The Causes of Moral Existence According to the Doctrine of Saint Thomas Aquinas

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THE CAUSES OF MORAL EXISTENCE ACCORDING TO THE
DOCTRINE OF SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

by

Thomas Francis O'Brochta

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Thomas Francis O'Brochta was born in Chicago, Illinois, December 15, 1939.

He was graduated from Saint Patrick High School, Chicago, Illinois, June, 1957, and from Saint Procopius College, Lisle, Illinois, June, 1961, with the degree of Bachelor of Arts.

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"Man is above all a moral being." If not always explicitly formulated, this proposition is none the less implied in the doctrines of the great majority of Western thinkers. It is no accident that Moral Philosophy has traditionally been one of the main branches of philosophical speculation. Moral Philosophy develops as an attempt to account for several factors of experience. Ultimately these factors can, it seems, be reduced to two: first, there is the awareness that certain of man's acts are either good or evil and that consequently by their actions men begin to exist either goodly or evilly; second, there is the recognition that while there may indeed be extrinsic causes, nevertheless in a very real and most significant way the immediate or proximate cause of these acts is somehow the individual himself. Which is to say that Moral Philosophy begins with the evidence that men perform purposeful acts; acts which are, in fine, grounded in cognition and volition. Yet as Vernon Bourke has recently shown, there is less than unanimity among moralists regarding the precise role to be assigned to the intellect and will in

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This thesis will follow one man's attempt to give a rational account of the evidence of moral existence. In presenting Saint Thomas Aquinas' account of the nature and causes of moral being this study will be divided into three parts. According to St. Thomas moral existence is a mode of being attributable primarily to the acts of intelligent beings. Therefore we will begin by examining Aquinas' explanation of the fact of change and activity manifested by all the beings of our direct experience. When the groundwork for a proper understanding of creaturely activity has been laid, Chapter Two will analyze the activity proper to man as a man, namely moral activity. Men begin to exist goodly and evilly depending on whether they perform good or evil acts. Furthermore, since this is a real becoming, a coming-to-be, there are real causes. The scope of this chapter is thus to expose what for St. Thomas is the nature and causes of moral existence. Finally, when the reality of moral existence has been uncovered by exposing its interior causes, its ultimate interior causes, Chapter Three will attempt to penetrate further the significance of St. Thomas' thought, by contrasting the causes operative in the coming into being of a good and evil act. This contrast may prove fruitful, for there is a radical difference between good and evil and between the causes of good and evil—indeed, the difference is as great as the difference between being and non-being.
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CHAPTER I

THE DYNAMISM OF CREATURELY BEING: APPETITION

Any understanding of the doctrine of Saint Thomas Aquinas must be said to be wanting if it overlooks the significance of his treatment of appetition. This notion is fundamental for a proper grasp of Aquinas' "philosophy" because it is the intelligible expression and explanation of an essential aspect of the fact of change. Aquinas introduces this notion as the expression of his conviction that the beings of experience are the very opposite of static. Change is an aspect of the "stubborn facts" of experience. Beings are radically dynamic, they change. Accepting the "stubborn facts" of change, Aquinas goes on to render its nature intelligible in the language of appetition. The purpose of this chapter is thus to once again emphasize the fact that Aquinas' is a metaphysics of the dynamism manifest in creaturely being.

1 If we be permitted to use an expression that appears in the writings of one of the foremost contemporary metaphysicians of change, viz. Alfred North Whitehead, Science and the Modern World, (10th printing: New York: Mentor Books, 1960) 22.
ACTIVITY AND CHANGE

It has been said that one of the primary "stubborn facts" of experience is the fact of beings undergoing change. Let us begin then by dwelling awhile on this fact. What does one experience in an encounter with the world? The primary data of experience seem to be the irreducible evidence that one is confronted with a multiplicity of individual existents. The immediate data of experience is the multiplicity of individual substances, entities, individual ontological units, call them what you will, all having this one thing in common, namely, that they exist. One experiences them as beings existing apart and in a way independent from each other and from oneself. They are beings unto themselves. A more accurate answer would seem to be, however, that one experiences a multiplicity of individual existents each manifesting various levels of activity.

2 Cf. John Wild, "Tendency: The Ontological Ground of Ethics," Journal of Philosophy, XLIX, (1952), 65. Speaking of the commonness evidenced in this direct encounter with the first data of experience, Wild says: "In spite of their mutual exclusiveness, one exists as much as another. In this, each is similar to all the rest. All this is obvious, one may say." What is also obvious is that within this same experience one is aware of difference. The idea of a multiplicity of individual existents devoid of any reference to difference is a contradiction. It is simply unthinkable because beings cannot be many and individual without being distinct. Consequently, Donald O'Grady says "Distinction, separation, in and among existents, gives rise to negation in judgment. This is and that is, but this is not that. This and That are differently. Each really is, but also each really is not." Further Notes on 'Being,' 'Esse,' and 'Essence' in an Existential Metaphysics," International Philosophical Quarterly, III, (1963) 613.

3 A distinction seems to be in order. While the preceding
Activity seems to pervade much of reality; it certainly pervades much of experience. On the level of material reality, objects as inanimate as silver and wood manifest change. Silver tarnishes and a piece of cut wood readily decays, and both are susceptible to the effects of fire, each in its own way. Extending the powers of sense, one can approach the world in the guise of the physical scientist. Now one discovers that the universe is vaster than the imagination can picture or the intellect can adequately conceive, and that this universe is, as far as it is known, exceedingly active. Change pervades the whole of astronomical experience. Turning to the "microscopic" world, the atomic and the sub-atomic particles come into "view." What becomes readily apparent is the fact that even at this level, or one could say especially at this level, beings evidence themselves as active, and as changing, as being and yet becoming.

A special kind of activity is manifest by what are called living beings. Their activity is a living one. Having begun to exist, they

paragraphs had been speaking of change and activity, it is perhaps more accurate to say that one witnesses beings undergoing various levels of activity. For while every change can be understood as an activity, not every activity precisely as activity need involve a change. For God is Ipsum Esse Subsistum, the act of all acts and yet there is no change in Him. Nevertheless, since the activities of the beings of our direct experience do, for the most part, involve some kind of change, that is a procession from a state of potentiality to a state of actuality (while an activity need not involve such a procession, though it may indeed, at least for limited beings, depend on the change already having taken place, as, for example, knowing presupposes the coming to know) change and activity will be used interchangeably throughout this chapter.
are nourished, grow, reproduce, and finally cease to exist. These are all activities, all manifestations of various kinds of change. But they are activities proper to one kind of being and lacking in another; whence one distinguishes and divides the beings of experience into living and non-living. Both kinds of beings, that is the living and non-living, are, and both act and change, but they are and they change differently.

Of the living beings, one encounters some that are sentient and still others that are intellectual as well. This further division follows the different activities performed by what are called brute animals and men. Being material, brutes and men are susceptible to the changes that affect and are affected by their material bodies. One can observe them undergoing changes in place or position, changing in the line of deterioration. They can suffer effects of fire and so forth. They seem to be susceptible to all of the changes that are open to material beings, and similarly they appear to be open to the changes undergone by all living beings. Nevertheless, being the kind of material things they are, they perform other kinds of activities, they undergo other kinds of change.

The activities proper to brutes are those of sense knowledge and the activities following upon sensation, while the activities proper to men are called intellectual knowledge and the activities following upon intellection. But the beginning of knowledge as an activity involves change --as experience teaches. Thus besides change in the purely material level one observes the different and indeed more perfect activities manifest by
brutes and men. Their activities are proportioned to their being. They are, and they act, but they are and they act differently.

The evidence of activity and change is overwhelming. It presents itself to the layman and scientist alike. Man cannot escape the "stubborn fact" that the primary datum of experience is a confrontation with a multiplicity of individual existents all manifesting various levels of activity, all in some way or another undergoing or having undergone changes—changes that are proportioned to their mode of being.

The philosopher's task is clear. It is, in the last analysis, to make intelligible the universal fact that the beings of experience manifest themselves as individual existents, each existing actively, each according to its own mode. And so one witnesses St. Thomas attempting to render this fact\(^4\) intelligible.

PERFECTION--THE GOOD AND THE END

Let it first be noted that change is undergone by beings whose actuality is not complete. Gilson, when speaking of the significance of St. Thomas' proof for God's existence, states the matter precisely. "Change," he says, "is possible only in beings whose actuality is incomplete, and its

\(^4\) By and large the above analysis of the beings of direct experiences is one which St. Thomas makes his own. See, for example, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, III, 20c.
result always is either to add to their actuality or to subtract something from it.⁵ And how could it be otherwise? If a thing were completely actual, in what way could it change? Indeed, there would be nothing for such a thing to become, nor would there be anything about it which would allow of being lost. Complete actuality is itself simple and indivisible. Where there is change, then, there is something either acquiring additional actuality or losing actuality; where there is change there is, incomplete actuality; where there is change there is, ultimately, actuality and potentiality.

Now a thing is perfect in so far as it is actual.⁶ And since being (esse) is the actuality of everything, even the actuality of form,⁷ it follows that a thing is perfect in so far as it has being.⁸ A thing is perfect inasmuch as it is actual, inasmuch as it has being, inasmuch as it exists.


⁶ Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, I, 5, 1c.

⁷ S.T., I, 4, 1, ad3; I, 3, 4c; S.C.G., II, 54c.

⁸ S.T., I, 5, 1c. Cf. I, 4, 2c: "Now all the perfections of all things pertain to the perfection of being; for things are perfect precisely so far as they have being after some fashion." Translation is taken from Anton C. Pegis (ed.) Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas, (12th printing: New York: Random House, Inc., 1945), 2 Vols. Unless otherwise noted, translations from the Summa Theologiae will be taken from Pegis' edition.
Anything, then, to the extent that it exists is perfect. And yet, none of the beings of direct experience are completely perfect, for none of them are completely actual. That is, none of them are pure actualities. In brief, the beings of direct experience, what St. Thomas calls substances, are actual and perfect, but not completely so, for they manifest activity. In keeping with the evidence of experience, Aquinas says that by the fact that a thing exists substantially it is said to possess its "first perfection." But by the fact that a substance acts it acquires its "second perfection." One can summarize Aquinas' thought by saying that substances are, and to the extent that they are they are perfect. But substances act, as experience shows, and therefore through their activity and in some instances in the very activity itself (as, for example, the immanent activity of the act of knowing) they acquire additional actuality, which is to say they acquire additional perfection. Through their activity they begin to be completed.

Why do substances act? Quite simply then, they act in order to become perfect, as much as each can. There is activity because everything seeks its own perfection, the perfection it does not yet possess but which it can attain. St. Thomas is quite specific about this. "Every creature,"

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9 For St. Thomas' distinction of first and second perfection see S.T., I, 73c; I, 6, 3c; III, 29, 2c; S.C.G., II, 46c; Quaestiones Disputatae de Veritate, I, 10, ad3; II, 2c; and esp. XXI, 5c.
he says, "intends to acquire its own perfection." They do this by seeking first to retain the actuality they already possess. With all the strength of their being, they strive to resist corruption and anything that in anyway tends to diminish their actuality. Beyond this, beings naturally seek to acquire additional perfection. And so St. Thomas says, "it belongs to every being to seek its perfection and the conservation of its being, and this in the face of each being according to its mode...." But perfection is actuality and therefore beings act in order to be more fully actual.

Now in seeking their perfection beings seek their good, for what perfects a thing is said to be that thing's good. The idea of good is

10 S.T., I, 44, 4c; cf. De Veritate, XXII, 1, sed. contra., 4; S.C.G., I, 37c; III, 3c.


12 De Veritate, XXI, 1c: "But everything which already has being naturally loves its being and with all its strength preserves it." The De Veritate, in 3 volumes: Volume 1 (Qq 1-9) translated by R.W. Mulligan, S.J.; Volume 2 (Qq 10-20) translated by J.V. McGlynn, S.J.; Volume 3 (Qq 21-29) translated by R. W. Schmidt, S.J. (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1954). Unless otherwise noted, translations from the Quaestiones Disputatae de Veritate will be taken from this Regnery edition.

13 S.C.G., I, 72c. Cf., De Veritate., XXI, 2c; S.C.G., III, 3c. For a more complete statement of these basic inclinations as they are manifested in man see S.T., I-II, 94, 2c.

14 S.C.G., I, 37c; III, 3c.
therefore bound up with perfection, as the idea of desire is bound up with seeking. Beings seek, which is to say they desire, the perfection of their being which is called their good.

This is not to say, however, that beings are not already good. For to the extent that they exist indeed to that extent they are actual, perfect, and therefore good. Speaking of the relationship between actuality, perfection and goodness St. Thomas says, "Every being, as being, is good. For all being, as being has actuality and is in some way perfect, since every act is some sort of perfection, and perfection implies desirability and goodness...."\(^{15}\) It follows that beings are perfect and therefore good inasmuch as they are actual, inasmuch as they exist. But as beings are said to have their first and second perfection, so they are said to be good in a qualified sense or good absolutely. There is, then, this relationship between a substance's act of being and its goodness:

... goodness is divided into substantial and accidental, just as is the act of being. There is, however, this difference: a thing is called a being in an absolute sense because of its substantial act of existing; but because of its accidental act of existing it is not said to be absolutely....But just the opposite is true of good. From the point of view of its substantial goodness a thing is said to be good in a certain sense, but from that of its accidental goodness it is said to be good without qualification.\(^{16}\)

\(^{15}\) S.T., I, 5, 3c.

\(^{16}\) De Veritate, XXI, 5c.
But what is the reason for this difference? St. Thomas continues,

A thing is called being inasmuch as it is considered absolutely, but good, as has already been made clear, in relation to other things. Now it is by its essential principles that a thing is fully constituted in itself so that it subsists; but it is not so perfectly constituted as to stand as it should in relation to everything outside itself except by means of accidents added to the essence.17

The first perfection and the first good of a being is therefore its substantiability, that is, the fact that this substance exists at all. It is a perfection and a good to exist. Nevertheless, substances manifest themselves actively, and this activity is an extension of the substance's act of existing, of its actuality, of its perfection, and of its good. And thus through its activity the substance can acquire its additional good or, perhaps it would be more correct to say, the substance can acquire its complete good and is said to be good absolutely speaking. The manner in which the substance completes itself in the line of actuality is thus the measure of its goodness absolutely speaking. To the extent, then, that they exist indeed to that extent substances are actual, perfect, and therefore

17 See also S.T., I, 5, 1, ad.I; De Veritate, XXI, 5, ad1; XXI, 1c; XXI, 2c; S.G., III, 20c; Compendium Theologiae ad Fratrem Reginaldum Socium Suum Carissimum, I, 109: "Since the good has the nature of perfection and of end, the twofold perfection and end of the creature disclose its twofold goodness. A certain perfection is observed in the creature inasmuch as it persists in its nature. This perfection is the end of its generation or formation. The creature has a further perfection which it reaches by its motion or activity. This perfection is the end of its movement or operation." Translation is taken from Cyril Vollert, S.J. Compendium of Theology, (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1947). Unless otherwise noted, translations from the Compendium Theologiae will be taken from this edition.
good. Yet just as they are beings whose actuality is incomplete, so they are beings whose goodness is incomplete. They are good things seeking additional goodness.

We have thus returned to our starting point, the fact that beings act. They act for a purpose which is their end. Their end is the completion of their being which is their full perfection. The good is that which is perfective of things and is therefore what all things desire as their end.

SOME INCLINATION FOLLOWS EVERY FORM

At this point it becomes necessary to pose a question. Exactly how are beings ordained to their end? Beings desire their good as their end, but what is the principle or principles of activity whereby they proceed to actively seek their end? After all, it is one thing to desire a good but quite another to pursue it, to attain it, and to enjoy it. And even if we say that beings seek their perfection, we have by no means specified what lies at the source of this active seeking of one's perfection.

Form

An answer to this difficulty could be had by beginning with St.

18 S.C.G., III, 2c; De Veritate, XXII, 1, sed. contra. 4.
19 S.C.G., III, 3c.
Thomas' statement that "some inclination follows every form." This dictum merely serves as a starting point, however, for in itself it does little but state in a universal proposition that every being tends to acquire its own perfection. For, as it will become evident, the inclination following every form finds its dynamic expression in the activity of the being seeking its perfection. It is the expression of an appetite. Nevertheless, the dictum does serve to give direction to the inquiry for it points to the more immediate principle of a being's activity, namely the being's form.

Following Aristotle, St. Thomas reserves a high place for a being's substantial form (and to form in general, i.e., accidental as well as substantial). For St. Thomas the substantial form is "that by which" the substance, that is, the basic entitative unit given in the immediate data of sense experience, is a "that which is." In brief, the substantial form is a principle of the thing's being by being nothing less than the complement of the substance as substance, and this even where the substance has no admixture of matter. Gilson summarizes the role played by substantial form thusly: "The proper role of the form is, therefore,

20 *S.T.*, I, 80 1c.

21 *S.C.G.*, II, 54c.

22 Ibid.
to constitute substance as substance. As St. Thomas says, it is what makes it to be substance and enables it to achieve substantiality."23 The substantial form is a principle of specification. By its substantial form the substance is determined to be the kind of substance that it is. Thus form gives actuality to the substance by giving it content, structure, specification.

It gives actuality in another way also. The substance is said to be but also to act in virtue of the kind of thing it is. Recall that St. Thomas said that "it belongs to every being to seek its perfection... and this in the case of each being according to its mode."24 Each being according to its mode: the significance of these words is that beings are, but they are what they are, and they are inclined to perfect and conserve themselves according to what they are. The inclination of a being toward its end, its good, follows from its essence and is expressed through its nature, through the form which is nothing less than a source of this intrinsic dynamic principle of a being's activities. Beings act and are acted upon the way that they are because they are what they are. Inasmuch as it is the substantial form which is the ultimate ground of a being's


24 S.C.G., I, 72c; underlining is mine.
specification, of a being's essence, of a being's nature, St. Thomas says that "some inclination follows every form." Form is here seen to be a principle guiding the being's search for perfection, a source of its desire for and inclination toward its good. A thing has for its good the kind of good that it does because it is the kind of thing that it is. It tends to perfect itself the way it does because it is the kind of thing that it is. Beings seek to perfect themselves, each according to their mode.

Esse

St. Thomas notes, however, that form is not the ultimate source of a being's actuality, nor, therefore, is it the ultimate source of a being's activity. For in the beings of our direct experience form is on the side of essence and is related to the act of existence (esse) as potentiality to actuality. And so Aquinas says,

Then, too, because being is compared even to the form itself as act. For in things composed of matter and form, the form is said to be the principle of being, for this reason: that it is the complement of the substance, whose act is being....

On the other hand, in substances composed of matter and form there is a twofold composition of act and potentiality: the first, of the substance itself which is composed of matter and form: the second, of the substance thus composed and being; and this composition also can be said to be of that which is and being, or that which is and that by which a thing is.25

25 Ibid., II, 54c.
In other words, the act of existing, *esse*, is the ultimate principle of being. It is **that by which** the substance exists at all. It is the actuality of everything, says St. Thomas, "even the actuality of form." 26 *Esse* is the actuality of everything for in giving actuality to the form it gives actuality to the substance through the form. For to exist is the actuality of everything. Outside of existence there is only non-being, only nothingness. The form is not a principle of being unless it exists, and thus the act by which the form exists is the act by which the substance itself is, and, as we shall see, it is also the act by which the substance operates.

The beings of our experience are composed of these two primary manifestations of act and potentiality, namely *esse*, the act of existing, and essence. Now if essence, be it simple or composed of matter and form, stands to the act of existing as potency limiting act; if *esse* is pure and unlimiting act; 27 if *esse* is the actuality of everything so much so that there is no actuality absolutely speaking apart from the actuality of *esse*, then it does indeed seem incorrect to speak of essence as though it exercised a causal influence on *esse*, as if essence were something in itself. What is not *esse* can only be non-*esse*, non-being purely and simply. 28 The

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26 See Chapter I, page 6, note 7.

27 Quaestiones Disputatae de Potentia Dei, 7, 2, ad9.

difficulty is that essence must not be understood as contributing something positive to esse, since the actuality of everything, every positive characteristic seems to come from esse.29

But none of the beings of our experience is an unlimited esse. While all of the actuality may indeed flow from esse, there is a real limitation placed on these esses. They are all esses of a certain intensity. Their esse is not the all of esse and yet is. What can such an esse be? It seems that it can only be an esse exercising itself limitedly, that is individually and specifically.30 Thus the individuality and specification of a being ought, perhaps, to be regarded as the very inner determination placed on an esse that is and yet is not the all of esse. Speaking of the distinction between essence and the act of existing (d’exister) Gilson refers to the self and inner determination of the act of existing: "Chaque essence est posée un acte d’exister qu’elle n’est pas et qui l’inclut comme son autodetermination."31 Again it seems difficult to see how it could be otherwise. The positive content of the beings of experience must come from their esse, their act of existing, since there is no actuality apart from this primordial act. Their esse is lim-

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30 O’Grady, "Further Notes on 'Being,'" I.P.Q.

ited within itself, and this limitation is their essence taken in its positive content, that is as modus essendi.

But what of the negative aspect, the potentiality and limitation manifested by these same beings? To be, and yet not to be unlimited esse is to be esse of a certain limitation. This limitation is the "that beyond which" this being's esse does not extend. There is a certain sense in which this being's esse is, but there is also a real sense in which it is not. Being this esse, it is not that esse, nor is it the esse of anything else that is or that can be. The fact that this being is actual and yet is not the all of actuality is for this being a real absence, a real negation, though not for all of that is it an evil. It is simply an absence, a lack, a real nothingness.32

Perhaps we have discovered the reason why beings act. If esse is primary; if it is in itself unlimited and pure act; and if the esse of the beings of experience is limited, then their activity is nought but limited esse seeking to overcome its limitation, as much as it can. Not only are beings actual and to that extent perfect inasmuch as they exist. They are also ordered to further actuality, and in this respect are in potentiality to further actuation. Which is to say that the limitation within which their esse is exercised is in some way and to some extent

32 O'Grady, "Further Notes on 'Being,'" I.P.Q.
capable of being overcome. 33

But here once again the role of form or essence comes to the fore. There seems to be, as experience evidences, an ultimate limitation or guiding principle within which esse is exercised. The esse of a being as subsistence is an esse of a certain intensity. Now this basic intensity is the very nature, the essence of the being as subsisting. Individual men are similarly men inasmuch as they are beings exercising an act of existing of a similar intensity. The activities performed by beings exercising an act of existing of a similar intensity will be activities that follow from this initial or basic act of this intensity, which is to say that the activities of being follow from the kind of being it is.

But all of the being's reality may not be its esse, for if esse is limited then this limitation is a certain bordering on nothingness, and the limitation shows a radical defect within esse as limited esse. Thus to be a limited esse involves both a perfection and a deficiency. To be


34 Seems, we say, because contemporary thought with its emphasis on evolution has raised philosophical questions about the intelligibility of what the physical sciences call evolution. See Joseph Donceel's stimulating article entitled "Causality and Evolution: A Survey of Some Neo-scholastic Theories," The New Scholasticism, XXXIX, (1965), 295-315.
limited esse is to be esse with non-esse.35 Posited into existence as a limited act of existing, the substances of our experience, the that which is, are radically dynamic. They are dynamic inasmuch as their esse is first and foremost an act; but they are also dynamic inasmuch as being a limited act they necessarily strive to overcome their limitations. They strive to perfect themselves by retaining their being and resisting anything which in anyway seeks to corrupt them. Beyond this they seek to expand their being. Being limited, there is room for addition, for completion; existing by the act of esse this addition, for completion, is actively sought. In short, substances "tend" to that which will complete their beings, to that which will perfect themselves absolutely speaking.

APPETITE

Now appetite is the name given to the principle of a being's tendencies, its inclinations. St. Thomas defines appetite as "nothing else than the inclination of a being desirous of a thing toward that thing."36 Appetite is therefore the desire that is innate in every being, which desire is directed toward the end, which is the good, for which the being has received its existence but which it has not yet attained. This implies that beings are cut off from their end, their good absolutely speaking. But

35 O'Grady, "Further Notes on 'Being," I.P.Q.
36 S.T., I-II, 8, 1c.
to be cut off from one's final good is a mark of imperfection, and consequently the appetite manifested by the beings of our experience is in fact a mark of imperfection. 37

So St. Thomas introduces the notion of appetition to account for an important aspect of the beings of our experience. The fact that beings tend to perfect themselves, that they seek to complete themselves, that they not only exist but are also related to that whereby they are made good absolutely speaking, all this indicates firstly, that beings lack that which is their end, their ultimate perfection, and secondly, that these same beings actively tend, are inclined, to acquire that which they lack. Appetite is, then, an inclination that a being has for actively acquiring the good for which it has received existence but from which it is separated. "To desire or have appetency (appetere)" says St. Thomas, "is nothing else but to strive for something (ad aliquid petere), stretching, as it were, toward something which is destined for oneself." 38 In order to attain this good that is destined for oneself, this end, the beings of our experience have built in appetite to diffuse themselves actively--either by acting or by being acted upon, either by causing or by being caused.

37 De Veritate, XXII, 2, ad 4: "The blessed who already enjoy the possession of God desire the continuance of their enjoyment. Furthermore, the enjoyment itself is a sort of appetite perfected by its object, although the name appetite implies imperfection."

38 Ibid., XXII, 1c.
Appetite: Form

Since appetite is nothing else than the inner dynamism of a thing's being, it is evident that it belongs to the existent which is its subject. And because substantial form is the first act of a being in the order of substance, appetite is the dynamic desire of a creature's form (i.e., the desire of an esse of a certain limitation or mode) seeking to further posit itself into existence in the line of additional actuality. Therein lies the significance of St. Thomas' dictum that "some inclination follows every form." Creatures are, and they are what they are, and they are inclined to perfect and conserve themselves according to what they are. Recall that St. Thomas says that "it belongs to every being to seek its perfection and the conservation of its being, and this in the case of each being according to its mode." Inclination, tendency, follows from essence and is expressed through nature, that is through the form which is nothing less than the source of this intrinsic dynamic principle of a being's activities: "The principle of every operation, furthermore, is the form by which a thing is in act, since every agent acts so far as it is in act. So, the mode of operation consequent upon a form must be in accordance with the mode of that form."

39 S.T., I, 80, 1c.
40 S.C.G., I, 72c.
41 Ibid., II, 47c.
Appetite: Esse

Nevertheless, appetite is existential, just as form is existential, because the act of the form is Esse itself. Esse is the actuality of everything. This primary position given to Esse by St. Thomas pervades the whole of his philosophy and, if properly understood, allows no trace of essentialism. If the act of the form is Esse, then Esse is the ultimate first principle of a being's appetite. It is the first principle (disregarding the ultimate first principle of being Who Is God), though not necessarily the proximate principle of the individual's inclinations. It is first inasmuch as giving actuality to the form—being the Esse of this specific and individual intensity—it gives actuality to the inclination following this form. Thus while the proximate principle of an individual's inclination follows its form, this principle is, like the form itself, ultimately grounded in its act of existing. This is the meaning of St. Thomas' statement that the threefold perfection of Esse is "subsistere," "tendere," and "requiescere:"

Since the essence of good consists in this, that something perfects another as an end, whatever is found to have the character of an end also has that of good. Now two things are essential to an end: it must be sought or desired by things which have not yet attained the end, and it must be loved by the things which share the end, and be, as it were enjoyable to them. For it is essen-

42 For an analysis of the primacy of Esse in St. Thomas' thought also see Donald O'Grady's article entitled "Esse and Metaphysics," The New Scholasticism, XXXIX, (1965), 283-294.
tially the same to tend to an end and in some sense to repose in that end. Thus by the same natural tendency a stone moves towards the center of the world and comes to rest there.

These two properties are found to belong to the act of being. For whatever does not yet participate in the act of being tends toward it by a certain natural appetite. 43

Esse is "subsistere" inasmuch as it is first and foremost the act of the substance as subsisting. But it is also "tendere" and "requiescere" inasmuch as the substance as subsisting is related to its final good, the good that perfects completely, through its activities as tending ("tendere") toward that good and as resting in it ("requiescere") when it is possessed. As esse is the act of the substance as subsisting, so is it the act whereby the substance tends to complete itself. If beings are active, then it is their esse itself which must be active. Esse must be the ground of that activity as activity (as opposed to activity as the potentiality for activity). Being itself radically actual, esse is the source of every actuality, of every activity, of every instance of change under-

gone and performed by the beings of our direct experience. The ultimate source of appetite is nought, then, but esse itself.

KINDS OF APPETITE

Although St. Thomas speaks at times of the nature of appetite in general, his most significant thoughts on the subject are, for the most part, couched in his discussions on the various kinds of appetite. In the light of what has already been noted, it will not be surprising to find St. Thomas distinguishing the kinds of appetition from the point of view of how various kinds of forms are related to a substance.

Every being of our experience is a substance existing with its own act of being and with the inclinations proper to its own individualized nature. The inclinations of the substance's intrinsic principle of being (that is, of its individualized form) are called its natural appetite (appetitus naturalis):

It is necessary to assign an appetitive power to the soul. To make this evident, we must observe that some inclination follows every form: for example, fire, by its form is inclined to rise, and to generate its like....For in those things which lack knowledge, the form is found to determine each thing only to its own being—that is, to the being which is natural to each. Now this natural form is followed by a natural inclination, which is called natural appetite.44

This appetite is called natural because it follows a being's own individualized form and because it is consequently an inclination arising from a

44 S.T., I, 20, 1c; cf. I, 59, 1c; S.C.G., III, 26c; II, 47c; De Veritate, XXV, 1c; XXII, 1c.
natural desire which, as nature, works with a natural necessity. Since natural appetency follows the natural form it is under a natural necessity to tend to that which it tends, and thus the heavy naturally tends downward and fire naturally tends to rise and to heat. For such appetition apprehension is unnecessary, for the object of natural appetite is a single one and is not tended to only where there is violence. And so St. Thomas says,

It is after this fashion that all natural things are inclined to what is suitable for them, having within themselves some principle of their inclination in virtue of which that inclination is natural, so that in a way they go themselves and are not merely led to their due ends. Things moved by violence are only led, because they contribute nothing to the mover. But natural things go to their ends inasmuch as they cooperate with the one inclining and directing them through a principle implanted in them.

45 De Veritate, XXV, 1c; cf. XXIII, 1c. Here we are obviously thinking of natural appetite in the sense that St. Thomas uses this term as embracing the inclinations of all natural forms, physical or mineral, vegetative, sensory, and rational or intellectual, both substantial and accidental. Nevertheless, inasmuch as the substance is the ground of its accidental forms, of its powers and operations, the inclinations following from these accidental forms, powers, operations follow from that by which the substance is made a that-which-is, namely, from the substantial form. Thus are all the natural inclinations ultimately grounded in the substantial form, even though they are manifest through accidental forms. For the four senses in which St. Thomas uses the term natural appetite see Richard R. Baker's The Thomistic Theory of the Passions and Their Influence Upon the Will, published doctoral dissertation; University of Notre Dame, 1941, (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Edward Brothers, Inc., 1941), 6-12.

46 S.T., I, 78, 1, ad3.

47 De Veritate, XXV, 1c.

48 Ibid., XXII, 1c; S.T., I, 82, 1c.
Thusly understood, natural appetite is, as Richard Baker says, not a distinct power or faculty of the agent, but it is identical with the nature itself. In other words, there is not a real, but only a virtual distinction (rationis ratiocinatae) between the nature or form and its natural appetite. Nature and natural appetite are merely two aspects of the same thing, whereby we view a being atistically and dynamically. Hence, the terms ultimately point to the same reality, in as much as every nature, by the fact that it is a nature, is inclined to itself as a good and to other things as good for it. A natural appetite is nothing more than a nature's consubstantial love for that which perfects it....

Natural appetite expresses the fact that every one of the beings of our experience is tending to perfect itself, is tending to its good in virtue of an intrinsic principle which is its very nature.

From this it follows that there will be as many kinds of natural appetites as there are natures. Non-living, living, sentient, and intellectual substances all have natural appetites proportionate to their na-

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49 The Thomistic Theory, 13-14.

50 Recall that St. Thomas follows Aristotle when speaking of the individual being's nature. On this point see Gustaf J. Gustafson's The Theory of Natural Appetency in the Philosophy of St. Thomas, published doctoral dissertation; Catholic University of America, 1944, (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1944) 51. Gustafson refers to the Summa Theologiae, III, 2, 1c, where Aquinas makes his own the opinion of Aristotle (Physics, II, 1, 192b 22) that nature is a "principle of motion (or change) in that which is per se and not per accidens." This notion can be seen operating in one of St. Thomas' earlier works where, commenting on Aristotle's statement that "every substance is a nature" (Metaphysics, V, 4,1014b 35), St. Thomas says that "the word nature, taken in this sense seems to signify the essence of a thing inasmuch as it is related to the thing's proper activity, since nothing lacks its proper activity." De Ente et Essentie, trans. Claire C. Riedl (rev. ed.: Toronto, Canada: St. Michael's College, 1937), Chapter 1, 15.
tures. If appetite expresses the relationship that a substance has to that which perfects it, to its good simply speaking, and if it also expresses the active tending toward this perfection, \(^5\) which activity has as its source and intrinsic principle of the substance, namely its nature viewed as a dynamic principle (a necessary consequence of an esse that is and yet is not the all of actuality), then non-living substances perfect themselves in a non-living way by tending to that which perfects in virtue of their natural appetite. And intellectual or rational substances perfect themselves accordingly in virtue of their particular kind of natural appetite, because they are the kind of thing that they are. So it is with all the beings of our experience. Being the kinds of beings they are, they tend to perfect themselves accordingly.

Now the beings of experience actually fall into four great classes. There are the purely natural, the living, the sensitive, and the intellectual or rational natures. What sets off the latter two classes from the purely natural substances is the fact that these beings are such that they have in addition \(^5\) to their natural forms the forms that they acquire


\(^5\) Perhaps it would be better to say that some substances have "as a part of their natural form" or "obtain as following from their natu-
through apprehension. St. Thomas expresses this when he says, "But in those things which have knowledge, each one is determined to its own natural being by its own natural form, but in such a manner that it is receptive of the species of other things." 53

Aquinas proceeds to classify apprehension into two basic kinds. Some creatures perform acts of sense apprehension while others perform, in addition, acts of intellectual apprehension. These are two radically different acts as can be seen from the difference of their objects. Whereas the object of sense apprehension is the species of sensible things, for example this or that colored thing, the object of intellectual apprehension is the species of intelligible things, the very nature of color. 54 The important fact that must not be lost sight of is that in the act of apprehension the subject acquires the form of the apprehended thing. To know is to become and be the other as the other.

Aquinas began with the principle that some inclination follows every form: from the natural form follows a natural inclination, and from

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53 S.T., I, 80, 1c.

54 De Veritate, XXV, 1c; also see X, 6, ad2; S.C.G., IV, 11c; II, 66c: "Moreover, sense is cognizant only of singulars; for every sense power knows through individual species, since it receives the species of
the apprehended forms follow corresponding inclinations.

Just as in those things that have knowledge forms exist in a higher manner and above the manner of natural forms, so there must be in them an inclination surpassing the natural inclination....And this superior inclination belongs to be appetitive power of the soul, through which the animal is able to desire what it apprehends, and not only that to which it is inclined by its natural form.55

He then proceeds to divide these superior inclinations according to the active principle from which they arise.

Since these inclinations arise as a consequence of apprehension and since appetite is the actual striving to effect a relationship in the real order of existence, Aquinas calls appetite a passive power. It is "passive" inasmuch as it is put into act by the object of apprehension, and it is a "power" inasmuch as it is the efficient cause of the movement that seeks to bring about a real relationship in the existential order between the subject and its object.

From the point of view of their "passivity," the appetitive powers, like all passive powers, are distinguished according to their objects which are their active and movable principles. For the motive must be proportionate to the movable, and the active to the passive. Indeed, the passive power itself has its very things in bodily organs. But the intellect is cognizant of universals, as experience proves."

55 S.T., I, 80, 1c.
nature from its relation to its active principle.  

Again,

The movement of the appetive part arises somehow from apprehension, because every operation of a passive principle takes its origin from an active principle. Now appetite is a passive power, because it is moved by the object of the appetite, which is an 'unmoved mover' as is said in The Soul /Aristotle's De anima, III (433b 15-18)/. But the object of appetitive does not move the appetite unless it is apprehended.  

Therefore since what is apprehended by the senses is "generically" different 58 from what is apprehended by the intellect, it follows that sense appetite is "generically" distinct from intellectual appetite. 59

There is, therefore, in addition to natural appetite, appetites that arise in conjunction with the forms acquired through apprehension. From sense apprehension comes sense appetite which in man Aquinas calls "sensuality." 60 The genus of sense appetite is in turn divided into the irascible and concupiscible powers. 61 And from intellectual apprehension

56 Ibid., I, 80, 2c.
57 De Veritate, XXV, 1c.
58 S.T., I, 80, 2c. It is interesting that in the De Veritate, XXV, 1c, Aquinas refers to this as a "specific difference."
59 See Chapter I, pages 28-29, note 54.
60 S.T., I, 80, 1c; De Veritate, XXV, 1c.
61 De Veritate, XXIV, aa. 2-3c; Quaestiones Disputatae de Anima, art. 13.
comes intellectual appetite called "will."  

It appears that Aquinas offers another basis for his classification of the genus of appetite. St. Thomas says that rational appetite is distinguished from that of sense in just the same way as sensitive appetite is distinguished from that of nature—because of a more perfect way of tending....Hence the nearer a nature is to God, the less it is inclined by another and the more it is capable of inclining itself.

Here the emphasis is placed on the fact that appetite or inclination is basically a principle of movement. It is this fact that enables Aristotle and Aquinas to refer to appetite as a "passive power." When one considers the "passivity" of this power one naturally divides the genus of appetite according to the active principles to which this passivity is directed. We have seen that such a consideration led Aquinas to classify the "superior inclinations" according to the objects of apprehension. But when one considers appetite as a principle of movement, the basis of classification becomes appetite under the aspect of "power."

Under this latter consideration St. Thomas proceeds to divide the genus of appetite according to the natures in which the appetite is found. By reason of its materiality, insensible nature "is inclined to an end, to be sure, but has within it nothing which inclines but only a prin-

62 For other passages where Aquinas can be observed dividing the genus of appetite into natural, sense, and intellectual appetites see S.T., I, 80, 1c; I, 59, 1c; I-II, 6, aa 1-2c; S.C.G., II, 47c; III, 26c; De Veritate, XXII, 4c; XXIII, 1c; XXV, 1c.

63 De Veritate, XXII, 4c.
ciple of inclination." 64 Thus while inanimate beings are moved, "and though one can move another, still no one of them can move itself." 65 Sensitive natures are more perfect as can be seen from the fact that they have within themselves an interior principle of inclination, a principle of self motion. But theirs is not the most perfect of natures nor is theirs the most perfect kind of tendency of appetite:

Yet this inclination is not within the control of the animal which is inclined but is determined by something else. An animal is not able at the sight of something attractive not to crave it, because animals do not themselves have the mastery over their own inclination. 66

Finally, there are those creatures who have a rational nature which,

being closest to God not merely, like inanimate things, has an inclination to something, and, like a sentient nature, a mover of this inclination determined as it were extrinsically, but further so has its inclination within its own power that it does not necessarily incline to anything appetible which is apprehended, but can incline or not incline. And so its inclination is not determined for it by anything else but by itself. 67

64 Ibid.
65 Ibid., a.3.
66 Ibid., a.4; see also a.3.
67 Ibid., a.4; see also a.3. For similar classifications of the genus of appetite under this aspect of power see S.C.G., III, 1c; III, 73c; II, 47c; De Veritate, XXII, 3c.
SUMMARY

This chapter began by noting that the beings of our direct experience are the very opposite of static. Beings manifest themselves actively, which is to say that they are dynamic. Their activity may involve a passage from the state of potentiality to a state of actuality which is change in the strict sense of the term. Or it may take the form of an activity which as an activity does not itself involve change (for example, the activity of knowing) but which may indeed need to be preceded by a change (for example, the activity of coming to know). Whatever form it takes, activity seems to be a basic element given in the data of experience. The philosopher's question is not, then, a question of fact. But rather given this fact, the question is what is its ratio? What can be known about beings that are dynamic, that act, that even undergo change?

For St. Thomas the activity and change manifest by individual beings is a sign of their imperfection and incompleteness. But it also points to the fact that these beings are actively seeking their end which is their good absolutely speaking, and this for them is to seek to expand their existence, to become more than they are. Bernard Diggs expresses what seems to be the authentic thought of St. Thomas in a passage which, because of the clarity of its expression, shall be quoted in full:

By its existence, the thing is actual, and thus perfect according to the measure of itself; it is lacking in nothing according to its own substantial nature. By the very fact that it is, it has gained the first step towards completeness. And by having this kind of existence, by having this first perfection, it is
able to express a goodness and perfect others. Through its own act of existing it has the capacity to attract others, to promise additional being. And in the simplicity of its existence, it stands ready to act and communicate its perfection. Its activity, in following on its existence, expresses that perfection which it has, and extends perfection to any other which has the capacity to receive it. And although this perfection is limited by the thing's own substantial nature, nevertheless it does not rest in the limitation. For by existing it has an inclination to become a greater thing, to spring beyond the limits of its substantial perfection and take more existence to itself. In this way the thing gains a completed perfection; in feeding on the existence of others it passes beyond its narrowness, and becomes fully developed. By completing its being it becomes good simply, good in every way that it can become good. And with this completion its activity is transformed and increased. The completing of its existence completes its perfective power. Thus by gaining additional existence a thing gains additional perfection.68

How do beings acquire this perfection, this completion? They tend to it by an inclination that follows their natural forms, (natural appetite) and in the case of beings of a higher and more perfect kind of nature by an inclination which follows upon the forms acquired through sense apprehension (sense appetite), or through intellectual apprehension (intellectual appetite).

In short, beings tend to perfect themselves according to what they are and, to be sure, precisely inasmuch as they are. Now it is the thesis of this writer that moral existence is the state of perfection ascribed by St. Thomas to one kind of being of our immediate experience. Men, that is rational beings, being what they are tend to perfect themselves

68 Love and Being, 73-74; cf. 88.
accordingly. Their completion in the line of existence is specifically proportioned to their first act of being--their substantiality. When men act we say that they are morally good or evil, which is but to recognize the special character attached to the acts of rational beings. This takes us to the next chapter which will investigate in what precisely lies the significance of the proposition that certain of man's acts bring man to exist in the moral order, in the order of perfection properly ascribed to rational beings.
CHAPTER II

THE NATURE AND CAUSES OF THE HUMAN ACT

In the previous chapter an attempt was made to sketch St. Thomas Aquinas' explanation of the fact of activity on whatever level it is observed. It was seen that beings act because they are seeking to complete themselves. They are actively seeking their final end which is their absolute good and second perfection. They are, in short, seeking to perfect themselves since they are cut off, so to speak, from their end which is perfective. In the present chapter attention is focused on the activities of rational beings, that is men. They too are seeking their completion, a completion proportioned to their being. But in seeking this completion they perform acts which are properly termed "moral." The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the reality and primarily the causality operative when human beings begin to acquire their second perfection and absolute good, which for them involves beginning to exist morally.
It is natural to refer to certain of men's actions and thus to the men whose actions they are as being good or evil. One is constantly classifying the acts of individual men as being good and worthy of praise or evil and worthy of blame. Indeed, few things seem more natural or more common than the oft pronounced moral judgments. It seems correct to say that by these judgments nothing less is meant than that the individual is really, that is existentially, existing either goodly or evilly, and that every such act is an act of coming into being, namely the being of moral existence. The explication of moral judgments is so existential, in fact, that not only is the evil man blamed, he is often punished and sometimes must forfeit his life.

Again, the question is not one of fact; rather, the philosopher's task is to give the ultimate explanation of this fact. His task is to render it intelligible by exposing its causes, its ultimate causes. Now the fact is that men manifest themselves morally, that is as existing goodly or evilly, and thus the philosopher's search is for those causes which adequately account for the individual's coming into being in the line of moral existence. In short, the question he must answer is what are the causes that are operative when a man begins to exist morally. Since this is a real existence and a real becoming, there are real causes.

In presenting the thought of St. Thomas concerning the causes of moral existence, one can begin by examining his notion of a moral act. In
the *Summa Theologiae* St. Thomas says that the human act is properly called the moral act.¹ This isolated passage is not much help of itself, serving as it does as a nominal definition. It but identifies human acts with moral acts and leaves the problem of specifying the constituents of the human act. However, earlier in this work Thomas had already stated quite clearly, if briefly, in what consists "human acts." There one finds the celebrated passage wherein he distinguishes human acts from acts of man:

> Of actions done by man those alone are properly called *human*, which are proper to man as man. Now man differs from irrational animals in this, that he is master of his actions. Wherefore those actions alone are properly called human, of which man is master. Now man is master of his own actions through his reason and will; whence, too, the free-will is defined as the faculty and will of reason. Therefore those actions are properly called human which proceed from a deliberate will. And if any other actions are found in man, they can be called actions of man but not properly *human* actions, since they are not proper to man.

In other words, only the actions of which man is the master can be said to be moral acts. While other acts performed by men are real acts, indeed they are as real as the moral acts, yet they are not called moral. Only acts performed knowingly and willingly are properly designated as moral acts. And thus only by performing such acts does the individual begin to exist morally, for inasmuch as man is the subject of his acts he is him-

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¹ *S.T.*, I-II, 18, 9c; cf. I-II, 18, 5c.

self said to exist morally.

Relating St. Thomas' identification of moral and human acts to what we saw in Chapter I is his general doctrine of creaturely activity, some important conclusions are seen to follow. First, since men are themselves a part of nature, they no less than the other kinds of beings manifest themselves actively because they are cut off from their end. They exist, and yet their existence is not all that it could be. Men act the way they do because they have not yet attained their complete good which is their final and complete perfection. They act because desiring those things which appear as good they seek to attain a relationship with them in the real order. Second, by their activity men manifest themselves as a radically different kind of being. They act, to be sure; but while similar in many respects to the activities of non-men, their activities are, nevertheless, strikingly different. The primary difference, as St. Thomas notes, is the fact that men act knowingly and willingly. Men seek to complete themselves, but they go about their task rationally and with a principle of inclination that is proportioned to their nature; that is, men tend to their end with a rational appetite which is their will. The consequence of this fact is equally experiential and takes the form of moral judgments. Recognizing the human situation, if at times but vaguely and even confusedly, we quite readily attribute a special quality to characteristically human activities: acts performed knowingly and willingly, that
is, human acts properly so called, are judged to be either really morally good or really morally evil. And so St. Thomas says that human acts are moral acts. This means that inclining to one's final end and ultimate good and perfection in a humanly way essentially and necessarily involves moral existence, be it good or evil. More will be said about this later.

NATURE OF MORAL EXISTENCE--MORAL GOOD AND EVIL

Presently, something should be said about the nature of moral existence before we undertake an investigation of its causes. Human activities are judged to be either morally good or morally evil. This is, as we have said, a starting point grounded in experience. Good and evil appear as categories into which moral acts are placed because human beings manifest themselves as existing either goodly or evilly. What does the philosopher make of this classification of human acts? In answering this question St. Thomas observes that the good and evil in human acts, in other words moral being, is in some ways not different from good and evil in non-human activity. St. Thomas uses the analogy not to deduce moral being from an analysis of the physical or natural beings of things, but because there maintains a real similarity between them. One would not be at a disadvantage then were he to begin with Aquinas' discussion of the good and evil in things in general. From there it is but a short step to

3 S.T., I-II, 18, 1c.
Saint Thomas' doctrine of moral being.

The Nature Of Good And Evil In Things In General

Briefly then, let us recall that anything in so far as it exists is actual and therefore good. And yet something is not for that reason necessarily good absolutely speaking, for, as was noted, the beings of our experience manifest themselves as being cut off from their end, their absolute good and second perfection. The question of good and evil ultimately reduces itself to a question of the being, the individual having attained at any given moment the level of perfection that it could and should possess. To the extent that it has attained this degree of perfection and actuality it is good, and to the extent that it falls short it is evil. Now it is this state of being cut off from their end which allows for the possibility of good and evil as we know them.

As for the nature of the goodness manifest by the beings of our experience something has already been said. Convertible with being, the good, or, if you will, the goodness of the beings of our experience, is nought but their very being understood as related to the appetite, that is, viewed as desirable. At this point the problem is not understanding the nature of their goodness. As was indicated in the previous chapter, an

4 See Chapter I, page 9, note 15.

5 Ibid.
individual has just as much good as it has being. The metaphysical problem now is given the convertibility of being and good, wherein lies the reality of evil. How can there be evil when everything which in any way is necessarily good?

It is right that a discussion on evil should develop after or at least within a discussion of good, for it is the essence of the matter that a privitive opposite be known only in the light of its positive counterpart. Ontologically posterior, evil is also logically posterior to the good. And so Aquinas says, "One opposite is known through the other, as darkness is known through light. Hence, what evil is must be known from the nature of good." The discussion of evil is therefore intimately connected with the good for, paradoxical as it appears at first sight, it is only the good which can and does reveal evil.

Aquinas observes that evil signifies the absence of some good.

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6 De Potentia Dei, 9, 7, ad6. "Indeed negation or privation cannot be the first that is conceived by the intellect since what is negated or deprived is always needed for the understanding of the negation or privation." As translated by Vernon J. Bourke in his The Pocket Aquinas, (Washington: The Washington Square Press Inc., 1960), 160.

7 S.T., I, 48, 1c; also see S.T., I, 14, 10, ad4: "To know a thing by something else only, belongs to imperfect knowledge, if that thing is knowable in itself; but evil is not knowable in itself because the very nature of evil consists in the privation of good; therefore evil can neither be defined nor known except by good."

8 S.T., I, 48, 1c; cf. also I, 14, 10, ad4; De Malo, 1, 1c: "Evil precisely as such is not a reality in things, but a deprivation of some particular good inhering in a particular good."
And since being and good are convertible, the absence of good which is meant by evil is an absence of being, of existence. Taken in itself evil is simply non-being. "That which has no being at all is neither good nor evil. And, as we have shown, whatever is, so far as it is, is good. Hence, a thing must be evil so far as it is a non-being." But how can evil be a non-being if it is so very real? St. Thomas answers by observing that of the 'kinds' of non-being, evil is properly said to be privation, and thus it should not be confused with mere negation on the one hand, nor with matter on the other, both of which are also said to be a kind of non-being.

Rather, evil is, as was said, a privation:

As the term "good" signifies perfect being, so the term "evil" signifies nothing else than privation of a perfect being. In its proper acceptance, privation is predicated of that which is fitted by its nature to be possessed, and to be possessed at a certain time in a certain manner. Evidently, therefore a thing is called evil if it lacks a perfection it ought to have.

Every evil is a certain lack of being, and therefore evil can also be said

9 S.C.G., II, 41c; "What is more, if every being, as such, is good, then evil, as such, is a non-being." Ibid.

10 In XII Metaphysics, sect. 1; see Sister Mary De Coursey, S.C.L., The Theory of Evil in the Metaphysics of St. Thomas and its Contemporary Significance, published doctoral dissertation; Catholic University of America, 1948, (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1948), 32-35. For the relationship between matter, negation and privation see also St. Thomas' De Principiis Naturae.

11 Compendium Theologiae, I, 114; cf. also S.T., I, 33, ad2: "In a third sense, privation means the absence of that which something ought to have; in which sense, privation signifies an imperfection."
to be a negation. However, not every negation is a privation, nor therefore is every negation an evil. Only when the negation is said of some perfection which should be present is it said to be a privation and an evil in the proper sense of the word.\(^{12}\) Evil is, then, a negation or non-being in a substance which ought not to have such a lack. The example St. Thomas often uses when speaking of the pritive aspect characteristic of evil is that of the blind man: "Thus if a man lacks the sense of sight, this is an evil for him. But the same lack is not an evil for a stone, for the stone is not equipped by nature to have the faculty of sight."\(^{13}\) Here then is the reality of evil, its essence, that "it is the privation of the good."\(^{14}\)

Taken in itself evil is nothing. It is therefore wrong to look for its essence as if evil were something in itself.

In fact, evil is simply a privation of something which a subject is entitled by its origin to possess and which it ought to have, as we have said. Such is the meaning of the word "evil" among all men. Now privation is not an essence; it is, rather, a negation in a substance. Therefore, evil is not an essence.\(^{15}\)

Nevertheless, evil is present in some subject; and since anything is good inasmuch as it exists, the subject of evil is some good:

\(^{12}\) See \textit{S.T.}, I, 48, 3c; \textit{S.C.G.}, III, 6c.

\(^{13}\) \textit{Compendium Theologiae}, I, 114; cf. \textit{S.T.}, I, 48, 3c.

\(^{14}\) \textit{S.T.}, I, 14, 10c. Underlining is mine.

\(^{15}\) \textit{S.C.G.}, III, 7c.
Indeed, evil cannot exist by itself, since it has no essence. Therefore, evil must be in some subject. Now, every subject, because it is some sort of substance is a good of some kind, as is clear from the foregoing. So every evil is in a good thing.\textsuperscript{16}

Not every good is necessarily the subject of evil, however. Evil's subject must be a good which has some potentiality,\textsuperscript{17} and thus the highest good Who is pure act could not possibly be the subject of evil.\textsuperscript{18} What then is the reality of evil? Evil is nothing more nor less than the lack of perfection that an existing substance could and should have. Inasmuch as a substance exists it is good and therefore perfect; but inasmuch as it is cut off from the perfection which it \textit{could} and \textit{should} have it is evil.

Evil is possible because beings are posited into existence as substances cut off from their final perfection, and in this sense they are in potentiality to that perfection:

Therefore the subject of evil must be good, not in the sense that it is opposed to evil, but in the sense that it is a potency for the reception of evil. This brings out the fact that not every good can be the subject of evil, but only such a good as is in potency with respect to some perfection of which it can be deprived.\textsuperscript{19}

From this it follows that it is not incorrect to maintain that

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{16} \textit{Ibid.}, III, 11c; \textit{S.T.}, I, 48, 3c.
\item \textsuperscript{17} \textit{S.T.}, I, 48, 3c.
\item \textsuperscript{18} \textit{Ibid.}, I, 49, 3, ad2.
\item \textsuperscript{19} \textit{Compendium Theologiae}, I, 117c.
\end{itemize}
the beings of our experience are divided into good and evil, if one retains
the proper meaning of these terms. Every thing is good inasmuch as it has
being, inasmuch as it exists. A substance is evil, and really so, only
inasmuch as its being, its existence falls short of the level of perfection
that is due to it.20 Evil is thus most real, as the blind man well knows.
But its reality is precisely that lack of being without which the individ­
ual is not properly what it should be. In this sense evil is most imper­
fact. It is, in truth, the very opposite of perfection; evil is, in itself,
non-being pure and simple. And since substances manifest themselves as
lacking the being that is properly due to them, they manifest themselves
as both good and evil. They are neither totally good nor totally evil;
but, rather they are somewhat good and somewhat evil. The division of be­
ings into good and evil is but the intelligible rendering of this fact.

Kinds Of Evil

The experience of evil--like that of good--contains a unifying
element. When one attempts to classify the various kinds of evil, for
example, the evils of corruption, death, sickness, loss of an organ or
power, etc., one discovers that these privations relate either to the op­
eration of a being or to the very being itself. For this reason St. Thomas
says,

20 S.T., I-II, 18, 1c; I-II, 18, 5c, and ad1.
Evil, as was said above, is the privation of good, which chiefly and of itself consists in perfection and act. Act, however is twofold, first, and second. The first act is the form and integrity of a thing; the second act is its operation. Therefore evil is also twofold. In one way it occurs by the abstraction of the form, or of any part required for the integrity of the thing, as blindness is an evil, just as it is an evil to be wanting in any member of the body. In another way evil exists by the withdrawal of the due operation, either because it does not exist, or because it has not its due mode and order. 21

From this basic distinction St. Thomas notes three kinds of evil. Depending on whether the above mentioned evils occur in irrational or rational beings, St. Thomas says that evil is divided into the evil of nature, of punishment (poena), 22 and of fault. When these evils (the privations, and that is either of the first or second perfection) are present in irrational beings St. Thomas calls them evils of nature (agens natural) and says that these are ultimately reduced to an evil in the agent or in the matter upon

21 Ibid., I, 48, 5c; also see De Malo, I, 4c; S.C.G., III, 6 up to and including St. Thomas' reply to the second argument of chapter 5; III, 14c.

22 S.T., I, 48, 5c. Whereas Anton Pegis and "The Fathers of the English Dominican Providence" in their translations of the Summa Theologica translate "Poena" as "Pain," the former in order to indicate the ambiguity of this translation includes the latin word "poena" in brackets while the latter footnotes the translation and gives this notation: "Pain here means penalty: such was its original signification, being derived from poena. In this sense we say Pain of death, Pain of loss, Pain of sense.--Ed." However, it appears that "punishment" is a more accurate translation of "poena," since when Aquinas uses the term "poena" either alone or in conjunction with another term he means it to signify primarily a type of punishment. Viz. R.J. Deferrari, I. Barry, and I. McGuinness' list of the "kinds of poena" appearing in St. Thomas' works. Every "kind" of usage in their list (some 35 in all) has a direct reference to punishment of some kind: A Lexicon of St. Thomas Aquinas Based on the Summa Theologica and Selected Passages, (Washington, 1948-1953).
which the agent acts. When the privation is in a rational being it takes on a special character due to the fact that it occurs in a being capable of intellectual knowledge and volition. On this basis evil is properly called either the evil of punishment (poena) or of fault (culpa). St. Thomas continues,

But because good in itself is the object of the will, evil which is the privation of good, is found in a special way in rational creatures which have a will. Therefore the evil which comes from the withdrawl of the form and integrity of the thing has the nature of a pain; and especially so on the supposition that all things are subject to divine providence and justice, as was shown above. For it is of the nature of pain to be against the will. But the evil which consists in the subtraction of the due operation in voluntary things has the nature of a fault; for it is imputed anyone as a fault if he should fail as regards perfect action, of which he is master by the will.  

The beings of our experience thus fall into the category of good or evil, and depending on whether the being is capable of rational knowledge and volition, its evil state can be further specified. If a being has the perfection it ought to have it is said to be naturally good, while to lack this perfection is to suffer a natural evil. Rational beings are also said to be good or evil. But since the achievement of their proper perfection is somehow dependent on their intellect and will, they are said to be morally good or morally evil. Moral evil is in turn more properly

23 S.T., I, 49, 1c; and ad3; cf. S.C.G., III, 10c.

24 S.T., I, 48, 5c; cf. De Malo, I, 4c.
called evil of fault since, as we shall shortly see, the causes of this evil, of this state of non-being, is the freely choosing subject himself.

MORAL GOOD AND EVIL

Now the genus of moral acts and consequently the genus of moral existence is divided into the species of moral good and moral evil. St. Thomas says, "Now certain actions are called human or moral inasmuch as they proceed from reason." Consequently it is evident that good and evil diversify the species on human actions: since essential differences cause a difference of species. Every human act inasmuch as it is performed knowingly and willingly is therefore a moral act and is properly classified as either morally good or evil, which is but to explicate Aquinas' identification of human and moral acts.

To say that every human act can be placed in the species of moral good or moral evil is not, however, to specify in what lies the goodness or evilness of moral activity. In answer to the question of whether all human actions are good St. Thomas says:

We must speak of good and evil in actions as good and evil in

25 The good of man is to be in accord with reason, for the standard in moral matters is reason: S.C.G., III, 9c; cf. also III, 10c; S.T., I, 63c and ad4; and I-II, 18, 1c.

26 S.T., I-II, 18, 5c, in the translation of the Fathers of the English Dominican Province, see also S.T., I, 48, 1, ad2.

27 Ibid., I-II, 18, 9c.
things, because such as everything is, such is the act that it produces.

We must therefore say that every action has goodness in so far as it has being, whereas it is lacking in goodness in so far as it is lacking something that is due to its fullness of being; and thus it is said to be evil, for instance, if it lacks the measure determined by reason, or its place, or something of the kind. 28

The goodness or evilness of moral activity and moral existence is consequently not different, ontologically speaking, from the goodness or evilness of things. A thing is good if it has the being, the actuality, the perfection that is due to it and evil to the extent that these are lacking, and this is true even regards the being of human acts: a man is good if he has the being, the actuality, the perfection that is due to him, while he is evil to the extent that his being falls short of this his end.

In brief then, every human act is either morally good or morally evil, depending on whether or not it is directed to a due end in accord with reason. It is only by performing human acts that the individual begins to exist morally, for inasmuch as man is the subject of his acts the man is himself said to exist morally. Thus our investigation has been given direction. Moral acts are human acts, that is acts performed knowingly and willingly. The causes of moral existence should therefore some-

28 Ibid., 18, 1c.
how include the faculties of knowing and willing. Let us now turn to the causes of moral existence.

CAUSES OF MORAL EXISTENCE

Aristotle reduces the causes to four in number: material, formal, moving, and final. St. Thomas follows Aristotle's division with the important modifications that he interprets the moving cause as an efficient cause and that he does not base his division on the prior distinction of intrinsic and extrinsic causal principles. Now the material cause is for St. Thomas as for Aristotle "that from which a thing comes to be and is 'something intrinsic,' i.e., something which exists within a thing." Prime matter is such a cause. It is the nature of prime matter to stand as the recipient of the formal cause and thereby constitute the completed material substance. The formal cause received into prime matter, the substantial form, is the intrinsic "form and pattern of a thing" from which

29 Gilson, Elements of Christian Philosophy, 184-189.

30 Francis X. Meehan, Efficient Causality in Aristotle and St. Thomas, published doctoral dissertation; The Catholic University of America, 1940, (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1940), 179, n.40; 205.

"each thing derives its nature."32

When speaking of efficient causality St. Thomas often follows Aristotle even to the extent of interchanging efficient and moving causality as if the two were simply convertible terms. Thus in his commentary on the Metaphysics St. Thomas says, "In a third sense cause means that from which the first beginning of change or of rest comes, i.e., a moving or efficient cause."33 Fr. Meehan,34 like Gilson,35 warns against misinterpreting St. Thomas' mind on this point, and refers his readers to the passages where St. Thomas speaks of God's creative act which is "that most obvious example of efficient causality par excellence which excludes motion, time and succession."36 If not simply a moving cause, what then is the nature of efficient causality? In the words of Fr. Meehan, "An efficient cause then is the productive cause or an acting cause; a cause which, by action, contributes being to or to the being or becoming of another."37

32 Ibid., 764. This differs, of course, from the extrinsic formal cause which is, for St. Thomas, the exemplary cause. Ibid; see also De Veritate, III, aa. 1 and 3c.

33 Ibid., 765.

34 Efficient Causality in Aristotle and St. Thomas, 184-189.


36 See, for example, S.C.G., II, 21c.

37 Efficient Causality in Aristotle and St. Thomas, 187-188; see also 199-328, esp. 308ff, where Fr. Meehan develops these notions. For a more recent study of the role of efficient causality in St. Thomas'
The fourth kind of cause is the final cause. In this sense cause means "a thing's end, i.e., that for the sake of which something is done."\(^{38}\) The importance of this cause lies in that while it is the last thing to come into being it is always prior in causality. The efficient cause is the causality of both matter and form, "because by its motion it causes matter to be receptive of form and makes form exist in matter."\(^{39}\) In a real sense it is also the cause of the final cause inasmuch as the end is not realized save through the agency of efficient causality. Yet the final cause is the cause of the efficient cause, "inasmuch as it is the reason for the causality of the efficient cause. For an efficient cause is a cause inasmuch as it acts, and it acts only because of the final cause."\(^{40}\) Last in the order of execution, the final cause is first in the order of the agent's intention. "And it is this way that it is a cause."\(^{41}\)

These then are the four species of causality. Though basically

thought especially from the point of view of the relationship maintaining between creaturely efficient causality and God's causality see Joseph Martin Graham's *Secondary Causal Influx According to Saint Thomas Aquinas*, unpublished doctoral dissertation; University of Notre Dame, 1961.

38 *In V Metaphysics*, lect. II, 771.


41 *S.T.*, I-II, 1, 1, ad1.
distinct modes, they do have something in common. Fr. Meehan summarizes the matter:

...a cause, in the generic sense, according to the mind of St. Thomas, is that particular species of principle, which, by positive influx, contributes being to, or contributes to the being or becoming of, something distinct from itself and on which that other is dependent in the measure of that contribution.42

These four causes are thus the principles that account for the being and becoming of the beings of our experience.

It has been observed that moral existence is a real mode of existence. Individual men are said to become moral, to come to be morally, either goodly or evilly. And even though they may develop a habit of moral action, virtuous or vicious, it is generally admitted that good men can begin to exist evilly and evil men goodly. The reality of this mode of being has also been examined, if but briefly, and it was seen that only human acts are moral acts, and therefore only by performing human acts does the subject enter into the order of morality by beginning to exist morally. Now since moral existence is a real state of being, and since individual men are said to become, to come to exist in this state, it is proper and necessary in looking for the intelligible expression of this mode of being, to seek those causes which "by positive influx" contribute to this mode of existence.

42 Efficient Causality in Aristotle and St. Thomas, 174.
Material Cause

Is there a material cause of moral existence? Let us look a bit more closely at what Aquinas says about material causality. Besides prime matter, which is the potency to substantial existence and which is called the matter out-of-which the substance comes to be. St. Thomas recognizes another kind of material cause, namely, the existing substance itself which is in potency to be accidentally. This type is called the matter in-which since an already informed matter, the existing substance, is subject to additional modifications—inasmuch as it is in potentiality to these accidental modifications. St. Thomas goes on to say that in a sense everything that is in potency can be called matter. It is clear that material causality is an analogous notion for Aquinas, meaning as it does anything from the purely passive potency of prime matter to "everything that is in anyway in potency." Taken in this latter and more general meaning the material cause of moral existence is the individual substance, the supposit who is the subject of his human acts. The individual man who in subsisting has achieved his first good and primary perfection is the subject of moral existence. When he performs human acts he is either achieving the good and perfection which he ought to possess, being the kind of being

43 De Principiis Naturae. Translation is taken from Vernon J. Bourke's translation as found in his The Pocket Aquinas, 62; also see In V Metaphysics, lect. II, 763.

44 Ibid.
he is, namely a rational being, and is said to be existing morally, that
is goodly, or he is achieving a good and a perfection but at the expense
of the good and perfection he ought to possess, and he is said to be exist-
ing morally, that is evilly. But in either case, it is the individual him-
self who is the material cause of moral becoming and moral being. Since
being and good are convertible, the material cause of moral being and be-
coming is a good--the subsistent. And so, when speaking of the causes of
evil St. Thomas says that "the good is the cause of evil by way of the ma-
terial cause....For it was shown that good is the subject of evil." It
hardly needs mentioning that the material cause of moral goodness is sim-
ilarly the subject and thus the good. The material cause of moral exist-
ence is, then, the individual subject who, inasmuch as he exists, is good.
He is the material cause in that in performing human acts the subject ac-
quires additional reality, additional perfection through the acquisition
of additional forms which are either good inasmuch as they are actually per-
fective of the subject as subject, or evil inasmuch as though coming to the
subject as somewhat good they deprive the substance of the thing which is
actually perfective--his real good.

Having discovered the material cause of moral existence we are
still left with a question. What causes the individual to begin to exist

45 S.T., I, 49, 1c; cf. Comp. Theol., I, 118c.
goodly or evilly? What brings about this state of being? What, in short, causes the material cause to take on the unique, though not on that count unreal, quality of moral being? The key to this inquiry is found in the already observed identification of human and moral activity. Every human act is a moral act, and inasmuch as human acts are those performed knowingly and willingly, moral acts spring from the powers of intellect and will. Are then the intellect and will causes of moral being? and if so, what is the mode of their causality? The answer to these questions obviously involves an analysis of the components of the human act and therefore it is to this analyses that we now turn.

Final Cause

St. Thomas' description of the human act, found for the most part in questions 8 to 17 of the Prima Secundae, reveals a rather complex act consisting in a number of distinct though related steps. 46 What be-

comes readily apparent when this act is analysed is the key role played by the intellectual and volitional powers throughout the act. The intellect and will are so related that each in its own way contributes to the very being of the moral act, and this each does by contributing a certain causality, a certain "positive influx" which gives the act its being.

In the previous chapter it was seen that appetition is an inclination that a being has for acquiring the good for which it has received existence but from which it is separated. It is the principle by which beings are ordered to their end which is perfective. Like all the substances of our experience, rational beings act for an end, their good. However they act in virtue of an intellectual apprehension, and consequently they tend to their ends by the power of an appetitive principle that is proportioned to this apprehension. As a principle of inclination in a rational being, the will is therefore most properly called a passive power: it is passive in that it is moved to act (to actively tend to) by the object of appetite which is some good apprehended by the intellect; and it is a power in that it is the principle whereby the subject actively tends to that good.47 The difficulty lies in determining first, in what matter of causality the will is said to be moved to action, and second, what is the causality whereby the will is said to be a principle of activity.

As a passive power the will is put into act by the object of in-

47 See Chapter I, 29-31.
intellectual apprehension which is presented to the will as something
good.\textsuperscript{48} In presenting its object the intellect is said to move the will.
And so Aquinas says that "primarily and directly the intellect moves the
will."\textsuperscript{49} Then does the intellect act as an efficient cause, for only the
efficient cause is properly called the cause of motion? One must answer
negatively; rather "the intellect moves the will in the way that the end
moves something, since the good that is understood is the end for the
will."\textsuperscript{50} Again,

Similarly in moving, the end is said to move as the reason for
moving, but the efficient cause, as the one producing the move­
ment, that is, the one which brings the subject of the motion
from potency to act.

The reason for acting is the form of the agent by which it
acts. It must accordingly be in the agent for it to act. It is
not there, however, according to its perfect act of being; for
when that is had the motion comes to rest. But it is in the
agent by way of an intention, for the end is prior in intention
but posterior in being. Thus the end preexists in the mover in
a proper sense intellectually (for it belongs to intellect to
receive something by way of an intention) and not according to
its real existence. Hence the intellect moves the will the way
in which an end is said to move--by conceiving beforehand the
reason for acting and proposing it to the will.\textsuperscript{51}

\textsuperscript{48} It appears that Aquinas never denied that the will was at
least partly a passive potency: see Bourke's \textit{Will and Western Thought},
63.

\textsuperscript{49} \textit{S.C.G.}, III, 26c.

\textsuperscript{50} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{51} \textit{De Veritate}, XXII, 12c; \textit{S.T.}, I, 82, 4c; \textit{S.C.G.}, I, 72c.
Moving in the manner of an end the intellect moves the will in the manner of a final cause, for the end is said to be a mover in the order of final causality.

The intellect is thus the final cause inasmuch as knowing the object, the intellect itself in a way becomes the object desired, the good object. But it becomes this object only intellectually, in the manner of being proper to intellectual knowledge. To know the other is to be the other intentionally. If intentional possession of the object is but the start of intellectual appetition whose culmination is the real possession of the good object as it exists in itself. It is a real start, nevertheless, since it is the act which initiates appetition. The intellect is thus the final cause of the moral act inasmuch as only through the intellect's apprehension of the good object, i.e. only by acquiring its form, is that object loved, desired and tended to at all. A condition of its being tended to is thus that the good thing be known, that is, that it be an object of intellectual apprehension:

Now appetite is a passive power, because it is moved by the object of appetite, which is an 'unmoved mover,' as is said in The Soul (De anima., III, 10, 433b 15-18). But the object of appetite does not move the appetite unless it is apprehended.


53 De Veritate, XXV, 1c. This principle is analogously applied to the inclination following natural appetition, for while knowledge must ground any and all movement directed to an end and while all beings act for an end not all beings are directed to their own end by their own knowledge. The inclination following natural forms is ordained to its proper end by the author of the being's nature who is God: De Veritate, XXII, 1, ad2.
Because the intellect is the presenter of the good object, a question arises as to whether the intellect is the final cause per se or per accidens. A moment's reflection on the activity of intellectual apprehension resolves this difficulty. It follows that since man's intellect "proceeds from a state of potentiality to a state of actuality," and since this change is initiated by something outside the knower, the very apprehension of the good object depends (ontologically) on the real object itself. Apprehension is always "apprehension of." The intellect is the final cause inasmuch as apprehending the end it, the end, is made an object of appetition. Speaking more precisely, it is simply the case that the intellect as intellect is not the end; the intellect is but the bearer of the end. Thus the intellect is the final cause of the moral act per accidens. Strictly speaking, the per se final cause of the will's activity and of the moral act is the end, the good object in the real order. This is why when speaking of that which moves the will, St. Thomas does not always introduce the notion of an apprehensive power. What moves the will is the good in the real order, the end taken in itself (per se): "In things willed for the sake of the end, the whole reason for our being moved is the end; and this it is that moves the will, as most clearly appears in things willed only for the sake of the end."  

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54 S.T., I, 85, 3c.

55 S.T., I, 19, 2, ad2.
It is only secondarily that the intellect enters into this movement inasmuch as it relates the will to the end by way of apprehension. So it is that when speaking of those things which move the will, St. Thomas often includes the intellect because it is an apprehended good that moves the will as an end: "that which is apprehended under the nature of what is good and befitting moves the will as an object." And again, "A thing is said to move in two ways: First, as an end, as when we say that the end moves the agent. In this way the intellect moves the will, because the understood good is the object of the will, and moves it as an end." 

Summarizing what has been said about the final causality of moral acts, we see that moral acts are performed with a view to an end which is some good. Thus the good object is primarily (per se) the final cause, the reason why the man acts at all. Secondarily, (per accidens), the intellect can be called the final cause for it presents the end—an object both good and befitting—to the appetitive power.

Formal Cause

A closer examination of what is involved in presenting the good object to the will reveals that the intellect enters into the causality of

56 S.T., I-II, 9, 2c. Underlining is mine.

57 S.T., I, 82, 4c. Underlining is mine.

58 On the final causality of the intellect in the moral act see Marianne Childress', "Efficient Causality in Human Actions," The Modern Schoolman, XXVIII, (1951), 191-222. Childress' article is an excellent
the moral act in another and more direct manner. Distinguishing between the exercise and determination of the will's act, St. Thomas observes that the object of the will, the good in general, moves the will in the manner of a formal cause, because it is in determining the will's act that the will is directed to a specific object:

On the other hand, the object moves, by determining the act, after the manner of formal principle, whereby in natural things actions are specified, as heating by heat. Now the first formal principle is universal being and truth, which is the object of the intellect. And therefore by this kind of motion the intellect moves the will, as presenting its object to it.59

As presenter of the good object it appears that the intellect is not only the final cause but is also and more properly the formal cause, the cause which gives specification to the will's act. What this means is this. The will is an appetitive power which is related to and which can tend to any object apprehended as something good. The relation to and tending to this object is, as we shall presently see, properly the act of the will, and therefore while its object is anything which is apprehended as a good,

study in the causality of the human act. While, as the title indicates, this article emphasizes the role of efficient causality of the human act, Childress does treat of the other causes. She does not however identify the material cause with the acting subject. Such an identification certainly seems compatible with Childress' work. Also see the study by Gerald Smith, S.J. entitled "Intelligence and Liberty," The New Scholasticism, XV, (1941), 1-17; Anton Pegis', "Necessity and Liberty: and Historical Note on St. Thomas Aquinas," The New Scholasticism, XV, (1941), 18-45; Bourke's Ethics, Klubertanz's The Philosophy of Human Nature.

59 S.T., I-II, 9, 1c; also ad3, cf. De Malo, 6, 1c.
either a particular good or the ultimate good, the will as an intellectual appetite is--prior to apprehension--not actually determined to any specific object. It becomes determined or specified only when some good object is actually apprehended. It certainly appears then, that the very content of the moral act comes from the intellect which, acting as the formal cause, specified the act to be the act of willing this apprehended good, or on the contrary, it specifies the act to be an act of shunning this apprehended evil.

Lest we misconstrue St. Thomas' thought on this important point, let us look a bit more deeply into this matter of the intellect "giving content" to the act of the will--and thereby to the moral act taken as a whole. If the proper object of the intellect is being and the true; if the good is the proper object of the will; and if rational appetition arises as a consequence of cognition, that is, if cognition is a condition of a thing being known as good and not of its being good, then how is it that the intellect presents the will with a good object? That the intellect must present the will with an object there can be no doubt, for the will is a passive power. Nor can there be any doubt that the intellect knows objects as being good--or as being evil--for the will's object is a known good or a known evil. But it is the will, the appetive power, which relates to objects in the real order, i.e. the order of existence, and thus the special character of goodness, born of the real fittingness.

60 De Veritate, XXII, 1c. See Gilson, Elements, 243-4.
and therefore of real relational character manifest by beings, is something which does not arise as an essential part of the cognitive act. Cognition is an activity complete in itself; knowledge is an act perfecting the knower in its own way. Nevertheless, appetition, at least rational appetition, is dependent on cognition and therein lies the difficulty of correctly distinguishing the role played by the intellect in the moral act.

If not always in the order of time, certainly in the order of beings, ontologically, it is the case that rational appetition is dependent upon intellection. An object must first be known before it can be loved, desired, sought and possessed in the order of existence. The only question is whether it is valid to speak of loving, desire, seeking and possessing without introducing the appetitive powers—which is the case if one maintains that the good object is presented to the will and then the will desires it. Rather, it is in desiring the object that the special quality of goodness is recognized, for goodness and desirability and inclination all pertain to the appetite. Therefore if an object is known as good, that is, if the intellect presents its object to the will as something good, it is hardly the intellect which in knowing the object confers upon it the additional note of goodness. On the contrary, it appears that the intellect discovers that its object is good when it understands that it is desired. The ontological order seems to be 1) knowledge of an object--intellectual apprehension; 2) desire of the object if it is good and shunning it if it is evil--intellectual appetition; 3) intellectual aware-
ness of the desirability or lack of desirability of the object, of its quality of goodness or evilness: having a good object in place of merely an object. It is in or after step three that the will has its proper object, an object intellectually apprehended as good.

But how do we know that this or that desired object is really good? How can we be sure it is the true good? St. Thomas answers that

Since, however, good has the nature of an end, and evil the nature of the contrary, hence it is that all those things to which man has a natural inclination are naturally apprehended by reason as being good, and consequently as objects of pursuit, and their contraries as evil, and objects of avoidance.61

In short, man must look to his natural inclinations. There are a few basic goods which man as man naturally desires. These are the goods of the body and soul which are absolutely fundamental to continued existence and which are basic for the development of man's potentialities. There must be some beginning to the appetite's inclinations, some starting point. There must be some objects to which the will as a nature is naturally directed. Once again showing the empirical bent of his mind Aquinas observes that we must look to man's natural inclinations as they manifest themselves. What are the fundamental objects of man's appetites? What basic inclinations manifestly ground all of man's activities? In other words, what are those basic ends to which all of men's desires are reduced? Observe how man lives:

61 S.T., I-II, 94, 2c.
For there is in man, first of all, an inclination to good in accordance with the nature which he has in common with all substances, inasmuch, namely, as every substance seeks the preservation of its own being, according to its nature; and by reason of this inclination, whatever is a means of preserving human life, and of warding off its obstacles, belongs to the natural law. Secondly, there is in man an inclination to things that pertain to him more specifically, according to that nature which he has in common with other animals; and in virtue of this inclination, those things are said to belong to the natural law which nature has taught to all animals, such as sexual intercourse, the education of offspring and so forth. Thirdly, there is in man an inclination to good according to the nature of his reason, which nature is proper to him. Thus man has a natural inclination to know the truth about God, and to live in society; and in this respect, whatever pertains to this inclination belongs to the natural law: e.g., to shun ignorance, to avoid offending those among whom one has to live, and other such things regarding the above inclinations. 62

It is therefore apparent that the intellectual act of specification involves the discovery of a good object, but does not mean that the intellect as intellect confers the character of goodness upon its apprehended object. The intellect's involvement in the moral act may indeed go beyond the step of discovery, but that this is its initial step there appears to be little doubt.

Whereas the speculative intellect is directed to contemplation, the practical intellect is directed to operation, 63 and thus St. Thomas notes that the speculative intellect differs from the practical in that "the speculative is only apprehensive of things but the practical is not

62 Ibid.

63 S.T., I, 79, 11c; De Veritate, XXII, 11, ad4.
only apprehensive but causative.\textsuperscript{64} It is not surprising therefore in virtue of its special preoccupation with operation that while the will is related to the speculative intellect,\textsuperscript{65} it is primarily the practical intellect that specifies the will's act. In the article where St. Thomas says that the intellect moves as a formal cause he goes on to say,

Just as the imagination of a form without estimation of fitness or harmfulness does not move the sensitive appetite, so neither does the apprehension of the true without the aspect of goodness and desirability. Hence it is not the speculative intellect that moves, but the practical intellect.\textsuperscript{66}

The intellect does move the will, but it is the practical intellect which moves--not as an agent exercising efficient causality, but as the formal cause giving content and thereby determining the will by presenting to it its object and the reason for attending to that object, namely, because it is apprehended as something good: "The practical intellect is a motive power, not as executing movement, but as directed towards it; and this belongs to it according to its mode of apprehension."\textsuperscript{67}

\textsuperscript{64} \textit{S.T.}, II-II, 33, 1c.


\textsuperscript{66} \textit{S.T.}, I-II, 9, 1, ad3; cf. \textit{S.T.}, I, 79, 11, ad1; \textit{S.C.G.}, I, 72: "Furthermore, a form considered by the intellect does not move or cause anything except through the will, whose object is the end and the good, by which someone is moved to act. Hence, the speculative intellect does not move, nor does the imagination alone without an act of the estimative power."

the object of the intellect absolutely speaking, it is being apprehended under the aspect of goodness which is the proper object of the practical intellect:

Now a certain order is to be found in those things that are apprehended by men. For that which first falls under apprehensions is being, the understanding of which is included in all things whatsoever a man apprehends. Therefore the first inde-monstrable principle is that the same thing cannot be affirmed and denied at the same time, which is based on the notion of being and not-being: and on this principle all others are based, as is stated in Metaph. iv. Now as being is the first thing that falls under the apprehension absolutely, so good is the first thing that falls under the apprehension of the practical reason, which is directed to action (since every agent acts for an end, which has the nature of good). 68

Marianne Childress 69 points out that the formal causality of the intellect involves the will's being ordered to reason. St. Thomas' emphasis on the order of reason is found at each and every step of the moral act beginning with the initial act of intellectual apprehension of the end (intellectus), 70 and concluding in the will's act of enjoyment (fruition) of the possessed good, which consists in resting in the acquired end. 71

As Childress says,

This 'order of reason' which implies a formal causality of

68 S.T., I-II, 94, 2c.
70 S.T., I-II, 19, 1c; De Veritate, XXII, 12c; S.T., I-II, 9, 1c.
71 S.T., I-II, 11c.
intellect on the will is more clearly evident in the acts consequent to velle—that is, from intention on. But even in the order of end the intellect 'informs' the will act when it is a question of willing a specified end. 72

What is the nature of this information whereby the will is ordered to reason? When two powers are ordered to one another we find in each of them something that belongs to the other, 73 and therefore the will and intellect being ordered to each other each has something of the other within itself. This being a real relationship, there is a real communion of being between these powers. Speaking of the relationship between the intellect and will in commanded acts St. Thomas says,

...since the acts of the reason and of the will can be brought to bear on one another, in so far as the reason reasons about willing, and the will willed to reason, it follows that the act of the reason precedes the act of the will, and conversely. And since the power of the preceding act continues in the act that follows, it happens sometimes that there is an act of the will in so far as it retains in itself something of the act of the reason, as we have stated in reference to use (Q. 16, a.1) and choice (Q. 13, a.1); and conversely, that there is an act of reason in so far as it retains in itself something of the act of the will. 74

Commenting on this passage Childress says that while St. Thomas is describing imperium we can apply this principle (of the will's receiving

73 S.T., I-II, 14, 1 ad1; see also De Veritate, XXII, 15c.
74 S.T., I-II, 17, 1c.
something of reason) to the act of intention (intendio). It would seem that we could apply it not merely to usus, electio, imperius, and intendio, but also to the other volitional steps involved in a moral act. In general, the will can be compared to the intellect as matter to form, and so we find the analogy drawn by St. Thomas when speaking of the intellect's causality in the volitional act of choice. While the act of choice belongs properly to the will, it is nevertheless, an act of the intellect inasmuch as an act of the intellect is presupposed in the act of choice: the act of choice is materially an act of the will but formally an act of the intellect. Specifying the will's act, the intellect is related to the will


76 The reason being that an act of the will presupposes and follows--ontologically--an act of cognition, and therefore while apprehension of the end is required for voluntas it is also required for intendio, consensus, electio, usus, and frutio. Without the initial act of apprehension not only would there not be an act of wishing the end but there could be no further acts of intellection and volition. Intellectus and voluntas are in fact presupposed throughout the moral act for they are present virtually within all of the following steps of the moral act. And so it is at every step along the way: every intellectual and volitional step has something of the reality, the being, of the preceding steps. Herein lies the basis of the unity of the moral act. On the virtual presence of an act throughout the moral series see Klubertanz's comments as noted by Childress "Efficient Causality," New Scholasticism, 210-211.

77 See also De Veritate, XXII, 15c; S.T., I, 83, 3c.

78 S.T., I-II, 13, 1c.
as form is to matter.

We can say summarily that the intellect is primarily the formal cause of the moral act in that it gives specifications to the will's act. That is, it is the intellect in its act of apprehension which presents the will with an object actually apprehended and thereby actually specified as something good. It is, furthermore, the intellect which, under the influence of the will, moves to consider not only the end but the means to the end, and therefore the intellect is seen to inform the will throughout the moral act. Given its object the will is moved from a state of potentiality to that of a will in act. The manner of the intellect's causality is that of specification and this is the reason for the matter-form analogy.

Efficient Cause

Although the intellect plays an indispensable role in the moral act, specification is not in itself moral activity. It remains to be determined wherein lies the causality whereby human acts receive their reality as acts. Here the discussion revolves around the fact that the will is a power. This brings us to a consideration of the efficient cause of moral

79 Although St. Thomas is speaking of the act of choice his analogy can, I think, be applied to the general relationship that the intellect and will manifest throughout the moral act. On this analogy see Fr. Klubertanz's "The Unity of Human Activity," The Modern Schoolman, XXVIII (1950). Childress "Efficient Causality," New Scholasticism, 206-11 refers to this work and also to that of Fr. Renard, The Philosophy of Man (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1948), 189 in her own presentation of St. Thomas' analogy.
activity. The relationship maintaining between the intellect and will involves not only the intellect's movement of the will as was seen above, but also that the will in its own way moves the intellect as well as the other powers of the soul and body. Whereas intellect moves in the manner of final and formal causality, St. Thomas says that it belongs to the will to move as an efficient cause.

The reason for this becomes apparent when one considers the manner in which things are said to be objects of the soul's powers. As St. Thomas says, "Now a thing is found to have a twofold relationship to the soul; one by which the thing itself is in the soul in the soul's manner of and not its own, the other by which the soul is referred to the thing in its own existence." In other words, there are two ways in which something can be an object of the soul. In one way a thing is an object of the intellect: "It is so inasmuch as it is capable of being in the soul, not according to its own act of being, but according to the manner of the soul --spiritually. This is the essential constituent of the knowable in so far as it is knowable."
The perfection and dignity of the intellect lies in the fact that the species of the thing understood is in the intellect itself. From another point of view however, existing in a knower intentionally is an imperfect mode of existence, for the object is not possessed according to its own mode of being, that is, according to its individual existential state:

The reason for acting is the form of the agent by which it acts. It must accordingly be in the agent for it to act. It is not there, however, according to its perfect act of being; for when that is had the motion comes to rest. But it is in the agent by way of an intention, for the end is prior in intention but posterior in being. Thus the end preexists in the mover in a proper sense intellectually (for it belongs to an intellect to receive something by way of an intention) and not according to its real existence.

This may appear to create somewhat of a difficulty, for it is evident that men love, desire, actively tend to and rest in the possession of goods according to the objects own manner of existence, that is, existence in the real order, in the order of non-intentionally. St. Thomas' solution is found in his introduction of that other manner in which things are objects of the soul. It is in virtue of the appetitive power that man is related to things as they exist in the real order: "Something is the object of the soul according as the soul is inclined and oriented to it after the manner of the thing itself as it is in itself. This is the es-

84 Ibid., XXII, 11c.
85 Ibid., XXII, 12c.
sential constituent of the appetible in so far as it is appetible." That men actively seek to possess the object of their inclinations cannot be denied. Therefore since they are related to this object by their appetite, it is this power which is the source of men's active striving to be united in the real order with the objects of their love. Hence while the intellect moves as the final and formal cause, it belongs to the will to move as an agent in the manner of efficient causality:

To move in the manner of an efficient cause, however, belongs to the will and not to the intellect; for the will is referred to things as they are in themselves, whereas the intellect is referred to them as existing spiritually in the soul. Now to act and to move pertains to things according to their own act of being by which they subsist in themselves, not according as they exist in the soul in the manner of an intention. It is not heat in the soul which heats, but that which is in fire. Thus the will is referred to things as subject to motion, but not the intellect. Furthermore the act of the will is an inclination to something, but not that of the intellect. But an inclination is the disposition of something that moves other things as an efficient cause moves. It is accordingly evident that the will has the function of moving in the manner of an agent cause; not, however, the intellect.

This passage takes us to the heart of St. Thomas' thought concerning the nature of the will's act. The will is an inclination, a tendency, which is to say that it is the intrinsic principle of a being's activity, as we saw in the previous chapter. One need not look further for an intrinsic principle of activity for none is to be found. Through his will man is a kind of a self-mover. Summarizing St. Thomas' thought Childress says,"Thus

86 Ibid., XXII, 10c.
87 Ibid., XXII, 12c; S.T., I, 80, 3c.
the will is mover precisely because it is an inclination, whereas the intellect is a cognitive power whose object is to possess things in the intentional order rather than in the order of esse naturale. 88

The objects of the will's movement are the intellect and the other powers of the soul and body. 89 Regarding the will's movement of the intellect, something could be said about the manner in which the will causes the intellect to actually understand. 90 However our concern is with the moral act and therefore we shall note what, in general, is the nature of the will's movement of the practical intellect in a moral act.

Presented with an object apprehended as something good the will naturally and therefore necessarily wills it (velle). 91 As Bourke says, "The will-act is not concerned with doing anything to attain the end, for the question of the possibility of achieving the end has not yet been considered by the intellect." 92 Wishing the end, the will moves the intellect to consider (judicium) the attainability of the end. 93 If the intellect

89 De Veritate, XXII, 12c; S.T., I, 82, 4c; I-II, 9, 1c; S.C.G. III, 26c.
90 S.C.G., III, 26c.
91 De Veritate, XXII, 14c.
92 Ethics, 59; cf. Childress, "Efficient Causality," New Scholasticism, 199-204
93 S.T., I-II, 12, aa. 112-13c.
judges that the end is obtainable, the will intends (intendio) that it be attained\(^94\) and thereby moves the intellect to deliberate (consilium) as to the available means.\(^95\) If the means are judged available, then faced with these the will may consent (consensus) to them,\(^96\) in which case it then moves the intellect to judge (judicium electionis) which means are best suited to attain the end.\(^97\) This brings the will to the act of choice (electio).\(^98\) Speaking of this act Bourke says,

Concomitant with the intellectual judgment of choice (the arbitrium) the will performs the volitional act of adherence to this decision... As far as the will is concerned, this election is a movement in the order of efficient causality, by which the agent actively commits himself to follow the last practical judgment. With this step and the step just preceding the moral act reaches its climax.\(^99\)

Bourke's observation about the mode of causality involved in the will's act of choice can be similarly applied to the other acts of the will. As far as the will is concerned, its movement of the intellect is in the manner of efficient causality. For as St. Thomas was seen to observe, it be-

\(^94\) Ibid., 19, 5c; De Veritate, XXII, aa. 13-14c.

\(^95\) Ibid., 14, (all); De Veritate, XXIV, 1, ad11.

\(^96\) Ibid., I-II, 15 (all).

\(^97\) Ibid., 14, 6c; 18, 3c.

\(^98\) Ibid., 13 (all); De Veritate, XXII, 15c; XXII, 13, ads. 9, 10, 16.

\(^99\) Ethics, 62.
longs to the very nature of the will to move as an agent; and therefore whenever the will moves a power of the soul—or when it moves the body—it does so as an efficient cause. Consequently, while not entering into a detailed examination of the steps involved in the moral act, we can know at once that since the will is moving the intellect it is doing so as an efficient cause.

SUMMARY

Thus our investigation has led us to conclude that the moral act is a mode of being the existence of which is the outcome of various causal principles. As the subject of human acts, the individually existing man is the material cause of the state of being that we call moral existence. It is he who through activities performed knowingly and willingly begins to exist either goodly or evilly, depending on whether his acts are good or evil. To act is to be. Indeed, it appears that the mode of existing proper to some kinds of being intimately involves activity. Did we not begin by observing that change and activity are an immediately given fact of experience? The final cause of the moral act is the object, the good and the end. Apprehended by the intellect the good is an object of desire and therefore is a cause inasmuch as it begins the act. Attracting the individual, it causes him to take a position: responding to the object the individual acts either goodly or evilly. As St. Thomas says, the morality of the human act is deprived primarily from the end, the good desired.100

100 *S.C.G.*, III, 9c, *Compendium Theology*, I, 116c; *S.T.*, I-II,
Now to know the other is to be the other; and thus knowing the good, the intellect in a way becomes the good. Therefore the intellect in a sense moves man to act as the end, which is why St. Thomas says that in the moral act the intellect acts as a final cause. None the less, the per se final cause is the good object; only secondarily or per accidens is the intellect the final cause. Primarily the intellect is the formal principle of the moral act. Giving specification to the moral act the intellect acts as a formal cause. A primary aspect of the moral act is that it be performed knowingly: it is a specific object, a known end and known means which moves the will. Granting the role played by the object and the intellect, it is the will that gives the moral act its reality as an act. Granted it is the intellect which bearing the end awakens the will; but it is the will, the rational appetite which has been awakened. Granted that the will's act of choice follows the intellectual act of judgment, yet it is the will acting as an efficient cause which, as we shall see, freely moves the practical intellect in its very act of judgment. In fine, the will is the efficient cause of the moral act--and therefore the efficient cause of moral existence. Presented with a good object, the will moves the intellect to consider the attainability of the end. If attainable, the will can then

\[18\text{ (All)};\text{ cf. Jacques Maritain, Neuf lecons sur les notions primieres de la philosophe Morale, (Paris: Tequi, 1949), 31-2; 40-1.}\]
move the various powers of man\textsuperscript{101} in the actual attainment of the good. In all this, in each of all its acts, the will is moving in the manner of an agent exercising efficient causality.

It would therefore seem that for St. Thomas the proximate intrinsic causes of moral existence are the subsisting subject through his powers of intellect and will. Man tends to perfect himself knowingly and willingly. Capable of intellectual knowledge, man inclines to his good by his appetite which, as we saw in the previous chapter, is the principle of a being's tendencies. In man this principle is his will.

In the previous chapter we also observed the primacy given esse in the doctrine of St. Thomas. Esse, the act of existing, is the ultimate principle of being. It is the actuality of everything "even the actuality of form." Giving actuality to the form, it gives actuality to the substance through the form. Giving actuality to the form, it also gives actuality to the tendency or inclination flowing from that form. The act of tending (to one's end) is, in short, ultimately caused by the substance's esse. For the threefold perfection of esse is "subsistere," "tendere," and "requiescere." Seen in this light the will is indeed the efficient

\textsuperscript{101} Following the intellectual act of \textit{imperium} (S.T., I-II, 17; De Veritate, XXII, 13, ad4, \textit{utens} (S.T., I-II, 16) is the act whereby the will "using" the various powers of the person--sense appetite, sense cognitive powers, the motor capacities of the body--acts with an aim of actually attaining the desired object, the good and the end. See Bourke, \textit{Ethics}, 63-4.
cause of the moral act--as is the intellect the formal cause, and the substance, the being, the individual, the material cause. Yet these should, perhaps, be seen more as proximate principles since the ultimate intrinsic source of these causes is nought but esse. The ultimate intrinsic cause of the moral act is, then, esse: esse as subsistere--grounding the material cause; esse as tendere--grounding the inclination of the will in which consists the efficiency of the act, and which in turn grounds the activity of the cognitive power, i.e. the formal cause; esse as requiescere--grounding the act of resting in the enjoyment of the possessed good. Finally, esse is also the ultimate interior principle on the side of the object known, the end. The good is desired because it exists, and therefore esse is the ultimate principle: first, of the being itself and second, of the existence the being has when it exists intentionally as the object of the cognitive power.
CHAPTER III

THE CAUSES OF MORAL GOOD AND MORAL EVIL

We saw that the will is the primary proximate efficient principle of the human act because it is the principle of inclination, of activity in the broad sense of the word. Yet there is an additional reason why this highest appetitive power is primary and this has to do with the manner in which this appetite is manifest in man. Although the intellect presents the will with its proper object, a known good, the will remains free to adhere to or to reject this good. As experience testifies, when a man knows that something is good for him he need not proceed to attain it. We say that man is free to act as he wants; he may even want not to act at all. If the nature of the moral act is to be properly understood, it is necessary that we know in what sense it is true to say that man's acts are not necessitated. We must account for the fact that human acts are actually free acts. For is it not freedom which characterizes the moral act? But if man is really a free cause of his acts, then he is the cause of evil as well as good, for as experience shows, some human acts are good, others evil. The problem then becomes one of determining what in the causality of a human act renders it morally good or evil. And since evil is the absence of being (of due being, to be sure) we must determine how it is that
man can freely introduce this absence into his acts. These facets of St. Thomas' moral doctrine shall now be examined.

THE VOLUNTARY ACT

It is important to note that a human act, that is, a moral act, is essentially a voluntary act. Experience shows that whereas the principles of some actions lie outside the agent, the principles of other actions lie within the agent itself. Violently thrust upward, the stone returns to earth by the principle of activity which is nought but its very nature. Yet, lacking knowledge, the stone cannot be said to plunge downward "voluntarily." As St. Thomas observes:

Now of those things that are moved by an intrinsic principle, some move themselves, some not. For since every agent or thing moved acts or is moved for an end, as was stated above, those are perfectly moved by an intrinsic principle whose intrinsic principle is one not only of movement but of movement for an end. Now in order that a thing be done for an end, some knowledge of the end is necessary. Therefore, whatever so acts or is so moved by an intrinsic principle that it has some knowledge of the end, has within itself the principle of its act, so that it not only acts, but acts for an end. On the other hand, if a thing has no knowledge of the end, even though it have a principle of action or movement, nevertheless, the principle of acting or being moved for an end is not in that thing, but in something else, by which the principle of its action towards an end is imprinted on it. Therefore those things are not said to move themselves, but to be moved by others.

Such is the nature of the stone and all objects which though they act, do

1 S.T., I-II, 6, 1c.
not act with knowledge, and which therefore are not really self-movers. What of those beings that have knowledge of an end? "Those things," St. Thomas continues,

are said to move themselves because there is in them a principle by which they not only act but also act for an end. And, consequently, since both are from an intrinsic principle, i.e., that they act and that they act for an end, the movement and acts of such things are said to be voluntary; for the term voluntary signifies that their movements and acts are from their own inclination. Hence it is that...the voluntary is defined not only as having a principle within the agent, but also as implying knowledge. 2

Human actions are certainly voluntary for they proceed from an interior principle of action whose object is an intellecually known good; and so Aquinas concludes the article observing that "since man especially knows the end of his work, and moves himself, in his actions especially is the voluntary to be found." 3

**Freedom As Regards To Acting**

Are then children, irrational creatures, and if we add to St. Thomas' list, 4 mentally retarded adult humans to be numbered among those beings that act voluntarily? Since the name voluntary is given to those acts which have their principle within the agent and which arises as a con-

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2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid., 6, 2, sed. contra.: In II Ethics, 5, nn. 434ff.
sequence of knowledge, it follows that beings capable of nonrational knowledge perform acts that are voluntary. However we must distinguish between the perfect and imperfect voluntary, for there is a real difference between intellectual and non-intellectual knowledge of one's end. "Now knowledge of the end" says St. Thomas,
is twofold, perfect and imperfect. Perfect knowledge of the end consists in not only apprehending the thing which is the end, but also in knowing it under the aspect of end, and the relationship of the means to that end. And such a knowledge of the end belongs to none but the rational nature.--But imperfect knowledge of the end consists in a mere apprehension of the end, without knowing it under the aspect of end, or the relationship of an act to the end. Such a knowledge of the end is exercised by irrational animals, through their senses and their natural estimative power. 5

Continuing the article we are led by St. Thomas to an important aspect of human activity.

Consequently, perfect knowledge of the end is accompanied by the voluntary in its perfect nature, inasmuch as, having apprehended the end, a man can, from deliberating about the means thereto, be moved, or not, to gain that end. But imperfect knowledge of the end is accompanied by the voluntary in its imperfect nature, inasmuch as the agent apprehends the end, but does not deliberate, and is moved to the end at once. 6

In other words, whereas the acts of irrational animals, as well as those of children and mentally defective adult human beings are somewhat voluntary, they are not as perfectly voluntary as those of rational beings, for

5 S.T., I-II, 6, 2c.
6 Ibid.
the acts of the former are spontaneous. Presented with an object apprehended as something good, a non-rational animal, or more properly speaking, an animal not actually exercising intellectual knowledge, cannot not seek to obtain it. On the other hand, since his operations flow from the powers of intellect and will, man is a free agent. In this life man is free not to tend to any apprehended good, be this an end or a means to an end.

Therefore if the will be offered an object which is good universally and from every point of view, the will tends to it necessarily, if it wills anything at all; since it cannot will its opposite. If on the other hand, the will is offered an object that is not good from every point of view, it will not tend to it of necessity—And since the lack of any good whatever is a non-good, consequently, that good alone which is perfect and lacking in nothing is such a good that the will cannot non-will it; and this is happiness. But any other particular goods, in so far as they are lacking in some good, can be regarded as non-goods; and, from this point of view, they can be set aside or approved by the will, which can tend to one and the same thing from various points of view.

Speaking of the source of man's liberty, Gilson says, in commenting on this passage, that it results from the gap encountered here below between the will and its object. In conjunction with an understanding open to universal being, the will tends toward universal good. Actually, however, it always finds itself in the presence of particular goods. These particular goods are incapable of satisfying its desire and do not constitute, as far as the will is concerned, absolutely necessary ends, and so the will remains entirely free in respect to them.

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7 See Chapter I, 27ff; esp. 30-31.
8 S.T., I-II, 10, 2c; cf. De Malo, 3, 3c.
9 The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, trans. L.K.
No particular object is sufficient to move the will necessarily. Therefore, since the goods presented by the intellect to the will are, in this life, particular goods, the will remains, in this life, free. It may be objected, however, that since the Perfect Good is necessarily connected with happiness, that man in this life is necessitated by the idea of this Good and of this connection. To this St. Thomas answers:

However, the Perfect Good, which is God, does indeed have a necessary connection with the happiness of man, because without Him man cannot be happy. Nevertheless, the necessity of this connection is not clearly evident to man in this life, because he does not see God in His Essence.10

Thus we see that the will is free both as regards the exercise of its act which is concerned with the end and as regards the specification of its act which concerns the means of obtaining the end. In this life no object apprehended as an end necessitates the will, for "no matter what the object be, it is man's power not to think of it and consequently not to will it actually."11 As regards the specification of the will, we see that


10 De Malo, 3, 3c as translated by Vernon J. Bourke in his Ethics, 113; cf. De Veritate, X, 11c; XVIII, 1c.

11 S.T., I-II, 10, 2c.
the will is free even here. For although choice presupposes a judgmental act of the intellect, nevertheless it is the will which leads the intellect to choose what it, the will, desires best. As Fr. Smith says, it may be objected that

if the will follows the judgment, then---although one may see that there are alternatives---nevertheless there is only one alternative which, by hypothesis, can be chosen. If so, the reason for this choice, supposing the will follows this reason for the choice, is also the reason which makes any other choice impossible. Thus the will is not free.

St. Thomas' answer is that the judgment presenting a good which one is to accept, or reject, is due to an influence not wholly intellectual. We do not indeed choose what we have finally decided is the best; but this only means---since 'best' here is just a relative, contingent best---that our will has made it the best. We judge a thing best because we wish to judge it best.\(^2\)

The nature of the voluntary act as it is manifest by man is, then, essentially a non-necessitated act. Though the will must be put into act by an object, the will is free to reject these particular goods. It is free as regard to the end and the means. Nor is the will forced when its object is the idea of the Absolute Good. In short, in this life man is a free agent.

Here we have discovered the reason why human acts are essentially moral acts. Since the result, the material causes of a moral act is the subject who in acting either really perfects his nature or in fact really

\(^2\) "Intelligence and Liberty," 11. As to St. Thomas' distinction of the will's act see S.T., I-II, 9, aa. 1 and 2c; S.T., I, 82, 2c; De Malo, 3, 3c; 6, 1c; De Veritate, XXII, 6c.
perverts it, i.e., performs acts that are really good or evil; since the
causes of this becoming are first, the good object moving as a final cause,
second, the intellect as presenting the end to the will and as formally
specifying its object, and finally, the will as the efficient cause moving
the intellect and other powers of man--to attain or reject these goods;
since in this order of becoming the will is a non-necessitated power, be-
ing forced neither in regards the execution nor specification of its act,
then it follows that the human act is in this life essentially a freely
caused act. Man is free to make of himself what he wishes; he is above
all a voluntary agent.

Freedom As Regards To Not Acting

But if man is free to act, so he is also free not to act, and
this freedom is similarly grounded in the power of intellect and the will.
For the voluntary extends not only to the will's actions but also to its
nonactions. To the question of whether there can be voluntariness with-
out an act St. Thomas answers in the affirmative. The reason for this is
that something can proceed from another in two ways.13 In one way some-
thing proceeds from another inasmuch as the other acts; for example, heat-
ing proceeds from heat. In another way something proceeds from another
precisely from the fact that this other does not act. "Thus the sinking

13 S.T., I-II, 6, 4c.
of a ship is attributed to the helmsman, from his having ceased to steer."  
And thus the helmsman by his non-acting is a real cause of the sinking of the ship, that is, if he could and should have acted. "For if the helmsman were unable to steer the ship, or if the ship's helm were not entrusted to him, the sinking of the ship would not be attributed to him, although it might be due to his absence from the helm."  
St. Thomas concludes:  

Since, then, by willing and acting, the will is able, and sometimes ought to hinder not-willing and not-acting, this not-willing and not-acting is imputed to the will as though proceeding from it. And thus it is that we can have the voluntary without an act, and this sometimes without an outward act, but with an interior act, for instance, when one wills not to act, and sometimes without an interior act, as when one does not will to act.  

The question of voluntariness without an act is an important aspect of St. Thomas' thought, for as we shall presently see it is this notion which enables him to explain how the individual can be said to be the "cause" of moral evil.  

A moral act is an act performed knowingly and willingly for an end which is something good. All of the above mentioned causes of the

14 Ibid., cf. S.T., I, 49, 2, ad3. It is interesting to note that St. Thomas uses the example of the helmsman in one of his earliest works. In De Principiis Naturae St. Thomas observes that "a pilot may be the cause of saving or sinking a ship: of the former by his presence, of the latter by his absence." As translated by V. Bourke in his Pocket Aquinas, 70.  

15 Ibid.  

16 Ibid., cf. In II, Sent., d. 35, art. 3.
moral act can be found in this sentence: the subject, the powers of intellection and appetition, and the end. In the line of secondary causality, that is preceding from the fact that every being and every cause and therefore every good receives its existence and is sustained in that existence by God,¹⁷ these are the causes which each in its own manner contribute a "positive influx" to the being and becoming of the moral act. Each in its own order but all acting together converge to produce the reality of the human act—a- an act which is either good or evil.

CAUSALITY OPERATIVE IN A MORALLY GOOD ACT

Secondary Causality

Let us take the case of a good act. What is it in a human act, in the causality of this act which renders it good? How is a good human act caused? Or again, how are the various causes operative when a good human act comes into being? Good or evil in human acts¹⁸ ultimately depends on whether the acts are in accordance with or against reason.

Now in human actions, good and evil are predicated in relation to the reason, because, as Dionysius says, the good of man is to be in accordance with reason, and evil is to be against

¹⁷ See, for example, S.C.G., III, Qq. 65-70.

¹⁸ The following discussion concerns primarily the interior quality of the moral act which is, as Bourke says, "the root and source of the moral quality of the whole moral act." Ethics, 144-45. Thus while we can speak of the morality of the commanded act, the point here is that morality is a quality attributed essentially to the interior act of the will.
reason De divinis nominibus, IV, 327. For that is good for a thing which suits it according to its form; and evil, that which is against the order of its form. It is therefore evident that the difference of good and evil, considered in reference to the object, is an essential difference in relation to reason, i.e., according as the object is suitable or unsuitable.19

St. Thomas points to the "rule of reason" because as Professor Bourke observes,20 reason is the specific difference of man. "His substantial form is rational." And therefore "when man acts reasonably, he acts in accord with his own formal nature." Acting in accord with his own formal nature man is in fact acting goody. But inasmuch as every human act is performed deliberately in view of consciously apprehended ends, they are rational acts, and therefore are not all human acts morally good acts? For a human act is by definition a reasonable act--man has his reasons. However this is not what St. Thomas has in mind when he speaks of the "rule of reason." As Father Copleston puts the matter,

it does not follow that the good which a man chooses and for the attainment of which he takes particular means is necessarily compatible with the objective good for man. There is therefore room for the concept of 'right reason,' reason directing man's acts to the attainment of the objective good for man.21

In other words, since the object of the cognitive power is the true, and

19 S.T., I-II, 18, 5c; cf. In II Ethics, lect. 2.
20 Ethics, 126.
since the object of the appetitive power is the good, and since in this
life not every good is necessarily objectively good for man and since man
can know this for a fact, then before man pursues any particular good he
ought to first apply his reason to the task of determining whether this
particular good is a true good,\textsuperscript{22} that is whether it is objectively good.
He ought to, that is, because man is by nature a rational animal. And this
is precisely St. Thomas' point. If in bringing the human act into exist-
ence the individual acts reasonably, that is with an eye to his true good,
then the human act is good; and since the individual has freely applied
the rule of reason his act is morally good.

More precisely, this involves the free initiative of the will.
Presented with a particular good the will is, as we have seen, free both
as regards the end and the means of attaining the end. Possessing reason
man is able to consider any good object from the point of view of whether
it is his true good. He can "weigh" various goods in the light of what he
knows is his real good and end; he can measure particular goods to deter-
mine if they are truly perfective of his nature. He can even consider the

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{22} "The will is not always directed to what is truly good, but
sometimes to the apparent good; and this has indeed some measure of good,
but not of a good that is suitable absolutely to be desired. Hence it is
that the act of the will is not always good, but sometimes evil." \textit{S.T.}, I-
II, 19, 1, ad3, underlining is mine. And again, "The good in view of which
one acts is not always a true good; but sometimes it is a true good, some-
times an apparent good. And in the latter event, an evil action results
from the end in view." \textit{S.T.}, I-II, 18, 4, ad1, underlining is mine.
\end{quote}
ultimate rule: God's Eternal Law. But whether or not man actually "weighs" the good, whether or not he actually applies the rule of reason and the eternal law and then, most importantly, whether man actually performs an act according to the dictate of this rule depends only secondarily on the cognitive power. Recall Father Smith's observation about the manner in which the will influences (causes) the act of judgment. To be sure it is reason which "judges," which "weighs," which "applies the rule of reason;" but it is the will which moves reason to actually "judge," to actually "weigh," to actually apply the "rule." As the efficient cause of the moral act, the initiative to move or not to move reason to consider whether a particular good is objectively good is an initiative which comes from the will. The will can initiate the human act either with or without the intellect's having applied the rule of reason. The will has its good object and that is good enough for it--if it wishes to be so. The will is not forced to move reason to consider the objective goodness of its object. If it does move reason to so consider, it does so freely; and if it does not move reason, then it is because it freely did not wish to do so. In

23 "Now in those things that are done by the will, the proximate rule is human reason, while the supreme rule is the eternal law. When, therefore, a human act tends to the end according to the order of reason and of the eternal law, then that act is right; but when it turns aside from that rectitude, then it is said to be a sin. Now it is evident, from what has been said /S.T., I-II, 19, 3, and ad4/ that every voluntary act that turns aside from the order of reason and of the eternal law is evil, and that every good act is in accord with reason and the eternal law." S.T., I-II, 21, 1c.
either case the initiative is on the part of the will, for it is the agent cause acting efficiently.

As to what characterizes the goodness of a human act, we see that the act is good when it is measured by the rule of reason. When man acts from the judgment that a particular good is also objectively good for him then his act is a good act, a morally good act in fact, because by his will he has freely moved his reason to actually reason about the objective goodness of the end. (It is not necessary that the judgment of reason be objectively correct, however. For as we say, a man can honestly be mistaken in his judgments as to what things are truly good for him. There is room here for erring reason.24 The point is that since man is a rational being he should exercise his reason in order to determine first what things are truly good for him, and second, how particular goods "measure-up" to these objective goods. In other words, every man is obliged to apply his reasons to the task of determining as best he can whether particular goods are truly good).

The object of the intellect is the true. Instead of preventing man from exercising his highest cognitive power, the will in causing reason to seek the true, in this case causing the practical reason to seek the

24 On the types of ignorance recognized by St. Thomas see S.T., I-II, 6, 8c; also see De Malo, 3, 8c; In II Sent., d. 22, q. 2, 2, c. Besides ignorance, Saint Thomas also recognizes two other factors which influence the degree of voluntariness of a human action. These are fear and concupiscance. See Bourke's Ethics, 67-105.
true good, the will is moving reason to function naturally and therefore
goodly. If the will initiates an act--either an exterior act or, more im-
portantly from the viewpoint of the morality of the act, initiates an in-
terior act--on the basis of "right reason," then the moral act taken as a
single entity will have the fullness of perfection it ought to have: it
will have the due good, which for a human act consists in the measure, the
form of right reason. And thus St. Thomas says,

Again, since reason is able to apprehend many goods and a
multiplicity of the ends, and since for each thing there is a
proper end, there will be, then, for the will an end and a first
motivating object which is not merely any good, but some deter-
minate good. Hence, when the will inclines to act \textit{voluntas
tendit in actum} as moved by the apprehension of reason, present-
ing a proper good \textit{proprium bonum} to it, the result is a fitting
action.\textsuperscript{25}

We are now in a more favorable position to understand the nature
of the causality in a good human act. Evil in an operation occurs, says
Thomas, either "by the withdrawal of the due operation, or because it has
not its due mode and order."\textsuperscript{26} The "due mode and order" of the human act
is that it can be measured by the rule of reason. Therefore, the human
act is good because the rule of reason has not been withdrawn from the act.
Now the formal cause of the human act was seen to be the cognitive power
both apprehending the end and deliberating and judging the means to the end.

\textsuperscript{25} \textit{S.C.C.}, III, 10, underlining is mine.
\textsuperscript{26} See Chapter II, page 47, note 21.
What characterizes the good human act from the point of view of this power is that reason actually judges the objective goodness of the will's object—and that in virtue of this judgment the will act is initiated. This is to say that the act is good when it has the form of the rule of right reason (and Eternal Law). The rule of reason, reason judging the objective goodness of the object, thus confers something extra, an additional perfection to the act. It confers a measure, the very measure of reason which is itself a mode of actuality, of existence. So measured, the act has its due form, its due perfection. The final cause of the human act is the end apprehended by reason. Now when reason judges that the object is objectively good then the formal object of the will is not merely an end but a due end.

Again, we observed that the human act has four causes. Here the question is how these causes render not merely a human act, but a good human act. The four causes are operative, but now they are viewed from the point of view of conferring goodness, properly so called, that is the perfection which comes from having fulfilled one's nature and thus having attained due end—for the faculties and powers also have their proper ends, which is not something totally opposed to the end of the subject. Indeed, it is the manner in which some beings manifestly attain their completion, their second perfection and final good. Now a thing is good inasmuch as it has being, inasmuch as it has existence, and therefore the human act regarded merely as an act will be good. What characterizes the special
quality of moral goodness of the act is thus not the act simply speaking, but rather that this act has the degree of perfection, of being, and thus the degree of goodness that it ought to have as a human act. Therefore we can distinguish between the causes of the human act and the quality of goodness, of perfection and existence of these causes. In fine, while the formal cause of the human act is the intellect or reason and the final cause is the end, the causes of the good human act are right reason and a proper or due end. The formal cause of the good act is thus not merely the cognitive power, but the cognitive power applying the rule of reason (and of Eternal Law) and thus conferring additional being on the object, an additional being which is due in a human act. The final cause is not merely the end, nor is it the intellect as apprehending the end. Rather it is an end that is apprehended as truly good.

We can now begin to understand the importance of the will in the execution of the good act. That the act be measured by right reason and the Eternal Law and that the object of the will be a proper and due good depends upon the agency of the will. For as the intellectual inclination of man, it is the will which can, and which in a good act actually does, move reason to measure the objective goodness of the object. When the will proceeds to initiate its act to incline to its object, having already moved reason to apply its rule, the act taken as a whole, as a unified entity, is good. The act is good because it does not lack, is not deprived of what it ought to have as a human act, namely, that it be measured by the rule
of reason and the Eternal Law and that the end consequently be a proper good. Since the will can incline to an object with or without having moved reason to apply its rule, it appears that there are two moments in the human act: the act whereby the will moves or does not move reason to consider the objective goodness of the end, and the act whereby the will actually inclines to its object, i.e., the act which initiates the human act. When the will, then, having moved reason to apply its rule breaks forth into action now "as moved by the apprehension of reason, as presenting a proper good to it, the result is a fitting action," a good act.

"The result is a fitting action" which is a way of saying that the result is the coming into existence of a fitting human being. For St. Thomas consistently maintains that while we speak of human activity in terms of the powers or faculties of the activity, nevertheless the human act is an act of the whole man. "Properly speaking, it is not a power which knows or intends, but the supposit through a power."27 To act is to be, and thus if his human act has the perfection proper and due to it, then man as the subject and material cause of the act has himself obtained through that act a mode of being of existence which is good. Acting goodly is a mode of being goodly. In his good human act the individual has, in fine, become more than he was: he has begun to acquire the goods and perfections for which he was created but from which he is separated. Good inasmuch as he exists,

27 De Veritate, XXII, 13, ad7.
in performing human acts man is striving to complete himself. The material cause of the good human act is the individual: a good seeking additional goodness in the line of acquisition open to him being the kind of thing he is.

Now the line of being, action, and goodness is the line of actuality and existence. As we observed in the previous chapters, there is for St. Thomas an act which is prior to every actuality and every form and which consequently lies at the root of the moral act. And this is the very act of existing. The ultimate interior cause of good moral existents is, then, its act of existing, esse: esse as subsistere, as tendere, and as requiescere.

God's Causal Influx

There remains but one final consideration. A fundamental tenant in St. Thomas' metaphysics is that God is is all things as an agent is present to that upon which it acts.

Now, since God is being itself by his own essence, created being must be His proper effect....But God causes this effect in things not only when they first begin to be, but as long as they are preserved in being....Therefore, as long as a thing has being, so long must God be present to it, according to its mode of being. But being is innermost in each thing and most fundamentally present within all things, since it is formal in respect of everything found in a thing, as was shown above. \(Q.4,1,\text{ad3};\ Q.7,\text{a.17}\). Hence it must be that God is in all things, and innermost.\(^{28}\)

\(^{28}\) S.T., I, 8, 1c.
From this it follows that God is present and works in every agent in three ways.\(^{29}\) First, as the cause of every operation as its end; second, as the cause of the action in every agent; third, God gives created agents their forms and preserves them in being. A consequence of this doctrine is that wherever there is being, actuality, or causality one can always discover the presence of Ipsum Esse. The ultimate source and first cause of being on any and every level is God. Consequently, inasmuch as the esse of the being of our experience participate in Ipsum Esse we must say that the ultimate cause, though now the ultimate exterior cause, of the good moral act is God. The question at this point is how does God's presence to his creatures affect their operations and thus the causality of the moral act.

While any serious investigation into this subject would take us far beyond the scope of this work,\(^{30}\) we can see the direction that St. Thomas' thought takes. Though God is immediately cooperating with all the operations performed by all finite beings this does not mean that creatures themselves do not exercise operations of their own. As Gilson notes,\(^{31}\)

> The reverse is true. Just as the immediate presence of God to creatures does not deprive them of their own being but, on the

\(^{29}\) S.T., I, 105, 5c; cf. S.C.G., III, Qq. 65-67.

\(^{30}\) An excellent work in this area is Joseph Martin Graham's Secondary Causal Influx According to Saint Thomas Aquinas.

\(^{31}\) Elements, 182.
contrary, causes it to be, so also His immediate co-operation with their operations does not deprive them of their own efficacy but, on the contrary, causes creatures to be able to act as well as to be. In fact, the co-operation of God with the operations of creatures is but another name for His presence by essence to the whole of creation.

In short, the absolutely first cause of the moral act is God. Whatever being and goodness are made manifest in the moral act, whatever secondary causes contribute to the being and becoming of the act, including, of course, the creatures ultimate interior first act, esse, are all caused by and participate in Ipsum Esse. In Him are all things and apart from Him there is only nothingness and non-being.

CAUSALITY OPERATING IN A MORALLY EVIL ACT

Secondary Causality

Unfortunately, however, not every human act is morally good, often they are evil, and therefore it is necessary to examine the causes of moral evil. Necessary it seems, because we have here a different order of being, or, to be more precise, we are no longer in the order of being which is the order of good. Rather we find ourselves in the order of privation, the order of non-being which is evil. We have here then a paradox. We say that man is the cause of moral evil yet how can this be? Although evil is a privation whose subject is something actual and good, still evil is in itself, that is, essentially, non-being. But how can man be the cause, indeed the voluntary cause, of non-being? Professor Maritain cautions,
we cannot reason about the line of evil in the same way as we do about the line of good, nor can we apply indiscriminately to the former theses established in relation to the latter. The perspective has to be reversed; we have to think in terms of nihil instead of thinking in terms of esse.\textsuperscript{32}

From what has been said it is sufficiently evident that what characterizes an evil human act is its departure from the rule of reason. When man initiates the human act without having applied the rule of reason, when the formal object of his will is not a good thought to be truly good, he is putting aside, ignoring, leaving potential and therefore non-existent the exercise of his reason--reason seeking the truth--which is what specifies man as man. It is for man to act less than a man and therefore to act evilly. The act is evil because right reason, the "due mode and order" of a human act, is absent. We have here then an inordinate act. An act which is not ordered as it ought to be, an act lacking a due perfection. What kind of causes can such an act have?

Having concluded that an evil human act is a sinful act\textsuperscript{33} St. Thomas says that a sin is an inordinate act, and therefore it has an essential and an accidental cause:

Accordingly, in so far as it is an act, it can have a direct cause, even as any other act; but in so far as it is inordinate, it has a cause in the same way as a negation or priva-

\textsuperscript{32} Existence and the Existent. This writer's debt to Professor Maritain's researches will be evident in what follows.

\textsuperscript{33} S.T., I-II, 21, 1c.
tion can have a cause. Now two causes may be assigned to a negation. First, the absence of the cause of affirmation: i.e., the negation of the cause itself is the cause of the negation in itself, since the result of removing the cause is the removal of the effect. Thus the absence of the sun is the cause of darkness. In the second place, the cause of an affirmation, of which a negation is a sequel, is the accidental cause of the resulting negation. Thus fire, by causing heat in virtue of its principal tendency, consequently causes a privation of cold.34

While the first cause is adequate to account for simple negation, it will not suffice to account for sin or for any kind of evil, for evil is not mere negation but privation, the absence of a due good. Now the difference is this, that no cause is needed to account for simple negation, simple non-being. It is precisely a lack of a cause that accounts—if we be permitted the use of a positive concept to convey a negative meaning—it is precisely the lack of a cause that accounts for non-being. On the other hand, the lack of order in every kind of evil is a privation of that which something ought naturally to have. Now such a lack of order must have a cause, though it be a deficient or accidental cause.

For that which naturally is and ought to be in a thing is never lacking except because of some impeding cause. And accordingly, we are wont to say that evil, which consists in a certain privation, has a deficient cause, or an accidental efficient cause.35

But every accidental cause is reducible to an essential cause, and there-

34 Ibid., 75, 1c.
35 Ibid.
fore one must uncover the essential efficient cause of evil. St. Thomas continues,

Since, then, sin has, on the part of its lack of order an accidental efficient cause, and on the part of the act, an essential efficient cause, it follows that the lack of order in sin is a result of the cause of the act.

But the efficient cause of the moral act is the will.

Accordingly, then, the will lacking the direction of the rule of reason and of the divine law, and intent on some mutable good, causes the act of sin essentially, and the lack of order in the act accidentally and without intention; for the lack of order in the act results from the lack of direction in the will.36

Let us pause here a moment. The will is the essential cause of evil in an act because it is the direct cause of the act. As the direct cause of the act the will is good, and thus the cause of evil is a good. However, it is also the "impeding cause" in this case the "deficient cause," inasmuch as through the efficiency of the will the act itself lacks something it ought to have, namely the rule of reason. In initiating the act the will is the direct proximate interior cause of the act, but in initiating the act without having moved reason to consider the objective goodness of the end and therefore without having for itself an object judged to be truly good, the will is the cause, "indirect," "accidental," "deficient" to be sure, but nevertheless the real cause, of the act's lacking

36 Ibid.
the direction of right reason. For it is within the power of the will to move the other powers of man to the performance of operations. Therefore, the will can move reason to apply its rule, its judgment, or it can act without the direction of right reason. The initiative is on the part of the will. And therefore although one may speak of other causes of sin, in the end the will alone is sufficient to cause moral evil.

Yet neither does external enticement move the reason of necessity, in matters of action, nor do things proposed externally of necessity move the sensitive appetite, except perhaps it be disposed thereto in a certain way; and even the sensitive appetite does not, of necessity, move the reason and will. Therefore something external can be a cause moving to sin, but not so as to be its sufficient cause. But the sufficient accomplishing cause of sin is the will alone.37

The moment of moral evil, that instant when the human act is, as Maritain says,38 "bitten by nothingness" occurs then, when the will breaks forth into action without having applied the rule of reason (or the Eternal Law, when this can be known): But when the will breaks forth into action, at the apprehension of sense cognition, or of reason itself presenting some other good at variance with its proper good, the result in the action of

37 S.T., I-II, 75, 3c; cf. S.C.G., III, 10: Having examined the principles (causes) of moral actions /"the first active principle in moral actions is the thing that is cognitively apprehended...the fourth is the motive power which carries out the command of reason."/ in order to determine the causes of evil human acts, St. Thomas concludes "that moral fault is found primarily and principally in the act of the will only, and so it is quite reasonable to say, as a result, that an act is moral because it is voluntary. Therefore, the root and source of moral wrongdoing is to be sought in the act of will." Cf. S.T., I-II, 75, 2c.

the will is a moral fault."\textsuperscript{39} It appears that we are at the source of moral evil. Evil is attributed primarily to the will inasmuch as it is the efficient cause of the human act. However we have not yet reached our goal even in discussing the line of efficient causality of moral evil. For although the will is the efficient cause of the evil act, it is also the cause of a certain defect which precedes the evil act and which ultimately grounds the "deficiency" that characterizes the privative character of the morally evil act.

St. Thomas teaches that, "In action, evil is caused by reason of the defect of some principle of action, either of the principle or the instrumental agent."\textsuperscript{40} In other words, the privation that attaches to an action results from a prior defect—a priority that is ontological and not merely temporal—in the disposition of the power that causes the act. It would seem to follow from this that the cause of evil in action is a prior evil in the being of the agent. In fact, this is what St. Thomas maintains:

For the natural agent produces the same kind of effect as it is itself, unless it is impeded by some exterior thing; and this amounts to some defect in it. Hence evil never follows in the effect unless some other evil pre-exists in the agent or in the matter, as was said above.\textsuperscript{41}

However this is not always the case, for "Evil has a deficient cause in

\textsuperscript{39} S.C.G., III, 10c.
\textsuperscript{40} S.T., I, 49, 1c.
\textsuperscript{41} S.T., I, 49, 1, ad3.
voluntary beings otherwise than in natural things."\textsuperscript{42} In voluntary beings, and here St. Thomas means the more perfect kind of voluntary being, namely those actually exercising rationality, a deficiency does precede the evil act, however here the deficiency is not itself an evil:

But in voluntary beings the defect of the action comes from an actually deficient will \textit{the active principle} inasmuch as it does not actually subject itself to its proper rule. This defect, however, is not a fault \textit{Qui tamen defectus non est culpa...} \textsuperscript{43}

There is, therefore, a defect in the agent which precedes the evil human act, a defect which is not yet a privation or evil but which nevertheless is the root, the ontological precondition for the evil human act. Furthermore, this defect is not an evil even though it is voluntary. In the \textit{Summa Contra Gentiles} \textsuperscript{44} Aquinas brings these various elements together. He says that a difficulty seems to result from concluding that the root and source of moral wrongdoing is the will.

Since a defective act stems from a defect in the active principle, we must understand that there is a defect in the will preceding the moral fault. Of course, if this defect be natural, then it is always attached to the will, and so the will would always commit a morally bad action when it acts. But virtuous acts show that this conclusion is false. On the other hand, if the defect be voluntary, it is already a morally bad act, and we will have to look in turn for its cause. Therefore, we must say that the defect pre-existing in the will

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{44} III, 10c.
sins in every one of its acts. Nor can we attribute the defect to chance or accident, for then there would be no moral fault in us, since chance events are not premeditated and are beyond the control of reason. So, the defect is voluntary. Yet, it is not a moral fault; otherwise we should go on to infinity.

Consequently we must distinguish two moments in the development of the evil human act. We have already seen in what consists the deficiency of the act as well as why this deficiency yields the act morally evil. Our investigation into the intrinsic efficient cause of moral evil will be completed when we determine the nature of that prior deficiency, that deficiency which is voluntary and not yet evil, but which is none the less at the root of moral evil.

In De Malo, 1, 3, St. Thomas sets out to explain the nature of the defect which precedes the deficient act of choice. He begins with the general principle that,

in all things wherever one factor exists as the rule and measure of the other, good in the one that is ruled and measured originates from the fact that it is ruled in conformity with the rule and measure,--the evil arises from its not being ruled or measured according to the rule.

A practical example is that of a craftsman. How is he to cut wood in a straight line? St. Thomas says that "were the craftsman's hand the rule itself of carving, he could not carve the wood otherwise than rightly." 47

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45 St. Thomas and the Problem of Evil, 30.

46 Ibid., Much of what follows will be taken from Maritain's penetrating study.

47 S.T., I, 63, 1c.
However as experience shows, often to the frustration of the craftsman, this is not the case. His hand is not "the rule itself of carving." No, in order to cut a straight line it is necessary for him to apply some rule, which for him is a material ruler. Therefore, if he does not cut a straight line, "that is, if he makes a bad cutting, that bad cutting will be caused by the fact that the craftsman did not hold the ruler in his hand." St. Thomas then draws the analogy in human matters. The rule of human acts is not identical with the very power of the agent, for if it were, then the act would never fall short of rectitude, which is clearly contrary to the facts. But inasmuch as the rule of human acts is not identical with the very power of the agent these acts must be measured by some external rule, external to the power that is, which for man is reason and divine law. "Similarly, delection and everything that happens in human affairs should be measured and ruled according to the rule of reason and of divine law." St. Thomas then proceeds to put his finger, so to speak, on the defect which precedes the moral act. Let us follow Marin­tain's translation and commentary on the passage from De Malo:

48 Ibid.
49 De Malo, 1, 3c.
50 S.T., I, 63, 1c.
51 De Malo, 1, 3c.
'That the will does not use /let us take careful note of the simple negation expressed there/ -- that the will does not make use of the rule of reason and of divine law,' that it does not have the ruler in its hand, -- this then, is the absence or the deficiency 'which must be considered in the will before the faulty choice in which alone moral evil consists. And for that very absence or that lack which consists in not making use of the rule,' not taking the rule in hand, 'there is no need to seek a cause, for the very freedom of the will, whereby it can act or not act, is enough....' Here we are at the very beginning; impossible to go any further back; a free defect, a defect of which freedom itself is the negative and deficient primary cause; -- and it is the will thus in default which, acting with this defect, is the cause--in quantum deficiens--of moral evil.52

St. Thomas then repeats his assertion that this deficiency is not a moral fault. "This very lack which consists in not paying attention in act to the rule, this lack considered in itself is not an evil, neither in the sense of an evil deriving from fault nor of an evil consisting of fault." The reason being that "the soul is not obliged, nor for that matter is it able, constantly to take the rule into consideration, in act." We have here then a lack of being, of perfection and actuality which is not an evil. The will is not obliged to constantly consider the rule of reason, and therefore the absence of the rule is not a privation, an absence of a due good. It is rather a simple negation, a simple lack of being which is merely non-being pure and simple.

Nor is an act of the will necessary to introduce this simple

absence. Quite the contrary, that this absence exists is attributable to
the will inasmuch as it does not act, inasmuch as it does not move reason
to seek the true good. And here we are brought back to the important dis-
tinction concerning the two ways in which voluntariness is attributable to
the will. The voluntary extends not only to the will's actions but also
to its non-actions. It is within the power of the will to act or not act,
and therefore the very freedom of the will is sufficient to account for
that first deficiency which, since it is not the absence of a due good, is
a simple negation and not yet an evil. A deficiency is thus introduced by
the non-action of the will. Perhaps it is better to say that the deficien-
cy which consists in the non-consideration of the rule of reason before
the execution of the human act is a lack which naturally accompanies the
existential state of man. Inasmuch as it is a simple negation this defi-
ciency has no cause, nor could it have one since it is the very lack of
any cause which "accounts" for simple non-being. What do we mean then when
we say that the will initiates this deficiency? Surely not that the will
does something, anything, for the result of a will act is being and perfec-
tion. Recall that as the direct efficient cause of the human act the will
introduces (causes) additional actuality and perfection. What St. Thomas
means is that the will simply does nothing to remove this deficiency; and
since the will could do something, since it could remove the deficiency,
then by not doing so, by not moving reason to apply its rule the will is
the source and to that extent the cause of the deficiency.
Since, then, by willing and acting, the will is able, and sometimes ought to hinder not-willing and not-acting, this not-willing and not-acting is imputed to the will as though proceeding from it. And thus it is that we can have the voluntary without an act...sometimes without an interior act, as when one does not will to act.53

At the moment when the will breaks forth into action with this deficiency, with this absence which consists in not looking to the rule of reason, at that moment the original deficiency becomes evil. At that moment the simple negation becomes the absence of a due good, a privation. For the craftsman need not always apply his ruler. It is sufficient that he apply it when he proceeds to actually cut the wood. Similarly in human acts: "The faultiness of will does not consist in not paying attention in act to the rule of reason or of divine law, but in this:—that without taking heed of the rule it proceeds to the act of choice."54

53 See Chapter III, page 90, note 16.

54 De Malo, I, 3c; cf. also ad3; S.T., I, 49, 1, ad3: "This defect, however, is not a fault; but fault follows upon it from the fact that the will acts with this defect." Also see S.T., I-II, 75, 1, ad3: "Now the fact of not applying the rule of reason or of the divine law, has not in itself the nature of evil, whether of punishment or of guilt, before it is applied to the act." Underlining is mine. And finally, in the Summa Contra Gentiles, III, 10, Saint Thomas says: "Hence a defect of ordering to reason and to a proper end precedes a fault of action in the will....Now, this defect in ordering is voluntary, for to will and not to will lie within the power of the will itself. And it is also within its power for reason to make an actual consideration, or to abstain from such a consideration or further to consider this or that alternative. Yet, such a defect of ordering is not a moral evil, for, if reason considers nothing, or considers any good whatever, that is still not a sin until the will inclines to an unsuitable end. At this point, the act of will occurs."
We are now in a position to bring these several elements together in order to summarize Aquinas' thoughts concerning the causality of moral evil. The will is the direct efficient cause of the human act; but it is also the deficient or accidental cause of the privation or evil of the act. The evil is properly attributed to the will inasmuch as voluntarily not having acted, not having moved reason to apply its rule "before" it inclined to its object the will let a deficiency enter into the act, a deficiency which inclines to its object. Here we have uncovered what Maritain calls the "spiritual element of sin." 55

This moment of non-consideration of the rule is so to speak the spiritual element of sin. There is a moment of nature, not of time, where the creatures has as yet done nothing, where it has as yet made no choice, (that is why there is as yet no fault, but mere negation or absence of being) and where nevertheless it has already done nothingness in the sense that it has not considered its rule, freely and voluntarily,--it has put an absence at the head of its acting, it has introduced the condition which will cause the texture of being to give way; that is why there will be faultiness now that it acts with that voluntary non-consideration; such an act will bear in itself the teeth-marks of nothingness.

On the part of the will we thus see that the efficacy of moral evil involves these two moments: firstly, the will simply does not act, does not move reason to apply its rule, and secondly, the will acts, now inclining to an object which the will has, in a sense, "caused" to be not measured by the rule of reason and to be thereby deprived of what it ought to have.

55 St. Thomas and the Problem of Evil, 32-3.
More accurately expressed, the will has not caused its object to be measured by the rule of reason and the Eternal Law. By not moving reason to apply its rule the first defect is not removed, and thus when the will breaks forth into action inclining to its object the human act bears the wound, the "teeth marks" of nothingness. Notice then, that the will is the cause of evil by first doing nothing, by not doing anything, by not acting. It has in a sense stood by passively and not removed the defect. When it breaks into action with this first defect, a defect which it could have removed, a simple negation becomes a privation and an evil.

What of the other causes? Does evil have a formal and final cause? Every act performed knowingly and willingly is, as we have observed, a human act. Furthermore, a human act is a moral act. And yet, not every human act is morally good. This means that the evil human act is an act performed knowingly and willingly, in which case it follows that even in evil human acts there is an object apprehended by the intellect, a final cause; an apprehending intellect, a formal and in a sense an accidental final cause; an inclining appetite, the will, an efficient cause; and finally a subject of these operations, the individual man, a material cause. Therefore what characterizes the evilness of a human act is not that these causes are absent strictly speaking, but rather that they are lacking something which they ought to have. They are present, but a perfection has been removed, a perfection and therefore an actuality which is due. In a human act this perfection consists in the act being measured by
the rule of reason and Eternal Law and that the object, the end, be a proper and due good. Now what constitutes the evil of a human act is the very absence of the form of right reason and the absence of the proper end, and in this sense evil has neither a formal nor a final cause.

But evil has no formal cause, but is rather a privation of form. So, too, neither has it a final cause, but is rather privation of order to the proper end, since it is not only the end which has the nature of good, but also the useful, which is ordered to the end.56

Evil does have a material cause, however. Since evil is a privation in some subject, and since the individual taken in his substantial unity is the subject of his acts, the subject of moral evil is the individual man. And inasmuch as it is the individual who is undergoing the activity, it is he who is the material cause of the morally evil act. Further, since anything is good inasmuch as it exists, and since evil is a privation in some existing subject, it follows that good is the subject of evil, and that in this sense the good is the cause of evil: "Now that good is the cause of evil by way of the material cause was shown above \( \square \) 48, a.3\( / \). For it was shown that good is the subject of evil."57 Properly speaking then, there are but two causes of evil. On the one hand there is the individual man who as the subject of the privation is the material cause. It is he who through his evil acts begins to exist evilly. For to

56 S.T., I, 49, 1c.

57 Ibid.
act is to be; acting is a mode of being. Once again recall our starting point, namely the empirical evidence that beings exist changeingly and actively. Activity is as much a part of the beings of our experience as is stability. The deficiency in which the evil of a human act consists is therefore in a very real sense a deficiency in the being and actuality of the existent. On the other hand, evil has an accidental efficient cause. Here we see that evil has a cause "by way of an agent, not directly, but accidentally."\(^{58}\)

It will follow that evil cannot be directly traced back to the substance's primordial act of existing. \textit{Esse} is the primary act of the existent and therefore the ultimate intrinsic source of all being and becoming, of all actuality including the actuality of causality. All of the actuality of a human act is therefore grounded in and flows from a substance's act of existing. Wherever there is being there is \textit{esse}. What of evil? Inasmuch as evil is non-being, we need not look for, nor would we find, its source and cause to be \textit{esse}, as if \textit{esse} could cause non-\textit{esse}, non-being. In a manner of speaking, non-being begins where \textit{esse} leaves off. Strictly speaking then, \textit{esse} is in no way the direct cause of evil—direct cause, that is, because it is in a way its indirect cause.

St. Thomas says that evil has an indirect cause. In man this is a defective will. Now since \textit{esse} is the primary act of being, whatever

\(^{58}\) \textit{Ibid.}
actuality and perfection is found in the human act is grounded in esse, while whatever there is of evil is ultimately though not proximately the privation of esse. For the human act has a direct efficient cause, whereas the evil of the act has but an indirect or deficient cause. Therefore inasmuch as the act was directly caused by the will, we can say that the act was grounded in esse. But inasmuch as the act is deficient it is not so grounded, for this deficiency consists in the will's not having acted, not having caused. And for this non-action there need be no direct intrinsic cause properly speaking: neither a proximate cause, i.e., the will, nor an ultimate cause, i.e., esse. There is an analogy here. Just as the proximate deficient or accidental cause of evil is the will, so the ultimate deficient or accidental cause of evil is esse. Esse gives actuality to the will's acts, acts which directly and efficiently cause the human act and which deficiently and accidentally cause the evilness of the act. It is in this way that esse can be said to be the "cause" of evil.

God's Causal Influx

Nor, therefore, is there an ultimate exterior cause of evil. To the question of whether the highest good, God, is the cause of evil Aquinas answers:

As appears from what was said, the evil which consists in the defect of action is always caused by the defect of the agent. But in God there is no defect, but the highest perfection, as was shown above. Hence the evil which consists in defect of action,
or which is caused by defect of the agent, is not reduced to God as to its cause. 59

Being all perfect, God is in no wise the cause of the deficiency of the human act. Man alone is sufficient to account for this deficiency, though he cannot alone sufficiently account for the being and perfection of the act. And so St. Thomas says,

The act of sin is both a being and an act, and in both respects it is from God. For every being whatever the manner of its being, must be derived from the First Being....But sin denotes a being and an action with a defect. But this defect is from a created cause, viz., free choice as falling away from the order of the First cause, viz., God. Consequently, this defect is not reduced to God as its cause, but to free choice; just as the defect of limping is reduced to a crooked leg as its cause, but not to the power of locomotion, which nevertheless causes whatever there is of movement in the limping. Accordingly, God is the cause of the act of sin; and yet He is not the cause of sin, because He does not cause the act to have a defect. 60

Since He is the ultimate cause of being and perfection God is therefore not the cause of evil. For this deficiency which is evil man has, as Maritain says, the first initiative. Man has no need of God in the line of

59 S.T., I, 49, 2c.

60 S.T., I-II, 79, 2c; cf. I-II, 79, 1c; S.T., I, 49, 2, ad2: "The effect of the deficient secondary cause is reduced to the first non-deficient cause as regards what it has of being and perfection, but not as regards what it has of defect; just as whatever there is of motion in the act of limping is caused by the motive power, whereas what is unbalanced in it does not come from the motive power, but from the curvature of the leg. So, too, whatever there is of being and action in a bad action is reduced to God as the cause; whereas whatever defect is in it is not caused by God, but by the deficient secondary cause."
evil because this is the line of non-being. Evil is introduced into the human act by the first initiative of the will which is not an act but a non-act, a not-acting, and for this man is sufficient. Nothing is done, and this is precisely St. Thomas' point. In order to voluntarily do nothing man has no need of God. Let us close this part of our study then with the fitting and remarkable observation of Jacques Maritain:

Here we have traced evil to its innermost hiding-place: here the creature is the primary cause, but negatively; I think we might summarize the doctrine in the words of the Gospel: 'Without Me you can do nothing.' That text can be read in two ways, and these two interpretations clarify the whole problem of created freedom in the face of divine freedom. 'Without Me you can do nothing,' means: Without Me you can not commit the slightest act in which there is being or goodness,--so much for the line of good; but if it concerns the line of evil, then the text should be otherwise interpreted, doing violence to the grammar: 'sine Me potestis facere nihil.' Without Me you can do nothingness, Without Me you can introduce into action and being the nothingness which wounds them and which constitutes evil. St. Hildegard complained that that very thing, that nihil, that nothing, could be done without God, she complained to God because without Him we could do nothingness, for she well knew that if we could do it only with Him, then we should never be able to do it, for with God only good and only being can be done. Quite obviously non-being can be "done" only without God. 61

SUMMARY

We have thus returned to our starting point, the fact that beings manifest themselves actively. In the First Chapter we saw that there

is change and activity because beings are not only actual, perfect and good inasmuch as they exist. They are also ordained for and directed to further actuality, additional existence. Beings exist, but their existence is not all that it can be. Though expressive in terms of appetite, their activity is ultimately grounded in their act of existing, in the act of a limited esse seeking to overcome its limitations as much as it can. By acting, substances begin to be completed, begin to be good simply speaking. Activity is the way open for limited esse to overcome non-esse. In man, activity takes on a unique character. Possessed of intelligence, man is the master of his acts. As we saw in Chapters Two and Three, through his intellect and will man is a free agent, being forced neither in regards the end nor the means of attaining the end, the apprehended goods. Because of this, man is the free cause of his activities, activities whereby he is actually perfecting and completing his being, or whereby he is actually defecting his being. To act humanly is to act morally, to be humanly is to be, to exist either goodly or evilly; not absolutely, to be sure, but in a certain and most significant sense, as we have seen.

Following Aquinas' discussion of the nature and causes of moral good and evil, we also saw that man is the cause of his good acts in a different way than he is the cause of evil ones. He is the cause of the former by action, by doing, by actually causing, that is by bringing something into being, namely that the act has the due measure of right reason and the will's object consequently be a due and proper good. What is important
is to see is that in the line of good which is the line of being and actuality, the individual begins-to-be-goodly by acting. Acting, to be sure, in a certain way—by moving reason to judge the true good. To act is to be; indeed, says St. Thomas, it is to be perfect and to complete one's being. However, in the former, that is when the person begins-to-be-evilly, we saw that here the cause of evil is similarly the individual, but now he is the cause by not acting, by not doing, by actually not causing that the act be so measured. And so the will is the interior proximate cause of evil by not-doing anything when it could and should have acted. But if there is no ultimate direct intrinsic cause of moral evil there can be no ultimate direct extrinsic cause. In truth, whether God is the ultimate cause of moral evil is literally not a problem in St. Thomas' doctrine. On the other hand, in the line of moral good God is found to be the ultimate extrinsic cause, and this in no way diminishes the causality nor therefore the responsibility of the creature. Men truly earn and deserve praise and reward for acting goodly just as they deserve and earn reproach and punishment for acting evilly. Human acts are moral acts and thus to act and to be humanly is to act and to be, to exist, morally.
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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Thomas Francis O'Brochta has been read and approved by three members of the Department of Philosophy.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

Date: June 21, 1966
Signature of Adviser: [Signature]