, nor could I otherwise know whether the statue is like him or not. But according to those positing a species, it is something previous to any act of knowing the object. Therefore, it cannot be posited because of the representation of the object. . . .

Nor ought a species be posited because of the causation of the act of knowledge. According to them, the corporeal and material cannot act on the spiritual; hence it is necessary to posit such a species in the intellect. But against this: Just as what is corporeal and material cannot be an immediate partial cause with respect to the act of knowing, which is received in what is spiritual—since it is in the possible intellect and is a spiritual quality—so neither can what is material be a partial cause concurring with the agent intellect in producing the species—which is spiritual in the possible intellect, which is also spiritual. Or, if you hold that what is corporeal can be a partial cause in causing a species in what is spiritual, so I hold that what is corporeal is a partial cause in causing the act of knowledge in what is spiritual.

If you say that the intellectual nature requires what is material in order to produce the species, I say the same concerning the act of knowledge.

Nor ought a species be posited because of the determination of the power, since every passive power is sufficiently determined by the sufficient agent, most of all when that power itself is active; but the sufficient agent is the object and the intellect, as has been proved. Therefore, etc.

Nor ought it be posited because of the union of the object with the power as mover and moved, since I would then argue in the same way that another species must be posited before that one. For in order that the object should be able to cause the first species in the intellect, it is required that it be united with it, just as a union is required in order that it should cause the act of knowledge. And this will be through another species, and so on to infinity.

In this way, therefore, it is obvious that because of experience, a habit and not a species should be posited.

#### To the First Question

These seen, I say to the first question, speaking of natural intuitive cognition, that an angel and our own intellect know what is other than themselves, not through their species nor through their own essence, but through the essence of the things known, and this as through the said circumstance of the efficient cause. So the reason for knowing, as it is distinguished from the power, is the essence itself of the thing known. . . .

#### To the Second Question

To the second question: If it is understood as concerning species properly so-called, a superior angel knows neither through a greater nor a lesser number, since it knows through none at all. But if the question is understood as concerning species as reasons for knowing, it does not know in this way through universal species, for instance, through the concepts of things, but it knows through diverse reasons, that is, diverse things known. And this is speaking about intuitive cognition naturally acquired, since in this case the reason for knowing as distinguished from the power, is the object. . . .

#### Doubts

Against these there are several doubts.

I. First, it seems that the intellect cannot have intuitive knowledge with respect to a singular, since the intellect abstracts from material conditions, for instance, from existing here and now; but neither singular nor intuitive cognition abstracts from the aforesaid conditions. Therefore, etc. . . .

V. Again. Against the position that a species is not posited in the intellect, but a habit. . . .

3. The intellect has not only the essential power for the cognition of complexes, but also of incomplexes; but that which reduces the intellect from an essential power to an accidental one cannot be a habit. This is, first, because it presupposes the act and, consequently, it presupposes the intellect reduced from the essential

power and second, because the habit is only with respect to complexes. And, consequently, if a habit could reduce the intellect from the essential to the accidental power with respect to cognition of a complex, it still would not do so with respect to cognition of an incomplex, for which a habit is not posited. . . .

#### To the Doubts

To I. To the first of these, I say that the intellect at first knows the singular intuitively. This is because the intellect knows intuitively what exists in reality, but nothing is such unless it is singular, and because this belongs to an inferior power, namely sense, and is a perfection. Therefore, etc.

Again: That which knows something as it is here and in this place and in this “now” and so for other circumstances, knows more perfectly and has a more perfect nature than that which does not know in this way. Thus, if sense should know in this way and intellect not, intellect would be less perfect than sense. . . .

To V, 3. To another I say that a habit should be posited with respect to the incomplex in the same way and for the same cause. But it is necessary to have recourse to experience for when it exists and when not, since when someone is more inclined to knowing, whether complex or incomplex, after rather than before a frequently elicited act concerning such, then a habit should be posited with respect to it; and when not, a habit should not be posited. Whence, just as not every incomplex knowledge is generative of a habit for the incomplex, so neither is every complex knowledge generative of a habit for the complex. For example, intuitive cognition—taking intuitive and abstractive cognition in the way mentioned above, as occurring together—is not generative of a habit for the incomplex, even though it is incomplex knowledge. And this is because no one experiences himself to be more inclined to knowing something intuitively after having frequently had intuition, than before. . . .

#### To the Arguments for the First Opinion

To the third. To another I say that there is not required before the act of knowing, any previous assimilation that is accomplished through a species; but the assim-

ilation suffices that is accomplished through the act of knowing, which is a likeness to the thing known. For according to Augustine in the fifteenth book of *On the Trinity*, when something is known as it is in itself, then the act of knowing will be quite similar to the thing, and a likeness other than the act of knowing is not required. . . .

To the Arguments of Scotus, *Oxon.* I. I, d. 3, q. 6, Omitted Above

To the argument I therefore reply that a species alone in the imagination does not suffice for the cognition of any thing; but just as for corporeal intuitive cognition there is required the power and the object, without any species, so for intellectual intuitive cognition the object together with the intellect suffices. And for the first abstractive knowledge, which stands together with intuitive, intuitive knowledge together with the intellect suffices; but for the second, a habit is required, as was said above. Nor does the imagination unconditionally accomplish anything necessary for intuitive or abstractive cognition, but only incidentally, given our present condition. For the separated soul can see intuitively things present to it, without any phantasm. But the Philosopher only sees things and their concourse for our present condition; hence he speaks well for that present condition, which does require a phantasm.

To another, I say that there are not two representable characteristics in reality, of which one is represented to the imagination and the other to the intellect, since there are no two such in reality, namely, a contracted nature and a contracting property. For whatever is in reality, is singular. . . .

If you say that the agent intellect makes a universal because it makes a species that indifferently represents many—Against: Then I would say that in the same way the sense makes a universal because it makes a species indifferently representing many. The assump-

tion is obvious, since when there are things that are very similar, nothing can be a likeness or representative of one unless it is a likeness and representative of the other. For example, if a Socrates existing here and another at Rome are very similar, there could not be any image in the likeness of the Socrates here that would be representative of him, which would not through everything be similar to the Socrates existing at Rome and representative of him. Therefore, in the same way, if there were two very similar whitenesses, no species in sense could be a likeness or representative of one that would not equally be a likeness and representative of the other. And consequently, a sensible species can represent many just as an intelligible one can; and so the action of a sense would terminate in a universal just as the action of the intellect.

Moreover, I say that the action of the intellect is real, because it terminates in real intuitive or abstractive cognition in the aforesaid way.

And when it is said that the agent intellect makes a universal in act, that is true, in that it makes a certain fictive being and produces a certain concept in objective being, which terminates its act. But this has only objective being, and in no way, subjective being. And in this way it makes a universal, as was said elsewhere. . . .

And when the Commentator says that if the quiddities of things were abstracted from matter, as Plato held, then we would not need an agent intellect; and therefore, the agent intellect does abstract—I reply that abstraction by the agent intellect is twofold. One is partially to cause an intuitive or abstractive act of knowledge, together with the object or habit in the aforesaid way, which act of knowledge is altogether abstracted from matter, since it is immaterial in itself and has its being in what is immaterial. Another is the abstraction through which it produces a universal, or universal concept of a thing, in objective being, as was said elsewhere.

## 58. Relations

### From *Ordinatio*, Book 1, distinction 30 Question 1

In the thirtieth distinction, the Master treats of the relational names pertaining to God on the basis of time. Concerning which, it should be asked whether God, really or according to reason, is referred to a creature. But since the question presupposes what a relation is, I inquire first concerning relation, and I ask first:

*Whether, with all authority of the faith or of any of the philosophers whatsoever excluded, it can be more easily denied than maintained that every relation is something on the side of the thing in some way or other distinct from every absolute or absolutes? . . .*

Concerning this question one first needs to know, so that the sense of the question is clear, that it is not a question as to what should be maintained according to the truth, but as to what one would maintain who wishes to rely exclusively upon the reason possible in this present condition and who does not wish to accept any doctrine or authority, just as one who wished to rely exclusively upon the reason possible to him and who did not wish to accept any authority whatsoever would say that it is impossible for three persons distinct in reality to be one supremely simple thing. Likewise, such a one would say that God is not man, and much else that according to the truth of the matter is false. Understanding the question so, there are various opinions. One is that not only because of authorities, but also because of rational arguments, it should be maintained that a relation is a thing other than any absolute thing or things, so that just as substance and quality are distinct things of which neither belongs to the essence of the other, so also substance and relation are in-

ality distinct things, and neither belongs to the essence of the other.

There are several arguments for this opinion. The first is this: Nothing is in reality the same as A without which A can exist in reality without contradiction. Many relations are such that without them their foundations can exist without contradiction. Therefore, etc. The major is proved in many ways, which I omit, since I reckon them to be conclusive. The minor is apparent in all relations of which the foundations can exist without the terms, as it is in all relations of equivalence, such as “similar,” “equal,” and so forth. For if this white exists and that white does not, this white is without similarity; and if another white is made, there is similarity in [this] white. Therefore, it can exist without as well as with this. Likewise, for many relations of nonequivalence, just as a master can exist without mastership and he can be a master upon the acquisition of slaves.

Besides, unless the aforesaid opinion is maintained, many inconveniences follow. The first is that every composition in beings will be denied, since if A and B compose AB, and the union of these parts is nothing in addition to those absolutes A and B separated, then the total reality which belongs to A and B when united persists when they are separated. And then A and B separated remain really united, and so the composite persists when the component parts are separated. And so the composite is not composite, since when a composite persists with the component parts separated, it is not composed of them. For nothing would then be, except something one by aggregation. The second inconvenience that would follow is that all causality of secondary causes will be denied, since what is caused by various secondary causes requires a due proportion and proximity in them in order that it be caused by them. But if this proximity and proportion are nothing except these very absolutes, then these are really causative of this effect when they are not in proximity just as when they *are* in proximity; and so when they are in proximity they can in reality cause nothing that they cannot even when they

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are not in proximity. For without something else given in reality, a thing cannot cause what it could not previously cause. From these it can be argued so: If A and B when separate do not compose AB, then neither do they when united; since just as the same thing, without anything else added in reality, cannot now cause what it previously could not, so neither can the same things, without anything else in reality, compose something that they previously could not. . . .

And if it is said that a relation is not another thing, since it is not a thing but is only in the intellect, it is argued against this, first, that this destroys the unity of the universe, second, that it destroys all substantial and accidental composition in the universe, third, that it destroys all causality of secondary causes. . . .

The first is proved, since the unity of the universe is in the order of the parts to one another and in the order to the first, just as the unity of an army is in the order of the parts of the army to one another and to the leader. And hence, against those denying that a relation is a thing outside an act of the intellect, it can be said in the words of the Philosopher in the twelfth book of the *Metaphysics* that those who speak thus undo the substantial connection of the universe.

The second is proved, since nothing is composed without the union of component parts, so that with the parts separated, the composite does not remain. But nothing real depends on what is merely a reason, and especially a reason caused through an act of our intellect, at least such a real which is not merely artificial. Therefore, since a relation is nothing except a conceptual being, no whole will be really natural, since it necessarily requires a relation for its existence.

The third is proved, since the causation of a real effect does not require a conceptual entity in the cause. But secondary causes cannot cause unless they are proportionate and in proximity. Therefore, if this approximation is merely a conceptual entity, causes will not be able to cause anything real under this kind of approximation. For without this approximation they cannot cause, and according to this opinion this approximation, which is a relation, is no thing. Therefore, a secondary cause contributes nothing to what is possibly caused. . . .

However much these arguments seem difficult and apparent for proving that a relation is a thing other

than absolutes, still, it seems to me that the arguments for the other side are more difficult and more evident. And hence I argue against this opinion in general as well as more specifically concerning the various relations which are posited.

First, then, I argue thus: Every thing distinct in reality from another thing can be understood without that other thing being understood, and most of all, if neither is a part of the other. But it is impossible for some thing which is a relation to be understood without any other thing. Therefore, etc. The major seems manifest, since the understanding of one thing totally disparate from another does not seem to depend on the other, any more than the understanding of an effect depends on the understanding of its essential cause. But there is no inconvenience, nor does it include a contradiction, for that which is an effect to be understood without its cause having been understood.

Therefore, in the same way, if similarity or another such relation were a thing different from absolutes and from the corresponding relation, it would not be repugnant to it to be understood with no absolute and no other relation understood. I prove the minor, since if anyone understands the similarity of Socrates to Socrates without the corresponding similarity, he will be able to know that Socrates is similar and still doubt whether he is similar to anything else; and in the same way, one will be able to know that someone is a father, and yet not know whether he has a child, rather, one can also not know whether he could have a child. . . .

Hence, I reply otherwise to the question, that whatever the truth may be, one who wants to rely on reason, so far as it is possible for a man to make judgments on the basis on his natural powers alone and in his present state, would more easily deny that any relation of the genus of relation is a different thing, as previously expounded, than maintain the opposite. And this is because the more difficult arguments are for this side rather than the other. Indeed, I go so far as to say that the arguments for this claim that do not rely on Scripture or the words of the saints have no force at all. And hence I say that just as one who would wish to follow reason alone and not accept the authority of Sacred Scripture would say that in God there cannot be three persons with a unity of nature, so one who would wish to rely only on the reason possible for us

in this present condition would equally have to hold that a relation is not any such thing in reality as many imagine. For no inconvenience for the negative side follows from principles known from what is purely natural and not taken on faith. Nor can it be shown through reason that not every thing really distinct from another is thus an absolute thing as the other is, although not every thing is as perfect an absolute thing as another. For if one thing that is really and totally distinct from another is not truly a thing absolute in itself, as whiteness is a thing absolute in itself, this is either because the one thing essentially depends on the other or because it necessarily co-requires the other, so that it cannot exist without the other, and vice versa. It is not because of the first, since an effect essentially depends on its cause. Yet because a cause is totally extrinsic to its effect, and vice versa, it follows that the effect is an absolute thing in its own right, just as its cause is. Nor is it because of the second, since man necessarily co-requires God in order that he should exist; indeed, it is a contradiction that men should exist and not God. And yet man is truly an absolute thing. And if it is said that neither of the relateds can exist without the other, and hence each is relative, this does not suffice. For, following natural reason, it ought to be said that an accident cannot exist without a subject, nor a subject without an accident; and yet each is truly an absolute. And in this way I should equally easily say that whiteness is a certain relation to something else, just as I should about any other imaginable thing. Nor does it seem that, following natural reason alone, it cannot be said that when there are two things distinct in place and subject, so that each is totally extrinsic to the other and one is no more of the essence of the other than whiteness is of the essence of blackness nor accident of subject, then it is necessary that each of those things is a thing in itself and for itself and has its own nature in itself, just as whiteness is a thing for itself, however much it necessarily co-requires another thing in order to exist, and just as an accident necessarily co-requires a subject in order to exist. Nor is it more repugnant to such a thing to be understood through itself, without another thing totally extrinsic and distinct in place and subject (and this I say insofar as it is from its nature), than it is repugnant to whiteness to be understood through itself without a subject.

Nor is it more repugnant to such a thing to be signified by some name which does not signify or consignify another totally distinct thing than it is repugnant to whiteness. And so, just as whiteness is not said with respect to another according to this name "whiteness," however much it necessarily belongs to its subject according to those holding that an accident cannot exist without a subject (as philosophers following only natural reason hold), so one name could be imposed that would signify just that thing that they say is paternity, and that would not consignify nor connote anything else imaginable, however much it might necessarily co-require something else. And so according to that, the name would no more be said of another than is whiteness. And so it does not seem that it would not be one thing in and for itself, everything else set aside by the intellect, just as whiteness is. And if you say that from its nature it is a relative thing, this would not suffice for someone following natural reason. For with equal ease one would say that in this way whiteness is not an absolute thing but is a certain relation to a subject, since it necessarily co-requires a subject. And with equal ease one would say that whiteness cannot be understood without a subject or apart from some ordering to a subject. In the same way one would say about science that it is not something absolute, but only a certain relation, since it necessarily is of something else; and so for many others. Therefore, those who wish to rely on reason alone would say, or would have to say speaking in consequence if they were not deceived by some *sophisma* or did not adhere to certain propositions, wishing to say the opposite rather than because of true, efficacious, and conclusive argument, that in reality, nothing is imaginable except an absolute or absolutes. For all that, a relation is either a name or a word or a concept or an intention in the soul, since I reckon that among philosophers an intention is what we call a concept. Such as I call relational convey two extremes existing at once, and this in speaking of certain relative names, since which are such and which are not will be obvious in the following question. For example, the similarity that is said of Socrates with regard to Plato conveys nothing except that Socrates is white and Plato likewise, or that each is black, or that they have qualities of the same character. In the same way, that this is double and that half

only conveys that this is of such a quantity and that of such. Whence he who could understand Socrates and Plato and their whiteness, with nothing else understood, would say at once that Socrates is similar to Plato. Whence even skilled laymen understanding little or nothing about such relations still say promptly and without doubt that two whites are similar, just as they say that they are white. This would not be true if those could only be similar because of certain other things outside of whiteness added to those whites.

The opposing arguments are reckoned quite easy to resolve.

To the first they would say that the major is true, since if A exists and B does not, it follows that they are not really the same. To the minor, when it is said that there are many relations without which the foundations can exist, they would say that speaking properly and from the force of the term, this is true. For relations do not exist except as intentions or concepts in the mind, and these certainly are not the same in reality as external things; and hence they do not establish that there are extremes really distinct. And if it is said that this white can exist although it is not similar, and still it can be made similar, and so it then has something which it did not have when it was not similar, they would easily reply that this white that at one time is not similar can be made similar, not through the advent of any such thing to it, but only through another white being made. For in order that it should be similar and was not before, no more is required than that something should now be white that was not white before. And if it is said that similarity is in this white, and that other white is not in this white, and therefore, similarity expresses something other than this white and that white, to this I say that, speaking properly and from the force of the term, it should not be conceded that similarity is in this white. For speaking properly, similarity does not exist except as a certain concept or intention or name that conveys several whites. Just so, others have to say that creativity is not really in God, however much God really is creative. Or, given an abstraction corresponding to the created just as creativity corresponds to the creative, and given that it is creation, then it is not true to say that creation is really in God, since God would then have something in himself which he did not have before. For be-

fore the creation of the world, this was false: "Creation is really in God," just as this was false: "Creation is God," or vice versa. In the same way, I say that, speaking properly, this similarity is not in this white; for just as it is conceded that God really is creative or creating, even though creation is not really in God, so it ought to be conceded that this white really is similar, even though similarity is not in this white. Whence, that argument proves equally that creation is a thing different from God and from creature, since this white can be similar without similarity no less than God can be [creating] without creation; and so God really is creating and is capable of not creating, just as this white really is similar and is capable of not being similar. . . .

To the first confirming argument about composition, perhaps it can be said that composition does not express two absolutes alone, for instance, matter and form, but it expresses also that nothing corporeal intervenes; and hence perhaps it should be said that it is not possible for form to exist and matter to exist and that nothing corporeal intervenes, and still that the composite does not exist. This response will be further clarified in what follows.

In the same vein they would reply to the second that approximation does not merely convey the two absolutes, but it also conveys that no impediment intervenes. And hence, when no impediment intervenes between what can be impeded, and they exist, then one will be able to act in the rest. But when there is some intervening impediment, then it is not necessary that one should act in the rest. And so this argument is against those others. For I take something luminous and something illuminable; if some opaque body is interposed, it surely does not act. But with the body removed, without anything acquired by the luminous or the illuminable, it will be able to illuminate. Therefore, it is possible that some two are at first disposed in such a way that one does not act on the other, and afterward are disposed in such a way that one does act on the other, solely because one or the other of the two changes in place—or, indeed, solely because some third thing (say, the opacity of an opaque body) is corrupted—and nonetheless, nothing new is added to either of them. So I propose that when in proximity to the other, it can act in it, and when not in proximity, it cannot. This is not from the fact that when approx-

imated it has some true thing formally in itself that it did not have when it was not approximated; but this is because when it is in proximity, no impediment intervenes. But when it is not in proximity, some impediment intervenes; for even a great quantity of air can sometimes be an impediment if it intervenes.

On this basis I say further, in response to the argument, that just as causes can cause something that they could not previously, without any other thing formally added to any of those causes, but only because of the removal of an intervening impediment, so, according to them, parts can sometimes compose without anything formally added to either of those causes, but only because nothing now intervenes between matter and form, whereas previously something did intervene. They would also say that it is not possible for such parts of a different character sometimes to compose and sometimes not to compose what is intrinsically one, with all the parts still persisting.

To the next, I concede the major; but I say to the minor that the foundation neither simultaneously nor successively contains such relations through identity. For this is false: "Socrates is really similarity," and likewise, "Socrates is really dissimilarity." And hence I do not hold that a relation is really the same as the foundation. But I say that a relation is not a foundation but rather an intention and concept in the soul conveying many absolutes. Or else it is many absolutes, just as a people is many men, and no man is a people. Which of these propositions is more in accordance with the property of the term pertains more to a discussion in logic than theology.

In the same vein I concede the major to the next; but I say to the minor that this is simply false: "Several relations are really in the same foundation," just as this is simply false: "Several similarities are really the same foundation." The reason for this is that similarity so posited in the abstract can only stand either for an intention in the soul or for many things, of which any one is similar, as "people" can only stand for many. And hence, just as each of these is false: "Many intentions or concepts in the soul are really in the same foundation," and likewise, "The many things of which any one is similar are really in the same foundation," so this is simply false: "Many relations or many similarities are really in the same foundation." And if it is

said that every relation is founded in some foundation, I say that if being founded is taken for inherence in reality and not for denomination in predication, then this is simply false. But otherwise it is true. . . .

To the other arguments against one way of holding that a relation is not a different thing but is only in the intellect, I say that it should not be imagined that according to this opinion a relation is only in the intellect in such a way that nothing is truly such except because of an act of the intellect or something caused in the intellect. For example, that Socrates is only similar to Plato because of an act of the intellect, just as Socrates can only be called a subject or predicate because of an act of the intellect. But it should be imagined that the intellect contributes no more to the fact that Socrates is similar than to the fact that Socrates is white. Indeed, from this itself, that Socrates is white and that Plato is white, Socrates is similar to Plato, with everything else imaginable set aside. And so nothing exists in reality outside of absolutes. Since there are many absolutes in reality, the intellect can express them in diverse ways: in one way expressing only that Socrates is white, and then it only has absolute concepts; in another way that Plato is white; and in a third way expressing that Socrates as well as Plato is white. And this can be accomplished through a relational concept or intention, in saying that Socrates is similar to Plato with regard to whiteness. For it is altogether the same which is conveyed through these propositions: "Socrates as well as Plato is white," and "Socrates is similar to Plato with regard to whiteness." And hence it should be conceded without qualification that the intellect contributes no more to the fact that the universe is one or that a whole is composite or that causes cause when in proximity or that a triangle has three sides, and so forth, than it does to the fact that Socrates is white or that fire is hot or water cold.

In the same vein I say to the proof of the first inconvenience that was adduced that according to the understanding of the Philosopher it ought to be conceded that the unity of the universe is the order of the parts to one another. For he understands nothing other than that for the universe to be one is for the parts to be so ordered—not that the order or unity is something distinct in reality from every part and all parts of the universe, for so would be to proceed to infinity. For that

thing would be ordered to the others, and consequently, by the very same argument there would be another thing outside of that and the others, which would be their order; and there would be an infinite sequence. Nor does it avail to say that there is a stop at the second step, since with equal ease a stop can be posited at the first; and plurality should never be posited without necessity. And hence according to the opinion of the Philosopher, there is nothing outside of those absolute parts, since the opinion of the Philosopher was that every imaginable thing is absolute. Still, this intention or unity or order or concept in the soul is relational, even though without that concept nothing is any less one or ordered. Just so, this concept or intention “every” is simply syncategorematic in the soul, and yet without this concept, every human being is capable of laughter. Nevertheless, we cannot express the fact that every human being, without concept, is capable of laughter except through a syncategorematic concept.

Through the same, I say to the second that nothing is composed without a union of component parts, tak-

ing “union” for those united parts, since thus, this is valid: “Nothing is composed without parts really united and unseparated.” But if the “union” supposits for a concept expressing the thing just as it is, it should be conceded that it can be composed without the union of component parts. For just as every human being is capable of laughter without this distributive sign “every,” so here. But the first sense is more usual among writers, whether it is more in accordance with the property of the term or not.

Through the same, to the third: that secondary causes cannot cause unless they are in proximity; and yet they do not require a conceptual entity in order to cause. And hence they are well able to cause without that intention in the soul which is “approximation.” Still, if “approximation” should stand for the things themselves in proximity, then they could not cause without approximation, since then this is valid: “They cannot cause unless they are in proximity.”

So, therefore, I say that the arguments against this opinion are in no case conclusive.

## 59. Motion

### *De successivis*

*That motion is not a thing other than permanent things.*

With these points seen regarding change, it should be argued that no motion is a kind of thing different in itself from permanent things. This is shown first for motion in general, and second, for each type of motion.

For motion in general I argue first thus: change does not bespeak a kind of thing different in itself from permanent things; therefore, by the same reasoning,

neither does motion, since the argument is not more valid of change than of motion; and the antecedent is obvious from what has been said.

Besides, if motion were a different thing, either it would be simple or composite. It is not simple, for then it would not differ from instantaneous change. Nor is it composite, for in that case I ask whether its parts exist or do not. If they exist, then many parts of a motion exist at once, which is against the very character of motion, since motion has one part after another. If the parts of motion do not exist, then motion is not a composite thing, since that which does not exist is not the part of any thing. The Philosopher also makes this argument regarding time, in the chapter on time, which we shall see more of below.

Secondly, the same conclusion is shown for the special types of motion, and the first is local motion. If

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Translated by James J. Walsh for this volume from *The Tractatus de successivis attributed to William Ockham*, ed. P. Boehner (St. Bonaventure: The Franciscan Institute, 1944).

local motion is a different thing, I ask, is it an absolute or a relational thing? It is not an absolute thing, since then it would be quantity, quality, or substance. But it is none of these, as is obvious inductively. For if it were, it would follow that everything moved locally would have new substance or new quality or new quantity, which is manifestly false. Also, because local motion would be just as perfect or more perfect than its terminus. Nor can it be said that it is a relational thing, for every thing is an absolute thing; there is no relational thing that is not absolute. . . .

Thirdly, I show that the motion of alteration is not a different thing, and so forth, since sometimes there is alteration without the taking on of any new thing, as when something is altered in continuously losing part after part of a form it had. Then that is continuously moved and yet it takes on nothing in itself, but only loses. Thus by the same reasoning, when something acquires part after part of a form, it is not required that it should have anything outside of that form and its part.

Fourthly, the same is clear for augmentation and diminution, since in such motion it suffices that quantity alone is gained or lost, without anything else; therefore it is vain to posit anything else there outside of quantity and other permanents.

Hence it should be said that motion is not any such thing completely different in itself from the permanent thing. For it is pointless to do with more what can be done with less. But we can explain motion and all that is said about motion without any such thing; therefore such an extra thing is pointless. That we can indeed explain motion and all that is said about it without such an additional thing is clear in working through the types of motion.

This is clear regarding local motion. For we truly have local motion when a body is in one place and afterwards in another place, going on in this way without any rest or anything intervening between the body and what moves it. Therefore it is pointless to posit such a different thing.

If it is said that body and place do not sufficiently explain local motion, because then whenever there were body and place there would then be motion, and thus a body would always be in motion, the reply is that body and place do not sufficiently account for the fact that motion exists. Thus the following is not a for-

mal implication: "Body and place exist, therefore there is motion." Even so, nothing else outside of body and place is needed. What is needed is that the body was first in one place and afterwards in another place and so on continuously, so that never in the entire time does it rest in any place. And it is clear that outside of all these, nothing different from permanent things is assumed. Thus nothing different from A is called for merely by a body being at first in A, and likewise, merely by it being at first not in B is anything different from B and the body assumed. And again, merely by the body being next in B is anything other than the body and B assumed. And in going on in this way it is evidently clear that one does not need to lay down any other thing beyond the body and places and other permanent things. What must be laid down is that the body be at some time in a particular place and sometime not. And this is what it is to be moved locally: at first to have one place, and with no other thing called for, afterward to have another place without any intervening rest and without anything outside of place and body and other permanents, and so going on continuously. And so, there is no other thing outside of those permanent things, but one only needs to add that the body is not in those places at the same time, and that it does not rest in them. And such negative requirements do not call for anything outside of permanent things. As a result, the entire nature of motion can be explained by a body being in distinct places successively and not resting in any of them, without any other thing whatsoever.

It is also clear for the motion of alteration that it does not require a thing different from permanent things. For merely from the parts of a form being acquired by a subject one before another, and not at once, one has the motion of alteration. Thus one does not have to assume anything other than the subject and the parts of the form; it is enough to set out the subject and the parts of the form, with the further requirement that they are not acquired all at once. But not being acquired at once does not assume anything different from the parts of the form, but rather that certain parts of the form exist at a certain time and not together. Therefore, it is not that some other thing is assumed on account of this, but rather that some thing is denied: not any particular one, but the simultaneity of many parts.

And if it is said that this non-simultaneity of parts is something, when this is asserted, “The parts do not exist all at once,” this should be the reply: Such a fiction of abstract nouns taken from adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions, verbs, syncategorematic terms, makes for many troubles, and leads many people into mistakes. For they imagine that just as there are distinct names, so there are distinct things corresponding to them, with the result that there is just as much of a distinction among things signified as among names signifying. This just is not true. Sometimes it is the same things that are signified, but there is diversity in the logical or grammatical way of signifying. Hence non-simultaneity is not some thing different from the things that can exist at the same time, but it signifies that those things do not exist at the same time. And so in these modern times, because of errors born from the use of such abstractions, it would be better in philosophy because of those simple-minded ones, not to make use of such abstractions, but only the verbs, adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions, and syncategorematic terms as they were initially set up rather than forming and using such abstractions. Indeed, if it were not for the use of such abstractions: “motion,” “mutation,” “mutability,” “simultaneity,” “succession,” “rest,” and such as these, there would be little difficulty concerning motion, mutation, time, and instants and such as these.

It is also clear for the motion of augmentation and diminution that nothing else is there than permanent things, for the motion there can be explained on these grounds alone, that there is a greater and greater quantity, or less and less quantity, and not at once. But in order to say that there is greater and greater quantity, one need not posit a thing different from permanent things; unless perchance someone might wish to make up an abstraction from this conjunction “and,” saying that “andness” or “andeity” is a thing different from those parts of quantity, which is thoroughly silly. Therefore, in the case of greater and greater, or less and less quantity, one need not posit a thing different from permanent things—permanent things are suffi-

cient, so long as the same thing is at first of a certain quantity and afterwards not, and going on in that way. And in this vein I have said elsewhere that motion is compounded from negations and affirmations—that is, that in order that there should be motion it suffices that permanent things or parts should be, but not at once, so that for the truth of the proposition “There is motion” certain affirmatives and certain negatives are enough. And neither through these affirmatives nor negatives is any thing other than the permanent things laid down or indicated to exist. But in the motion of alteration it is enough that at first there is one thing and not another, and afterward the other thing is and not still another, and going on in this way without anything different from a permanent thing. . . .

As for the manner of speaking, in placing this noun “motion” in a sentence, we should note the same kind of thing that was remarked for the noun “mutation,” that sometimes “motion” has supposition for the verb “to be moved” and for its moods and tenses, sometimes it has supposition for the thing itself that is moved, sometimes for the end reached or thing acquired when something is moved. Some times it is given in place of such an expression as “that it is moved” or “when it is moved” or some such. Likewise, what are added to this noun “motion” in one position or the other of a sentence, are to be analyzed in different ways. For instance, “Motion exists in time” should be expounded thus: “When something is moved, it does not gain or lose all that it loses or gains at once, but one after another.” In this way it is clear that these nouns “motion” and “time,” like other such abstractions, are invented for the sake of brevity, so that, namely, all that is conveyed through the long expression “What is moved does not gain or lose all that it gains or loses at once, but one after another” is conveyed through the brief expression “Motion exists in time.” Likewise, the proposition “Motion is in what is moved” ought to be expounded thus: “What is moved gains or loses something.” Many other cases can be handled in the same way. Other propositions, however, should be expounded differently. . . .

## 60. Projectile Motion

From *Commentary on the Sentences*  
Book III (*Reportatio*)

### Question 4

. . . It should also be noted that with respect to the movement of a projectile there is a serious difficulty concerning the causally moving principle of that movement. For it cannot be the projector, since that can be destroyed with the movement still going on. Nor can it be the air, since that can be moved with a contrary movement, as if an arrow should meet an oncoming stone. Nor can it be a power in the stone, for I ask by what that power is caused? It is not caused by the projector, for a natural agent brought to what it works on in the same way, always causes its effect in the same way; but the projector, whether with regard to anything absolute or relational in it, can be brought to a stone as when it moves it and yet not move it. For my hand can be brought to some body slowly, and then it will not move it in place: it can also be moved swiftly and with force, and then it is brought to it as be-

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Translated for this volume by James J. Walsh from Guilelmus De Occam, OFM, *Super 4 Libros Sententiarum*, vol. III, *Opera plurima*, Lyon, 1494–1496. *Réimpression en fac-similé* (London: The Gregg Press Limited, 1962). Corrected by Thomas Williams from the critical edition, *Opera theologica*, Franciscan Institute Publications.

fore. And then it will cause motion, whereas previously it did not. Therefore this power that you propose is not caused by anything absolute or relational in the projector nor by the movement in place of that projector. For movement in place does nothing to the effect unless the active agent is brought to what it works on, as was said above. But everything posited in the projector is brought to the projectile in the same way through slow movement as through swift.

Hence I say that in such movement after the separation of the projectile from the initial projector, what does the moving is that very thing moved in itself; the moving is not through some power in it, whether absolute or relational, so that the mover and the moved are totally indistinct. If you say that movement in place is a new effect and a new effect has some cause, I reply that movement in place is not a new effect, whether absolute or relational. I say this while denying (the reality of) location. For local motion is not anything other than that the moveable thing coexists with various parts of space, such that it coexists with no single one for such a time that two contradictories are verified of it. Whence, although any part of space which the moving thing crosses is new with respect to that crossing thing, seeing that the moving thing is now crossing through those parts and previously was not, still that part is not new without qualification. This has already been pointed out. Indeed, it would be remarkable if my hand should cause some power in a stone merely by touching the stone through local motion.

## 61. Efficient and Final Causality

From Quodlibet IV

### Question 1

Does every effect have a final cause distinct from its efficient cause?

For the negative: God is both a final cause and an efficient cause of the same effect. Therefore, it is not always the case that the final cause is distinct from the efficient cause.

For the opposite: If the answer were no, then there would not be four distinct causes.

Here we must first see in what way an end is a cause; second, I will reply to the question.

### First Article

#### *Thesis 1*

As for the first article, I claim that the causality of an end is nothing other than its being loved and desired efficaciously by an agent, so that the effect is brought about because of the thing that is loved. Hence, just as (i) the causality of matter is nothing other than its being informed by the form, and (ii) the causality of a form is nothing other than its informing the matter, so too the causality of an end is its being efficaciously loved and desired, so that in the absence of that love and desire the effect would not be brought about.

#### *Thesis 2*

From this it is evident that a final cause and an efficient cause are distinct, i.e., their nominal definitions are different. For the definition of a final cause is to be

loved and desired efficaciously by an agent, so that the effect is brought about because of the thing that is loved; the definition of an efficient cause is to be that which is such that something else follows upon its existence or presence. Sometimes one of these definitions belongs to one thing and the other to another thing, and sometimes they can belong to the same thing.

#### *Thesis 3*

From this it is further evident that sometimes an end is a cause when it does not exist, since sometimes an end is desired when it does not exist. For to be a final cause is nothing other than to be desired or loved in the way explained above. Hence, it is distinctive of a final cause that it is able to cause when it does not exist. Just as a form would be able to be a cause when it does not exist if it were able to inform something when it does not exist, so from the fact that an end is able to be desired when it does not exist, it follows that it is able to be a cause when it does not exist.

You might object that that which does not exist is not a cause of anything.

I reply that this is false. Rather, one must add that the thing in question does not exist *and* is neither loved nor desired—and then it indeed follows that it is not a cause. But now an end can be loved and desired even though it does not exist; and so it can be a final cause even though it does not exist.

### Second Article

As for the second article, I assert that (i) one must reply to the question in one way according to the truth of the faith and that (ii) I would reply in another way if I did not accept any authority.

#### *Thesis 1*

For, speaking in the first way, I claim that according to the truth of the faith every effect has a final cause, taking 'final cause' in the proper sense. However, it is not

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From William of Ockham, *Quodlibetal Questions*, tr. Alfred J. Freddoso and Francis J. Kelley (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991). Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

always the case that an effect has a final cause distinct from its efficient cause, since sometimes the same thing is both a final cause and an efficient cause. For instance, God, who is an efficient cause *and* an end with respect to many effects, should, at least according to right reason, always be a final cause.<sup>1</sup>

### Thesis 2

However, speaking in the second way, if I accepted no authority, I would claim that it cannot be proved either from propositions known per se or from experience that every effect has a final cause that is either distinct or not distinct from its efficient cause. For it cannot be sufficiently proved that every effect has a final cause.

And if you ask whether the causality of a final cause is distinct from the causality of an efficient cause, I reply that in some cases the causality of the final cause is distinct from the causality of the efficient cause, and in some cases it is not distinct.<sup>2</sup> For when the same thing is both the final cause and the efficient cause, then the causalities are not distinct, whereas when the causes are different things, then the causalities are distinct. Still, the authoritative writers think of these causalities as distinct because from the fact that something is an efficient cause, it does not follow that it is an end, or vice versa.

### Problem 1

But there are some problems here. First, it seems that the description of a final cause is not well worded.<sup>3</sup>

1. Here Ockham has in mind the free actions of voluntary agents, since any such action should, according to right reason, be done for the sake of God.

2. Since Ockham holds that the causality of a cause is not an entity distinct from the cause itself, he is forced to hold that, strictly speaking, all of a thing's causalities are identical with that thing and hence identical with one another. See *Quodlibet* 6.12, for his discussion of the ontological status of efficient causation.

3. The description alluded to here is the definition of a final cause, viz., "to be loved and desired efficaciously by an agent, so that an effect is brought about for the sake of the thing that is loved."

First, someone is able to hate another, so that he does something because of the one who is hated, e.g., strikes him. And the one who is hated is a final cause of this effect, and he is only someone who is hated. Therefore, the causality of a final cause is a thing's being hated, so that because of the thing that is hated, etc.

Second, someone is able to love another and yet it is not necessary that he bring about an effect because of the one who is loved.

Third, either (i) an end causes by its own reality, and this is not so, since when the effect is being caused, the end does not exist; or (ii) it causes through something that takes its place, e.g., through [an act of] love, and this is the causality of an efficient cause.

Fourth, natural agents—and, likewise, intentional agents in their first cognition and first volition—act because of an end and yet they do not act because of an end that is loved or desired beforehand.

Fifth, a final cause is nobler than the other causes. But that which is loved and desired and because of which an agent acts is not always better. Therefore, etc.

### Problem 2

The second problem is that it seems necessary on the basis of natural reason to posit that every effect has a final cause.<sup>4</sup>

It is through the final cause that one replies to the question "For what reason does this effect exist?" For every question asks for a cause. For instance, if someone asks, "What are these men fighting for?" one replies, "In order that they might dominate."

Again, one cannot otherwise account for the fact that someone proceeds anew from rest into action.

Again, otherwise all agents would act by chance.

Again, natural agents act through determinate means, since the effect is apt by nature to be brought about.

Again, otherwise there would be no error in action, since it would not be the case that one thing is intended more than another.

4. The following arguments are based on Aristotle, *Physics* 2.3ff., 194b32ff.

*Reply to Problem 1*

To the first of these problems I reply that the description in question is indeed well put.

To the [first] proof I reply that the final cause of the hatred is the very one who hates. For he loves himself, so that he hates his adversary because of the one who is loved. On the other hand, the final cause of the striking is his adversary's suffering, a suffering that he who does the striking desires. For if he did not desire the other's suffering, he would not strike him. And so the causality of the end is invariably its being loved and not its being hated, since the one who is hated is not a final cause.

To the second argument I reply that the causality of an end is its being loved efficaciously, so that because of the loved thing, etc. And no one ever loves in this way without bringing about some effect, unless he is impeded. On the other hand, if the love is subject to some condition, then it is not an efficacious love.

To the third argument I reply that an end is a cause through its own reality in such a way that its own proper reality is desired. And, as was explained earlier, it is not necessary for that reality to exist when the effect is being caused.<sup>5</sup>

To the fourth argument I reply that natural agents, as well as intentional agents in their first cognition and first volition, do not have a final cause fixed in advance by a created will; instead, they have only an end fixed in advance by God, who is a superior agent.

To the fifth argument I reply that that which is a final cause in accord with right reason is nobler than the other causes or at least equally noble—even if this is not in fact the case.<sup>6</sup> Alternatively, one can reply that an end is always nobler than the other causes either in reality or in the opinion and estimation of the will.

You might object that in order for the proposition "An effect is produced" to be made true, it is sufficient

to posit an agent and a patient; therefore, any other cause is superfluous.

I reply that the existence of the end is not required in order for the effect to be produced. Nonetheless, in intentional agents it is required that the end be loved and desired efficaciously.

*Reply to Problem 2*

To the second problem I reply that the Philosopher's arguments all apply just to an agent that is able to fail and to fall short without any change at all in the concurring agent or the patient or the other dispositions. The only sort of agent like this is a free agent, which is able to fail and to fall short in its own action even if everything else remains the same. However, the arguments in question do not establish that other agents have a final cause.

Therefore, in replying to the first argument for the contrary position, someone who is just following natural reason would claim that the question "For what reason?" is inappropriate in the case of natural actions. For he would maintain that it is no real question to ask for what reason a fire is generated; rather, this question is appropriate only in the case of voluntary actions. And so it is alright to ask for what reason they are fighting, since they are fighting voluntarily in order that they might dominate. And it can be proved evidently through experience (and in no other way) that a free agent acts because of an end. And in such actions the effect sometimes has a final cause that is distinct from its efficient cause and sometimes has an end that is not distinct from its efficient cause.

To the next argument I reply that natural agents proceed anew from rest into action at the moment when an impediment is removed. For instance, a fire is now close to the wood and previously was not. On the other hand, a free agent proceeds anew into action because he begins to intend an end.

As for the next argument, I reply that this argument goes through for a free agent, which is no more inclined by its nature toward the one effect than toward the other. However, the argument does not go through for a natural agent, since an agent of this sort is by its nature inclined toward one determinate effect in such

5. See First Article, Thesis 3.

6. That is, a final cause that is intended in accord with right reason is nobler than the other causes, even if in particular cases the agent does not in fact intend the end that right reason dictates ought to be intended.

a way that it is not able to cause an opposite effect. This is evident in the case of fire with respect to heat.

To the next argument I reply that natural agents act in this way through determinate means by their nature, because their nature necessarily requires this.

As for the final argument, I reply that this argument goes through for a free agent, in whose action there is error in the proper sense. However, in the action of nature there is no error properly speaking, since nothing is intended by such an agent. Therefore, whatever oc-

curs [in the action of nature] occurs naturally and not by mistake.

#### Reply to the Main Argument

To the main argument I reply that the reason for which the four causes are said to be distinct is that (i) they are often, though not always, distinct, and that (ii) from the fact that something is a final cause it does not follow that it is an efficient cause, or vice versa.

## 62. The Connection of the Virtues

### [Art. I: Prefatory Conclusions]

Concerning this question, there are four things we should do. First, we should preface the discussion with some conclusions necessary to the question being considered; second, we should make some distinctions. Third, we should reply to the question. Fourth, we should state and resolve some doubts. . . .

The third conclusion is that some act is necessarily and intrinsically virtuous. This is proved because it is impossible that some contingently virtuous act—namely, an act that can be called indifferently virtuous or vicious—be made determinately virtuous on account of some newly elicited act that is not necessarily virtuous; for no act that is contingently virtuous in the manner described makes another act determinately virtuous or causes it to be so denominated. For if this could happen, either the second act that is contingently virtuous will be determinately virtuous in virtue of some other act that is necessarily virtuous; or it will be determinately virtuous in virtue of a contingently virtuous act. If we choose the first alternative,

then by the same reasoning the process will stop at the second act, and we have what we proposed to show—that there is some necessarily virtuous human act. If we choose the second alternative, there will be an infinite regress, or the process will stop at some necessarily virtuous act, so that we have what we proposed to show.

But both the exterior and the interior acts of a man—such as understanding and willing (insofar as the act of willing is a morally indifferent act)—are contingently virtuous. For example, going to church on account of the proper end is a virtuous act at first, and yet the same act, continued on account of a wicked end, is vicious; consequently the act is contingently virtuous. The same thing can be said about understanding and speculating: the act of understanding is first virtuous on account of a proper end, and afterward, while the same act remains in the intellect, if our intention changes—namely, so that the act is continued on account of an improper end—it will be vicious speculation; consequently that speculation is contingently virtuous.

Therefore I hold that some primary, necessarily virtuous act must be granted: a primary praiseworthy act in perfect circumstances, an act so virtuous that it cannot be rendered vicious. Willing to do something because it is divinely commanded is such an act; it is

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virtuous in such a way that it cannot be rendered vicious, given divine precept. The saints are speaking of the virtue generated by this kind of act when they speak of the virtue that no one can abuse.

The fourth conclusion is that a primary, necessarily virtuous act is an act of will. This is evident first because that act alone is primarily praiseworthy or blameworthy, while other acts are so only secondarily and in virtue of some extrinsic denomination—for example, in virtue of their being elicited in conformity with an act of will. Besides, any act, other than an act of will, can be either virtuous or vicious while remaining the same; but that act of will alone is virtuous in such a way that it cannot be made vicious, as is evident above in the third conclusion. Moreover, according to the saints no act is praiseworthy or blameworthy unless on account of a good or a bad intention; but an intention is an act of will; therefore etc. Besides, according to Anselm, just as only the will sins, only the will is punished, therefore etc. . . .

### [Art. II: Prefatory Distinctions]

The first distinction of the second article concerns prudence, which can be considered in four ways. In one mode, it is taken as all knowledge directive with respect to any possible action whatever, whether mediately or immediately; this is the manner in which Augustine considered prudence in the first book of *On Free Choice of the Will*. In this sense, prudence refers to two kinds of evident knowledge. It refers [1] to evident knowledge of some universal proposition that we evidently know from teaching, because it proceeds from self-evident propositions; this scientific knowledge is moral science properly speaking. Prudence also refers [2] to evident knowledge of a universal proposition that we can only know evidently in virtue of experience; this knowledge, too, is moral science. An example of the first kind of prudence is the proposition: “everyone who acts generously should be treated generously”; an example of the second, “any irascible person should be mollified with fine words.”

In another mode, prudence is taken as evident knowledge that is immediately directive in regard to some particular possible action. In this sense it refers

to knowledge of some particular proposition that evidently follows from teaching and from a self-evident universal proposition, as from a major proposition. For example: “this man should be treated generously,” which follows evidently from the proposition “everyone who acts generously,” etc.

In a third mode, prudence is taken as knowledge, gained only in virtue of experience, immediately directive in regard to some possible action. An example is: “this irascible person should be mollified with fine words.” This knowledge applies only to some particular proposition known by experience. It seems to be what the Philosopher intends by prudence properly speaking, insofar as prudence is distinguished from moral science.

In a fourth mode, prudence is taken as an aggregate of all immediately directive knowledge, whether gained from teaching or from experience, applied to all human works requisite for living well, considered absolutely or unconditionally. And in this mode prudence is not a single knowledge only, but it includes as many knowledges as there are moral virtues requisite to living well, considered absolutely. For any moral virtue has its own prudence and directive knowledge. . . .

The third distinction concerns justice and any other single moral virtue insofar as it is not another virtue, formally or equivalently. Such virtue has five degrees, which belong to distinct species, not to the same species.

### [The Degrees of Virtue]

The first degree is when someone wills the performance of just works in conformity with right reason, as it dictates that such acts should be performed, according to the proper circumstances respecting precisely this work, on account of the worthiness of this work itself as an end. Suppose, for example, the intellect dictates that such a just work should be performed in such a place, at such a time, on account of the worthiness of the work itself or on account of peace or some such end, and the will elicits an act willing such work in conformity with the dictate of the intellect.

The second degree is when the will wills the performance of a just work in conformity with right reason as stated above, and beyond this has the intention

never to give up such works for any reason whatever that is contrary to right reason, not even to avoid death, if right reason were to dictate that such a work should not be given up in order to avoid death. Suppose, for example, that a man wished to honor his father according to the aforesaid right dictate, at the proper time and place, etc., having the intention and the will not to give up honoring his father for the sake of avoiding an imminent death.

The third degree is when someone wills the performance of such a work in conformity with right reason as stated above, with the intention just discussed, and beyond this she wills the performance of such a work, in the aforesaid circumstances, precisely and solely because it is dictated by right reason.

The fourth degree is when someone wills the performance of such a work according to all the conditions and circumstances discussed above, and beyond this wills that work precisely on account of love of God—because, for example, the intellect has dictated that such works should be performed precisely for the sake of love of God. Only this degree is the perfect and true moral virtue, about which the saints speak. . . .

### [Art. III: Reply to the Question]

#### [Author's Conclusions about the Connection of the Virtues]

Therefore in reply to the first article of the third principal article, let this be the first conclusion: All moral virtues are connected in certain universal principles, which can serve as major premises and as minor premises in a practical syllogism proving a particular conclusion; the knowledge of these conclusions is the prudence that is immediately directive of a virtuous act. I have in mind such principles as, "everything worthy should be done," "everything good should be loved," "everything dictated by right reason should be performed." Numerically the same principle as the major premise, together with different subordinate minor premises, can serve to prove different particular conclusions; the knowledges of these conclusions are the prudences that are directive of different virtuous acts. . . .

This brings us to the second article of the third [principal] article. Here the first conclusion is that the

first three degrees of moral virtues do not necessarily require the theological virtues, considered either strictly or loosely. This is evident because we cannot have theological virtues without particular knowledge and a proper concept of the end, in the manner in which it is known in this state. But moral virtues in the aforesaid degrees can be acquired without such knowledge of the end. This is evident in the case of a simple pagan, who does these things according to right reason, without seeking to acquire the concept proper to that end. Therefore, etc.

The fourth conclusion is that fourth-degree moral virtue necessarily requires the theological virtues; this is true according to God's ordained power. It is evident because no one can love a creature or anything created for the sake of God unless she loves God above all, since "that on account of which we love is better loved." But by God's ordained power, such love cannot exist without infused faith, hope, and charity, or without faith, hope, and charity acquired in some manner.

Let this be the first conclusion of the fourth article of the third [principal] article: There can be no moral virtue and no virtuous act without any prudence. For no act is virtuous unless it is in conformity with right reason, since right reason is posited in the definition of virtue (see the *Ethics*, Book 2). Therefore any virtuous act or habit necessarily requires some prudence.

Someone might ask whether after the generation of virtue, a virtuous act could be elicited without an act of prudence. My answer is no, since no one acts virtuously unless he acts knowingly and freely. And therefore, if on some occasion such an act of will is elicited on the basis of such a habit without an act of prudence, it will neither be, nor be called, virtuous. Rather it is elicited in the manner of an act of habituated, sensitive appetite. This is evident in the case of the insane, who will something that they previously willed virtuously on account of a residual habit in the will that inclined them to virtuous acts when their condition was good. In their present state, however, this is not a virtuous act because they are neither praiseworthy nor blameworthy on account of their acts. The entire reason for this is that they do not know what they are doing, since they do not have prudence or right reason.

Someone might ask about an act of prudence: How is it related to a virtuous act? What genus of cause does

it belong to? Since in your view prudence is necessarily required, and it is also true that an effect sufficiently depends on its essential causes, etc., my answer is that it is an efficient cause, necessarily requisite to an act of virtue, without which it is impossible that an act should be virtuous, according to the present divine ordination. For a virtuous act necessarily requires the activity of an act of prudence and an act of will, so that these two causes are partial causes, together with God, with respect to a virtuous act. . . .

The sixth conclusion is that any moral virtue can exist without prudence in the first and second mode. For eliciting a virtuous act does not require that the immediately directive knowledge be caused by self-evident propositions, in the manner in which prudence in the second mode is produced. The same knowledge can be caused either by self-evident propositions or by experience, and one of the two means suffices to cause that knowledge. For example, that I should virtuously help or do something good for someone does not require that the proposition “this person should be helped” follow from this proposition “every friend should be helped,” etc. Instead it suffices that I evidently assent to this because I saw (or in some other way experienced) that that person helped me. But eliciting a virtuous act necessarily requires prudence in the second or third mode indicated above.

In the same manner, moral virtue does not require prudence in the first mode indicated because, as is evident, experience can provide knowledge of any particular, immediately directive proposition whatever; knowledge of a universal proposition is not required. But if experience does not provide evident knowledge of some particular proposition, then the virtue directed by that particular knowledge would necessarily require prudence in the first and second modes, but not the third.

#### [Art. IV: Uncertainties Concerning the Question]

The fourth article raises some doubts. The first doubt is whether there is any indifferent act of will—such that that act would at first be indifferent as to goodness or wickedness, and afterward numerically the same act

would be rendered good or wicked. It appears that this could happen, since every act elicited in conformity with right reason is simply virtuous; but someone could first elicit an indifferent act without right reason and afterward continue the same act with right reason; therefore, etc.

In the same way, it can be proven that a primarily and intrinsically good act can be rendered intrinsically wicked. For if it is elicited first in conformity with right reason and afterward continues contrary to right reason, then it will first be intrinsically good and thereafter intrinsically wicked; therefore, etc. Similarly, if it were elicited first contrary to right reason and afterward continued in conformity with right reason, then it will first be intrinsically wicked and thereafter intrinsically good; therefore, etc.

The second doubt arises because it does not appear that right reason, end, place, time, etc. are secondary and partial objects of a virtuous act for the following reasons: [1] these are the circumstances of such an act, therefore they are not the objects of that act, since the same thing cannot be both object and circumstance; [2] the same act would then be an act of willing and rejecting, since someone can reject, hate, and detest sin for the sake of God as an end. But insofar as this act terminates at God, it cannot be an act of hatred and rejection, since it is a virtuous act, and no one virtuously hates God; therefore it is an act of willing insofar as it terminates at God. But insofar as it terminates at sin, it is an act of rejection. Therefore, etc. . . .

John [Duns Scotus] replies to the first doubt. . . . He says that both a habit and an act of will can be indifferent, so that the same habit of abstinence that is generated solely by nature and whose act is merely natural can afterward be intrinsically good by virtue of the coexistence of an act of prudence. . . .

Third, John says that sin—or the deformity found in an act of sin—is nothing but a lack of rectitude. It cannot be rectitude that inheres in the act, or has at some time inhered in an act, since it is the same act and consequently does not change to something contradictory. Rather it is a lack of the rectitude that ought to inhere in such an act, a rectitude that the will was obligated to supply.

Contrary to the first part of John’s reply we argue as follows: It is impossible that an act which is not virtu-

ous should be rendered virtuous by any purely natural act, which is in no sense in the power of the will. For no one is praised or blamed for such an act, since it is a merely natural act. But according to John, and in truth, an act of prudence is a merely natural act; it is no more in our power than an act of seeing. Therefore it is impossible that an indifferent act of will, which is not virtuous, should be rendered virtuous solely by the coexistence of an act of prudence.

[The Author's Own Solution]

Therefore, in reply to this doubt, I say that an act can be called virtuous, either intrinsically or extrinsically. In the first sense, it is impossible that an indifferent act should be rendered morally good by the coexistence of an act of prudence, since it is impossible that any act that is not virtuous should be rendered virtuous by something merely natural. In the second sense, it can indeed occur, but this will not be solely on account of the coexistence of prudence, but rather on account of a new act of will together with prudence.

Here is an example: In abstraction from any [particular] circumstance someone wills study. That act is generically good. Subsequently the intellect dictates that this act of will should be continued according to all requisite circumstances, and the will wills to continue the first act according to the dictate of right reason. That second act is perfectly virtuous, since it conforms to a complete dictate of right reason, and it is intrinsically virtuous. The first act is virtuous only by extrinsic denomination—namely, because it conforms to the second act. The second act is distinct from the first act, as is evident from their separability and the distinction in their objects, since the second act has right reason as an object, and the first does not. The goodness of the first act is no different from the goodness of an exterior act of the apprehensive or executive faculty. . . . Hence, if only the first act existed, together with an act of prudence, it would not be called virtuous, either intrinsically or extrinsically. That it would not be intrinsically virtuous is evident from what was said above. That it is not extrinsically virtuous is evident because an act is never extrinsically good unless because it conforms to some intrinsically good act; prudence is not this

sort of act; only an act of will is, as is evident from what was said above.

When someone argues [against this view] on the basis of an act that is first intrinsically good and afterward wicked, I reply that the hypothesis is impossible. For these acts of reason are contraries: the first dictates that such an act should be elicited and continued, the second dictates that that act should not be continued, and it is impossible that these acts of reason should coexist in the intellect, on account of their formal incompatibility. Moreover, just as these acts of reason are incompatible, so also are the acts of will elicited in conformity with them. For to will study according to right reason and to will study of the same object contrary to [right] reason are opposite acts of will, on account of the opposite acts of reason that are the objects of these acts of will. Similarly, the first virtuous act of will could not naturally be elicited or continued without right reason, which is a partial cause, both in eliciting and in preserving the act; and therefore, when that right reason is destroyed, so is that act of will; but that act of reason is destroyed when the opposite act is elicited; therefore, etc. And therefore an act that is at first intrinsically good cannot subsequently be rendered indifferent or intrinsically or extrinsically wicked; nor is the converse possible. . . .

In regard to John's third point I maintain that the deformity in an act—or the sin in an act that is called a sin—is not a lack of rectitude that ought to inhere in the act, on account of the argument advanced above. Instead, it is the lack of rectitude that ought to inhere in the will. This is no different from saying that the will sins by omission when it is bound and obligated by divine precept to elicit some other act that it does not elicit. Hence rectitude is nothing, either absolute or relative, other than the act itself that ought to be elicited according to right reason and God's will.

From this it is evident that John and others are mistaken when they imagine that rectitude is a relation of conformity with circumstances or with right reason, for the reasons previously stated. That they are mistaken seems to follow from John's own words, for he says that deformity is not a lack of rectitude that at some time inhere in, and does not now inhere in, an act. For that act cannot change from one opposite to another, since the act is simply identical. Accordingly,

I would argue as follows: If deformity cannot be a lack of rectitude that inhered and does not now inhere, on account of the transition from one contradictory to another, then in the same manner it cannot be a lack of rectitude that now inheres and previously did not inhere, for the same reason. Consequently, even in John's view, it is impossible that the act of will should first be indifferently virtuous in regard to morals or merit and subsequently be rendered intrinsically virtuous.

Hence all those who imagine that the rectitude of an act adds something to the act, whether absolute or relative, are mistaken; for rectitude is nothing other than the act itself. Therefore, to lack rectitude in an act is to lack this sort of act. Similarly, the will elicits some act that it is obligated not to elicit, because it elicits contrary to right reason and God's precept, and thus the will sins by commission. If the will is obligated to elicit the opposite act, then the deformity in this act is a lack of the rectitude that ought to inhere in the will; it is the lack of another act—the opposite act—which the will is obligated to elicit. And if the will is not obligated to elicit the opposite act—if such a case could be found anywhere—then, on the hypothesis, the deformity would not be the lack of some rectitude that ought to inhere either in that act or in the will; instead, it would be the act itself, elicited contrary to God's precept, and it would not be a lack of any thing.

From what has been said, it is also evident that it is not good to say that what is material in sin is the positive act; and what is formal is the lack of justice that ought to inhere. For sin in the will involves either commission or omission, or both at once. Take the case of commission alone: if the will elicits some act contrary to right reason and divine precept, and if it is not obligated to elicit the opposite act, then there is only an act of sin in the will and no lack of rectitude or justice that ought to inhere; consequently what is formal in that case is not a lack of anything. If there is only omission in the will—because, for example, the will is obligated to elicit some act that it does not elicit—then there is only a lack of rectitude there without anything material, since no act is elicited. If there is both commission and omission, as when the will elicits some act contrary to God's precept, and it is obligated to elicit the opposite act, then the sin is twofold: commission and omission. The sin of commission is

solely that positive act, the sin of omission is the lack of another act that ought to inhere.

Consequently, to say that there are two things in sin—something material and something formal—is no different from saying that a sin of commission is material and a sin of omission is formal. And thus where there is only a sin of omission or only a sin of commission, those who hold this view should not assign two such things. For if they imagine that a lack of justice or rectitude is something formal in sin, so that that rectitude is something positive, either absolute or relative, that can inhere in, or is designed to inhere in, an act that renders that act of sin virtuous apart from the right act that the will is obligated to elicit, the view is impossible [to defend], as was proven earlier.

From what has been said, it is also evident in what sense sin is called a privation; for a sin of omission is formally a privation, and a sin of commission is not a privation but a positive act that the will is obligated not to elicit, and therefore it is a sin. If, however, a sin of commission always involves a sin of omission, then every sin will include a privation that is a sin. But not every sin is a privation, since only a sin of omission is a privation.

It is evident on this basis what the efficient cause of sin is. For a sin of omission has no positive cause, since it is nothing positive itself; instead, it has only a defective cause; and that cause is the will, which is obligated to, and does not, elicit an act opposite to that privation. However, if we speak of a sin of commission, in this case the efficient cause of that act is not solely the created will, but God himself, who is as much the immediate cause of every act as any second cause. God is as much the positive cause of the deformity found in such an act as he is a cause of the substance of the act itself, since, as has been said, the deformity in an act of commission is nothing but the act itself, elicited contrary to divine precept. Thus the word or concept 'deformity' signifies the act itself and connotes or allows us to understand that the act caused is contrary to divine precept; it indicates absolutely nothing else.

Someone might say that then God would sin by causing such a deformed act, just as a created will sins by causing such an act. My reply is that God is a debtor to no one, and therefore he is not obligated to cause either that act or the opposite act; nor is he obligated

not to cause that act. Therefore, however much he might cause that act, God does not sin. But the created will is obligated by divine precept not to cause that act, and consequently it sins by causing that act because it does what it ought not to do. Hence, if the created will were not obligated not to cause that act or its opposite, however much it caused that act, it would not sin, just as God does not sin. . . .

In reply to the second doubt, I maintain that both the end and right reason, and all other circumstances, are partial, secondary objects of a virtuous act. The reason for this is that there is an act of will that is intrinsically and necessarily virtuous and in no sense contingently virtuous, given the present divine ordination. Moreover, in the present state of affairs, if what are called circumstances were not the objects of a virtuous act, no act of will would be necessarily and intrinsically virtuous but only contingently and extrinsically virtuous; the opposite conclusion was proven above.

The assumption is evident, since every act of will, while remaining entirely the same, can be continued and preserved, given only the apprehension and manifestation of the object of that act. For causing an act of will appears to require nothing more than God, the will itself, and the apprehension of an object. Acting as partial causes, these three suffice to cause every act of will, which does not require the real existence of anything else as an object. Therefore they suffice to preserve such an act without positing the real existence of anything else.

Suppose, therefore, that right reason, or the act of assent that is called right reason, is not the object of an act of virtue—for example, temperance. But if only a circumstance and nourishment are the objects of such an act, then it follows that once the food is apprehended, the will could elicit a perfectly virtuous act without right reason, even perhaps when reason errs. On this hypothesis, just as the will can cause a virtuous act in the absence of all right reason, so it can subsequently preserve an act elicited with right reason in the absence of right reason. Consequently, that act will first be virtuous and afterward vicious or not virtuous, and be so contingently, not necessarily.

Someone might say that according to the opinion advanced here and according to John, an act of prudence is required as an essential and partial cause of a

virtuous act, although the act of prudence need not concur as an object of a virtuous act. Similarly, the apprehension of an object and God concur as partial causes in producing a virtuous act, although they are not objects:

On the contrary, if right reason were required only as an essential and partial cause in the manner described, then, since God can supply all the causality of a second cause, if God were to supply the causality of right reason, and the causality of the willing and apprehension remained, that act could be perfectly virtuous without an act of prudence. That is manifestly false, since given the present divine ordination, no act is perfectly virtuous unless elicited in conformity with right reason actually inhering [in the will].

Therefore, I hold that right reason is an object of a virtuous act. And since its real existence as an object is required for a virtuous act, it follows that its causality in respect to a virtuous act is effective, according to the principle frequently alleged—[namely, that] “an effect sufficiently depends,” etc. For if the real existence of right reason as an object were not required, it appears that merely the apprehension of right reason and the object of a virtuous act, together with the will, could cause a virtuous act, just as it can cause any other act.

Confirmation: No act is perfectly virtuous unless by that act the will wills a dictate of right reason on account of its being a dictate of right reason. For if the will were to will a dictate of reason, not because it was a dictate, but because it was enjoyable or on account of some other reason, then the will would will that dictate if it were merely manifested by way of apprehension, [even] in the absence of right reason; and consequently that act would not be virtuous because it would not have been elicited in conformity with right reason. For to elicit [an act] in conformity with right reason is to will a dictate of reason on account of its being a dictate. In the present state of affairs, however, it is impossible that someone should will one thing on account of another, second thing, unless that person wills that second thing; for if he rejects or does not will the second thing, then he wills the first thing more for its own sake than for the sake of the second thing. Therefore, in order that I virtuously will a dictate of right reason, I must necessarily will right reason by the same act, and not by another.

# Nicholas of Autrecourt, c.1295–1369

If Anselm of Canterbury represents the medieval high-water mark in the claims made for reason, Nicholas of Autrecourt must come very close to representing the low-water mark. It is not only the dogmas of the faith that he finds to be indemonstrable, including the existence of God, but also the very foundational doctrines of philosophy itself. In his professed intentions, Autrecourt can be grouped with the old Christian antiphilosophical tradition that counts Tertullian and Peter Damian among its best-known advocates. Men spend their lives uselessly, he said, studying Aristotle and his Commentator, when they could be studying the good of the community instead. It is said that there are a thousand or more demonstrated truths in Aristotle and his followers; but Autrecourt can scarcely find one — and, what is worse, scarcely one that is even probable. Unlike those who merely denounced the illusory wisdom of the philosophers, however, Autrecourt enforced his rejection by an epistemological critique powerful enough to win him a modern characterization as “the medieval Hume.” But he adds a dimension unknown to Hume in supplementing his critique with a probabilistic metaphysics including such exotic (for the medieval world) theses as atomism and the eternity of things.

From one point of view, then, Autrecourt fits into the critical movement of the later Middle Ages, bringing to a climax the dialectical scrupulousness of Duns Scotus and the various devices of William of Ockham. With Autrecourt, this movement achieves its simplest and clearest principle: the only evidence is that which is reducible to the law of noncontradiction, the “first principle,” as it was called. He seems to suppose that the certainty of the senses and of our acts is established

by this principle. But the principle requires that in all valid inferences, no matter how many steps may be involved, the consequent must be identical with the antecedent, or a part of it. The surprising result of this stringency is that arguments from qualities to substances and from effects to causes are invalid. Of course, if one *means* by “quality,” “quality-of-a-substance,” or by “effect,” “effect-of-a-cause,” then such arguments are not invalid. But then, the characterization of what we sense as qualities or effects is not certain. Furthermore, on the ground that a probable inference must pertain to conjunctions of which we have at some time had evident knowledge, inferences to substances and causes cannot even be probable. Somewhat surprisingly, in view of the fact that the concept of the final cause is included in this critique, the first principle for his probabilistic metaphysics is that things are for the sake of the good. Thus, if it is better for things to be eternal than not to be so, we must say that it is more probable that they are than that they are not.

Nicholas of Autrecourt was born in Autrecourt, in the diocese of Verdun, sometime between 1295 and 1298. It is interesting to note that James of Metz and John of Mirecourt, two other critical and censured philosophers roughly from the same epoch, came from the same region. Autrecourt was at the Sorbonne from 1320 to 1327, presumably completing the arts program. He eventually added a bachelor's degree in laws and became a licentiate in theology. He thus must have completed a commentary on the *Sentences*, and there is evidence that he also lectured on the *Politics*. In 1338 he was made a canon of the cathedral of Metz, which would amount to a subsidy for advanced studies. By this time he had apparently composed nine let-

ters to Bernard of Arezzo, of which we have two, and certain other items of this kind of public correspondence, of which we have one letter to a man named Giles. There is some question as to whether his treatise *Order Requires* (*Satis ordo exigit*) was composed before 1335 or as late as 1340. In 1339, the University of Paris issued a statute directed against those who “dogmatized” the doctrines of William of Ockham and held secret meetings about them. This was followed in 1340 by one directed against “pernicious subtleties” stemming from arguing against “famous propositions” taken in their literal sense alone, and repeating the strictures against dogmatizing Ockhamism. This latter statute seems to have Autrecourt in mind among others, and hence it is often assumed that the former did as well. But Ockham did not confine his interpretations to the literal sense; and on the crucial topics of universals and the divine power, Autrecourt differs radically from Ockham. He denied that a universal is only a mental sign, holding that a quality is both individual and universal; and he denied that one could legitimately invoke the distinction between a miracle and the normal course of nature. It may be a mistake, then, to classify him as an Ockhamist. Regardless of philosophical affiliations, he was summoned to Avignon for questioning in 1340. The death of the pope delayed the investigation, but in 1342 it was taken up again. The report of the investigation is usually called, after the man who conducted it, *The Articles of Cardinal Curti*. On May 19, 1346, Nicholas of Autrecourt was sentenced to burn his writings at Paris. He may before this have fled from Avignon, but

he complied with the sentence on November 25, 1347. His degrees were rescinded and he was declared ineligible for the mastership in theology. However, on August 6, 1350, he became dean of Metz and is then described as a licentiate in theology. Nothing more is known of him.

The following selections contain the two surviving letters to Bernard of Arezzo. They have as their point of departure the burning issue of the times concerning the intuitive cognition of non-existents, that is, whether there is any philosophical limit to skepticism about the existence of objects. In them, Autrecourt presents his theory of evidence and its critical consequences for much of the philosophy of Aristotle.

Although Pierre d’Ailly, a prominent theologian of nominalist sympathies who flourished at the turn of the fifteenth century, said that Autrecourt had been condemned out of jealousy, we must not suppose that his extreme views, however persuasive or repellent they may be to us, dominated the nominalist or any other school during the later Middle Ages. Some of his arguments were used, and the rejection of Aristotle in the name of a practical concern for salvation or man’s natural welfare was to become an increasingly important attitude. What is interesting about Nicholas of Autrecourt is not that he epitomizes the collapse of reason in the later Middle Ages, but rather that in his thought medieval commonplaces received, as it were, an internal critique. For he did not come at the philosophy of the schools from an alien background. As Hume did with a later tradition, he simply showed what follows if one insists on consistency to a professed principle.

## 63. Letters to Bernard of Arezzo

### I. First Letter to Bernard

With all the reverence which I am obligated to show to you, most amiable Father Bernard, by reason of the worthiness of the Friars, I wish in this present communication to explain some doubts—indeed, as it seems to some of us, some obvious contradictions—which appear to follow from the things you say, so that, by their resolution, the truth may be more clearly revealed to me and to others. For I read, in a certain book on which you lectured in the Franciscan school, the following propositions which you conceded, to whoever wished to uphold them, as true. The first, which is set forth by you in the first book of the *Sentences*, Dist. 3, Qu. 4, is this: *Clear intuitive cognition is that by which we judge a thing to exist, whether it exists or does not exist.* Your second proposition, which is set forth in the same place as above, is of this sort: *The inference, “An object does not exist, therefore it is not seen” is not valid; nor does this hold, “This is seen, therefore this exists”; indeed both are invalid, just as these inferences, “Caesar is thought of, therefore Caesar exists,” “Caesar does not exist, therefore he is not thought of.”* The third proposition, stated in that same place, is this: *Intuitive cognition does not necessarily require the existing thing.*

From these propositions I infer a fourth, that every awareness which we have of the existence of objects outside our minds, can be false; since, according to you it [the awareness] can exist whether or not the object exists. And I infer another fifth proposition, which is this: *By natural cognitive means [in lumine naturali] we cannot be certain when our awareness of the exist-*

tence of external objects is true or false; because, as you say, it represents the thing as existing, whether or not it exists. And thus, since whoever admits the antecedent must concede the consequent which is inferred from that antecedent by a formal consequence, it follows that you do not have evident certitude of the existence of external objects. And likewise you must concede all the things which follow from this. But it is clear that you do not have evident certitude of the existence of objects of the senses, because no one has certitude of any consequent through an inference which manifestly involves a fallacy. But such is the case here; for according to you, this is a fallacy: “whiteness is seen, therefore whiteness exists.”

But you will perhaps say, as I think you wished to suggest in a certain disputation over at the Preaching Friars', that although from the fact of seeing it cannot be inferred, when that seeing is produced or conserved by a supernatural cause, that the seen object exists, nevertheless when it is produced precisely by natural causes—with only the general concurrence of the First Agent—then it can be inferred.

But to the contrary: When from some antecedent, if produced by some agent, a certain consequent cannot be inferred by a formal and evident inference, then from that antecedent, no matter by what thing it be produced, that consequent cannot be inferred. This proposition is clear, by example and by reason. By example in this way: If, whiteness being posited as existing by the agency of A, it could not be formally inferred “Whiteness exists, therefore color exists,” then this could not be inferred no matter by what agency the whiteness be posited as existing. It is also clear by reason, because the antecedent is not in itself modified by whatever it is that causes it to be—nor is the fact which is signified by that antecedent.

Further, since from that antecedent it cannot be inferred evidently by way of intuitive cognition, “therefore whiteness exists,” we must then add something to that antecedent—namely, what you suggested above, that the [vision of] whiteness is not produced or conserved in existence supernaturally. But from this my

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contention is clearly established. For when a person is not certain of some consequent, unless in virtue of some antecedent of which he is not evidently certain whether or not the case is as it states it to be—because it is not known by the meaning of its terms, nor by experience, nor is it inferred from such knowledge, but is only believed—such a person is not evidently certain of the consequent. It is clear that this is so, if that antecedent is considered together with its condition; therefore, etc. On the other hand, according to your position, whoever makes the inference from that antecedent without adding that condition, makes an invalid inference—as was the case with the philosophers, and Aristotle, and other people who did not add this condition to the antecedent, because they did not believe that God could impede the effects of natural causes.

Again, I ask you if you are acquainted with all natural causes, and know which of them exist and which are possible, and how much they can do. And I ask how you know evidently, by evidence reducible to that of the law of contradiction, that there is anything such that its coming to pass does not involve contradiction and which nevertheless can only be brought to pass by God? On these questions I would gladly be given certitude of the kind indicated.

Again, you say that an imperfect intuitive cognition can be had in a natural manner, of a non-existent thing. I now ask how you are certain (with the certitude defined above) when your intuitive cognition is of a sufficiently perfect degree such that it cannot naturally be of a non-existent thing. And I would gladly be instructed about this.

Thus, it is clear, it seems to me, that as a consequence of your statements you have to say that you are not certain of the existence of the objects of the five senses. But what is even harder to uphold, you must say that you are not certain of your own actions—e.g., that you are seeing, or hearing—indeed you must say that you are not sure that anything is perceived by you, or has been perceived by you. For, in the *Sentences*, Book I, Dist. 3, in the place above cited, you say that your intellect does not have intuitive cognition of your actions. And you prove it by this argument: Every intuitive cognition is clear; but the cognition which your intellect has of your acts, is not clear; therefore, etc.

Now, on this assumption, I argue thus: The intellect which is not certain of the existence of things of which it has the clearest cognition, will not be certain concerning those things of which it has a less clear cognition. But, as was said, you are not certain of the existence of objects of which you have a clearer cognition than you have of your own acts; therefore, etc.

And if you say that sometimes some abstractive cognition is as clear as an intuitive cognition—e.g., that every whole is greater than its part—this will not help you, because you explicitly say that the cognition which we have of our own acts is not as clear as intuitive cognition; and yet intuitive cognition, at least that which is imperfect, is not naturally of evident certainty. This is clear from what you say. And thus it follows evidently, that you are not certain of what appears evident to you, and consequently you are not certain whether anything appears to you.

And it also follows that you are not certain whether any proposition is true or false, because you are not evidently certain whether any proposition exists, or has existed. Indeed it follows that if you were asked whether or not you believed some articles of the Faith, you would have to say, “I do not know,” because, according to your position, you could not be certain of your own act of believing. And I confirm this, because, if you were certain of your act of believing, this would either be from that very act itself, in which case the direct and reflective act would be identical—which you will not admit—or else it would be by some other act, and in that case, according to your position, you would in the same way be uncertain, because there would then be no more contradiction than that the seeing of whiteness existed and the whiteness did not exist, etc.

And so, bringing all these statements together, it seems that you must say that you are not certain of those things which are outside of you. And thus you do not know if you are in the heavens or on the earth, in fire or in water; and consequently you do not know whether today’s sky is the same one as yesterday’s, because you do not know whether the sky exists. Just as you do not know whether the Chancellor or the Pope exists, and whether, if they exist, they are different in each moment of time. Similarly, you do not know the things within you—as, whether or not you have a beard, a head, hair, and so forth. And *a fortiori* it follows from

this that you are not certain of the things which occurred in the past—as, whether you have been reading, or seeing, or hearing. Further, your position seems to lead to the destruction of social and political affairs, because if witnesses testify of what they have seen, it does not follow, “We have seen it, therefore it happened.” Again, I ask how, on this view, the Apostles were certain that Christ suffered on the cross, and that He rose from the dead, and so with all the rest.

I wish that your mind would express itself on all these questions, and I wonder very much how you can say that you are evidently certain of various conclusions which are more obscure—such as concern the existence of the Prime Mover, and the like—when you are not certain about these things which I have mentioned. Again, it is strange how, on your assumptions, you believe that you have shown that a cognition is distinct from what is cognized, when you are not certain, according to your position, that any cognition exists or that any propositions exist, and consequently that any contradictory propositions exist; since, as I have shown, you do not have certainty of the existence of your own acts, or of your own mind, and do not know whether it exists. And, as it seems to me, the absurdities which follow on the position of the Academics, follow on your position. And so, in order to avoid such absurdities, I maintained in my disputation at the Sorbonne, that I am evidently certain of the objects of the five senses, and of my own acts.

I think of these objections, and of so many others, that there is no end to them, against what you say. I pray you, Father, to instruct me who, however stupid, am nevertheless desirous of reaching knowledge of the truth. May you abide in Him, who is the light, and in whom there is no darkness.

## II. The Second Letter of Nicholas of Autrecourt to Bernard of Arezzo

Reverend Father Bernard, the depth of your subtlety would truly bring forth the admiration of my mind, if I were to know that you possess evident knowledge of the separated substances—the more so if I know this, but even if I had in my mind a slight belief. And not only, if I should think that you possess true cognition

of the separated substances, but even of those conjoined to matter. And so to you, Father, who assert that you have evident cognition of such lofty objects of knowledge, I wish to lay bare my doubtful and anxious mind, so that you may have the materials for leading me and other people toward acquaintance with such great things.

And the first point is, that at the foundation of discourse this principle is primary: Contradictories cannot be simultaneously true. And with respect to this, two things hold: the first is that this is the first principle, taken negatively as that than which nothing is more primary. The second is that this is first, taken positively, as that which is prior to every other principle.

These two statements are proved by argument, as follows: Every certitude possessed by us reduces to this principle, and it in turn is not reduced to any other in the way that a conclusion is reduced to its premise; it therefore follows that this principle is first, with the twofold primacy indicated. This consequence is known from the meaning of the term “first,” according to each of the expositions given. The antecedent is proved with respect to both of its parts. And first, with respect to its first part, namely, that every certitude possessed by us, short of this certitude, reduces to this principle of which you say you are certain, I set forth this consequence: It is possible, without any contradiction being implied, that something will appear to you to be so, and yet that it will not be so; therefore you are not evidently certain that it is so. It is clear to me that if I were to admit this antecedent to be true, I would concede the consequent to be true; and therefore I would not be evidently and unqualifiedly certain of that of which I was saying that I was certain.

From this it is clear that every one of our certitudes is resolved into our said principle, and that it is not resolved into another, as a conclusion into its premise. From this it is plain that all certitudes are resolved into this one, as was said, and that this consequence is valid: If this is prior to everything other than itself, then nothing is prior to it. And thus it is first, with the twofold primacy above stated.

The third point is that a contradiction is the affirmation and negation of the same (predicate) of the same (subject), etc., as is commonly said.

From these things I infer a corollary—namely, that the certitude of evidence which we have in the natural light, is certitude in the unqualified sense; for it is the certitude which is possessed in virtue of the first principle, which neither is nor can be contradicted by any true law. And hence whatever is demonstrated in the natural light of reason, is demonstrated without qualification; and, just as there is no power which can make contradictories simultaneously true, so there is no power by which it can come to pass that the opposite of the consequent is compatible with the antecedent.

The second corollary which I infer, with regard to this, is that the certitude of evidence has no degrees. Thus, if there are two conclusions, of each of which we are evidently certain, we are not more certain of one than of the other. For as was said, every certitude is resolved into the same first principle. Either, then, those first conclusions are reduced with equal immediacy to the same first principle—in which case there is no ground for our being more certain of one than of the other; or else one is reduced mediately, and the other immediately. But this makes no difference, because, once the reduction to the first principle has been made, we are certain of the one equally with the other—just as the geometrician says that he is as certain of a second conclusion as of the first, and similarly of the third and so on, even though in his first consideration, because of the plurality of the deductions, he cannot be as certain of the fourth or third as of the first.

The third corollary which I infer, in connection with what has been said, is that with the exception of the certitude of faith, there is no other certitude except the certitude of the first principle, or the certitude which can be resolved into the first principle. For there is no certitude except that in which there is no falsity; because, if there were any in which falsity could exist, let it be supposed that falsity does exist in it—then, since the certitude itself remains, it follows that someone is certain of something whose contradictory is true, without contradiction.

The fourth corollary is this: that a syllogistic form is immediately reducible to the first principle; because, by its demonstration, the conclusion is either immediately reduced (in which case the thesis holds), or else mediately; and if mediately, then either the regress will be infinite, or else it must arrive at some

conclusion which reduces immediately to the first principle.

The fifth corollary: In every consequence which reduces immediately to the first principle, the consequent, and the antecedent either as a whole or in part, are really identical; because, if this were not so, then it would not be immediately evident that the antecedent and the opposite of the consequent cannot both be true.

The sixth corollary is this: In every evident consequence reducible to the first principle by as many intermediates as you please, the consequent is really identical with the antecedent or with part of what is signified by the antecedent. This is shown because, if we suppose some conclusion to be reduced to the certitude of the first principle by three intermediates, the consequent will be really identical with its (immediate) antecedent or with part of what is signified by that antecedent, by the fifth corollary; and similarly in the second consequence, by the same reason; and thus, since in the first consequence the consequent is really identical with the antecedent or with part of what is signified by the antecedent, and likewise in the second one, and likewise in the third, it follows that in these consequences, ordered from first to last, the last consequent will be really identical with the first antecedent or with a part of what is signified by that antecedent.

On the basis of these statements, I laid down, along with other conclusions, one which was this: From the fact that some thing is known to exist, it cannot be evidently inferred, by evidence reduced to the first principle or to the certitude of the first principle, that some other thing exists.

Aside from many other arguments, I brought forth this argument. In such a consequence, in which from one thing another thing is inferred, the consequent would not be really identical with the antecedent or with part of what is signified by the antecedent; therefore it follows that such a consequence would not be evidently known with the said evidence of the first principle. The antecedent is conceded and posited by my opponent; the consequence is plain from the description of “contradiction,” which is affirmation and negation of the same of the same, etc. Since therefore in this case the consequent is not really identical with the antecedent or its part, it is evident that if the op-

posite of the consequent, and the antecedent, be simultaneously true, this would not be a case of one thing being affirmed and denied of the same thing, etc.

But Bernard replies, saying that although in this case there is not a formal contradiction, for the reason given, yet there is a virtual contradiction; he calls a contradiction virtual, however, if from it a formal contradiction can be evidently inferred.

But against this we can argue manifestly, from the fifth and sixth of the above corollaries. For it has been shown that in every consequence reducible either immediately or mediately to the certitude of the first principle, it is necessary that the consequent—whether the first one or the last—be really identical with the first antecedent or with a part of it.

Again, we may argue conclusively from another premise. For he says that, although in a consequence in which from one thing another thing is inferred, there is not a formal contradiction, there is nevertheless a virtual one from which a formal one can be evidently inferred. Then let there be, for example, the following consequence propounded: “A exists, therefore B exists.” If, then, from the propositions, “A exists,” “B does not exist,” a formal contradiction could be evidently inferred, this would be through a consequent of one of these propositions, or through a consequent of each of them. But whichever way it is, the thesis is not established. For these consequents would either be really identical with their antecedents, or they would not. If identical, then there will not be a formal contradiction between those consequents, since there will not then be an affirmation and a negation of the same predicate of the same subject, and hence not between the antecedents either. Just as it is not a formal contradiction to say that a rational animal exists and that a neighing animal does not exist; and for the same reason. But if it be said that these consequents differ from their antecedents, we argue the same way as before, that this is not a consequence evidently reduced to the certitude of the first principle, since the opposite of the consequent is compatible with whatever is signified by the antecedent, without contradiction. And if it be said that there is a virtual contradiction, from which a formal one can be inferred, we argue as before: either there is a regress without end, or else we must say that in a consequence evident

without qualification the consequent is identical in its signification with the antecedent, or with part of what is signified by the antecedent.

And it is true that the reverend Father has said, with regard to this question, that it would not be true to say that in a consequence evident without qualification it is required that the opposite of the consequent, and the antecedent, cannot simultaneously be false, and that they are therefore not opposed as contradictories. But in actual fact this does not in any way prevent what I am maintaining. For I do not wish to say that the opposite of the consequent must be the contradictory of the antecedent—for in many consequences the antecedent can signify more than does the consequent, though the consequent signifies a part of what is signified by the antecedent—as in this consequence, “A house exists, therefore a wall exists.” And on this account the opposite of the consequent, and the antecedent, can both be false. But I wish to say that in an evident consequence the opposite of the consequent, and the antecedent or a part of what it signifies, are opposed as contradictories. It is plain that this is the case in every valid syllogism; for since no term occurs in the conclusion which did not occur in the premises, the opposite of the conclusion, and something signified by the premises, are opposed as contradictories. And so it must be in every valid inference, because an enthymeme is only valid in virtue of a proposition presupposed—so that it is a kind of incomplete syllogism.

Further, I offer this argument for my main conclusion: Never, in virtue of any inference, can there be inferred a greater identity of the extreme term, than that which is between the extreme term and the middle term, because the former is only inferred in virtue of the latter. But the opposite of this will occur, if from the fact that one thing is a being, it could evidently be inferred that something else is a being; because the predicate of the conclusion, and the subject, signify what is really identical, whereas they are not really identical with the middle term which is posited as another thing.

But Bernard objects to this proposed rule, because it follows evidently, with an evidence reduced to the certitude of the first principle, “Whiteness exists, therefore something else exists”—because whiteness cannot exist unless some subject maintains it in exis-

tence. Likewise it follows, “Whiteness is not a being in the primary sense, therefore some other thing exists.” Or likewise, “Fire is brought into contact with the fuel, and there is no impediment, therefore there will be heat.”

To these objections I have elsewhere given many answers. But for the present I say that if a thousand such objections were adduced, either it must be said that they are irrelevant, or, if relevant, that they conclude nothing against my position. Because in these consequences which he states, if the consequent is really identical in its signification with the antecedent as a whole or with a part of the antecedent, then the argument is not to the point, because in that case I would concede the consequences to be evident, and nothing against my position would be adduced. But if it be said that the consequent is not identical with the antecedent or part of it, then, if I concede the opposite of the consequent, and the antecedent, to be simultaneously true, it is plain that I am not conceding them to be contradictories, since contradictories are of the same predicate of the same subject, etc. And thus such a consequence is not evident by the evidence of the first principle, because the evidence of the first principle was understood to be had when, if it were conceded that the opposite of the consequent is compatible with the antecedent, contradictories would be admitted as simultaneously true. For though one might concede, with respect to this consequence “A house exists, therefore a wall exists,” that a house exists and a wall does not exist, he does not thereby concede contradictories to be simultaneously true, because these propositions are not contradictories, “A house exists,” “A wall does not exist,” since both of them may be false; yet he does concede contradictories on another ground, because to signify that a house exists is to signify that a wall exists, and then it is a contradiction that a house exists and that a wall does not exist.

From this rule, so explained to anyone having the grasp of it, I infer that Aristotle never possessed an evident cognition concerning any substance other than his own soul—taking “substance” as a thing other than the objects of the five senses, and other than our formal experiences. And this is so, because he would have had a cognition of such a thing prior to every in-

ference—which is not true, since they [substances] are not perceived intuitively, and since (if they were) rustics would know that such things exist; nor are they known by inference, namely, as inferred from things perceived to exist antecedently to discursive thought—because from one thing it cannot be inferred that another thing exists, as the above conclusion states.

And if he did not have evident cognition of conjoined [material] substances, much less did he have it of abstract substances. From which it follows, whether you like it or not, and not because I make it so but because reason determines it, that Aristotle in his whole natural philosophy and metaphysics had such certitude of scarcely two conclusions, and perhaps not even of one. And Father Bernard, who is not greater than Aristotle, has an equal amount of certitudes, or much less.

And not only did Aristotle not have evident cognition [of these things]—indeed, though I do not assert this, I have an argument which I cannot refute, to prove that he did not have probable knowledge. For a person does not have probable knowledge of any consequent, in virtue of some antecedent, when he is not evidently certain whether the consequent will at some time be true together with the antecedent. For let anyone really consider well the nature of probable knowledge—as for example that because it was at one time evident to me that when I put my hand in the fire I was hot, therefore it is probable to me that if I should put it there now I would be hot. But from the rule stated above, it follows that it was never evident to anyone that, given these things which are apparent without inference, there would exist certain other things—namely, those others which are called substances. It therefore follows that of their existence we do not have probable knowledge. I do not assert this conclusion; but let this argument be resolved, for a solution will surely occur.

And that we do not possess certitude concerning any substance conjoined to matter, other than our own soul, is plain—because, pointing to a piece of wood, or a stone, this conclusion will be most clearly deduced from a belief accepted at the same time. For by the divine power it can happen, with these things which appear prior to all inference, that no substance is there; therefore in the natural light of reason it is not

evidently inferred from these appearances that a substance is there. This consequence is plain from what we explained above. For it was said that a consequence is evident only if it is a contradiction for it to occur, through any power, that the opposite of the consequent is true along with the antecedent. And if it is said that the consequence is evident, if to the antecedent

we add “God is not performing a miracle,” this is disproved by what we have said on this point in our first letter to Bernard.

I ask, Father, that you take up these doubts and give counsel to my stupidity; and I promise that I will not be stubborn in evading the truth, to which I adhere with all my strength.

# Marsilius of Padua, between 1275 and 1280–c.1342

When, about 1260, William of Moerbeke translated Aristotle's *Politics* into Latin from the Greek, new political speculations arose under the impact of the work. Stimulated by Aristotle's doctrines, political philosophers investigated afresh the nature of the state, the source of its authority, the function of its parts, and its role in the production of happiness here on earth. But just as in the theoretical sciences the reintroduction of Aristotle's works produced moderates who, while philosophers, displayed theological interests, and secularists who studied philosophy apart from any theological concerns (see p. 437), so in politics the appearance of Aristotle's work produced Aristotelians of the same two kinds. Both derived their political theories from Aristotelian principles, but whereas the moderates recognized some ultimate superiority of the Church, the secularists held that the state in temporal matters rules supreme. In political thought, Marsilius of Padua was the most articulate spokesman for the secularist view.

But to see Marsilius merely as a political philosopher who was a secular Aristotelian is to do an injustice to his intention and the complexity of his thought. As he explicitly states, it was his aim to free the state from discord and from strife that had resulted from the temporal uses of ecclesiastical power. The very title of his major work, *The Defender of Peace*, suggests that he wanted to restore to the state the peace that it had lost through clerical interference. Living in the fourteenth century, Marsilius could hardly hope to accomplish this task without considering the long tradi-

tion of political writings devoted to the demarcation of areas of secular and ecclesiastical power. Nor could he ignore the persistent struggles between popes and secular rulers over whose authority should be supreme. Hence to understand Marsilius requires at least a cursory glance at some of the doctrines and historical events that form the backgrounds of his views.

How religious and secular authority are related was an issue as old as Christianity itself. Already the first Christian teachers had to instruct their followers how to meet demands for civil obedience made by the Roman state. Since Christianity, in its beginning, was a religion without political power or ambitions, their counsel was "obey the secular rulers." Jesus had advocated rendering unto Caesar what was Caesar's (Matt. 22:21) and, in a much-to-be-quoted text, the Apostle Paul had stated:

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. . . . For [the ruler] is the minister of God to thee for good. . . . Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor (Rom. 13:1, 4, 7).

While passages such as these leave little doubt about the political teachings of the early Church, there were others that could be used in support of ecclesiastical temporal claims. Jesus had said to Peter:

And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven (Matt 16:19).

And Paul had written to the Corinthians:

Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? (1 Cor. 6:3)

These passages and others like them were in Marsilius' mind when he developed his own political views.

As the organization of the Church developed, as its power grew, and as the Roman Empire became Christian, Christian thinkers had to re-examine the nature of the Church's temporal claims. In the west, Latin Fathers, chief among them Augustine (see p. 7), developed their political views, and even though they differed in emphasis and detail, a consensus began to emerge. The orientation of the Fathers was theological, and hence they viewed the state primarily as a corrective for the vices resulting from the fallen nature of man. Men, according to the Fathers, were created free and equal, and political institutions exist among them by convention. Christian society is to be governed by two authorities, the jurisdiction of each of which is to be distinct. There is the Church, which cares for man's eternal salvation, and there is the state, which by preserving order, justice, and peace, ministers to his temporal needs. Between the two authorities a spirit of helpfulness and respect is to prevail, but at the same time the authority of the Church is ultimately supreme. These patristic teachings found their authoritative formulation in the doctrine of the two powers or the "two swords" (Luke 22:38) that Pope Gelasius I (end of the fifth century) expressed when he wrote to Anastasius, emperor in the east:

There are, then, august Emperor, two powers by which the world is chiefly ruled, the sacred power of the prelates and the royal power. But of these, the burden of the priests is the heavier,

for they will have to give account in the divine judgment even for the kings of men. . . .<sup>1</sup>

While the Gelasian doctrine was to remain the foundation of political theory in the west, it was vague and required interpretation. Defenders of secular claims pointed out that Gelasius had spoken of the independence of the temporal power, while proponents of the ecclesiastical cause emphasized that he had affirmed the final superiority of the Church. But whatever the theoretical differences, the implementation of the doctrine depended on how much power state or Church could muster. Though churchmen took an active part in political processes, until the end of the eleventh century the secular power generally ruled supreme. Yet from the ninth century on, forces were at work that helped to strengthen the position of the Church. There were the Pseudo-Isidorean Decretals. Forgeries of the ninth century, they denied to secular rulers the right to confiscate the property of bishops, and they placed bishops under the jurisdiction of their own councils and, ultimately, under the jurisdiction of the pope. The Decretals also incorporated an earlier forgery known as the Donation of Constantine, according to which Constantine gave the western portion of the empire to Pope Sylvester I, in gratitude for having cured him of leprosy. In their own days the Decretals had little effect, but in the skillful hands of canon lawyers later on they became powerful weapons in the arsenal of papal claims. Then there were the Cluniac reforms. By refusing to render feudal service for land received, by combating ecclesiastical abuses such as simony and clerical marriage, and by securing the transfer of papal elections from secular authorities to the College of Cardinals, the reformers helped to build a church that, spiritual in its orientation, possessed a strong, centralized administration.

However much these developments increased ecclesiastical power, the Church was unable to enforce its claim until it found a strong champion in Pope Gre-

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1. Gelasius I, *Letters*, 12, 2. Cited in R. Carlyle and A. Carlyle, *A History of Medieval Political Theory in the West*, 6 vols., London, 1903-1936, Vol. 1, p. 191.

gory VII and a cause in the Investiture Controversy. In 1075, Gregory decreed that henceforth bishops were to be appointed by the Church, not by the secular ruler. Emperor Henry IV ignored the decree and Gregory excommunicated him, at the same time relieving his vassals of their feudal oath. Because of political conditions, Henry was forced to submit, though later on the victory was his. This phase of the controversy was settled by the Concordat of Mainz (1122), a compromise that left the secular ruler a voice in the election of bishops. Though Gregory in the end did not prevail, he had provided an example of how the Church could use its power.

Under the impact of the Investiture Controversy, papalists and imperialists began to explicate the details of their respective claims. Both parties accepted the Gelasian doctrine of the two swords, but for papalists it came to mean that both powers were entrusted to the pope and that the emperor receives his by delegation, while for imperialists it came to mean that the secular ruler receives his power directly from God. In the twelfth century the papalist position found an exponent in John of Salisbury, who, while respecting the lawful exercise of power by the secular ruler, wrote in a famous passage:

... the prince receives the [secular] sword from the hand of the Church. ... For the Church also possesses it, but it uses it through the hand of the prince. ... The prince, therefore, is indeed the minister of the sacred power [*minister sacerdotii*] and he exercises that part of the sacred offices which seems to be unworthy of the hands of the sacred power. For every office [pertaining to] the sacred laws is religious and holy; however, that is inferior which is exercised in the punishment of crimes and which appears to be represented by the figure of the executioner.<sup>2</sup>

By contrast, the imperialist position found its expression in the somewhat earlier (c. 1100) *York Tracts*, the

product of an investiture controversy in England. According to the *Tracts*, the power of the king is higher than that of bishops, though the Church possesses the right to invest bishops with the symbols of their spiritual authority. In sentiments foreshadowing those of Marsilius, the author of the *Tracts* asserts that, in spiritual matters, all bishops are equal, denying concurrently the supremacy of the bishop of Rome. At the same time, the renewed study of Roman law and its development provided the imperialists with support, for now civilian jurists set forth the legal basis of royal authority and the details of royal claims.

In the first half of the thirteenth century the Church reached the zenith of its political power under such skilled and powerful popes as Innocent III, Gregory IX, and Innocent IV. The empire and the papacy were now at war. The papacy used military force, alliances, diplomatic pressures, and economic aid to enforce its temporal goals. Innocent III, for example, decided the election of Otto and Frederick II as emperors, and in controversies with the kings of France and England he forced the two rulers to submit. Though the struggle ended in the defeat of the empire, the papacy itself was eventually greatly weakened. Innocent III strengthened the papacy through a system of papal legates through which even outlying districts came under his effective control. Regular taxes imposed on the clergy as well as levies and “gifts” on special occasions became important sources of papal economic power. At the same time, canon lawyers, though theoretically committed to the doctrine of the two swords, defined wider and wider areas of papal authority. According to their teachings, the pope had the right to judge the fitness of elected candidates, to confirm treaties between secular rulers, and to supervise the administration of justice. Their claims culminated in the doctrine of the “papal plenitude of power” according to which the pope, as Vicar of Christ, possesses full power in both secular and spiritual affairs. The Gelasian doctrine had come a long way.

In the light of these backgrounds, the impact of Aristotle’s *Politics* can now be more fully understood. Most political philosophers retained the doctrine of the two swords, but Aristotle’s well-developed political teachings required a revised understanding of the na-

2. *Policraticus* IV, 3. Cited in Carlyle and Carlyle, Vol. IV, p. 333.

ture and function of the state. Whereas for the Fathers the state existed by convention as a corrective for the transgressions of fallen man, for Aristotle it existed by nature for man's moral education and for the production of happiness here on earth. Christian thinkers, to be sure, had to allow for man's supernatural salvation and for the temporal Church, but at the same time they found it possible to examine the state in its own terms. Imperialists, papalists, and moderate papalists alike turned to Aristotle for support of their views.

The shift in political thought is well illustrated by Aquinas, who was a moderate papalist. For Aquinas, the definition of papal and imperial power is no longer the overriding issue, but it becomes part of a political philosophy at large. As a theologian, Aquinas sees the state as part of a hierarchically ordered universe created and governed by God; but as an Aristotelian, he sees it as a human institution required to bring man to that natural end which, without the collaborative efforts of others, he could never attain. It is significant that Aquinas finds in the well-ordered state a contributing factor even for the ultimate salvation of man. Perhaps the central theme of Aquinas's political thought is his philosophy of law (see p. 528). Law for him is an "ordinance of reason," which in the form of natural and human law becomes the instrument for the moral and political training of man. Even the ruler is ultimately subject to law. Speaking of the form that government should take, Aquinas strikes a balance between what is best in itself and what is best, given men as they are. Absolutely, monarchy is best; but relatively, a mixed government (which seems to be a limited monarchy) is preferable. Aquinas's view is similarly balanced when he speaks of secular and ecclesiastical power. The pope, he holds, is ultimately supreme and he has the right to interfere in political affairs; but as long as the secular ruler exercises his power within his proper sphere, it is unjust for the ecclesiastical authorities to interfere.

Whereas Aquinas adopted a moderate position, Dante, some fifty years later, defended the imperialist cause. But the empire of which Dante spoke did not exist in his day. Using Aristotelian principles, Dante undertook to show that the attainment of man's natural end requires peace and that this peace can only be guaranteed by a universal empire governed by a single

ruler. From these theoretical foundations, he went on to argue that the Roman Empire was the providentially ordained state for providing the required temporal unity. And finally he turned to scripture and the decrees of early councils to demonstrate that the emperor received his power directly from God and that, hence, he is not subject to any superior human power.

While Aquinas's and Dante's expositions were rather theoretical, the set of political writings next to be considered were occasioned by renewed conflicts between Church and state. This time the issue was taxation and the antagonists were Pope Boniface VIII (1294–1303) and Philip the Fair, king of France (1285–1314). Political power had shifted from the emperor to national rulers and a feeling of national loyalty had grown. When Philip imposed taxes on the French clergy to finance a war, Boniface issued the bull *Clericis laicos*, which forbade the clergy to pay. This bull was followed later (1302) by the famous *Unam sanctam*, which contained the most extreme statement of papal claims. In this bull, Boniface declared that subjection to the pope is necessary for salvation and that both swords belong to the Church, the king using his "at the command and with the permission of the priests." But this time the papacy could not enforce its claims. The French clergy, imbued with nationalist feelings, paid willingly. The controversy ended with the "Babylonian Captivity," during which Avignon was the papal seat.

Once again tracts appeared in support of both sides. On the papalist side, Giles of Rome was the major spokesman. Invoking philosophical arguments, scriptural passages, and historical precedents, he developed a position in which the temporal ruler is the vassal of the pope. His position is well summarized in the following passage:

As in the universe itself corporeal substance is ruled by spiritual . . . so among Christians all temporal lords and all earthly power ought to be governed and ruled by spiritual and ecclesiastical authority, and especially by the pope. . . .<sup>3</sup>

3. On *Ecclesiastical Power*, I, 5. Cited in G. Sabine, *A History of Political Theory*, 3rd ed., New York, 1961, p. 174.

The royalist position was presented by John of Paris. Holding that, though the priest is superior in dignity to the secular ruler, the king, nevertheless, receives his power directly from God, John writes:

... secular power is greater than spiritual power in certain matters, namely, temporal matters; and with respect to this it is not subject to it in anything, because it does not stem from it. Rather, both powers stem directly from one supreme power, namely, divine power.<sup>4</sup>

We now come to the time of Marsilius, once again a time of political controversy. The pope was John XXII (1316–1334), the emperor, Louis of Bavaria (1314–1347), the occasion an imperial election. Marsilius took the emperor's part. The defense of secular power, as we have seen, was nothing new; but whereas earlier imperialists granted some superior power to the pope, Marsilius proposed a more radical solution. A secularist in politics, and following a secular interpretation of Aristotle, Marsilius set out to show that the clergy possesses no right to temporal power, and that its proper role is to instruct and admonish. Moreover, he attacked papal claims by showing that in spiritual matters all priests are equal. To establish these doctrines he first developed a secular theory of the state and then, as many another reformer, he re-examined the religious texts.

Marsilius begins with an analysis of the state. Invoking a biological analogy, he shows that the state is like an animate being and that its health (which is peace) consists in the orderly functioning of its parts. There are six classes within the state, of which the clergy is one. It follows then that the clergy is one class among many and that its political role (such as it is) is determined by the secular ruler. Marsilius emphasizes, moreover, that though the clergy is quite properly concerned with man's well-being in the life to come, the good life here on earth is the prerogative of the state.

Marsilius' secularist position becomes still more explicit in his analysis of law. Unlike Aquinas, for whom the various kinds of law form parts of a well-ordered whole, Marsilius distinguishes sharply between divine and human law. The latter possesses coercive force here on earth, the former does not. Moreover, Marsilius displays great interest in the efficient cause of the law. In a statement that is central to his thought, he affirms that legislative power rests "with the people, or the whole body of citizens, or the weightier part thereof," and, for him, the people or their delegates are the source of judicial and executive power. These doctrines make Marsilius an important precursor of modern political thought.

Not satisfied with investigating the relation of Church and state, Marsilius also examines the internal structure of the Church. Though he could hardly deny the reality of the Church as a temporal organization, he tries to redefine its structure. To that end he affirms the equality of all priests in their spiritual function and the Church, for him, is ultimately the whole body of Christian believers. Claims for papal plenitude he counters by advocating that matters of doctrine be settled by a general ecclesiastical council rather than by the pope.

Marsilius dei Mainardi was born in Padua, sometime between 1275 and 1280. Son of a notary at the University of Padua, he seems to have considered the study of law, but instead turned to medicine and natural philosophy. From December 1312 until March 1313 he was rector of the University of Paris. There he came in contact with "secular Aristotelians." In 1316, Pope John XXII promised him a canonry in Padua, and two years later a benefice. Marsilius' interests were not only academic but also political. We hear, in a letter dated 1319, that Can Grande della Scala and Matteo Visconti had sent him to Count Charles of La Marche to offer him the captaincy of the Ghibelline League. The mission failed, and he returned to Paris. At this time he seems to have become acquainted with some Spiritual Franciscans, among them Michael of Cesena, who defended the doctrine of evangelical poverty (see p. 606). This doctrine played a significant role in Marsilius' thought. During the years at Paris he worked on the *Defender of Peace*, which he finished on June 24, 1324. When the

4. *On Papal and Royal Power*, Chap. 5. See R. Lerner and M. Mahdi, *Medieval Political Philosophy: A Sourcebook*, New York, 1963, p. 414.

authorship of the work became known, Marsilius, together with John of Jandun, was forced to flee Paris and went to the court of Louis of Bavaria. In Louis they found a defender, since he also was at odds with the pope, who had refused to confirm his election. In 1327 Louis undertook an expedition to Italy to secure the imperial crown. He conquered Rome, and in accordance with Marsilius' doctrines, he was crowned in 1328 by Sciarra Colonna as delegate of the people. Marsilius was appointed spiritual vicar of the city. However, when the people became disaffected, Louis, and with him Marsilius, had to leave Rome. Marsilius spent the remainder of his life at Louis's court where there were also Spiritual Francis-

cans, among them William of Ockham. In 1342, Marsilius composed a summary of his major work, entitled *Defensor minor*, part of which is a treatise *Concerning the Jurisdiction of the Emperor in Matrimonial Cases*. He died shortly thereafter.

All the following selections are taken from *The Defender of Peace*. The first describes the purpose of the state and its division into parts. It is in this section that Marsilius discusses the political function of the clergy. The next two sections contain his account of the law and of the legislator. The last two sections, which contain much analysis of religious texts, deal with ecclesiastical claims of temporal power and with the claim for "papal plenitude."

## 64. The Defender of Peace

### Discourse I

#### Chapter IV. On the Final Cause of the State and of Its Civil Requirements, and the Differentiation in General of Its Parts

The state, according to Aristotle in the *Politics*, Book I, Chapter I, is “the perfect community having the full limit of self-sufficiency, which came into existence for the sake of living, but exists for the sake of living well.” This phrase of Aristotle—“came into existence for the sake of living, but exists for the sake of living well”—signifies the perfect final cause of the state, since those who live a civil life not only live, which beasts or slaves do too, but live well, having leisure for those liberal functions in which are exercised the virtues of both the practical and the theoretic soul.

2. Having thus determined the end of the state to be living and living well, we must treat first of living and its modes. For this, as we have said, is the purpose for the sake of which the state was established, and which necessitates all the things that exist in the state and are done by the association of men in it. Let us therefore lay this down as the principle of all the things that are to be demonstrated here, a principle naturally held, believed, and freely granted by all: that all men not deformed or otherwise impeded naturally desire a sufficient life, and avoid and flee what is harmful thereto. This has been acknowledged not only with regard to man but also with regard to every genus of animals, according to Tully in his treatise *On Duties*, Book I, Chapter III, where he says: “It is an original endowment which nature has bestowed upon every genus of living things, that it preserves itself, its body, and its life, that it avoids those things which seem harmful, and that it seeks and obtains all those things which are necessary for living.” This principle can also be clearly grasped by everyone through sense induction.

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From Marsilius of Padua, *The Defender of Peace*, trans. A. Gewirth, Vol. 2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956). Reprinted by permission.

3. But the living and living well that are appropriate to men fall into two kinds, of which one is temporal or earthly, while the other is usually called eternal or heavenly. However, this latter kind of living, the eternal, the whole body of philosophers were unable to prove by demonstration, nor was it self-evident, and therefore they did not concern themselves with the means thereto. But as to the first kind of living and living well or good life, that is, the earthly, and its necessary means, this the glorious philosophers comprehended almost completely through demonstration. Hence for its attainment they concluded the necessity of the civil community, without which this sufficient life cannot be obtained. Thus the foremost of the philosophers, Aristotle, said in his *Politics*, Book I, Chapter I: “All men are driven toward such an association by a natural impulse.” Although sense experience teaches this, we wish to bring out more distinctly that cause of it which we have indicated, as follows: Man is born composed of contrary elements, because of whose contrary actions and passions some of his substance is continually being destroyed; moreover, he is born “bare and unprotected” from excess of the surrounding air and other elements, capable of suffering and of destruction, as has been said in the science of nature. As a consequence, he needed arts of diverse genera and species to avoid the aforementioned harms. But since these arts can be exercised only by a large number of men, and can be had only through their association with one another, men had to assemble together in order to attain what was beneficial through these arts and to avoid what was harmful.

4. But since among men thus assembled there arise disputes and quarrels which, if not regulated by a norm of justice, would cause men to fight and separate and thus finally would bring about the destruction of the state, there had to be established in this association a standard of justice and a guardian or maker thereof. And since this guardian has to restrain excessive wrongdoers as well as other individuals both within and outside the state who disturb or attempt to oppress the community, the state had to have within it

something by which to resist these. Again, since the community needs various conveniences, repairs, and protection of certain common things, and different things in time of peace and in time of war, it was necessary that there be in the community men to take care of such matters, in order that the common necessity might be relieved when it was expedient or needful. But beside the things which we have so far mentioned, which relieve only the necessities of the present life, there is something else that men associated in a civil community need for the status of the future world promised to the human race through God's supernatural revelation, and that is useful also for the status of the present life. This is the worship and honoring of God, and the giving of thanks both for benefits received in this world and for those to be received in the future one. For the teaching of these things and for the directing of men in them, the state had to designate certain teachers. The nature and qualities of all these and the other matters mentioned above will be treated in detail in the subsequent discussions.

5. Men, then, were assembled for the sake of the sufficient life, being able to seek out for themselves the necessities enumerated above, and exchanging them with one another. This assemblage, thus perfect and having the limit of self-sufficiency, is called the state, whose final cause as well as that of its many parts has already been indicated by us in some measure, and will be more fully distinguished below. For since diverse things are necessary to men who desire a sufficient life, things that cannot be supplied by men of one order or office, there had to be diverse orders or offices of men in this association, exercising or supplying such diverse things which men need for sufficiency of life. But these diverse orders or offices of men are none other than the many and distinct parts of the state.

Let it suffice, then, to have covered thus in outline what the state is, why there came about such an association, and the number and division of its parts.

#### Chapter V. On the Differentiation of the Parts of the State, and the Necessity of Their Separate Existence for an End Discoverable by Man

We have now completely listed the parts of the state, in whose perfect action and intercommunication, with-

out external impediment, we have said that the tranquillity of the state consists. But we must now continue our discussion of them, since the fuller determination of these parts, with respect both to their functions or ends and to their other appropriate causes, will make more manifest the causes of tranquillity and of its opposite. Let us say, then, that the parts or offices of the state are of six kinds, as Aristotle said in the *Politics*, Book VII, Chapter 7: the agricultural, the artisan, the military, the financial, the priestly, and the judicial or deliberative. Three of these, the priestly, the warrior, and the judicial, are in the strict sense parts of the state, and in civil communities they are usually called the honorable class (*honorabilitatem*). The others are called parts only in the broad sense of the term, because they are offices necessary to the state according to the doctrine of Aristotle in the *Politics*, Book VII, Chapter 7. And the multitude belonging to these offices are usually called the common mass (*vulgaris*). These, then, are the more familiar parts of the city or state, to which all the others can appropriately be reduced.

2. Although the necessity of these parts has been indicated in the preceding chapter, we wish to indicate it again more distinctly, assuming this proposition as having been previously demonstrated from what is self-evident, namely, that the state is a community established for the sake of the living and living well of the men in it. Of this "living" we have previously distinguished two kinds: one, the life or living of this world, that is, earthly; the other, the life or living of the other or future world. From these kinds of living, desired by man as ends, we shall indicate the necessity for the differentiation of the parts of the civil community. The first kind of human living, the earthly, is sometimes taken to mean the being of living things, as in Book II of the treatise *On the Soul*: "For living things, living is their being"; in which sense life is nothing other than soul. At other times, "living" is taken to mean the act, the action or passion, of the soul or of life. Again, each of these meanings is used in two ways, with reference either to the numerically same being or to the similar being, which is said to be that of the species. And although each of these kinds of living, both as proper to man and as common to him and to the other animate things, depends upon natural causes, yet we are not at present considering it insofar

as it comes from these causes; the natural science of plants and animals deals with this. Rather, our present concern is with these causes insofar as they receive fulfillment “through art and reason,” whereby “the human race lives.”

3. Hence, we must note that if man is to live and to live well, it is necessary that his actions be done and be done well; and not only his actions but also his passions. By “well” I mean in proper proportion. And since we do not receive entirely perfect from nature the means whereby these proportions are fulfilled, it was necessary for man to go beyond natural causes to form through reason some means whereby to effect and preserve his actions and passions in body and soul. And these means are the various kinds of functions and products deriving from the virtues and arts both practical and theoretic.

4. Of human actions and passions, some come from natural causes apart from knowledge. Such are those which are effected by the contrariety of the elements composing our bodies, through their intermixture. In this class can properly be placed the actions of the nutritive faculty. Under this head also come actions effected by the elements surrounding our body through the alteration of their qualities; of this kind also are the alterations effected by things entering human bodies, such as food, drink, medicines, poisons, and other similar things. But there are other actions or passions which are performed by us or occur in us through our cognitive and appetitive powers. Of these some are called “immanent” because they do not cross over (*non transeunt*) into a subject other than the doer, nor are they exercised through any external organs or locomotive members; of this kind are the thoughts and desires or affections of men. But there are other actions and passions which are called “transient” because they are opposed in either or in both respects to the kind which we have just described.

5. In order to proportion all these actions and passions, and to fulfill them in that to which nature could not lead, there were discovered the various kinds of arts and other virtues, as we said above, and men of various offices were established to exercise these for the purpose of supplying human needs. These orders are none other than the parts of the state enumerated above. For in order to proportion and preserve the acts

of the nutritive part of the soul, whose cessation would mean the complete destruction of the animal both individually and as a species, agriculture and animal husbandry were established. To these may properly be reduced all kinds of hunting of land, sea, and air animals, and all other arts whereby food is acquired by some exchange or is prepared for eating, so that what is lost from the substance of our body may thereby be restored, and the body be continued in its immortal being so far as nature has permitted this to man.

6. In order to moderate the actions and passions of our body caused by the impressions of the elements that externally surround us, there was discovered the general class of mechanics, which Aristotle in the *Politics*, Book VII, Chapter 6, calls the “arts.” To this class belong spinning, leathermaking, shoemaking, all species of housebuilding, and in general all the other mechanic arts that subserve the other offices of the state directly or indirectly, and that moderate not only men’s touch or taste but also the other senses. These latter arts are more for pleasure and for living well than for the necessity of life, such as the painter’s art and others similar to it, concerning which Aristotle says in the *Politics*, Book IV, Chapter 3: “Of these arts some must exist from necessity, and others are for pleasure and living well.” Under this class is also placed the practice of medicine, which is in some way architectonic to many of the above-mentioned arts.

7. In order to moderate the excesses of the acts deriving from the locomotive powers through knowledge and desire, which we have called transient acts and which can be done for the benefit or for the harm or injury of someone other than the doer for the status of the present world, there was necessarily established in the state a part or office by which the excesses of such acts are corrected and reduced to equality or due proportion. For without such correction the excesses of these acts would cause fighting and hence the separation of the citizens, and finally the destruction of the state and loss of the sufficient life. This part of the state, together with its subsidiaries, is called by Aristotle the “judicial” or “ruling” and “deliberative” part, and its function is to regulate matters of justice and the common benefit.

8. In addition, since the sufficient life cannot be led by citizens who are oppressed or cast into slavery by ex-

ternal oppressors, and also since the sentences of the judges against injurious and rebellious men within the state must be executed by coercive force, it was necessary to set up in the state a military or warrior part, which many of the mechanics also subserve. For the state was established for the sake of living and living well, as was said in the preceding chapter; but this is impossible for citizens cast into slavery. For Aristotle the preeminent said that slavery is contrary to the nature of the state. Hence, indicating the necessity for this part, he said in the *Politics*, Book IV, Chapter 3: “There is a fifth class, that of the warriors, which is not less necessary than the others, if the citizens are not to be slaves of invaders. For nothing is more truly impossible than for that which is by nature slavish to be worthy of the name ‘state’; for a state is self-sufficient, but a slave is not self-sufficient.” The necessity for this class because of internal rebels is treated by Aristotle in the *Politics*, Book VII, Chapter 6. We have omitted the quotation of this passage here for the sake of brevity, and because we shall quote it in Chapter XIV of this discourse, paragraph 8.

9. Again, since in some years on earth the harvests are large, and in others small; and the state is sometimes at peace with its neighbors, and sometimes not; and it is in need of various common services such as the construction and repair of roads, bridges, and other edifices, and similar things whose enumeration here would be neither appropriate nor brief—to provide all these things at the proper time it was necessary to establish in the state a treasure-keeping part, which Aristotle called the “money class.” This part gathers and saves monies, coins, wines, oils, and other necessities; it procures from all places things needed for the common benefit, and it seeks to relieve future necessities; it is also subserved by some of the other parts of the state. Aristotle called this the “money” part, since the saver of monies seems to be the treasurer of all things; for all things are exchanged for money.

10. It remains for us to discuss the necessity of the priestly part. All men have not thought so harmoniously about this as they have about the necessity of the other parts of the state. The cause of this difference was that the true and primary necessity of this part could not be comprehended through demonstration, nor was it self-evident. All nations, however, agreed

that it was appropriate to establish the priesthood for the worship and honoring of God, and for the benefit resulting therefrom for the status of the present or the future world. For most laws or religions promise that in the future world God will distribute rewards to those who do good and punishment to doers of evil.

11. However, besides these causes of the laying down of religious laws, causes which are believed without demonstration, the philosophers, including Hesiod, Pythagoras, and several others of the ancients, noted appropriately a quite different cause or purpose for the setting forth of divine laws or religions—a purpose which was in some sense necessary for the status of this world. This was to ensure the goodness of human acts both individual and civil, on which depend almost completely the quiet or tranquillity of communities and finally the sufficient life in the present world. For although some of the philosophers who founded such laws or religions did not accept or believe in human resurrection and that life which is called eternal, they nevertheless feigned and persuaded others that it exists and that in it pleasures and pains are in accordance with the qualities of human deeds in this mortal life, in order that they might thereby induce in men reverence and fear of God, and a desire to flee the vices and to cultivate the virtues. For there are certain acts that the legislator cannot regulate by human law, that is, those acts that cannot be proved to be present or absent to someone, but that nevertheless cannot be concealed from God, whom these philosophers feigned to be the maker of such laws and the commander of their observance, under the threat or promise of eternal reward for doers of good and punishment for doers of evil. Hence, they said of the variously virtuous men in this world that they were placed in the heavenly firmament; and from this were perhaps derived the names of certain stars and constellations. These philosophers said that the souls of men who acted wrongly entered the bodies of various brutes; for example, the souls of men who had been intemperate eaters entered the bodies of pigs, those who were intemperate in embracing and making love entered the bodies of goats, and so on, according to the proportions of human vices to their condemnable properties. So too the philosophers assigned various kinds of torments to wrongdoers, like

perpetual thirst and hunger for intemperate Tantalus: water and fruit were to be near him, but he was unable to drink or handle these, for they were always fleeing faster than he could pursue them. The philosophers also said that the infernal regions, the place of these torments, were deep and dark; and they painted all sorts of terrible and gloomy pictures of them. From fear of these, men eschewed wrongdoing, were instigated to perform virtuous works of piety and mercy, and were well disposed both in themselves and toward others. As a consequence, many disputes and injuries ceased in communities. Hence too the peace or tranquillity of states and the sufficient life of men for the status of the present world were preserved with less difficulty, which was the end intended by these wise men in laying down such laws or religions.

12. Such, then, were the precepts handed down by the gentile priests; and for the teaching of them they established in their communities temples in which their gods were worshiped. They also appointed teachers of these laws or doctrines, whom they called priests (*sacerdotes*), because they handled the sacred objects of the temples, like the books, vases, and other such things subserving divine worship.

13. These affairs they arranged fittingly in accordance with their beliefs and rites. For as priests they appointed not anyone at all, but only virtuous and esteemed citizens who had held military, judicial, or deliberative office, and who had retired from secular affairs, being excused from civil burdens and offices because of age. For by such men, removed from passions, and in whose words greater credence was placed because of their age and moral dignity, it was fitting that the gods should be honored and their sacred objects handled, not by artisans or mercenaries who had exercised lowly and defiling offices. Whence it is said in the *Politics*, Book VII, Chapter 7: "Neither a farmer nor an artisan should be made a priest."

14. Now correct views concerning God were not held by the gentile laws or religions and by all the other religions which are or were outside the catholic Christian faith or outside the Mosaic law which preceded it or the beliefs of the holy fathers which in turn preceded this—and, in general, by all those doctrines which are outside the tradition of what is contained in the sacred canon called the Bible. For they followed

the human mind or false prophets or teachers of errors. Hence too they did not have a correct view about the future life and its happiness or misery, nor about the true priesthood established for its sake. We have, nevertheless, spoken of their rites in order to make more manifest their difference from the true priesthood, that of the Christians, and the necessity for the priestly part in communities.

#### Chapter X: On the Distinction of the Meanings of the Term "Law," and on the Meaning Which Is Most Proper and Intended by Us

Since we have said that election is the more perfect and better method of establishing governments, we shall do well to inquire as to its efficient cause, wherefrom it has to emerge in its full value; for from this will appear the cause not only of the elected government but also of the other parts of the polity. Now a government has to regulate civil human acts (as we demonstrated in Chapter V of this discourse) and according to a standard (*regulam*) which is and ought to be the form of the ruler, as such. We must, consequently, inquire into this standard, as to whether it exists, what it is, and why. For the efficient cause of this standard is perhaps the same as that of the ruler.

2. The existence of this standard, which is called a "statute" or "custom" and by the common term "law," we assume as almost self-evident by induction in all perfect communities. We shall show first, then, what law is; next we shall indicate its final cause or necessity; and finally we shall demonstrate by what person or persons and by what kind of action the law should be established; which will be to inquire into its legislator or efficient cause, to whom we think it also pertains to elect the government, as we shall show subsequently by demonstration. From these points there will also appear the matter or subject of the aforesaid standard which we have called law. For this matter is the ruling part, whose function it is to regulate the political or civil acts of men according to the law.

3. Following this procedure, then, we must first distinguish the meanings or intentions of this term "law," in order that its many senses may not lead to confusion. For in one sense it means a natural sensitive inclination toward some action or passion. This is the

way the Apostle used it when he said in the seventh chapter of the epistle to the Romans: "I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind." In another sense this term "law" means any productive habit and in general every form, existing in the mind, of a producible thing, from which as from an exemplar or measure there emerge the forms of things made by art. This is the way in which the term was used in the forty-third chapter of Ezekiel: "This is the law of the house . . . And these are the measurements of the altar." In a third sense "law" means the standard containing admonitions for voluntary human acts according as these are ordered toward glory or punishment in the future world. In this sense the Mosaic law was in part called a law, just as the evangelical law in its entirety is called a law. Hence the Apostle said of these in his epistle to the Hebrews: "Since the priesthood has been changed, it is necessary that there be a change of the law also." In this sense "law" was also used for the evangelic discipline in the first chapter of James: "He who has looked into the perfect law of liberty, and has continued therein . . . this man shall be blessed in his deeds." In this sense of the term law all religions, such as that of Mohammed or of the Persians, are called laws in whole or in part, although among these only the Mosaic and the evangelic, that is, the Christian, contain the truth. So too Aristotle called religions "laws" when he said, in the second book of his *Philosophy*: "The laws show how great is the power of custom"; and also in the twelfth book of the same work: "The other doctrines were added as myths to persuade men to obey the laws, and for the sake of expediency." In its fourth and most familiar sense, this term "law" means the science or doctrine or universal judgment of matters of civil justice and benefit, and of their opposites.

4. Taken in this last sense, law may be considered in two ways. In one way it may be considered in itself, as it only shows what is just or unjust, beneficial or harmful; and as such it is called the science or doctrine of right (*juris*). In another way it may be considered according as with regard to its observance there is given a command coercive through punishment or reward to be distributed in the present world, or according as it is handed down by way of such a command; and considered in this way it most properly is called, and is, a law.

It was in this sense that Aristotle also defined it in the last book of the *Ethics*, Chapter 8, when he said: "Law has coercive force, for it is discourse emerging from prudence and understanding." Law, then, is a "discourse" or statement "emerging from prudence and" political "understanding," that is, it is an ordinance made by political prudence, concerning matters of justice and benefit and their opposites, and having "coercive force," that is, concerning whose observance there is given a command which one is compelled to observe, or which is made by way of such a command.

5. Hence not all true cognitions of matters of civil justice and benefit are laws unless a coercive command has been given concerning their observance, or they have been made by way of a command, although such true cognition is necessarily required for a perfect law. Indeed, sometimes false cognitions of the just and the beneficial become laws, when there is given a command to observe them, or they are made by way of a command. An example of this is found in the regions of certain barbarians who cause it to be observed as just that a murderer be absolved of civil guilt and punishment on payment of a fine. This, however, is absolutely unjust, and consequently the laws of such barbarians are not absolutely perfect. For although they have the proper form, that is, a coercive command of observance, they lack a proper condition, that is, the proper and true ordering of justice.

6. Under this sense of law are included all standards of civil justice and benefit established by human authority, such as customs, statutes, plebiscites, decrees, and all similar rules which are based upon human authority as we have said.

7. We must not overlook, however, that both the evangelical law and the Mosaic, and perhaps the other religions as well, may be considered and compared in different ways in whole or in part, in relation to human acts for the status of the present or the future world. For they sometimes come, or have hitherto come, or will come, under the third sense of law, and sometimes under the last, as will be shown more fully in Chapters VIII and IX of Discourse II. Moreover, some of these laws are true, while others are false fancies and empty promises.

It is now clear, then, that there exists a standard or law of human civil acts, and what this is.

Chapter XII: On the Demonstrable Efficient Cause of Human Laws, and Also on That Cause Which Cannot Be Proved by Demonstration: Which Is to Inquire into the Legislator. Whence It Appears Also That Whatever Is Established by Election Derives Its Authority from Election Alone Apart from Any Other Confirmation

We must next discuss that efficient cause of the laws which is capable of demonstration. For I do not intend to deal here with that method of establishing laws which can be effected by the immediate act or oracle of God apart from the human will, or which has been so effected in the past. It was by this latter method, as we have said, that the Mosaic law was established; but I shall not deal with it here even insofar as it contains commands with regard to civil acts for the status of the present world. I shall discuss the establishment of only those laws and governments which emerge immediately from the decision of the human mind.

2. Let us say, to begin with, that it can pertain to any citizen to discover the law taken materially and in its third sense, as the science of civil justice and benefit. Such inquiry, however, can be carried on more appropriately and be completed better by those men who are able to have leisure, who are older and experienced in practical affairs, and who are called “prudent men,” than by the mechanics who must bend all their efforts to acquiring the necessities of life. But it must be remembered that the true knowledge or discovery of the just and the beneficial, and of their opposites, is not law taken in its last and most proper sense, whereby it is the measure of human civil acts, unless there is given a coercive command as to its observance, or it is made by way of such a command by someone through whose authority its transgressors must and can be punished. Hence, we must now say to whom belongs the authority to make such a command and to punish its transgressors. This, indeed, is to inquire into the legislator or the maker of the law.

3. Let us say, then, in accordance with the truth and the counsel of Aristotle in the *Politics*, Book III, Chapter 6, that the legislator, or the primary and proper efficient cause of the law, is the people or the whole body of citizens, or the weightier part thereof, through its election or will expressed by words in the

general assembly of the citizens, commanding or determining that something be done or omitted with regard to human civil acts, under a temporal pain or punishment. By the “weightier part” I mean to take into consideration the quantity and the quality of the persons in that community over which the law is made. The aforesaid whole body of citizens or the weightier part thereof is the legislator regardless of whether it makes the law directly by itself or entrusts the making of it to some person or persons, who are not and cannot be the legislator in the absolute sense, but only in a relative sense and for a particular time and in accordance with the authority of the primary legislator. And I say further that the laws and anything else established through election must receive their necessary approval by that same primary authority and no other, whatever be the case with regard to certain ceremonies or solemnities, which are required not for the being of the matters elected but for their well-being, since the election would be no less valid even if these ceremonies were not performed. Moreover, by the same authority must the laws and other things established through election undergo addition, subtraction, complete change, interpretation, or suspension, insofar as the exigencies of time or place or other circumstances make any such action opportune for the common benefit. And by the same authority, also, must the laws be promulgated or proclaimed after their enactment, so that no citizen or alien who is delinquent in observing them may be excused because of ignorance.

4. A citizen I define in accordance with Aristotle in the *Politics*, Book III, Chapters 1, 3, and 7, as one who participates in the civil community in the government or the deliberative or judicial function according to his rank. By this definition, children, slaves, aliens, and women are distinguished from citizens, although in different ways. For the sons of citizens are citizens in proximate potentiality, lacking only in years. The weightier part of the citizens should be viewed in accordance with the honorable custom of polities, or else it should be determined in accordance with the doctrine of Aristotle in the *Politics*, Book VI, Chapter 2.

5. Having thus defined the citizen and the weightier part of the citizens, let us return to our proposed objective, namely, to demonstrate that the human au-

thority to make laws belongs only to the whole body of the citizens or to the weightier part thereof. Our first proof is as follows. The absolutely primary human authority to make or establish human laws belongs only to those men from whom alone the best laws can emerge. But these are the whole body of the citizens, or the weightier part thereof, which represents that whole body; since it is difficult or impossible for all persons to agree upon one decision, because some men have a deformed nature, disagreeing with the common decision through singular malice or ignorance. The common benefit should not, however, be impeded or neglected because of the unreasonable protest or opposition of these men. The authority to make or establish laws, therefore, belongs only to the whole body of the citizens or to the weightier part thereof.

The first proposition of this demonstration is very close to self-evident, although its force and its ultimate certainty can be grasped from Chapter V of this discourse. The second proposition, that the best law is made only through the hearing and command of the entire multitude, I prove by assuming with Aristotle in the *Politics*, Book III, Chapter 7, that the best law is that which is made for the common benefit of the citizens. As Aristotle said: "That is presumably right," that is, in the laws, "which is for the common benefit of the state and the citizens." But that this is best achieved only by the whole body of the citizens or by the weightier part thereof, which is assumed to be the same thing, I show as follows: That at which the entire body of the citizens aims intellectually and emotionally is more certainly judged as to its truth and more diligently noted as to its common utility. For a defect in some proposed law can be better noted by the greater number than by any part thereof, since every whole, or at least every corporeal whole, is greater in mass and in virtue than any part of it taken separately. Moreover, the common utility of a law is better noted by the entire multitude, because no one knowingly harms himself. Anyone can look to see whether a proposed law leans toward the benefit of one or a few persons more than of the others or of the community, and can protest against it. Such, however, would not be the case were the law made by one or a few persons, considering their own private benefit rather than that of the community. This position is also supported by the

arguments which we advanced in Chapter XI of this discourse with regard to the necessity of having laws.

6. Another argument to the principal conclusion is as follows. The authority to make the law belongs only to those men whose making of it will cause the law to be better observed or observed at all. Only the whole body of the citizens are such men. To them, therefore, belongs the authority to make the law. The first proposition of this demonstration is very close to self-evident, for a law would be useless unless it were observed. Hence Aristotle said in the *Politics*, Book IV, Chapter 6: "Laws are not well ordered when they are well made but not obeyed." He also said in Book VI, Chapter 5: "Nothing is accomplished by forming opinions about justice and not carrying them out." The second proposition I prove as follows. That law is better observed by every citizen which each one seems to have imposed upon himself. But such is the law which is made through the hearing and command of the entire multitude of the citizens. The first proposition of this prosyllogism is almost self-evident; for since "the state is a community of free men," as is written in the *Politics*, Book III, Chapter 4, every citizen must be free, and not undergo another's despotism, that is, slavish dominion. But this would not be the case if one or a few of the citizens by their own authority made the law over the whole body of citizens. For those who thus made the law would be despots over the others, and hence such a law, however good it was, would be endured only with reluctance, or not at all, by the rest of the citizens, the more ample part. Having suffered contempt, they would protest against it, and not having been called upon to make it, they would not observe it. On the other hand, a law made by the hearing or consent of the whole multitude, even though it were less useful, would be readily observed and endured by every one of the citizens, because then each would seem to have set the law upon himself, and hence would have no protest against it, but would rather tolerate it with equanimity. The second proposition of the first syllogism I also prove in another way, as follows. The power to cause the laws to be observed belongs only to those men to whom belongs coercive force over the transgressors of the laws. But these men are the whole body of citizens or the weightier part thereof. Therefore, to them alone belongs the authority to make the laws.

7. The principal conclusion is also proved as follows. That practical matter whose proper establishment is of greatest importance for the common sufficiency of the citizens in this life, and whose poor establishment threatens harm for the community, must be established only by the whole body of the citizens. But such a matter is the law. Therefore, the establishment of the law pertains only to the whole body of the citizens. The major premise of this demonstration is almost self-evident, and is grounded in the immediate truths which were set forth in Chapters IV and V of this discourse. For men came together to the civil community in order to attain what was beneficial for sufficiency of life, and to avoid the opposite. Those matters, therefore, which can affect the benefit and harm of all ought to be known and heard by all, in order that they may be able to attain the beneficial and to avoid the opposite. Such matters are the laws, as was assumed in the minor premise. For in the laws being rightly made consists a large part of the whole common sufficiency of men, while under bad law there arise unbearable slavery, oppression, and misery of the citizens, the final result of which is that the polity is destroyed.

8. Again, and this is an abbreviation and summary of the previous demonstrations: The authority to make laws belongs only to the whole body of the citizens, as we have said, or else it belongs to one or a few men. But it cannot belong to one man alone for the reasons given in Chapter XI and in the first demonstration adduced in the present chapter; for through ignorance or malice or both, this one man could make a bad law, looking more to his own private benefit than to that of the community, so that the law would be tyrannical. For the same reason, the authority to make laws cannot belong to a few; for they too could sin, as above, in making the law for the benefit of a certain few and not for the common benefit, as can be seen in oligarchies. The authority to make the laws belongs, therefore, to the whole body of citizens or to the weightier part thereof, for precisely the opposite reason. For since all the citizens must be measured by the law according to due proportion, and no one knowingly harms or wishes injustice to himself, it follows that all or most wish a law conducing to the common benefit of the citizens.

9. From these same demonstrations it can also be proved, merely by changing the minor term, that the

approval, interpretation, and suspension of the laws, and the other matters set forth in paragraph 3 of this chapter, pertain to the authority of the legislator alone. And the same must be thought of everything else which is established by election. For the authority to approve or disapprove rests with those who have the primary authority to elect, or with those to whom they have granted this authority of election. For otherwise, if the part could dissolve by its own authority what had been established by the whole, the part would be greater than the whole, or at least equal to it.

The method of coming together to make the laws will be described in the following chapter.

## Discourse II

Chapter IV: On the Canonic Scriptures, the Commands, Counsels, and Examples of Christ and of the Saints and Approved Doctors Who Expounded the Evangelic Law, Whereby It Is Clearly Demonstrated That the Roman or Any Other Bishop or Priest, or Clergyman, Can by Virtue of the Words of Scripture Claim or Ascribe to Himself No Coercive Rulership or Contentious Jurisdiction, Let Alone the Supreme Jurisdiction over Any Clergyman or Layman; and That, by Christ's Counsel and Example, They Ought to Refuse Such Rulership, Especially in Communities of the Faithful, If It Is Offered to Them or Bestowed on Them by Someone Having the Authority to Do So; and Again, That All Bishops, and Generally All Persons Now Called Clergymen, Must Be Subject to the Coercive Judgment or Rulership of Him Who Governs by the Authority of the Human Legislator, Especially Where This Legislator Is Christian

We now wish from the opposite side to adduce the truths of the holy Scripture in both its literal and its mystical sense, in accordance with the interpretations of the saints and the expositions of other approved doctors of the Christian faith, which explicitly command or counsel that neither the Roman bishop called pope, nor any other bishop or priest, or deacon, has or ought to have any rulership or coercive judgment or juris-

diction over any priest or non-priest, ruler, community, group, or individual of whatever condition; understanding by “coercive judgment” that which we said in Chapter II of this discourse to be the third sense of “judge” or “judgment.”

2. The more clearly to carry out this aim, we must not overlook that in this inquiry it is not asked what power and authority is or was had in this world by Christ, who was true God and true man, nor what or how much of this power he was able to bestow on St. Peter and the other apostles and their successors, the bishops or priests; for Christian believers have no doubts on these points. But we wish to and ought to inquire what power and authority, to be exercised in this world, Christ wanted to bestow and in fact (*de facto*) did bestow on them, and from what he excluded and prohibited them by counsel or command. For we are bound to believe that they had from Christ only such power and authority as we can prove to have been given to them through the words of Scripture, no other. For it is certain to all the Christian believers that Christ, who was true God and true man, was able to bestow, not only on the apostles but also on any other men, coercive authority or jurisdiction over all rulers or governments and over all the other individuals in this world; and even more perhaps, as for example the power to create things, to destroy or repair heaven and earth and the things therein, and even to be in complete command of angels; but these powers Christ neither bestowed nor determined to bestow on them. Hence Augustine, in the tenth sermon *On the Words of the Lord in Matthew*, wrote the following: “‘Learn of me’ not how to make a world, not how to create all visible and invisible things, nor how to do miracles in the world and revive the dead; but: ‘because I am meek and humble of heart.’”

3. Therefore for the present purpose it suffices to show, and I shall first show, that Christ himself came into the world not to dominate men, nor to judge them by judgment in the third sense, nor to wield temporal rule, but rather to be subject as regards the status of the present life; and moreover, that he wanted to and did exclude himself, his apostles and disciples, and their successors, the bishops or priests, from all such coercive authority or worldly rule, both by his example and by his words of counsel or command. I

shall also show that the leading apostles, as Christ’s true imitators, did this same thing and taught their successors to do likewise; and moreover, that both Christ and the apostles wanted to be and were continuously subject in property and in person to the coercive jurisdiction of secular rulers, and that they taught and commanded all others, to whom they preached or wrote the law of truth, to do likewise, under pain of eternal damnation. Then I shall write a chapter on the power or authority of the keys which Christ gave to the apostles and their successors in office, bishops and priests, so that it may be clear what is the nature, quality, and extent of such power, both of the Roman bishop and of the others. For ignorance on this point has hitherto been and still is the source of many questions and damnable controversies among the Christian faithful, as was mentioned in the first chapter of this discourse.

4. And so in pursuit of these aims we wish to show that Christ, in his purposes or intentions, words, and deeds, wished to exclude and did exclude himself and the apostles from every office of rulership, contentious jurisdiction, government, or coercive judgment in this world. This is first shown clearly beyond any doubt by the passage in the eighteenth chapter of the gospel of John. For when Christ was brought before Pontius Pilate, vicar of the Roman ruler in Judaea, and accused of having called himself king of the Jews, Pontius asked him whether he had said this, or whether he did call himself a king, and Christ’s reply included these words, among others: “My kingdom is not of this world,” that is, I have not come to reign by temporal rule or dominion, in the way in which worldly kings reign. And proof of this was given by Christ himself through an evident sign when he said: “If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would certainly fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews,” as if to argue as follows: If I had come into this world to reign by worldly or coercive rule, I would have ministers for this rule, namely, men to fight and to coerce transgressors, as the other kings have; but I do not have such ministers, as you can clearly see. Hence the interlinear gloss: “It is clear that no one defends him.” And this is what Christ reiterates: “But now my kingdom is not from hence,” that is, the kingdom about which I have come to teach.

5. Expounding these evangelic truths, the saints and doctors write as follows, and first St. Augustine:

If he had answered Pilate's question directly, he would have seemed to be answering not the Jews but only the Gentiles who thought this of him. But after answering Pilate, he answered the Jews and the Gentiles more opportunely and fitly, as if to say: Hear ye, Jews and Gentiles, I do not impede your rule in this world. What more do you want? Through faith approach ye the kingdom which is not of this world. For what is his kingdom but those who believe in him?

This, then, is the kingdom concerning which he came to teach and order, a kingdom that consists in the acts whereby the eternal kingdom is attained, that is, the acts of faith and the other theological virtues; not, however, by coercing anyone thereto, as will be made clear below. For when there are two coercive dominions in respect of the same multitude, and neither is subordinated to the other, they impede one another, as was shown in Chapter XVII of Discourse I. But Christ had not come to impede such dominion, as Augustine said. Hence on the passage in the same chapter of John: "Thy own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee up to me. What hast thou done?" Augustine wrote: "He sufficiently shows that the act is looked upon as a crime, as if to say: If you deny you are a king, what then have you done to be delivered up to me; as if it would not be strange if he who called himself king were delivered up to the judge to be punished." So, then, Augustine thought that it would be nothing strange if Christ had been punished, had he called himself secular king, especially before those who did not know he was God; and that he denied he would be a king of such a kingdom or with such authority, namely, to coerce transgressors of the law. Hence on the words in the same chapter of John: "Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?" Theophylact wrote: "Christ spoke to Pilate as if to say: If you say this on your own, show the signs of my rebellion, but if you have heard it from others, then make the ordinary inquiry." But if the opinion of our adversaries were correct, Christ should never have said what Theophylact states, namely, that

Pilate should make the ordinary inquiry about him; indeed, were they correct, he should rather have said that it did not pertain to Pilate to make this inquiry, inasmuch as he, Christ, of right (*de jure*) was not and did not wish to be subject to him in jurisdiction or coercive judgment.

6. Again, on the words, "my kingdom is not from hence," Chrysostom says: "He does not deprive the world of his providence and leadership, but he shows that his kingdom is not human or corruptible." But every kingdom that is coercive over anyone in this world is human and corruptible. Moreover, on the words in the same chapter of John: "Thou sayest that I am a king," Augustine wrote: "He spoke in this manner not because he feared to admit that he was king, but so that he might neither deny he was a king nor affirm that he was such a king whose kingdom is thought to be of this world. For he said, 'Thou sayest,' as if to say: You, a carnal man, speak carnally," that is, about carnal rule over contentious and carnal temporal acts, taking "temporal" in its third sense; for the Apostle called such acts "carnal" in the first epistle to the Corinthians, Chapter 3.

From the above it appears, therefore, that Christ came into the world to dispose not about carnal or temporal rule or coercive judgment, but about the spiritual or heavenly kingdom; for almost always it was only about this latter that he spoke and preached, as is plain from the gospel in both its literal and its mystical sense. And hence we most often read that he said: "Like is the kingdom of heaven," etc., but very rarely did he speak of the earthly kingdom, and if he did, he taught that it should be spurned. For he promised that in the heavenly kingdom he would give rewards and punishments according to the merits or demerits of the agents, but never did he promise to do such things in this world, but rather he does the contrary of what the rulers of this world do. For he most often afflicts or permits the affliction of the just and the doers of good, and thus he leads them to the reward of his kingdom. For "all that have pleased God passed through many tribulations," as it is written in the eighth chapter of Judith. But the rulers of this world, the judges of the worldly kingdom, do and ought to do the contrary, maintaining justice; for when they distribute rewards in this world to those who observe the laws, and punish-

ments to perpetrators of evil, they act rightly; whereas if they did the contrary they would sin against human and divine law.

7. Let us return to the principal question through what Christ showed by deed or example. For in the sixth chapter of John we read that “when Jesus therefore knew that they would come to take him by force and make him king, he fled again into the mountain, himself alone.” Whereon the interlinear gloss: “From this he descended to care for the multitude, teaching men to avoid the good fortunes of this world and to pray for strength to withstand them.” It is certain, therefore, that Christ avoided rulership, or else he would have taught us nothing by his example. This view is supported by the expositions of St. Augustine, who wrote that “the Christian faithful are his kingdom, which is now cultivated, now redeemed, by the blood of Christ. But his kingdom will be manifest when the clarity of his saints will be revealed after the judgment made by him. But the disciples and the crowds, believing in him, thought he had come to reign.” So, then, the saints never understood, by Christ’s kingdom in this world, temporal dominion or judgment over contentious acts and its execution by coercive power against transgressors of the laws in this world; but by his kingdom and governance in this world they understood, rather, the teaching of the faith, and governance in accordance with it toward the heavenly kingdom. This “kingdom,” says Augustine, will indeed be “manifest after his judgment” in the other world. He repeatedly states that to think Christ then reigned as the crowds thought was to “ravish him,” that is, to have a wrong assumption and opinion of him. Whereon Chrysostom also: “And the prophet,” that is, Christ, “was now among them, and they wanted to enthrone him as king,” that is, because he had fed them. “But Christ fled, teaching us to despise worldly honors.”

8. Moreover, the same is shown very evidently by Christ’s words and example in the following passage of the twelfth chapter of Luke: “And one of the multitude said to him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. But he,” that is, Christ, “said to him, Man, who hath appointed me judge or divider over you?” As if to say: I did not come to exercise this office, nor was I sent for this, that is, to settle

civil disputes through judgment; but this, however, is undoubtedly the most proper function of secular rulers or judges. Now this passage from the gospel contains and demonstrates our proposition much more clearly than do the glosses of the saints, because the latter assume that the literal meaning, such as we have said, is manifest, and have devoted themselves more to the allegorical or mystical meaning. Nevertheless, we shall now quote from the glosses for a stronger confirmation of our proposition, and so that we may not be accused of expounding Scripture rashly. These words of Christ, then, are expounded by St. Ambrose as follows: “Well does he who descended for the sake of the divine avoid the earthly, and does not deign to be judge over disputes and appraiser of wealth, being the judge of the living and the dead and the appraiser of their merits.” And a little below he adds: “Hence not undeservedly is this brother rebuffed, who wanted the dispenser of the heavenly to concern himself with the corruptible.” See, then, what Ambrose thinks about Christ’s office in this world; for he says that “well does he avoid the earthly,” that is, the judgment of contentious acts, “who descended for the sake of the divine,” that is, to teach and minister the spiritual; in this he designated Christ’s office and that of his successors, namely, to dispense the heavenly or spiritual; that spiritual of which Ambrose spoke in his gloss on the first epistle to the Corinthians, Chapter 9, which we quoted in Chapter II of this discourse under the third meaning of this word “spiritual.”

9. It now remains to show that not only did Christ himself refuse rulership or coercive judgment in this world, whereby he furnished an example for his apostles and disciples and their successors to do likewise, but also he taught by words and showed by example that all men, both priests and non-priests, should be subject in property and in person to the coercive judgment of the rulers of this world. By his word and example, then, Christ showed this first with respect to property, by what is written in the twenty-second chapter of Matthew. For when the Jews asked him: “Tell us therefore, what dost thou think? Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?” Christ, after looking at the coin and its inscription, replied: “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” Whereon the interlinear gloss

says, "that is, tribute and money." And on the words: "Whose image and inscription is this?" Ambrose wrote as follows: "Just as Caesar demanded the imprinting of his image, so too does God demand that the soul be stamped with the light of his countenance." Note, therefore, what it was that Christ came into the world to demand. Furthermore, Chrysostom writes as follows: "When you hear: 'Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's,' know that he means only those things which are not harmful to piety, for if they were, the tribute would be not to Caesar but to the devil." So, then, we ought to be subject to Caesar in all things, so long only as they are not contrary to piety, that is, to divine worship or commandment. Therefore, Christ wanted us to be subject in property to the secular ruler. This too was plainly the doctrine of St. Ambrose, based upon this doctrine of Christ, for in his epistle against Valentinian, entitled *To the People*, he wrote: "We pay to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. That the tribute is Caesar's is not denied."

10. The same is again shown from the seventeenth chapter of Matthew, where it is written as follows: "They that received the didrachmas came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay the didrachmas?" and then, a little below, is written what Christ said to Peter: "But that we may not scandalize them, go to the sea and cast in a hook, and that fish which shall first come up, take: and when thou hast opened its mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: take that, and give it to them for me and thee." Nor did the Lord say only, "Give it to them," but he said, "Give it to them for me and thee." And Jerome on this passage says: "Our Lord was in flesh and in spirit the son of a king, whether we consider him to have been generated from the seed of David or the word of the Almighty Father. Therefore, being the son of kings, he did not owe tribute." And below he adds: "Therefore, although he was exempt, yet he had to fulfill all the demands of justice, because he had assumed the humility of the flesh." Moreover, Origen on the words of Christ: "That we may not scandalize them," spoke more to the point and in greater conformity to the meaning of the evangelist, as follows: "It is to be understood," that is, from Christ's words, "that while men sometimes appear who through injustice seize our earthly goods, the kings of this earth

send men to exact from us what is theirs. And by his example the Lord prohibits the doing of any offense, even to such men, either so that they may no longer sin, or so that they may be saved. For the Son of God, who did no servile work, gave the tribute money, having the guise of a servant which he assumed for the sake of man."

How, then, is it possible, on the strength of the words of the evangelic Scripture, that the bishops and priests be exempt from this tribute, and from the jurisdiction of rulers generally, unless by the rulers' own gratuitous grant, when Christ and Peter, setting an example for others, paid such tribute? And although Christ, being of royal stock in flesh, was perhaps not obliged to do this, yet Peter, not being of royal stock, had no such reason to be exempt, just as he wanted none. But if Christ had thought it improper for his successors in the priestly office to pay tribute and for their temporal goods to be subject to the secular rulers, then without setting a bad example, that is, without subjecting the priesthood to the jurisdiction of secular rulers, he could have ordained otherwise and have made some arrangement about those tax collectors, such as removing from them the intention of asking for such tribute, or in some other appropriate way. But he did not think it proper to do so, rather he wanted to pay; and from among the apostles, as the one who was to pay with him the tribute, he chose Peter, despite the fact that Peter was to be the foremost teacher and pastor of the church, as will be said in Chapter XVI of this discourse, in order that by such an example none of the others would refuse to do likewise.

11. The passage of Scripture which we quoted above from the seventeenth chapter of Matthew is interpreted in the way we have said by St. Ambrose in the epistle entitled *On Handing Over the Basilica*, where he writes as follows: "He," that is, the emperor, "demands tribute, it is not denied. The fields of the church pay tribute." And a little further on he says, more to the point: "We pay to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. The tribute is Caesar's, it is not denied." Expressing more fully this which we have called the meaning of the above-quoted passage of Scripture, St. Bernard in an epistle to the archbishop of Sens wrote as follows: "This is what is done by these men," namely, those

who suggested that subjects rebel against their superiors. "But Christ ordered and acted otherwise. 'Render,' he said, 'to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.' What he spoke by word of mouth, he soon took care to carry out in deed. The institutor of Caesar did not hesitate to pay the tax to Caesar. For he thus gave you the example that you should do likewise. How, then, could he deny the reverence due to the priests of God, when he took care to show it even for the secular powers?"

And we must note what Bernard said, that Christ, in taking care to pay the tax to the secular powers, showed "due," and therefore not coerced, "reverence." For everyone owes such tax and tribute to the rulers, as we shall show in the following chapter from the words of the Apostle in the thirteenth chapter of the epistle to the Romans, and the glosses thereon of the saints and doctors; although perhaps not every tax is owed everywhere by everyone, such as the entry tax which was not owed by the inhabitants, although the custodians or collectors sometimes wrongly demanded and exacted it from simple inhabitants or natives, such as were the apostles. And therefore, in agreement with Origen, who I believed grasped the meaning of the evangelist on this point better than did Jerome, I say that it seemed customary and was perhaps commonly established in states, especially in Judaea, that entry taxes were not to be paid by inhabitants or natives, but only by aliens. And hence Christ said to Peter: "Of whom do the kings of the earth receive tribute?" etc., by "tribute" meaning that entry tax which the tax collectors were demanding. For Christ did not deny that the children of the earth, that is, natives, owe "tribute," taking the word as a common name for every tax; on the contrary, he later said of it, excepting no one: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's"; and this was also expressed by the Apostle in agreement with Christ, when he said, in the thirteenth chapter of the epistle to the Romans: "For this cause also you pay tribute," that is, to rulers, "for they are the ministers of God." By "children," therefore, Christ meant the children of kingdoms, that is, persons born or raised therein, and not the children of kings by blood; otherwise his words would not seem to have been pertinent, for very often he spoke in the plural both for himself

and for Peter, who was certainly not the child of such kings as those discussed by Jerome. Moreover, if Christ was of David's stock in flesh, so too were very many other Jews, although not perhaps Peter. Again, the tribute was not then being exacted by David or by anyone of his blood; why, therefore, should Christ have said, "The kings of the land . . . then the children are free," saying nothing about the heavenly king? But it is certain that neither Christ nor Peter was a child of Caesar, either in flesh or in spirit. Moreover, why should Christ have asked the above question? For everyone certainly knows that the children of kings by blood do not pay tribute to their parents. Jerome's exposition, therefore, does not seem to have been as much in agreement with Scripture as was Origen's. But the above words of Scripture show that Christ wanted to pay even undue tribute in certain places and at certain times, and to teach the Apostle and his successors to do likewise, rather than to fight over such things. For this was the justice of counsel and not of command which Christ, in the humility of the flesh which he had assumed, wanted to fulfill and to teach others to fulfill. And the Apostle, like Christ, also taught that this should be done. Hence, in the first epistle to the Corinthians, Chapter 6: "Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?" than to quarrel with one another, as he had said before.

12. Moreover, not only with respect to property did Christ show that he was subject to the coercive jurisdiction of the secular ruler, but also with respect to his own person, than which no greater jurisdiction could be had by the ruler over him or over anyone else, for which reason it is called "capital jurisdiction" (*merum imperium*) by the Roman legislator. That Christ was thus subject can be clearly shown from the twenty-seventh chapter of Matthew; for there it is written that Christ allowed himself to be seized and brought before Pilate, who was the vicar of the Roman emperor, and he suffered himself to be judged and given the extreme penalty by Pilate as judge with coercive power; nor did Christ protest against him as not being a judge, although he perhaps indicated that he was suffering an unjust punishment. But it is certain that he could have undergone such judgment and punishment at

the hands of priests, had he so desired, and had he deemed it improper for his successors to be subject to the secular rulers and to be judged by them.

But since this view is borne out at great length in the nineteenth chapter of John, I shall here adduce what is written there. When Christ had been brought before Pilate, vicar of Caesar, to be judged, and was accused of having called himself king of the Jews and son of God, he was asked by Pilate: "Whence art thou?" But having no reply from Jesus, Pilate spoke to him the following words, which are quite pertinent to our subject; here is the passage: "Pilate therefore saith to him, Speakest thou not to me? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and I have power to release thee? Jesus answered: Thou shouldst not have any power against me, unless it were given thee from above." See, then, Jesus did not deny that Pilate had the power to judge him and to execute his judgment against him; nor did he say: This does not pertain to you of right (*de jure*) but you do this only in fact (*de facto*). But Christ added that Pilate had this power "from above." How from above? Augustine answers: "Let us therefore learn what he," that is, Christ, "said, and what he taught the Apostle," that is, Paul, in the epistle to the Romans, Chapter 13. What, then, did Christ say? What did he teach the Apostle? "That there is no power," that is, authority of jurisdiction, "except from God," whatever be the case with respect to the act of him who badly uses the power. "And that he who from malice hands over an innocent man to the power to be killed, sins more than does the power itself if it kills the man from fear of another's greater power. But God had certainly given to him," that is, Pilate, "power in such manner that he was under the power of Caesar."

The coercive judicial power of Pilate over the person of Christ, therefore, was from God, as Christ openly avowed, and Augustine plainly showed, and Bernard clearly said in his epistle to the archbishop of Sens: "For," as he wrote, "Christ avows that the Roman ruler's power over him is ordained of heaven," speaking of Pilate's power and with reference to this passage of Scripture. If, then, the coercive judiciary power of Pilate over Christ was from God, how much more so over Christ's temporal or carnal goods, if he had possessed or owned any? And if over Christ's person and

temporal goods, how much more over the persons and temporal goods of all the apostles, and of their successors, all the bishops or priests?

Not only was this shown by Christ's words, but it was confirmed by the consummation of the deed. For the capital sentence was pronounced upon Christ by the same Pilate, sitting in the judgment seat, and by his authority that sentence was executed. Hence in the same chapter of John this passage is found: "Now when Pilate had heard these words, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat"; and a little below is added: "Then therefore he delivered him," that is, Jesus, "to them to be crucified." Such was the Apostle's view regarding Christ, when he said in the fourth chapter of the epistle to the Galatians: "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent his son, made of a woman, made under the law," and therefore also under the judge whose function it was to judge and command in accordance with the law, but who was not, however, a bishop or a priest.

13. Not only did Christ wish to exclude himself from secular rulership or coercive judicial power, but he also excluded it from his apostles, both among themselves and with respect to others. Hence in the twentieth chapter of Matthew and the twenty-second chapter of Luke this passage is found: "And there was also a strife among them," that is, the apostles, "which of them should seem to be the greater. And he," Christ, "said to them, The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them, and they that have power over them are called beneficent." (But in Matthew this clause is written as follows: "And they that are the greater exercise power upon them.") "But you not so: but he that is the greater among you, let him become as the younger; and he that is the leader, as he that serveth." "But whosoever will be the greater among you, let him be your minister. And he that will be first among you shall be your servant: even as the Son of man is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister," that is, to be a servant in the temporal realm, not to lord it or rule, for in spiritual ministry he was first, and not a servant among the apostles. Whereon Origen comments: "'You know that the princes of the Gentiles lord it over them,' that is, they are not content merely to rule their subjects, but try to exercise violent lordship over them,"

that is, by coercive force if necessary. “But those of you who are mine will not be so; for just as all carnal things are based upon necessity, but spiritual things upon the will, so too should the rulership of those who are spiritual rulers,” prelates, “be based upon love and not upon fear.” And Chrysostom writes, among other remarks, these pertinent words:

The rulers of the world exist in order to lord it over their subjects, to cast them into slavery and to despoil them [namely, if they deserve it] and to use them even unto death for their [that is, the rulers’] own advantage and glory. But the rulers [that is, prelates] of the church are appointed in order to serve their subjects and to minister to them whatever they have received from Christ, so that they neglect their own advantage and seek to benefit their subjects, and do not refuse to die for their salvation. To desire the leadership of the church is neither just nor useful. For what wise man is there who wants to subject himself of his own accord to such servitude and peril, as to be responsible for the whole church? Only he perhaps who does not fear the judgment of God and abuses his ecclesiastic leadership for secular purposes, so as to change it into secular leadership.

Why, then, do priests have to interfere with coercive secular judgments? For their duty is not to exercise temporal lordship, but rather to serve, by the example and command of Christ. Hence Jerome: “Finally he,” that is, Christ, “sets forth his own example, so that if they,” the apostles, “do not respect his words they may at least be ashamed of their deeds,” that is, wielding temporal lordship. Hence Origen on the words: “And to give his life a redemption for many,” wrote as follows:

The rulers of the church should therefore imitate Christ, who was approachable, and spoke to women, and placed his hands upon the children, and washed the feet of his disciples, so that they might do the same for their brethren. But we are such [he is speaking of the prelates of his day] that we seem to exceed even the worldly rulers in pride, either misunderstanding or de-

spising the commandment of Christ, and we demand fierce, powerful armies, just as do kings.

But since to do these things is to despise or be ignorant of Christ’s commandment, the prelates must first be warned about it, which is what we shall do in this treatise, by showing what authority belongs to them; then, if they disregard this, they must be compelled and forced by the secular rulers to correct their ways, lest they corrupt the morals of others. These, then, are the comments made on the passage in Matthew. On Luke, Basil writes: “It is fitting that those who preside should offer bodily service, following the example of the Lord who washed the feet of his disciples.”

Christ, then, said: “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them. But you,” that is, the apostles, “not so.” So Christ, king of kings and lord of lords, did not give them the power to exercise the secular judgments of rulers, nor coercive power over anyone, but he clearly prohibited this to them, when he said: “But you not so.” And the same must consequently be held with respect to all the successors of the apostles, the bishops or priests. This too is what St. Bernard clearly wrote to Eugene, *On Consideration*, Book II, Chapter IV, discussing the above words of Christ: “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them,” etc. For Bernard wrote, among other things:

What the apostle [Peter] has, this did he give, namely, the guardianship, as I have said, of the churches. But not lordship? Hear him. “Neither as lording it over the clergy,” he says, “but being made a pattern of the flock.” And lest you think he spoke only from humility, but not with truth, the voice of the Lord is in the gospel: “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them, and they that have power over them are called beneficent.” And he adds: “But you not so.” It is quite plain, then, that lordship is forbidden to the apostles. Go, then, if you dare, and usurp either the apostolate if you are a lord or lordship if you are an apostle. You are plainly forbidden to have both. If you wish to have both at once, you shall lose both. In any case, do not think you are excepted from the number of those about whom God complains in these words: “They have reigned,

but not by me: they have been princes, and I knew not.”

And so from the evangelic truths which we have adduced, and the interpretations of them made by the saints and other approved teachers, it should be clearly apparent to all that both in word and in deed Christ excluded and wished to exclude himself from all worldly rulership of governance, judgment, or coercive power, and that he wished to be subject to the secular rulers and powers in coercive jurisdiction.

### Chapter XXIII: On the Modes of Plenitude of Power, and the Manner and Order of Their Assumption by the Roman Bishop, Together with a General Statement of How He Has Used and Still Uses Them

The nature and extent of the priestly powers was determined in Chapters VI, VII, IX, and XI of this discourse; the equality or inequality of the priests in power and dignity was examined in Chapters XV and XVI of this discourse; and in the preceding chapter we discussed the proper and expedient priority or leadership of one bishop, church, or clerical college over all others, and the origin and development of this primacy, its secret and gradual transition into an improper form and species of priority, extending to so grave and unbearable an excess as the seizure of secular power, and the immoderate and completely intolerable desire of the Roman bishops for rulership, to which desire they have already given vocal expression.

2. In all the seizures of secular power and rulership which the Roman bishops have perpetrated in the past, and which, as everyone can plainly see, they are still striving with all their might, although wrongly, to perpetrate, no small role has been played in the past, and will be played in the future, by that sophistical line of argument whereby these bishops ascribe to themselves the title of “plenitude of power.” This sophistry is also the source of the misreasoning whereby they try to prove that all kings, rulers, and individuals are subject to them in coercive jurisdiction. Hence it will be well to examine this plenitude of power, first by separating or distinguishing its various modes; next by inquiring whether in any one or more of these modes

plenitude of power belongs to the Roman pontiff or to any other bishop; then, by showing which meaning of this title the Roman bishop first claimed for himself; and finally by examining how this was transferred into other forms (would that they were not frauds!) harmful to all rulers and subjects living a civil life, and what use the Roman pontiff has hitherto made, and still makes, and unless he is prevented will most likely continue to make, of these forms of the title of plenitude of power.

3. Inasmuch as plenitude of power seems to imply a certain universality, and it is our purpose to deal only with voluntary powers, we must differentiate plenitude of power into its various modes or senses, according to the different kinds of universal voluntary power.

[i] In one sense, then, plenitude of power is and can be truly understood to mean, in accordance with the significance or force of the words themselves, the unlimited power to perform every possible act and to make anything at will. This power seems to belong only to Christ from among all men. Whence in Matthew, last chapter, it is written: “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.”

[ii] In a second sense, more pertinently, plenitude of power can be understood to mean that whereby a man is allowed to perform any voluntary controlled act upon any other man and upon any external thing that is in men’s power or can be put to their use; or again, plenitude of power can be understood to mean that whereby a man is allowed to perform every act aforesaid, but not upon every other man or everything subject to human power; or, furthermore, plenitude of power can be understood as that whereby a man is allowed to perform not every act, but only a determinate kind or species of act, and yet following every impulse of the will, and upon every other man and everything subject to human power.

[iii] In a third sense, plenitude of power can be understood as the power of supreme coercive jurisdiction over all the governments, peoples, communities, groups, and individuals in the world; or again, over only some of these, but yet following every impulse of the will.

[iv] In a fourth sense, plenitude of power can be understood to mean the kind of power defined above, but over all clergymen only, and including the power to

appoint them all to church offices, to deprive them thereof or depose them, and to distribute ecclesiastic temporal goods or benefices.

[v] In a fifth sense, it can be understood as the power whereby priests can in every way bind and loose men from guilt and punishment, and excommunicate them, lay them under interdict, and reconcile them to the church, all of which was discussed in Chapters VI and VII of this discourse.

[vi] In a sixth sense, it can be understood to mean the power of the priests to lay their hands on all men so as to receive them into ecclesiastic orders, and the power to bestow or prohibit ecclesiastic sacraments, which was discussed in Chapters XVI and XVII of this discourse.

[vii] In a seventh sense, it can be understood as the power to interpret the meanings of Scripture, especially on matters which are necessary for salvation; and the power to distinguish the true meanings from the false, the sound from the unsound; and the power to regulate all church ritual, and to make a general coercive command ordering the observance of such regulations under penalty of anathematization.

[viii] In an eighth sense, and the last so far as our purposes are concerned, plenitude of power can be understood to mean a general pastoral cure of souls, extending to all the peoples and provinces in the world, which was discussed in Chapters IX and XXII of this discourse.

Plenitude of power might also be understood, in each of the senses given above, as that power which is limited by no law, so that non-plenary power would be that which is limited by the laws human or divine, under which right reason can also properly be placed. There are perhaps other modes and combinations of plenitude of power, but I think that we have enumerated all those which are pertinent for our purposes.

4. And so, having thus distinguished these modes of plenary power, I say that plenitude of power in the first two senses given above does not belong to the Roman bishop, to any other priest, or to anyone else except Christ or God. Because this fact is so evident, and is certified by divine and human wisdom and all moral science, I omit to discuss it, and also for the sake of brevity.

As to the third and fourth modes of plenary power, we have shown by demonstration in Chapter XV of

Discourse I, and more fully confirmed by the infallible testimony of the sacred Scripture in Chapters IV, V, and VII of this discourse, and most firmly corroborated in Chapters XV, XVI, XVII, and XXI of this discourse, that in no way at all, let alone with plenitude, do these powers belong by divine law to any priest or bishop, as such, over any clergyman or layman. But as to whether human law has granted such plenitude of power to any clergyman, bishop or priest, or to any layman, in any way in which such power is capable of being granted and of being revoked by the judgment of the human legislator for a reasonable cause, this must be ascertained from the human laws and the rescripts or privileges of the human legislator.

As to the fifth and sixth modes of plenary power, it has been shown in Chapters VI and VII of this discourse that the power to bind men to and loose them from guilt and punishment, and publicly to anathematize or excommunicate anyone, has not been granted to the priest absolutely or with plenitude, but rather this power has been so delimited by divine law that the priest cannot damn the innocent or loose the guilty with God. Also, the power of any bishop or priest publicly to excommunicate someone, and especially to lay a ruler or community under interdict, must properly be delimited by human enactment, as has been shown in Chapters VI, VII, and XXI of this discourse. Moreover, in Chapter XVII of this discourse it has been shown that the power to appoint ministers of the church by laying on hands, and to teach and preach, and to minister the ecclesiastic sacraments in communities of believers, does not belong to bishops or priests with plenitude, since the proper way to use these powers has been determined for bishops and priests by divine and human law.

As to the remaining modes of plenitude of power, the seventh and eighth, it has been shown in Chapters XX, XXI, and XXII of this discourse that they belong to no bishop or priest with plenitude, but in accordance with the determination of both divine and human law. Therefore, plenitude of power does not belong to the Roman bishop or to any other priest, as such, unless perhaps they mean by plenitude of power the priority or leadership which we have shown, in Chapter XXII of this discourse, to belong to the Roman bishop and his church over all other priests and churches, by authority of the faithful human legislator.

5. Now we must discuss what was the source of the Roman pontiff's original ascription to himself of the title of plenitude of power, and which mode of this title he first assumed, although such plenary power truly belongs to him in none of the senses given above. But this title seems to have been first assumed by the Roman pontiff in its eighth sense, and the original source wherefrom this title appeared to belong to him seems to have been the statement of Christ to St. Peter, in John, Chapter 21: "Feed my sheep"; and also the words in Matthew, Chapter 16, spoken to Peter alone: "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven"; also the passage in John, Chapter 18: "Put up thy sword into the sheath"; and again the reply of the disciples to Christ: "Behold, here are two swords." These passages are interpreted by some men as meaning that the whole body of sheep, that is, the Christian believers in the whole world, has been entrusted to Peter alone, and thus to every Roman pontiff as the particular vicar of St. Peter; and that the other apostles and the bishops who succeeded them were not entrusted with the guidance of all the sheep throughout the whole world, but to each of them was entrusted a particular determinate flock and province. St. Bernard, thus interpreting the words of Christ which we quoted above from John, Chapter 21, writes in his treatise addressed to the Roman pope Eugene *On Consideration*, Book II, as follows: "You are the one universal shepherd, not only of the sheep, but also of the shepherds. How do I prove this, you ask? By the word of the Lord. For to which, I will not say of the bishops, but even of the apostles, were all the sheep entrusted so absolutely and without differentiation? 'If you love me, Peter, feed my sheep.' Where no distinctions are made, no exceptions are made." And a little below, Bernard adds: "Hence, to each of the other apostles, who knew the sacrament, was allotted a particular flock. And thereupon James, 'who seemed to be a pillar' of the church, was content to serve only in Jerusalem, yielding to Peter the care of the whole." And then Bernard draws this pertinent inference: "According to your canons, therefore, the others have been called to take care of a part, while you have been called to plenitude of power." At the beginning, then, plenitude of power was understood to mean the general administration or care of all souls.

6. While such was the meaning of this title when the Roman bishop first assumed it for himself, although it was not in harmony with the true sense of Scripture, as will be sufficiently proved in Chapter XXVIII of this discourse, this meaning was presumptuously transformed by him into a different one, perhaps for the sake of gain or other advantage, or in order to usurp preeminence over others. By this transformation, the Roman bishop claimed and publicly declared that he alone, by his own pronouncement or by the imposition of any this-worldly satisfaction which he might care to demand, could completely absolve sinners and exempt them from the penalties which they would be obliged to pay or suffer for the status of the future world in accordance with the demerits of their sins.

7. Having thus assumed these powers under a guise of piety and mercy (piety, that they might seem to have care and solicitude for all men by the motivation of charity; mercy, that they might be thought to have the power and the desire to take pity upon all men), the Roman bishops, supported by the privileges and grants of rulers, and especially when the imperial seat was vacant, then extended this title: first they made it apply to the regulation of church ritual by making certain laws over clergymen, which from the beginning were called "decrees"; and then they persuaded laymen to accept certain regulations which were made in the form of requests or exhortations, imposing fasts and abstinences from certain foods at fixed periods, for the purpose of obtaining divine suffrage and mercy so that the epidemics and the atmospheric tempests which then plagued men might be averted. All this is to be seen from the history of St. Gregory and of certain other saints.

8. When the laymen in their devoutness voluntarily accepted and observed these regulations or requests, and such observance became an established custom, the Roman bishops began to proclaim them in the form of commands, and thus ventured, without leave by the human legislator, to frighten their transgressors with vocal threats of anathematization or excommunication—but all this under the guise of piety or divine worship.

9. But then the desire of the Roman bishops for domination grew even stronger. Seeing that devout believers, because of their foolishness and their igno-

rance of divine law, were frightened by such pronouncements, and that, from fear of eternal damnation, they believed they were obliged to obey the proclamations of the priests, the Roman bishops with their coterie of clergymen had the presumption to issue certain oligarchic edicts or ordinances concerning civil acts, declaring that they and the clerical order or office, wherein they also included any mere laymen they chose, were exempt from public burdens; and they promoted to the clerical order even married laymen, who readily joined in order to enjoy immunity from public burdens. In this way they have subjected to themselves a not inconsiderable part of the civil multitude, removing them from the power of the rulers. And again, desiring further to lessen the rulers' power, they have issued other edicts imposing the penalty of anathema upon those who have inflicted any personal injuries on men who were enrolled in a clerical group; similarly, they publicly defame them in their temples by excommunicating them, nonetheless demanding that such culprits be given the punishments fixed by human laws.

10. But here is a still more detestable act, truly execrable in the priestly office: in order to expand their jurisdiction and thereby to increase their shameful gains, in open contempt of God and to the patent harm of rulers, the Roman and other bishops excommunicate and exclude from the ecclesiastic sacraments laymen and clergymen who neglect or are unable to pay certain pecuniary debts which it had been their civil obligation to discharge at the end of a certain time. Christ and the holy apostles had brought these men into the church by means of many exhortations, hardships, and exertions, and finally through martyrdom and the spilling of their precious blood. For he who was "made all things to all men," in order that he might win over all men, did not act in the way these bishops do, but rather he wished that only grave crimes should cause sinners to be cut off from the company of the other believers, as we have shown from 1 Corinthians, Chapter 5, in Chapter VI of this discourse.

11. Not content even with these acts, but seeking the highest degree of secular power, contrary to the command or counsel of Christ and the apostles, these bishops have rushed forth to make laws distinct from those of the whole body of citizens, decreeing that all

clergymen are exempt from the civil laws and thus bringing on civil schism and a plurality of supreme governments, the incompatibility of which with the peace of men we demonstrated in Chapter XVII of Discourse I, adducing the sure testimony of experience. For this is the root and origin of the pestilence besetting the state of Italy; from it all scandals have germinated and grown, and so long as it continues, civil discord in Italy will never cease. For the Roman bishop fears that this power into which he has gradually stolen through sly deception, and which custom (or rather abuse) has enabled him to retain, will be revoked by the ruler (which revocation he would richly deserve because of the excesses he has committed); and so by all kinds of malicious devices he prevents the appointment and inauguration of the Roman ruler. And a certain bishop has finally gone so far in his audacity as to issue edicts proclaiming that the Roman ruler is bound to him by an "oath of fealty," as being subject to him in coercive jurisdiction. This assertion can be found plainly expressed, by anyone who reads the document entitled *On the Sentence and the Thing Judged*, which is in the seventh ridiculous and despicable part of the statements which they call "decretals."

12. Because Henry VII, of happy and divine memory, who occupies a position of preeminence among the rulers of all ages, places, and conditions, refused to bow down before such headstrong rashness, this most Christian emperor and man of all the virtues is called a transgressor "who pretends to have forgotten" his sworn oath, in a certain document called a "decretal," which is as false as it is rash, entitled *On Oaths*, although its title might more appropriately be: on the wrongful injuries and insults inflicted upon the divine emperor, and upon all his successors, relatives, and allies. For this prince is defamed as a perjurer by the so-called "founders of the canons," who strive to blacken his fair memory (if it could be stained by the words or writings of such calumniators).

13. Not daring to call these oligarchic ordinances "laws," the Roman bishops and their cardinals gave them the name "decretals" instead, although, like human legislators, they intend them to be binding on men for the status of the present world, with penalties to be inflicted for their transgression. From the very beginning they were afraid explicitly to express this in-

tention by using the word “laws,” for they feared resistance and correction by the human legislator, since by making such ordinances they committed the crime of treason against rulers and legislators; and so from the beginning they called these ordinances “canonic rights,” in order that by the coloring of the phrase (although it was used with impiety) they might better lead the faithful to regard such ordinances as valid and thus more fully to believe, respect, and obey them.

In this way, then, to conclude, the Roman bishops have gradually and secretly accomplished this transformation, and now openly claim for themselves plenitude of power in the last six senses, thereby committing very many monstrous crimes in the civil order against divine and human law and against the right judgment of every rational being. Of some of these crimes, although not all, we have made individual mention in the preceding chapter.

# John Buridan, c.1300–c.1358

“The influence of Buridan went far beyond what we can imagine.” Thus speaks Etienne Gilson, a most eminent historian—and one unsympathetic to Buridan’s philosophical orientation—in his *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*. His estimate is confirmed by the range of remaining manuscripts from Poland to Italy, by the assignment of Buridan’s works as texts at various times in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries from Scotland to Austria, and by printed editions from every century from the fifteenth through the eighteenth. Buridan clearly was one of the great teachers of the late medieval and early modern periods. As modern scholars explore this unusually popular body of work, they find physical theories with some claim to have influenced and even anticipated Galileo, and semantic investigations sufficiently precise and subtle to prove instructive for modern logicians. Thus Buridan is known today as much for his theory of impetus and his treatment of the paradoxes of self-reference as for the legendary example of the ass placed between two equally appetizing bundles of hay.

Buridan was a nominalist, and is sometimes dismissed simply as the leader of the Parisian Ockhamists. But this classification does not do him justice, especially if the skeptical and disintegrative potentialities of Ockham’s thought are emphasized. Buridan is firm in rejecting universals as extra-mental entities; but he is equally firm in rejecting skepticism, and he develops ingenious qualifications to blunt the force of the disintegrative argument from divine omnipotence that was cutting such a swath at the time. One might say that in his hands the nominalist methods were not put to a polemical use dominated by moral or religious

zeal but rather were used to clarify problems and eliminate controversy. “I believe that the controversy sprang from a lack of logic” is one of his characteristic remarks. This temperament may have something to do with the fact that he was one of the rare medieval philosophers who did not go on to theology, and also perhaps with the fact that he was a secular priest and thus not committed to the official doctrine of one of the religious orders. Indeed, it has been suggested that his attitude toward theology was akin to that of the so-called Averroists, and that he avoided trouble only by extreme circumspection. He once pointed out that like all arts masters he had taken a vow not to touch upon purely theological matters and to refute philosophical positions contrary to the faith. But he also said that it pertains to philosophy to consider what can be concluded beyond given premises, whether possible or impossible, and to do this for moral as well as natural terms. This suggests the rather independent attitude that as a logician he has the right to criticize the validity of arguments in whatever field they may be employed. But for the most part Buridan is more interested in detailed questions of logic, ethics, and what he calls “natural science” than in the large metaphysical issues most relevant to theology. In this close focus, in his scientific and semantic interests, and in his persistent resolution of issues by means of logical analysis, Buridan strikes many of his readers as an unusually “modern” philosopher; and it may be fitting to end this anthology with a figure whose modes of thought may be familiar to the student, thus emphasizing the continuity of the history of philosophy by helping to dispel the illusion of a great gap between

the later Middle Ages and the beginnings of modern philosophy in the seventeenth century.

As a widely known teacher, Buridan became the subject of legends—such as the one that has him dally with the queen of France and tossed into the Seine sewed up in a sack. Beyond these legends little is known of his life. He is first mentioned as rector of the University of Paris in 1328, which presumably indicates that he was born before 1300. His birthplace is traditionally put at Bethune, in the diocese of Arras. Sometime between 1316 and 1334, he journeyed to Avignon where he climbed Mont Ventoux considerably before Petrarch, for the significantly different purpose of making scientific observations. In 1340 he was rector again and seems to have been a prominent mediator in university disputes. In this role he signed a statute prohibiting the “dogmatizing” of Ockhamism, but it has been convincingly argued that the main burden of this statute is directed against Nicholas of Autrecourt rather than Ockham. Buridan accumulated benefices and by 1349 seems to have been prosperous. The last direct record of him comes from 1358. He appears to have left a considerable bequest, including a house, to the university. There is a story, rejected by most modern scholars, that he helped found the University of Vienna in 1366.

Buridan left the works one would expect of a master of arts of more than thirty years’ teaching experience. His logical works include the *Sum of Dialectic* (*Summulae de dialectica*), *Consequences* (*Consequentiae*), and an advanced work on logical problems, *Sophismata*. The bulk of his work consists of literal commentaries and collections of Questions on the works of Aristotle, including the *Physics*, *De caelo*, *De anima*, and *Metaphysics*, and Questions alone on the *Ethics*, *Politics*, and *Rhetoric*. There are various other works on minor or pseudo-Aristotelian treatises, and a few treatments of specific topics. Questions of chronology have little meaning for such a corpus, since he no doubt lectured on many of these topics concurrently. However, there is some evidence that the *Summulae* is among his earliest published works, and the *Questions on the Ethics*, among the latest.

The selections that follow show Buridan more as a philosopher than as a logician or natural scientist, and

they deal with topics that look back over much covered elsewhere in this anthology. In the first selection Buridan deals with skeptical implications of the argument from divine omnipotence and replies to Nicholas of Autrecourt. He concedes that induction is not a formally valid type of inference, but attempts to defend natural science from skepticism by elaborating a conception of degrees of evidence. He says here that he speaks only of “complexes,” or propositions, and that he has spoken of “simples” elsewhere. This must refer to Question 4, Book I of the *Questions on Aristotle’s Physics*, where he says that neither in the abstraction of concepts from perception nor in the formation of propositions from concepts is there any argument from one proposition to another. And only in such an argument is there any application of the principle of non-contradiction so devastatingly invoked by Nicholas. The second selection gives very straightforwardly the nominalist objections to the modified Platonism perpetuated by the doctrine of essences. It also gives an example of intramural nominalist controversy—in this case, whether scientific laws are categorical or hypothetical in logical force. He mentions here the rejection of a real distinction between essence and existence, which is taken up in the third selection. There he criticizes the other major interpretation of the distinction of essence from existence as a distinction of reason and presents his own rather peculiar solution of the problem. The fourth selection, on motion, contrasts with those by his supposed fellow nominalist, Ockham, and has led to controversy concerning the extent to which these medieval thinkers may have anticipated such later scientific concepts as inertia. In the final selection, concerning ethics, as well as in previous selections, one can find the crucial employment of the distinction between absolute and connotative reference. It is also interesting to notice that he pays considerable attention to Cicero and Seneca—which suggests that it is not only in climbing Mont Ventoux that he should be linked with Petrarch. Even though he associates “moral logic” with rhetoric and poetics, he presents here a prime example of the analysis of terms that the later nominalists proclaimed as one of their defining characteristics (see p. 605). Buridan seems here to go beyond his earlier view that

since natural science is based on relative rather than absolute evidence, it is not subject to arguments from divine omnipotence. He seems to say that because ethical terms are connotative, they are only applicable when the natural network of connotations is fulfilled. Arguments from divine omnipotence would thus seem to remove the very conditions for significant discourse

and hence are irrelevant to ethics. Here we have a nominalism that is the very reverse of skeptical and disintegrative.

In these selections, the infinitive-with-accusative construction (e.g., *rosam esse*) is translated by the expression "X-exists" (rose-exists) rather than by the awkward "for an X to exist."

## 65. Certainty and Truth

From *Questions on Aristotle's*  
"Metaphysics," Book 2

### Question 1

On the second book it is asked *whether comprehension of the truth of things is possible for us*. It is argued that it is not: . . .

Again, the senses can be deluded, as is commonly said, and sensible species can surely be conserved in the organs of sense with the sensible things absent, as it says in the *De somno et vigilia*. And then we judge about what does not exist as if it existed; hence we err through the senses. And the difficulty is greatly augmented in that we believe from the Faith that God can form the species of sensible things in our senses without the sensible things being present, and He can conserve them for a long time; and then we judge as if the sensible things were present. Further, since God can do this and even greater things, and you do not know whether He wishes to do this, you do not have certitude and evidence whether you are awake and there are men before you, or whether you are asleep. For in your sleep, God could produce sensible species as clear as, or rather, a hundred times clearer than could be produced by sensible objects. And you would then judge formally that there are sensible things before you, just as you now judge. Hence, since you know nothing about the will of God, you cannot be certain of anything.

Then on the side of the intellect, it is argued that our intellect depends on the senses in knowing. Hence if we do not have certitude through the senses, as was said, it follows that neither do we through the intellect. . . .

Again, regarding principles, it is argued that they are known through experiences, and experiences are

deceptive, as is obvious through Hippocrates. Second, it is proved that they are fallacious, for experiences only have the force of establishing a universal principle by way of induction from many cases; and a universal proposition never follows from an induction unless the induction includes every singular of that universal, which is impossible. Indeed, consider that whenever you have touched fire, you have sensed it to be hot, and so through experience you judge this fire that you have never touched to be hot, and so on. At length you judge every fire to be hot. Let us assume, therefore, that from the will of God, whenever you have sensed iron, you have sensed it to be hot. It is sure that by the same reasoning you would judge the iron that you see and that in fact is cold, to be hot, and all iron to be hot. And in that case there would be false judgments, however much you would then have as much experience of iron as you now in fact have of fire. . . .

Again, neither a conclusion nor an effect can be known through a cause, nor a cause through an effect, since a cause is neither essentially nor virtually contained in its effect; nor is an effect known through a cause, since causes are less well known to us. And if you say that they are more known by nature, that is not to the point, since we are inquiring about our learning and not about nature's. Moreover, it seems that we can never have evidence of one thing through another, since there is no evidence except according to a reduction to the first principle, which is founded in contradiction. But we can never have a contradiction concerning two diverse things. Let us posit that they are A and B. It will be no contradiction for A to exist and B not to exist, or for A to be white and B not to be white. Hence there never will be an evident series concluding that B exists from the fact that A exists, and so for the others. . . .

The opposite is argued through Aristotle, who says it is in one way easy and in another, hard; and so he assumes it to be possible. And the Commentator argues thus: that for which we have a natural desire is possible, since nothing founded in nature is vain. As

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Translated for this volume by James J. Walsh from Joannes Buridanus, *In Metaphysicam Aristotelis Quaestiones*, Paris, 1588. Reprinted by Minerva G.M.B.H., Frankfurt a.M., 1964.

Aristotle says in the beginning, we have a natural desire to know, and consequently, the certain comprehension of the truth is possible for us.

To clarify the question, the terms should be expounded in some way. More is said concerning in-complex truth in other books. But for the present, I only intend the complex truth by which a proposition is called true, and no care should be taken for vocal or written propositions, since they are only called true or false because of true or false mental propositions that they represent, just as urine is called healthy or ill because it signifies the health or illness of the animal.

And further, I presume for the present that the truth of a mental proposition is not anything other than the very mental proposition that is true, however much these names “true” and “truth” connote that this kind of mental proposition is conformed to the things signified, in the way mentioned elsewhere. Then we must see what we should understand by the comprehension of truth, and it is already obvious according to what was said that the comprehension of truth is nothing other than the comprehension of a true proposition. Now the comprehension of truth can be taken in three ways. In one, the comprehension of truth is nothing other than the formation or the existence of a proposition in the mind, and again, the comprehension of a true proposition is nothing other than that very true proposition itself. It is obvious that this is possible, and hence it should be concluded that the comprehension of truth is possible in us. In another way, the comprehension of truth is the same as the understanding of a true proposition as an object of the mind, such that we know the proposition just as we comprehend or know a stone. And this surely is still possible for us, since we understand both terms and propositions, and hence we know how to say a great deal about them. And so it should also be concluded that in this way the comprehension of truth is possible for us.

In yet another way, the comprehension of truth is taken for the adhesion or assent through which we assent or adhere to a true proposition, and this surely is still possible for us. Indeed, we can assent not only to true propositions, we also often assent to false ones, as when we are stubborn in false opinions. So it should

be concluded that in this way still the comprehension of truth is possible for us. But the arguments made raise a doubt as to whether such assent to the truth is possible for us with certitude. And then we should note that in order to assent to the truth with certitude, firmness of truth and firmness of assent are required. Now firmness of truth is possible. In one way, absolutely, as in this proposition, “God exists,” since in no case can it be falsified; but also there is firmness of truth on the assumption of the common course of nature. And thus it would be a firm truth that the heaven is moved, that fire is hot, and so for other propositions and conclusions of natural science, notwithstanding that God could make fire be cold, and so the proposition “All fire is hot” would be falsified. In this way, then, it is obvious that firmness of truth is possible. But firmness of assent is that by which we adhere and assent to a proposition without fear for the opposite. And this can exist in three ways: in one, from the will or natural appetite, and so Christians assent and adhere firmly to the articles of the Catholic faith, and some heretics also adhere to their false opinions so much that they wish to die before denying them, and such is the experience of the saints who wished to die for the Christian faith. It is manifest that in this way, firmness of assent is possible for us.

In a second way, firmness comes to us from natural appearances by way of certain arguments, and in this way it is still possible that we can firmly assent, not only to the truth, but also to falsehood; for many having false opinions believe that they have firm knowledge, as Aristotle says in Book 7 of the *Ethics*, where he says that many adhere to what they opine no less than to what they know. In the third way, firmness of assent comes from evidence, and the evidence of a proposition is termed absolute or unqualified when from the nature of sense or intellect, a man is disposed without necessity to assent to the proposition, so that he cannot dissent. And according to Aristotle, this kind of evidence belongs to the first complex principle, as is obvious in Book 4 of this work. But in another way, evidence is taken as relative (*secundum quid*) or on the assumption, as was previously mentioned, that it would be observed among beings in the common course of nature; and so it would be evidence for us

that all fire is hot and that the heaven is moved, even though the contrary is possible through the power of God. And this kind of evidence suffices for the principles and conclusions of natural science. Indeed, there is still another weaker evidence that suffices for acting morally well, for when all circumstances have been regarded and inquired into which a man can inquire into with diligence in judging according to the exigencies of this kind of circumstance, the judgment will be evident with evidence sufficient for acting morally well, even though the judgment should be false because of the invincible ignorance of some circumstance. For instance, it is possible that a magistrate should act well and meritoriously in hanging a saintly man because through witnesses and other documents in accordance with the law it appeared sufficiently to him that the good man was guilty of homicide. Hence the conclusion is reached that certain wicked ones wishing to destroy the natural and moral sciences proclaim, that in many of the principles and conclusions of those sciences there is no simple evidence, but they can be falsified through cases supernaturally possible. But absolute evidence is not required for such sciences; the previously mentioned relative evidence or evidence on assumption suffices. Hence Aristotle well says in Book 2 of this work that mathematical exactitude is not to be sought in all sciences. And since it has appeared that in all the aforesaid ways firmness of truth and firmness of assent are possible to us, the question should be answered that the comprehension of truth with certitude is possible for us. . . .

To the next objection, I say that if the senses are naturally deluded, the intellect has the ability to inquire when a man is and when he is not deluded, and it has the ability to correct illusory judgments. But if God operates simply miraculously, it should be concluded

that He can; and so this is only evidence on an assumption, and as was previously said, it is sufficient for natural science.

To the next, I concede that the intellect in its simple and first apprehension depends on sense. But afterwards, the intellect can compound and divide, and discern beyond sense. . . .

To the next, which says that experience is not valid for concluding to a universal principle, I say that this is not an inference by grace of the form (of inference); but the intellect, predisposed by its natural inclination to truth, assents to a universal principle through experiences. And it can be conceded that such experiences are not valid for absolute evidence; but they are valid for the evidence that suffices for natural science. And with this there are also other principles from the inclusion or repugnance of terms or propositions, which do not require experiences, just as is the case for the first principle. Indeed, it is evidently true that a chimera exists or does not exist, that a goat-stag exists or does not exist, and that man is an animal, if the signification of the terms is known.

To the next, I say that effects are known through their cause by an adequate ground (*propter quid*), since the cause is better known to us as the reason why (*propter quid*) the effect exists. Likewise, a cause is known through the effect as to the fact that it exists (*quia est*), since the effect bears a certain similarity to the cause; hence it can represent the cause, together with the natural inclination of the intellect to truth. When it is also said that one thing cannot be conclusively known through another, I deny this, and I say that there are an almost infinite number of principles known self-evidently or known through sense or through experience or through the inclusion of terms, without requiring to be demonstrated through the first principle.

## 66. Knowledge

From *Questions On the Ten Books of the "Nicomachean Ethics" of Aristotle, Book 6*

Question 6. Is everything knowable eternal?

It is argued that the answer is no: . . .

Again, natural science is had of hailstorms and rains, of plants and animals, and universally of what can be generated and destroyed; and these are not eternal. Therefore, etc.

The opposite is apparent through Aristotle in Book 6 of this work, where he says:

Now what scientific knowledge is, if we are to speak exactly and not follow mere similarities, is plain from what follows. We all suppose that what we know is not even capable of being otherwise; of things capable of being otherwise we do not know, when they have passed outside our observation, whether they exist or not. Therefore the object of scientific knowledge is of necessity. Therefore it is eternal: for things that are of necessity in the unqualified sense are all eternal; and things that are eternal are ungenerated and imperishable.<sup>1</sup>

The same is had from Book I of the *Posterior Analytics*.

Again, "Science is a firm habit and always determined to the truth, and cannot be turned into error nor removed from the intellect, except perhaps through oblivion." But these would not be true unless the knowable were eternal, since, as is said in the *Categories*, when the knowable is removed, so is the sci-

ence. For if the knowable does not exist, neither does the science.

It should be noted that "the knowable" can be taken in two ways. In one way, for the demonstrable conclusion. In the other, for the thing or things signified by the terms of the conclusion, or for that or those things for which the terms of the conclusion supposit. For this conclusion, "Every man is capable of laughter," is knowable since it is demonstrable, and in knowing it we have science about all men and everything capable of laughter.

If the question is asked concerning the knowable as a demonstrable conclusion, then again a distinction should be made, since a conclusion is taken with regard to its reality or with regard to its truth. If with regard to its reality, then no conclusion ought to be called eternal or necessary, any more than asses or horses or colors or tastes, since we form conclusions afresh in writing as well as in voice or in the mind. And so they begin and cease to exist, just as do colors and tastes. But if a conclusion is taken with regard to its truth, then it can still be understood in two ways that a conclusion is eternal or necessary, or that it cannot possibly be otherwise. In one way, because the conclusion is always true, speaking categorically and unqualifiedly; and in this way a conclusion is no more necessary or eternal with regard to its truth than with regard to its reality. For whenever it does not exist, it is not true. In another way, speaking hypothetically, because every such conclusion is true whenever it is propounded, so that it cannot be false. And propositions are called necessary and perpetual and impossible to be otherwise in this way or in an equipollent sense—and not in the other way, whether they are written propositions or uttered, or formed in our mind.

It is in this way, then, that everything knowable (speaking of scientific knowledge proper) should be said to be eternal, necessary, impossible to be otherwise, ungenerated, and incorruptible. And this can be clarified by the difference between science, sense, and opinion. Although sense and science judge of the truth and falsity of different propositions, they differ

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Translated for this volume by James J. Walsh from *Johannis Buridani Quaestiones in decem libros ethicorum Aristotelis ad Nicomachum*, Oxford, 1637. The text has been checked against the Paris edition of 1513 and *Ms. Bibl. Nat. Lat.* 16128.

1. 1139b18–25, Ross translation.

further in that sense only judges with certitude of what is sensibly present. But through the habit of science the intellect judges truly in the absence as well as in the presence of what is intelligible. Science differs from opinion because, although both can judge in the absence of intelligible things, opinion does not judge with certainty, but with fear, and science judges with certainty and without fear. And all this ought to be assumed from the meaning of the terms “science” and “opinion.” But surely it is impossible to judge of the truth of a proposition with certainty in the absence of the things signified by the terms. If a proposition can be false, then a knowable proposition cannot be false. And this is the argument Aristotle intended in the text, “if we are to speak exactly and not follow similarities, we all suppose that what we know is not capable of being otherwise; of things capable of being otherwise, we do not know, when they have passed beyond our observation,” etc. And all this seems self-evident to me.

But if we speak of the knowable as the thing or things signified by the terms of the conclusion, or that for which the terms of the conclusion supposit, there are diverse opinions on the proposed question.

One distinguishes between existence (*esse*) and essence, for we see that names and definitions signify the essences of things, which do not signify the things to exist nor not to exist, as is had in the *Posterior Analytics*. This opinion, however, maintains that things persist eternally according to their essences or quiddities, although they do not persist according to existence; for essences, they say, remain the same, and receive existence through generation and lose it through destruction.

They say, therefore, that there can be science of things in two ways. In one way, with regard to essence. In another way, with regard to existence (*esse*). That is, since a definition expresses essence only, and neither existence nor non-existence, things are known only with regard to essence; and so it is for demonstrative science, where an attribute intrinsically following upon the essence of a thing is demonstrated of its subject through its definition. But a demonstration answering the question, does it exist? makes the thing known with regard to existence. They say, therefore, that as things are knowable, so they are eternal. For if they were knowable with regard to existence, it would

be necessary that they be eternal in existence; but if they are knowable as to essence only, it is not necessary that they be eternal as to existence.

I do not like this opinion. First, because I do not think that existence and essence are distinguished in the thing itself outside the soul, which you should look up in Book 4 of the *Metaphysics*.

Second, because it seems to me dangerous in the faith to say that anything is eternal that is not God.

Third, because it seems to me to imply the contradiction that essence persists and existence does not, since what persists, is, and has existence.

Fourth, because if persisting essence takes on existence and non-existence, no other matter need be posited, since that essence will be capable of undergoing change and bearing the limits of change while itself remaining the same.

Fifth, because it seems to me that this name “essence” is only the abstract of this concrete “existence” (*esse*), just as “entity” is of this concrete “being” (*ens*), and “quiddity” of this concrete “what” (*quid*), and “reality” of this concrete “thing” (*res*); and hence, just as a thing is called white by whiteness, so it is called existence by essence and being by entity and what by quiddity. And many other difficulties can be adduced against this opinion; but I pass over them, since our present concern is not primarily speculative. . . .

Others distinguish between universal and singular, not only according to concept, but also in external reality, to such an extent that they say that a universal as an external thing is neither generable nor destructible. Singulars, however, they say, are generable and destructible. Therefore, they say, science is not of singulars, but universals; and so they say that the knowable is perpetual, although the singulars of them are destructible.

But I think that a universal does not exist outside the soul distinct from singulars, which for the present I assume from Book 7 of the *Metaphysics*; and even if it were distinct, it could persist with all its singulars destroyed only if it were a separated Idea. And yet it is acknowledged, as it seems to me, that if all roses were now destroyed, so that they did not exist in any way, or if there were no thunders nor comets nor eclipses of the sun and moon, still, the doctor would not on that account lose the science that he has of the rose, nor

the astronomer, the science that he has of eclipses, nor you, the science that you have from the book *Meteorology* about thunders and comets. Indeed, you could teach me the science of the *Meteorology* just as if there were a thousand thunders. Hence even if such a distinction between universal and singular in reality were conceded, it would be worth nothing for the proposed position.

Others, however, holding universals to be distinct from singulars only through the operation of the soul (as Aristotle and the Commentator, I think, seem to wish), say that the knowable as external reality ought to be eternal in that there always is some thing or things for which the terms of the knowable conclusion supposit. For this it is not required that any of those knowable things is itself perpetual, but it suffices that individuals of the same species perpetually succeed one another through generation, so that to take horses and asses as examples, it is never true to say “There is no horse; there is no ass.”

But I still do not think that is necessary, since, as was said, a doctor need not lose his science of roses if there are no roses, etc. I therefore believe that the knowable things for which the terms of a knowable conclusion supposit do not have to be perpetual in any of the aforesaid ways. But it is possible for them to be capable of destruction out of existence altogether, because it is sometimes true to say that no such thing exists; for instance, I believe that I have true science about thunders and comets even though just now there are no thunders and comets. Nor is this strange, for if it has been demonstrated to me that every triangle has three angles, etc., I do not through this demonstration have scientific knowledge only of the triangles that now exist, but also of past and future ones. Otherwise, it would follow that if a new triangle were made tomorrow, I would not then know that every triangle has three angles, unless a demonstration containing that new triangle were repeated to me, which is absurd. Therefore, I say that through the book *Meteorology* I have scientific knowledge of all thunders, past, present, and future, if any are present; and if none are present, then I have scientific knowledge of past and future ones alone.

But then a doubt occurs, since scientific knowledge requires conformity or adequation to knowable things, since science requires the conclusion to be

true. And truth consists in the adequation of the intellect to the thing known. But when the things known do not exist, there is no adequation to them, for nothing is adequated to what is nothing. Therefore, science cannot be had of things that do not exist.

Some reply to this that science can be had of things existing or not existing, or even impossible, with regard to propositions of perpetual truth that can be formed about them, namely, propositions that cannot be false. Thus they say first that concerning things that do not and even cannot exist, propositions of perpetual truth can be formed that are categorical but negative, as that a vacuum is nothing. And so I have negative science about a vacuum. For the adequation required for the truth of a proposition is preserved in this case, since it is not required that some thing exist that is equal to the intellect, but only that as the intellect understands the thing to exist or not, so in reality it exists or not. Therefore, that understanding is true by which I understand a vacuum not to exist, since it is so in reality that a vacuum does not exist.

Second, they say that concerning things that do not exist, propositions of perpetual truth can be formed that are affirmative, but hypothetical, such as “If a vacuum exists, a vacuum is a place,” or “If thunder exists, it is sound in the clouds.” And in this way affirmative science can be had of non-entities, for in the said propositions adequation of the intellect to the thing sufficient for truth is preserved. For the intellect does not understand that a vacuum is a place, but that if it existed, it would be a place; and so even though in reality a vacuum is not a place, still, if there were a vacuum in reality, it would be a place.

Third, they say that concerning things that do not exist, no true categorical affirmative proposition can be formed, at least of inherence and with a verb of present tense. For if there were no thunder, this would not be true: “Thunder is sound in the clouds,” since what does not exist is not sound in the clouds, and since according to the rules of logic, an affirmative proposition is true in that the terms supposit for the same. But what does not exist is the same as nothing. Hence they say that in the science of such things we ought not understand the propositions categorically, even though they are propounded categorically for the sake of brevity. Rather, we ought to understand them hypothetically. For instance, in the book *Meteorology*

I should not understand the proposition “Thunder is sound in the clouds” categorically, since thus it would not be knowable, but rather, hypothetically, namely that if thunder exists, or whenever it does, it is sound in the clouds.

And I myself believe that such a great controversy between those holding these opinions sprang from a lack of logic. For it seems to me that names that signify things and do not consignify any determinate time, signify present, past, and future things indifferently. Nor is that strange, since I can understand a thing without co-understanding a determinate time. So I can form a composite in the intellect from the concept of a thing and the concept of a time, past or future as well as present, such as in saying “Caesar was; Caesar will be.” And so it is not unsuitable for a term sometimes to supposit for past and future things just as for present ones.

For according to the older logicians, the supposition of a common term is twofold, namely, natural and accidental. It is accidental when the term only supposits for its supposita at some determinate time; it is natural when it supposits for all its supposita indifferently, whether they are present, past, or future. And the demonstrative sciences use this latter supposition. Otherwise, we would not have scientific knowledge of future triangles through a demonstration showing that a triangle has three angles, etc., which is unsuitable, as was said. And Aristotle in Book I of the *Posterior Analytics* gives the understanding of the general proposition, where the terms have the said natural supposition, that animal is predicated of every man; for if it is true to call something man, it is true to call it animal. And if one is true, so is the other, that is to say, this proposition “Man is an animal” or “Every man is an animal,” is general according to natural supposition if whatever it is true to call man and whenever it is true to call it man, then it is also true to call it animal. And this is true in that way, “Thunder is sound in the clouds,” referring singulars to singulars.

But someone will immediately say, Master, you coincide with the preceding opinion, since you assign a hypothetical sense to knowable propositions; and the others conceded that such hypothetical propositions are necessary and knowable. I reply that perhaps this opinion and that other one intend the same science, but they differ logically in the manner of speaking. For the former does not concede in these matters that the

proposition is categorical, with a categorical sense. But I concede it to be true according to natural supposition. Nor is it necessary that a proposition be hypothetical merely because its sense is clarified through a hypothetical. For in this way, every proposition would be hypothetical. For the sense of this proposition, “A man runs,” can be explicated through this hypothetical, “Socrates runs, or Plato runs, and so for each”; and the sense of this one, “Every man runs,” can be explicated through this one, “Socrates runs and Plato runs and so for each.” Nor are the two arguments they adduced conclusive.

To the first, when it is said, what is not [does not exist] is not sound in the clouds; there is no thunder; therefore, no thunder is sound in the clouds, it should be replied that if there is no thunder, the major and minor premises are true, since the terms in both are drawn to accidental supposition, that is, for present supposita alone, by virtue of this verb “is” occurring without a further predicate. Hence the conclusion is well inferred, understanding the terms in it to have accidental supposition just as in the premises, but not understanding that they have natural supposition. Rather, that would be the fallacy of figure of speech from the variation in supposition.

To the next, when it is said that in a true affirmative proposition, the terms ought to supposit for the same, I concede, for the same present, past, or future. For it is true in this way to say that some animal was in Noah’s ark, since then there was some animal being in Noah’s ark. And I would yet concede with the aforesaid opinion that if the terms of a proposition, or one of them, should supposit for nothing, neither present, past, nor future, the affirmative categorical proposition could not be true. For instance, this is false: “Vacuum is place not filled with body,” if “vacuum” is taken significatively. For then the terms cannot supposit for the same, since one or the other or both supposit for nothing. But that proposition should be conceded if “vacuum” is taken according to material supposition, and the proposition is predicative of a definition giving the nominal meaning of the defined term. For this is the difference between nominal and real definition, that a real definition is verified of a defined term having personal supposition, as in “Man is the rational animal.” But a nominal definition is verified of a defined term having material supposition. In this sense, vacuum is

place not filled with body, that is, this name “vacuum” signifies “place not filled with body.” And it is a true affirmative categorical proposition and each of the terms supposits for a true being. But all this, since it does not belong to ethics, is said in abbreviated form here, and you can find it more explicitly investigated, if you wish, in my writing on the *Summulae*, where there is a treatise on suppositions. . . .

To the opposing arguments: To the first it should be said that if “eternal” is taken in the most proper way, nothing is eternal except God alone; hence we do not say that everything knowable is eternal in that way, but rather in the aforesaid way.

The other opposing arguments go their ways, and the Question is finished.

## 67. Essence and Existence

From *Questions on Aristotle's*  
“*Metaphysics*,” Book 4

### Question 8

The eighth question is *whether existence (esse) and essence are the same in anything whatsoever*, and by “essence” I understand the thing itself. And so the question is whether rose is the same as rose-exists (*rosam esse*), man and man-exists, and so for others. First it is argued that the answer is no: For I understand rose or thunder even when I do not understand that a rose or thunder exists. Hence they are not the same. Likewise, I have scientific knowledge about rose and thunder and still am ignorant as to whether a rose exists or whether thunder exists. Therefore, if this is known by me and that is not, it follows that this is not the same as that.

Again, names and definitions signify essences and they neither signify existence nor non-existence, as is had from Book 1 of the *Posterior Analytics*; and this is because they signify without a time. Therefore, existence is not the same as essence. Again, the question, *if something is*, differs greatly from the question, *what it is*, as is clear from Book 2 of the *Posterior Analytics*;

and they differ only because of the difference between existence and essence. For the question, *what something is*, is asked concerning the essence or quiddity; but the question, *if something is*, is asked concerning the existence of the thing. Again, the same does not happen to itself, but existence happens to a thing, for it happens to a rose that it exists or does not, since a rose can exist and it can also not exist. Therefore, rose and rose-exists are not the same. . . .

The Commentator says that the opposite is the intention of Aristotle in this Book 4, where he says that man is the same as being man (*ens homo*) and one man. By “being man,” Aristotle seems to understand the existence of man (*esse hominis*).

And you ought to know that the older philosophers, including Saint Thomas, held that in every being other than God there was a composition from essence and existence. And so it would be necessary to distinguish essence from existence in some way, because only God was unqualifiedly simple. Others also said that existence and non-existence are in some way diverse accidents happening to essence, so that essence takes on existence through generation and non-existence through destruction. And so some held that the essences of things are perpetual, however much these diverse modes are successively attributed to them, as we sometimes say that rose exists and sometimes that it does not. And thus they conceded that quidditative predications are true even though the things do not exist. And perhaps that cardinal was of this opinion who sent the bull proclaiming that this proposition, “Man

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is animal," or even this proposition, "Horse is animal" is necessary because of the inclusion of terms and would be true even though God should annihilate all horses. But on Book 2 of the *Posterior Analytics*, Grosseteste seems to be of the contrary opinion. For he says that everything predicated of God predicates or signifies the simple essence of God, but to be predicated of something different from God predicates or signifies the dependence of that upon God. And this dependence, he says, does not make for multiplicity in the dependent thing. And I say with Grosseteste and the Commentator that in each and every thing, the thing and the thing-exists are the same, so that essence does not differ from existence, nor existence from essence. This can be proved thus: rose can only be said to differ from its existence by saying that existence is a mode added to it and acquired by it through generation, and by saying that the quiddity or essence is eternal, just as that opinion maintains. But all this is impossible; therefore, etc. And the major seems manifest, since the arguments made in the beginning seem to argue for this and nothing else, and it is because of these that men were moved to posit the difference between existence and essence. But the minor is proved, namely, that it is impossible to speak thus. First, because it would follow that we do not need to posit prime matter, for that is only posited because it is necessary that the subject undergoing transmutation persists through both limits of the change; and that subject would be posited to be the quiddity or essence, and then [the limits would be] existence and non-existence. Hence it would not be necessary to posit matter. Second, it would follow that humanity would persist in a corpse, and it is by humanity that the thing is man, just as it is by whiteness that a thing is white. Hence the corpse would still be man, which is to utter a falsehood. And the first consequence is proved, since humanity can be nothing other than the essence or quiddity of man that persists when the man is destroyed, and it either persists separately or it persists in the matter of the corpse. If it persists in the matter of the corpse, the proposed position is had. If it is said that it persists separate from the matter, this will be to posit the Ideas of Plato, which Aristotle later disproved. And this argument that I have made about man and humanity can be made about horse and horseness or stone and its quiddity, and so for others.

Arguing from them, one is led into the difficulty more obviously than in arguing from man, since we concede that the human soul is separable, and perhaps some would say that it is the quiddity of man. And again, such added modes of being would be posited altogether in vain, since if existence is a mode added to the thing, for instance, to rose, and acquired through substantial generation, at once all the same difficulties that arose concerning rose come back concerning that existence. For just as rose can exist and can not exist, so that mode can exist and can not exist; and I could understand that mode without understanding it to exist, and perhaps I would understand it not to exist. For I could understand that to exist or to have existed which Aristotle was when he was; and yet whatever he was, I understand this, that he does not exist. Hence it appears that such an added mode does nothing toward preserving definitions. . . .

But because of the solutions of the arguments, it seems that what should be said about that question is that essence and existence, or rose and rose-exists, differ according to reason. For this name "rose" is imposed from a different concept than this name or expression "rose-exists." Therefore, when it is said that I understand rose when I do not understand it to exist, I concede that; but it does not follow that therefore, rose-exists differs from rose. But it only follows that there are diverse concepts or reasons according to which a rose is understood through this name "rose" and through this expression "rose-exists." But you argue thus through an expository syllogism: I know this rose; this rose is that one that exists; therefore, I know the rose exists. I concede the entire syllogism. And so I concede that it is impossible, given that that rose is the rose you know, and which you also know does not exist. But this does not follow: the rose that exists, I know; therefore, I know the rose exists. Whence you should know that since we cognize, know, or understand a thing according to determinate and distinct reasons, we also can know the thing according to one reason and be ignorant of it according to another. Hence the terms following the verbs "understand" or "know" connote the reasons according to which they are imposed, and they do not thus connote them if they precede those verbs. Because of this you have it from Aristotle that this consequence is not valid: I know Choricus; Choricus is coming; therefore, I

know the one coming. For to know the one coming is to know that thing according to the concept according to which it is called the one coming. Now, however much I know Choricus, still, even though he is the one coming, it does not follow that I know him under that concept according to which I know he is coming. But this would be a good expository syllogism: I know Choricus; Choricus is coming; therefore, I know the one coming. So, therefore, in the proposed position: I know a rose, and yet I do not know that the rose exists. But the rose that exists, I know. In the same way to the other argument: I concede that I may have scientific knowledge concerning rose or thunder through many conclusions and yet I may not have scientific knowledge of rose or thunder with regard to the conclusion that rose exists or that thunder exists.

Again, to the next argument, it can be conceded concerning signification just as concerning knowledge, because of the fact that names are imposed for signifying by means of the understandings of things. Hence this name “rose” signifies rose, and it does not signify that a rose exists; and still it signifies this rose and the rose that exists. And so concerning definition.

Again, I say that rose-exists does not happen to (*accidit*) rose; but this predicate “exists” indeed accrues to (*accidit*) this subject “rose.” Hence the proposition “Rose exists” is contingent and can be false; but so it is also concerning the proposition “Rose is rose,” for it would be false if no rose existed. And when it is also said that rose can not exist, I concede that also rose can not be rose. So that when rose does not exist, its quiddity does not exist, nor does it persist.

To the next, I say that God is most of all simple, since He is not composed of parts, nor can He be composed of anything.

### Question 9

The ninth question is, Do existence (*esse*) and essence differ according to reason?

It is argued that they do not, since it follows that if they differ according to reason, then they differ. And it further follows that if they differ, then existence is not essence, which is against what was said in the other question.

Again, existence and essence do not differ according to the thing, as was decided in the preceding ques-

tion; therefore, they do not differ according to reason, or else that reason would be in vain or false. For those reasons in the intellect are fictitious and false that do not have a correspondence on the part of the thing. Now, it is unsuitable to say that this kind of reason is fictitious. Therefore, it well follows that they do not differ according to reason.

Again, just as the same thing is named by these two names “existence” and “essence,” so I am called by two names, namely, “John” and “Buridan.” Let us assume, then, that I have two different asses; we should never because of this say that John and Buridan are different according to ass or asses. By the same reasoning, therefore, even though that thing that is existence and essence should have two different reasons in the intellect, it should never because of this be said that existence and essence differ according to reason or reasons. . . .

Yet Aristotle and the Commentator conclude the opposite, nor can the arguments that were made in the other two questions be refuted: if existence and essence, and also being and one, were altogether the same, according to the thing as well as according to reason, those names would be synonymous. First, you can assume some logical conclusions, namely, that existence and essence differ or are not the same, namely, my existence and your essence. Then also, existence and essence are the same and do not differ, namely, my existence and my essence. For those conclusions are indefinite and subcontraries and hence they can well be true simultaneously. Then also I say that existence does not differ from essence, indeed, no existence differs from essence and no essence differs from existence. For every existence is essence and every essence is existence, as is obvious through the preceding Question. Yet it is conceded that existence differs from essence and essence differs from existence. And we have all this through logic because of the negation implicit in this verb “differs.” But I come more to the point and I posit the conclusion that my existence and my essence do not differ according to reason, nor does a stone and its existence, since it is impossible that the same should differ from itself, whether according to the thing or reason or anything else. Hence if my essence is the same as my existence, it is impossible that my essence should differ from my existence, whether according to reason or anything else. Thus I also say that these words “my essence” and “my exis-

tence" do not differ according to reason, since they differ from themselves formally and intrinsically, and setting such reasons aside altogether, they still differ. And hence it appears that such "reasons" of Aristotle and others are improper, in that if they were true, they would not be true according to the proper sense of the terms, but rather according to some other sense. I speak of such propositions as "Being and one differ according to reason," or "Existence and essence," or "Man and animal," and so for others. But such propositions as this are still conceded: "Existence and essence are the same according to the thing, but they differ according to reason." They are conceded, that is, for the senses that I use. For when I say that existence and essence are the same according to the thing, the sense is that existence and essence are the same thing. But when I say that existence and essence differ according to reason, the sense is that the reason by which this name "existence" is imposed is different from that by which this name "essence" is imposed, or else those names would be altogether synonymous. And so should it be said for all other similar propositions. But then there remains a great difficulty, since that difference of reasons should not be called fictitious. Whence such a difference of reasons comes originally from on the side of the thing, and on this there were quite diverse opinions. One opinion was that existence is attributed to a thing according to a singular concept, and essence, according to a universal concept; hence, because sense senses singularly, it judges everything that it senses to exist. And because generations are also of singulars, we therefore say that generation terminates in the existence of the thing. But this opinion is not valid, since this name "Socrates," which is a singular name imposed for signifying according to a singular concept, signifies an essence and does not signify that the thing exists. Again, it is certain that "existence" signifies not only singularly, but also universally. I judge universally and I know that every being exists, that every man exists; therefore, etc. Hence even though demonstrative science does not descend to singular concepts, Aristotle raises the question if it is demonstratively knowable. Another opinion, held by Grosseteste, is that all things are called existence and essence because of their dependence on God. For according as things were in God in the exemplary mode, so they are called essences and quiddities; and

from that it was said that quiddities are eternal, since God is the exemplar of all things from eternity. But Grosseteste did not understand that it is absolutely true that quiddities or the essence of things are eternal, but he intended that their reflections in the divine intellect are from eternity, and such reflections are not the simple divine essence. But insofar as things depend on God as bringing them about or conserving them, they are said to exist. Hence no one says that things exist from eternity, since God was not bringing things about from eternity. But that opinion still does not suffice for the proposed position, since just as stone and stone-exists differ according to reason in the previously mentioned sense, so one must say that in a similar sense, God and God-exists differ; and the remarks of Grosseteste do not bear on such a difference. Again, we form those different reasons, namely understanding rose and rose-exists, without understanding anything about God—indeed, children know roses to exist without perceiving any connection between them and God. And so Aristotle and the grammarians seem to solve the difficulty straight off, for names signify without a time. Since things are conceived without any given time being understood, they can also be understood without a determinate time in which they exist or co-exist being understood. And so verbs are imposed for signifying with a time. Therefore, the same thing is called essence according to a simple concept, that is, as absolute, without the connotation of a time, and it is said to exist or to have existed or to be going to exist according to a concept connoting a time. But without doubt, even though these remarks seem at first glance to be clear, they contain a great difficulty. First of all, it is true that even if there were no time, God would still exist and would know Himself to exist. Indeed, we posit through divine power that, with everything quiet and without movement, God conserves us without any movement; the visual image would remain in my eye according to which I see you, and I would still judge you to exist, and it would also be true that you exist. Hence it does not seem to be because of the apprehension of time that this judgment is proper, even if the proposition "John exists" connotes the present time and would not be true if there were no present time because it is falsified from the lack of what is connoted. For since "white" supposits for man and connotes whiteness,

take whiteness away and “Man is white” would be false. And yet it is sure that if there were no time, as there would be none if everything were conserved in utter quiet, it would be no less true that things exist. And so it seems difficult (to find) where the concept by which we judge a thing to exist comes from. And what seems to me should be said is that things are perceived and judged to exist according as they are perceived as in the prospect of the knower.

Whence you do not judge anything to exist unless it is in the prospect of sense; and so if Socrates recedes from the prospect of sense, then you do not know whether it is true that he exists. Yet we judge something to exist by reasoning, but this is by referring to things that were in the prospect of sense. For instance, even though the stars are not in the prospect of the knower, the intellect judges them to exist, because we have seen stars in the prospect of sense, and by reasoning, the intellect concludes that they are indestructible. Again, the intellect judges by arguments that everything moved is moved by a mover, and the first moved thing by the first mover. Some motion appears to us in the prospect of sense, and hence we judge that a mover exists, and indeed, that the first mover exists. And so, turning again to the aforesaid opinion of Aristotle and the grammarians, it seems to me that this verb “to exist” connotes presence, which “essence” or this name “stone” does not connote, even

though it does not connote a temporal and successive present, but rather, presence just as you are present to me. Even if all things were motionless, it would still be true that “to be going to exist” or “to have existed” necessarily connote succession; and if succession had never appeared because all things that now are had been perpetually without motion or succession, I believe that we never would have judged anything to have existed or to be going to exist. But we would have judged those things to exist that appeared to us in the prospect of sense. And perhaps we do apply the connotation of such a presence to the presence of time in order to distinguish between “to exist,” “to be going to exist,” and “to have existed,” however much in order to know that a thing exists, it is not required that a time be co-understood, but only that the thing be apprehended through the mode of presentness in the prospect of the knower—even though there is no succession nor is it imagined. But when through the intellect we detach the concept of a thing from the concept of such presence and from the concept of the connection of the thing to such presence, then we impose those names “essence,” “man,” “stone” for signifying the thing. And all the arguments that were made are conceded according to these remarks, since it has been conceded that according to the proper sense of the terms, my existence and my essence do not differ according to reason, etc.

## 68. Motion

From *Questions on the Eight Books of the “Physics” of Aristotle, Book 3*

Question 7. Seventh, it is asked whether local motion is a thing distinct from place and from that which is locally moved.

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Translated for this volume by James J. Walsh from *Johannis Buridani subtilissime questiones super octo physicorum libros Aristotelis*, Paris, 1509. Reprinted by Minerva G.M.B.H., Frankfurt a.M., 1964.

It is argued that it is not, since if everything can be explained without a thing in addition to what is moved and place, those additions would be pointless and hence improper. But everything can be explained without such addition. The proof is that there would be local motion if the moved thing should continuously be in one and another part of space even though nothing else were held to exist. And succession and priority and posteriority would be explained by means of different parts of space that have order and position according to location with any addition set aside.

Again, it follows that God could separate and separately conserve motion without what is moved and without place, or rather, even with these annihilated. This seems improper, for then there would be motion and nothing to be moved. . . .

The opposed argument is that neither the being of place nor of the moved thing consists in becoming. Rather, each of these is completely achieved (*perfecte factum*), unless it is eternal; but the being of local motion or of time consists in becoming, one [part] after another. Therefore the being of motion is not the being of place nor of that which is moved. Thus it is not of the essence of any of these nor, in consequence, is it any of them. The consequence is valid because the same is the being of man, the essence of man, and man, as ought to be manifest from *Metaphysics*, Book 4.

Again, the moved thing as well as place is by nature permanent; motion is not, but is by nature successive. . . .

The older thinkers did not doubt concerning this question, but with one voice they conceded that local motion is a thing other than the thing moved and place. But now the later moderns claim on account of the aforesaid arguments that motion is not a thing other than the thing moved. To look into this one must assume the meaning of the word (*quid nominis*), since without this one cannot argue, as is clear from *Metaphysics*, Book 4, the *Posterior Analytics*, and the *De sensu*, where it is said that the meaning of the word is the beginning of instruction. Thus everyone concedes that local motion is some kind of change (*mutatio*) and that to be moved is to be changed. But in Book 5, Aristotle says, and it is self-evident, that to change is first to be disposed one way and later, another, or at least it is at first to be disposed in some way and later not to be disposed in that way or vice versa. Whence Aristotle says that since every change is from some condition into some condition; the name at the least makes clear that something is different, and what is at first is manifestly different later. And the Commentator says this is manifest in itself, since while a thing is in the same disposition, then there will be no change (*transmutatio*).

Therefore I lay down some conclusions. The first conclusion is that it would be possible for the outermost sphere to be moved by a motion in which it is

moved without place. This is proved so: If the outermost sphere and the others were through the divine power a single continuum, so that the entire world were one continuous body, then there would be no place, according to Aristotle. For there would be no surface of a containing body touching what is divided from it. Whence Aristotle holds that the world as a whole does not have a place, except by reason of parts of which one places another because it contains and is divided from it and touches it. For this is required in order that there should be place. And so if God should annihilate all bodies outside of this stone, this stone would no longer be in a place. Yet given this case, it would still be possible that God should move the entire world at one time in a circle. I prove this through a certain condemned Parisian article that says that God cannot move the entire world at the same time with rectilinear motion (page 544, no. 66). This is in error. And there is no reason why He should move it more with rectangular motion than with circular motion. Again, just as in the daily motion He moves all the heavenly spheres at the same time with the outermost sphere, so He could revolve all the others, that is, the lower ones, at the same time and by Himself. He can revolve everything at the same time now, while they are discontinuous from one another; he could do this no less if they were to be made a single continuum. Therefore He could move the entire world even if there were no place. . . .

The fourth conclusion is that the motion of the outermost sphere is neither that sphere nor its place. Manifestly it is not its place, since it is possible that it should be moved even though it did not have a place, as was said above, and since if it has a place, still that is divided from it. But its motion is not divided from it, since it is said that the sphere itself is disposed one way and another intrinsically. But neither is that motion the very sphere, since as was said in the Question on the distinction of figure from what has the figure, it is not imaginable nor possible that something should be disposed otherwise than it was disposed before, unless this is with regard to something extrinsic or unless this is because of something existing that did not exist before, or ceasing to exist that existed before. But the two first ways are not pertinent to the motion of the outermost sphere, as is obvious from the remarks. Therefore the third way has to be conceded. And still, so far as

the substance of the outermost sphere is concerned, there is nothing that would not have existence before, and nothing existed before which does not do so now. Therefore, what did not exist before or vice versa is other than the sphere, and this is only motion or its parts. Therefore, etc. . . .

The fifth conclusion is that the motion of the outermost sphere is distinct from that sphere and its place, if it should have a place, since it does exist and it is neither the one nor the other. . . .

And then, in reply to the arguments: To the first, it is manifest that without an added disposition it cannot be explained how the outermost sphere should be intrinsically disposed one way and another as it is so disposed.

To the second I say that I do not deem it more improper that there should be motion and nothing moved or changed, than that there should be whiteness and nothing should be white. Neither is possible naturally and each is possible supernaturally. Concerning this it is said that for local motion to exist and place not to exist implies a contradiction. I say that the motion of the outermost sphere or a ship in a river is not called local because according to that, place has to be altered, but because according to the common course of nature, everything that is moved by that motion in fact changes local residence or situation with respect to something else. And all that motion which we call local could be not local, since no place nor location would be changed with respect to any other thing. But then we could not perceive it. It is not, therefore, called local because place is necessary for it, but because it could not be perceived unless a change of the place or location of the thing with respect to another were apparent. Whence those on ships in the sea moved at the same time with equal speed do not perceive that they are in motion.

## Book 8

**Question 12.** Twelfth, it is asked whether a projectile, after leaving the hand of the projector, is moved by the air, or by what it is moved.

It is argued that it is not moved by the air, for the air seems rather to resist, since it has to be divided. Again,

if you say that in the beginning the projector moves the projectile and the adjacent air with it, and that the moved air moves the projectile further to whatever the distance, the doubt returns as to what that air is moved by after the projector ceases to move it. There is just as much difficulty about this as about the thrown stone. . . .

In my judgment this question is indeed difficult, for it seems to me that Aristotle did not resolve it. He treats of two opinions. The first is called “antiperistasis.” According to it the projectile leaves swiftly the place in which it was, and nature, not allowing a vacuum, swiftly sends air after it to refill that place. The air thus swiftly moved, upon reaching the projectile, propels it further, and this goes on continuously for some distance. Aristotle rejects this conclusion, saying in Book 8 of this work that antiperistasis makes everything both move and be moved at once. This seems to be understood thus: if some way other than the said antiperistasis is not put forward, it requires that all bodies follow after the projectile, and even the heavens. For just as the projectile leaves the place in which it was, the body behind has to follow; and thus that following body leaves the place in which it was, and so it is required again that another body again follow, and so on always . . . it seems to me that this proposal is worth nothing, because of several observations.

The first concerns a wheel or a millstone, which is moved for a long time and does not leave a place, so that air is not required to follow in order to refill the place from which it left. Therefore, a wheel and millstone are moved in such a way that it cannot be said to be according to that fashion.

The second observation is that if a lance having a rear as sharply pointed as the front were projected, it would be moved no less than if its rear were not sharp; yet the following air could not push the sharp end since it would be easily divided by the sharpness.

The third observation is of a ship in a river drawn swiftly even against the current. It cannot be said to pause, but with the pulling stopped it is moved for a long time, yet a sailor up top does not feel air pushing from behind, but he only feels air resisting from the front. . . .

The other opinion, which Aristotle seems to approve, is that along with the projectile the projector

moves the adjacent air, and that swiftly moved air has the power of moving the projectile. It should not be understood that the same air is moved from the place of the projector up to the place at which the projectile stops, but that the air joined to the projector is moved by the projector, and that moved air moves another next to it and that other, up to a certain distance. Thus the first air moves the projectile to the second air and the second to the third and so on. Hence Aristotle says that there is not one mover, but many, one after another. Hence he also says that the motion is not continuous, but consequently of contiguous beings.

But it seems to me without a doubt that this fashion is just as impossible as the preceding one, for using this way it could not be said by what the wheel or millstone is turned once the hand is removed. If you should keep the adjacent air away from the millstone with a cloth all around it, the millstone would not stop moving because of that, but it would be moved for a long time. Therefore it is not moved by that air. . . .

Besides, however rapidly air is moved, it is easily divisible; thus it is not obvious how it would sustain a stone weighing a thousand pounds projected from a sling or mechanical device.

Again, you could move the adjacent air just as swiftly or more swiftly with your hand if you held nothing in the hand than if you held a stone in your hand that you wished to hurl. Therefore, if that air from the speed of its motion were of such a force that it could move that stone swiftly, it would seem that if I should push the air against you equally swiftly, that air ought to push you forcefully and truly noticeably, and we do not perceive this.

Again it would follow that you would project a feather farther than a stone, the less heavy farther than the more heavy, with the sizes and shapes the same; and this is observed to be false. The consequence is manifest, since the moved air should sustain or bear or move a feather more easily than a stone, the lighter more easily than the heavier. . . .

And so it seems to me that what should be said is that the mover in moving what is moved impresses upon it a certain impetus or force that moves the moved thing in the direction the mover moved it, whether up or down, laterally or in a circle. And the

more swiftly the mover moves the moved thing, the stronger the impetus it impresses on it. The stone is moved by that impetus after the projector ceases to move, but the impetus is continuously diminished by the resisting air and by the gravity of the stone inclining it against the direction the impetus inherently moves it. Hence the motion of that stone is made continuously slower, and finally the impetus is so diminished or corrupted that the gravity of the stone prevails over it and moves the stone down to its natural place. This manner seems to me to be maintained in that the others do not seem true: also all the appearances are consonant with this way.

For if someone should ask how it is that I hurl a stone farther than a feather, and a hand-sized iron ball farther than the same sized wooden one, I reply that the reception of all natural forms and dispositions is in matter and by reason of the matter. Hence, however much more there is of matter, by that much more can a body take on the impetus more intensely. Now other things being equal, there is more prime matter in a dense and heavy body than in a rarified and light one; hence the dense and heavy one receives more from that impetus and more intensely, just as iron can receive more from heat than wood or water of the same quantity. A feather, however, receives such an impetus so sparsely that such an impetus is at once corrupted by the resisting air. And so even if a light piece of wood and a heavy piece of iron of the same size and shape should be moved equally swiftly by the projector, the iron would be moved farther because the impetus would be impressed more intensely in it. This impetus would not be corrupted as rapidly as would a less intense impetus. This is also the reason why it is more difficult to stop a swiftly moved large millstone than a small one, since, other things being equal, there is more impetus in the large one. . . . And from this also appears the cause whereby the natural downward motion of a heavy thing is continuously speeded up, for at first only gravity moved it and so it moved more slowly; but in moving, impetus is impressed on that heavy thing, which impetus then moves it along with the gravity. Hence the motion becomes swift, and the swifter it goes, the more intense the impetus becomes. Hence the movement appears to become continuously swifter. . . . Also, since it does

not appear from the Bible that there are intelligences to whom it pertains to move the heavenly bodies, one could say that there seems no need to posit such intelligences. For it might be said that when God created the world He moved each of the celestial orbs however He pleased; and in moving them He impressed an impetus that moves them without His moving them any more, except in the way of the general influence, just as He concurs in co-acting in everything that is done. For He rested on the seventh day from every work He had achieved by committing to others their reciprocal actions and passions. And those impetuses impressed upon the heavenly bodies were not afterwards lessened or corrupted because there was no inclination of the heavenly bodies to other motions nor was there the resistance that would corrupt or restrain that impetus. But I do not assert this; I request the theologians to teach me how these things can be done.

Still, there are serious difficulties concerning this opinion. . . .

The second difficulty is: what kind of a thing is that impetus? Is it the motion itself or a different thing? And if it is a different thing, is it a purely successive thing like motion, or is it a thing of a permanent nature? Whatever the answer, the arguments to the contrary seem difficult.

To the second problem, which is indeed difficult, it seems to me one should respond by laying down three conclusions.

The first is that that impetus is not the local motion by which the projectile is moved, since the impetus moves the projectile and the mover makes the motion; therefore the impetus makes the motion, and the same thing does not make itself. Therefore, etc.

Again, since every motion is from a mover present and existing at the same time as that which is moved, if that impetus were the motion, one would have to assign a different mover for that motion, and the chief

difficulty would recur. Hence nothing would be gained by positing such an impetus.

But some would quibble, saying that the prior part of the motion that accomplishes the projection makes the next following part of the motion, and that the next, and so on up till the entire motion stops. But this is not probable, since what is making something ought to exist while that is done, but the prior part of the motion does not exist while the later does, as was remarked elsewhere. Thus the prior does not exist when the posterior does, and the obvious consequence from this, which is remarked elsewhere, is that for motion to be is nothing other than for it to become or be corrupted; whence motion does not exist when it is achieved, but when it is taking place.

The second conclusion is that impetus is not a purely successive thing, since such a thing is motion, and the definition of motion pertains to it, as was said elsewhere. And it was just now said that impetus is not local motion.

Again, since a purely successive thing is continuously made and corrupted, it requires a continuous maker, and no maker of that impetus could be given that would exist at the same time as it does.

The third conclusion is that impetus is a thing of permanent nature distinct from the local motion by which the projectile is moved. This is apparent from the aforesaid two conclusions and the preceding ones. And it is likely that impetus is a quality whose nature it is to move the body on which it is impressed, just as a quality is said to be impressed on iron by a magnet that moves iron to the magnet. It is also likely that just as that quality is impressed on what is moved by the mover along with the motion, so is it lessened or corrupted or impeded by resistance or contrary inclination just as the motion is. . . .

This is what I have to say on this question, and I would rejoice if anyone should find a more probable way with it.

## 69. Happiness

From *Questions on the Ten Books of the "Nicomachean Ethics" of Aristotle, Book 10*

**Question 4.** In what act or acts does human happiness consist, and the Question can be asked in this form: Does human happiness consist in one act or several?

It is argued that it consists in one, through the saying of Aristotle that "the good of man," that is, happiness, "is the operation of the soul according to the most perfect virtue," but if there should be several virtues, "according to the best and most perfect." And he does not say "operations" nor "according to virtues," but "operation" and "according to one virtue, and the most perfect and best." And he says the same and clarifies it further in Book 10. . . .

Again, in Book 1 of this work, Aristotle calls that the end of human operations which we wish for its own sake, and the others for the sake of it. He calls it the good and best, and by that he intends human happiness. And this cannot belong to two human acts, since just as there is no disorder in the greater world, so should there be none in man. But there would be disorder in human acts if two were best and equally final, of which neither was ordered to the other as its end. Therefore, such an end must be single, and that is happiness.

Again, intellectual contemplation is one act, not two, and Aristotle concludes in Book 10 of this work that happiness is a certain kind of intellectual contemplation.

Again, Seneca does not cease proclaiming in his letters that the good of man is single, and that it is reason most perfect. Hence he concludes in his letter *Inimicitias* that "only perfect reason makes man

blessed." Therefore, happiness seems to consist in one act and not in several.

Those believing otherwise argue for the opposite with many authorities and arguments, since all who say that human happiness consists in one act, say that this is either the act of intellect, such as the vision or contemplation of God, or in the act of will, such as the love of God, whichever of these is most perfect and best. But it is claimed that this is impossible, whichever of these you pick. For if you say that the most noble act possible to man is the clear vision of God, then I prove that this is not essentially happiness. For with that act remaining and other acts removed, as they can be removed by the absolute power of God—as some theologians say—a man would then still be happy, just as a stone would be white if whiteness remained in it and all other accidents were removed. And yet the consequent is false, namely, that a man clearly seeing God without delight and without the love of God would be called happy. For it is necessary that happiness be most delightful, as Aristotle says. Therefore, etc. And this is more strongly confirmed, since those theologians say that together with the clear vision of God, God could form intense sadness in the soul of Socrates, without delight, and hatred of God without love. Would he then be happy? I myself surely would not want such happiness.

Again, every human power can be made happy whose work is inherently to attain the beatifying object, which is God. But the vegetative power is not such, nor the sensitive, nor the power of local movement, nor the sensitive appetites. It is intellect and will that are such, for through the intellect we know God and through the will we love Him. Therefore, man can truly be made happy according to both those powers. Therefore, if he were made happy according to only one of those powers, he would not be perfectly nor totally happy, but partially and in a diminished way, which should not be said, since nothing diminished should be attributed to happiness. Thus in Book 10 of this work it says that nothing imperfect belongs to that of which happiness consists. Happiness, there-

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Translated for this volume by James J. Walsh from *Johannis Buridani Quaestiones in decem libros ethicorum Aristotelis ad Nicomachum*, Oxford, 1637. The text has been checked against the Paris edition of 1513 and Ms. *Bibl. Nat. Lat.* 16128.

fore, must be a whole made up essentially of the acts of those powers, and must not be the single act of only one of them.

Again, happiness is held to consist in the perfect contemplation of God; but the perfect contemplation of God does not exist without love, nor does love without knowledge. But happiness is constituted from both.

Again, happiness is held to be that which is most self-sufficient; and no single act is most self-sufficient.

Again, Aristotle says in Book I of this work, "He who is extremely ugly or ignoble, or alone and without issue," and how would this be true if happiness consisted in one act, whether of the intellect or the will? . . .

Indeed, other moralists and Holy Scriptures seem to intend the same. For many authoritative texts of Holy Scripture seem clearly to say that human happiness consists in the vision of God, and many others, in the love of God. This is because it is not merely in this or in that, but in both conjointly and together.

And the same seems to come from Seneca and Cicero, for they say now one thing and now the other. For instance, in his paradoxes, Cicero says, "All the wise are free, and the foolish, servile." And so freedom and thus happiness are attributed to wisdom, which is an intellectual habit. But in the same book he also asks, "For what is freedom?" And he replies, "It is the power of living as you wish." And so he attributes happiness to the will.

Likewise, Seneca often attributes happiness to wisdom and right reason, and also often to the moral virtues. For instance, in the letter *Agnosco*, he says of the highest good, and hence of happiness, that "it cannot exist unless the science of things obtains, and art, through which divine as well as human things are known." And in the letter that begins *Epistola tua*, he says, "those goods are true that reason holds for genuine," etc. Moreover, he later says that "nothing is stronger than reason." And in the following letter: "What is the best in man? 'This very right reason, which completes the highest happiness.'" Further, he concludes afterwards that only perfect reason makes one blessed; and thus it is manifest that in that letter, Seneca holds that happiness consists in reason and wisdom.

But you at once would say that all these texts of Seneca and the arguments on which they are founded

conclude the opposite of what I wish to prove. For I intend to conclude that it is not only in an act of the intellect, such as are wisdom, science, and reason, that human happiness consists, but rather in a composite from the act of intellect and the act of will. And the texts adduced say expressly that it is in the act of intellect alone. For Seneca says, "only perfect reason makes one blessed"; and one who saw all his books would say that he proclaims and extols wisdom above all human goods.

But the reply is that if one looks very carefully into Seneca's intention or opinion, it will appear that he knew quite well how to distinguish between the moral virtues (which we call virtues of appetite or the will) on the one hand, and prudence (which we call the virtue of the practical intellect) on the other—as is obvious from that most beautiful little book of his called *De quattuor virtutibus cardinalibus*. And he says in that little book that both kinds are virtues, or types of virtues: the former are the virtues of our soul as it is called the practical appetite, and the latter are the virtues of the same soul as it is called the practical intellect. But he does not call either, taken alone, the virtue of the human soul absolutely, as it is simply called the human soul, since virtue should be the perfect disposition of that of which it is called the virtue, by the characteristic for which it is called its virtue. But none of these taken separately is the perfect disposition of the human soul according to that for which it is called the human soul, nor even of human practice according to that for which it is called human practice. . . .

And so, reasoning according to the aforesaid arguments, it seems that the virtue of the active soul, according to which it is called active, is the aggregation of moral virtue and prudence, and neither one taken separately. . . .

If we say, therefore, that in the collection of moral virtue and prudence, the principal virtue of the active soul is prudence, it follows according to the denomination of a collection from its principal member that every virtue of man insofar as he is active is prudence. This is what Seneca intended by "reason" and even by "wisdom," since he always spoke about practical happiness, in which connection prudence is called "wisdom." In this way Seneca also calls all the virtues of the soul "reasons," and courage he says is "science." . . .

Socrates also should be regarded as having used this way of speaking and this intent when he said that all virtues are reasons and prudences, as Aristotle tells in Book 6 of the *Ethics*. Nor does Aristotle seem there to reject those remarks taken with that intent; but he rejects the words, just as he rejects Socrates' words when he says "Man is the intellect."

From all these, it seems that what should be said is that practical happiness, which is what these philosophers mostly talk about, is neither the act of intellect according to prudence nor the act of will according to moral virtue taken separately, but an act compounded from those acts according to perfect virtue and compounded from those partial virtues. In this collection the most principal, noble, and best member is prudence and its act, according to the clarification of the intention of those previously cited philosophers.

And it seems that proportional remarks should be made regarding contemplative happiness and the act of the contemplative intellect, so far as that is called the happiness of the human soul as it is and is called contemplative. Whence I think that in Heaven there corresponds to clear vision, which properly and with regard to itself ought not be called practical, a love that also ought not be called practical, but rather contemplative.

I myself believe that it is not possible to disprove this way of speaking with arguments having much force, nor do I think that Aristotle rejected this way in the aforesaid sense. Nonetheless, another way of speaking can be given, namely, that since that should be called happiness which is the best and most perfect of what is inherently capable of being happy according to virtue, the best of what is in man can be considered in two ways: in one, by the way of composition or aggregation, and in another, by the way of division or resolution; and so in either of these ways it can be called human happiness.

By the way of composition, then, the "best" in man is the collection of all the virtues, operations, and dispositions that inherently belong to man and pertain to his betterment, according to the soul and each of its powers and also the body and each of the parts pertaining to its integrity. In this way, the name "happiness" would supposit for such a collection, at the same time connoting the possession of extrinsic goods sufficient for a man to be able effectively to perform the

single operations suitable to him according to the virtues both of the soul and the body. And this is the happiness described by Boethius and which is the perfect condition through the aggregation of all goods; and so nothing imperfect belongs to what is included in happiness, as it says in Book 10 of this work. And so one would say that he who had a limb cut off, or was confined because of illness, or was imprisoned, or unfortunate, or lacked external goods, was not a happy man, as was noted in Book 1. And philosophers lacking the Catholic faith and spiritual and supernatural revelation assign this kind of happiness to this life.

But by the way of resolution, what is called "best" in man is that disposition or act or whatever is named by the name, which would be best in that collection when resolved into its parts, and to which each of the other members is ordered as its end—not that the resolution is made by a real removal of the parts from one another, but by reason considering all the parts distinctly.

Therefore, if we say that what is best is the act of speculation concerning the divine essence, we should say that that will be human happiness, so that this name "human happiness" supposits precisely for the act, but yet not absolutely and without connotations. Rather, it connotes everything required for the effective operation of that act of speculation, and also what is naturally consequent or annexed to it. And thus it connotes first of all the love of God, as naturally following from that speculation, and, if this is right and perfect, delight, which is naturally annexed to these acts. Then it also connotes the virtue of wisdom, of which that speculation is the perfection. Consequently, it connotes prudence, and the moral virtues preparing the way for wisdom, as was said in Book 6. And then, the liveliness of the senses serving the intellect for speculation. And finally, the virtues of the body and exterior goods, as was sufficiently deduced in Question 16 of Book 1.

And it is sure that Aristotle held to this way of speaking; and the previous arguments do not prevail against it, for they are easily met.

To the first: we posit that the clear vision of God is human happiness in heaven; you argue that then a man would be happy if he should clearly see God without delight, but rather with sadness and hatred of God. I deny this. Indeed, he would instead be un-

happy, since then that clear vision would not be happiness, because of a lack of what is connoted—just as snubness, which, although it supposits for a curve, still connotes the nose. And if the magnitude and curve of the nose that are snubness were removed from the nose and put in stone, that would no longer be snubness, because of a lack of what is connoted. And thus, although Aristotle held happiness to be the act of speculating, still he says in Book 7 of this work that “those who say that the victim on the rack or the man who falls into great misfortunes is happy if he is good are, whether they mean to or not, saying nothing.” And similarly in Book I of this work. And what is said about whiteness is not to the point, since “whiteness” signifies that for which it supposits without the connotation of other things. . . .

When it is said that happiness is the perfect contemplation of God, I can concede that. This contemplation is speculation or the vision of God, but still the name “contemplation” connotes, just as does the name “happiness,” the presence of love and delight naturally connected to that speculation or vision.

And you say that vision is perfect contemplation. I say that is true, adding to it love and delight; but if they were not present, that would not be perfect contemplation nor perfect vision. For the vision might well be perfect in its essential perfection, but it does not follow that it is perfect with the perfection inherently added to it—just as a man without moral and intellectual virtues would not be an absolutely or unqualifiedly perfect man, even if he were perfect according to his essential perfection.

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One excellent starting point for further reading on the authors and topics represented in this volume is the online *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (<http://plato.stanford.edu>). For an introduction to the history of philosophy in the Middle Ages, see John Marenbon, *Medieval Philosophy: An Historical and Philosophical Introduction* (Routledge, 2009). For surveys of the period arranged topically, see A. S. McGrade, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), and Robert Pasnau, ed., *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 2009).

The remainder of this bibliography is arranged according to the major divisions of this volume. No effort at comprehensiveness has been made. The aim has been to enable students to find major recent contributions to the study of medieval philosophy; fuller bibliographies should be sought in the works cited here.

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