

Christopher Hughes

Aquinas on
BEING, GOODNESS,
AND GOD



Aquinas on Being, Goodness, and God

Thomas Aquinas is one of the most important figures in the history of philosophy and philosophical theology. Relying on a deep understanding of Aristotle, Aquinas developed a metaphysical framework that is comprehensive, detailed, and flexible. Within that framework, he formulated a range of strikingly original and carefully explicated views in areas including natural theology, philosophy of mind, philosophical psychology, and ethics.

In this book, Christopher Hughes focuses on Aquinas's thought from an analytic philosophical perspective. After an overview of Aquinas's life and works, Hughes discusses Aquinas's metaphysics, including his conception of substance, matter, and form; his account of essence and existence; and his theory of the nature of human beings, including his critique of a substance dualism that Aquinas attributes to Plato, but is usually associated with Descartes. In the final chapters, Hughes discusses Aquinas's account of the existence and nature of God, and his treatment of the problem of evil, as well as his ideas about the relation of goodness to being, choice, and happiness.

Aquinas on Being, Goodness, and God is essential reading for students and scholars of Aquinas, and anyone interested in philosophy of religion or the history of medieval philosophy.

Christopher Hughes is Reader in Philosophy at King's College London, UK. Before coming to London, he taught at Cornell University, USA. He is the author of *Kripke: Names, Necessity, and Identity* (2004).

to the much-loved quondam conigliette

Aquinas on Being, Goodness, and God

Christopher Hughes

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Preface

There are already a great many books about Aquinas. Why add to their number?

I hope that some of the readers who could have, or actually have, read many other books about Aquinas, will find this one of use. It may be helpful, though, to say something about what sort of book this is (and isn't), in order to give prospective readers some idea of how likely they are to find it worth their while.

This book is full of arguments. Some are taken from Aquinas' texts, in more or less their original form. Some are slightly (or more than slightly) reconstructed versions of arguments in the texts. Some concern how Aquinas' arguments should or should not be understood. Some concern what, given his commitments, Aquinas might or must have thought about a question he does not explicitly pronounce upon. Some concern the cogency of Aquinas' arguments, or the cogency of certain counterarguments to Aquinas' arguments. And so on.

Some readers are looking for a book that sets out what Aquinas thought about a range of questions (e.g., the nature and persistence conditions of human beings, the problem of evil, and the nature of goodness), without going into painful detail about the reasons for which Aquinas held those views, or the ways in which he defended them. Such readers would do far better with, say, F. C. Coplestone's very clear and accessible book, *Aquinas*, than with this one.

As will become evident to most readers from the first section of [chapter 2](#), my philosophical background is very much in analytic philosophy. Readers who are invincibly allergic to analytic philosophy will find this book deeply uncongenial (and might be happier with something by Etienne Gilson, or John Whipplel).

Someone who wants to learn more about Aquinas might take the view that the best way for her to proceed was, as it were, to thoroughly understand him first, and engage him philosophically later (if at all). That is, she might think that she should first get a really good grasp of Aquinas' entire system (in all its glorious detail), and only subsequently (if at all) tackle questions about the (non-immediate) implications of Aquinas' views, or questions about the defensibility of those views or their (immediate or non-immediate) implications.

Depending on how much Aquinas this sort of reader has under her belt, she may well want to read a book on Aquinas that is purely expositional. If

so, this is not the book for her: in it, for better or worse, my strategy is to ask and attempt to answer questions about the implications and defensibility of Aquinas' views on a given question (the non-univocality or otherwise of "being", the relation between "coincidence" and identity, the relation between a human being and his body, the dependence or otherwise of contingent being on necessary being, the identity or otherwise of goodness and being, etc.) even before "filling in" all of Aquinas' views on adjacent or non-adjacent questions.

Readers not unsympathetic to analytic philosophy will probably not be too averse to a book in which exposition and engagement/evaluation go hand in hand. Some of those readers will be after a book that so to speak covers all the bases—one that thoroughly covers Aquinas' metaphysics, philosophical theology, epistemology, ethics, politics, etc. This certainly is not such a book: although it covers (in some depth) some very central themes in Aquinas' metaphysics, philosophy of mind, philosophical theology, action theory, moral psychology, and ethics, it makes no pretense to even touch upon everything that is central to Aquinas' philosophy (or theology). For readers in search of an all-the-bases book, I would highly recommend Eleonore Stump's *Aquinas*.

Some readers may want to read a book on Aquinas that takes account of and engages the very extensive (non-analytic and analytic) secondary literature on Aquinas. If so, they should read no further. I am not entirely ignorant of that literature, especially on the analytic side (e.g. Geach, Kenny, and Prior), and I have in fact benefited greatly from it (especially from what we might call the "Cornell school" of Aquinas commentators (*in primis* Norman Kretzmann, but also Eleonore Stump, Robert Pasnau, Christopher Shields, and Scott MacDonald). From time to time, I engage the literature, but for the most part I leave it to readers to compare and contrast my views on Aquinas with those of other commentators (should they care to).

Some readers may not require a study of Aquinas that has ambitions of completeness, or constantly engages the secondary literature. They may instead be looking for a book that goes beyond exposition to evaluation, and yet is short enough, clear enough, and fun enough to be a good book to take to the beach. If so, they should definitely opt for Anthony Kenny's (very slim) *Aquinas*, or Peter Geach's "Aquinas" (from Elizabeth Anscombe and Peter Geach, eds., *Three Philosophers*) rather than this book.

So, given the many and varied sorts of readers with an interest in Aquinas that might be advised to steer clear of this book, who if anyone might be advised to read it?

Suppose that you know enough about Aquinas to know that he is a philosopher who is both exceptionally and excitingly "synoptic" or systematic, and also wonderfully interested in, careful about, and good at filling in the details of his big picture. Suppose that you want to get a better grip on how the "little bits" of Aquinas' big picture "add up to" the big

picture. (To vary the metaphor, suppose you want to understand which small square bits Aquinas starts with, and how he puts them together to form his mosaic.) Then you might enjoy this book.

Suppose also, that your interest in Aquinas is very far from “merely historical”. That is, suppose that, in reading Aquinas, your primary interest is in what you can learn from Aquinas about metaphysics, philosophy of mind, philosophical theology, ethics, etc. Then you will certainly be interested in questions about what Aquinas’ views (proximately and remotely) imply, and about the defensibility of Aquinas’ views and their implications. And you probably won’t mind that, in the book, I spend a fair bit of time talking about some central problems of philosophy (and not just about Aquinas’ take on some central problems of philosophy). (It’s because I do that that the book’s working title was *Aquinas and Some Central Problems of Philosophy*, rather than *Aquinas on Some Central Problems of Philosophy*.) In which case, as long as you don’t mind a book in which there is a constant interplay of exposition and engagement/evaluation there’s a decent possibility you’ll enjoy this book.

Suppose further that as well as being interested in Aquinas, you are a fan of what might be called a “Chisholmian” way of doing philosophy. That is, suppose you think that the—or at least a—good way of trying to do philosophy is to always aim at clear and informative definitions, nuanced distinctions, logically tight argumentation, and ingenious counterexamples. Then, I’d like to think, there’s a very serious possibility you’ll enjoy this book. And, I’d like to think, this will be so, even if you don’t have any particular antecedent interest in Aquinas—at least as long as you are interested in metaphysics, philosophical theology, and ethics.

I have already indicated that if you take to analytic philosophy, you are more likely to benefit from this book than if you do not take to it. That said, I would like to think that you might find this book helpful, even if your background is in Aquinas, and you have scant familiarity with analytic philosophy (as long as your unfamiliarity with analytic philosophy is not the explanation of your unaversion to it). So, although this may be unrealistic, I would like to think that a “continental” historian of (mediaeval) philosophy, or, say Thomas Merton (much influenced by Aquinas, and Etienne Gilson on Aquinas), or C. S. Lewis could have gotten something out of this book. I have accordingly tried to write a book that could be understood by someone thoroughly unacquainted with analytic philosophy. I have always tried to avoid saying things such as “for reasons Roderick Chisholm has made clear”, or “in light of Saul Kripke’s critique of Quinean skepticism about Aristotelian essentialism”, or the like, and I have always tried to provide explanations of terminology from philosophical logic that is part of the *koinē* of analytic philosophers, but not of other kinds of philosophers, or non-philosophers. Indeed, I have tried to the best of my ability to do both my exposition and evaluation of Aquinas “starting from zero” (presupposing nothing). This has made the book longer than it otherwise might have been, but also (I

hope) clearer and more accessible to a broader readership. (*Caveat lector lectrixque*: I am not saying that all the details of my arguments concerning the nature of Aquinas' views, or their implications and adequacy, can be taken in instantly and effortlessly. I'm old enough to have been thinking (fruitfully or otherwise) for a good while both about Aquinas, and about issues in contemporary metaphysics, philosophical logic, philosophical theology, and so on that bear crucially on questions about the implications and adequacy of various Thomistic views. Inasmuch as this book is a precipitate of a longish process of making up my mind (and changing my mind) about Aquinas, and about various questions in metaphysics, it is in places something of a dense read. (Ease of readability is also sometimes reduced by my attempt to adhere to the Chisholmian ideal of constructing logically tight arguments without tacit premises.)

If memory serves, when you order a book or a CD from Amazon, you often get a message on your computer screen that says something like "customers who liked this book/CD also liked ...". If I had to conjecture who might like and profit from this book, I would say it would be readers who had enjoyed Norman Kretzmann's two-volume study of the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, or Robert Pasnau's study of Aquinas on human nature, and were looking for something that aimed at something like that kind of engagement with Aquinas, at that level of depth, or to readers who had enjoyed Eleonore Stump's very comprehensive study, *Aquinas*, and wanted to see more detailed coverage of just some of the topics covered there. In some ways, the book I know that is closest to mine in approach and ambitions is Robert Pasnau and Christopher Shield's *The Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas*, although my book has somewhat less breadth of coverage, and (I think) somewhat denser and more elaborate argumentation.

I would also conjecture that readers who had enjoyed Roderick Chisolm's *Person and Object*, or Alvin Plantinga's *The Nature of Necessity* or *God, Freedom, and Evil*, or Peter van Inwagen's *An Essay on Free Will*, or Eric Olson's *The Human Animal* would find a good bit here to hold their interest.

I hope, (prospective) gentle reader, that you now have a more informed idea of whether it's worth your while read this book. In the end, though, there's only one way to find that out. As they say in Italy, *buttati!* (go for it!).

Note

In what follows, the translations of Aquinas are my own. I generally translated from the web site www.corpusthomicum.org/. For the most part, I have followed the contours of Aquinas' Latin pretty closely, and in cases in which I have translated more freely, or in which there are questions about how Aquinas' term is best translated, I have supplemented the translation with bits of the Latin original.

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1 Life and works

Aquinas was born some time between 1225 and 1227 in his family's castle at Roccasecca, not far from the town from which he took his name – Aquino, roughly half way between Naples and Rome.

At the age of six, he began his education at the Benedictine abbey in nearby Monte Cassino, and as a teenager, he pursued his studies in Naples. To the dismay of his family, he joined the Dominican order at nineteen. Although his family was opposed to his going abroad, and did their best (forcibly or at least semi-forcibly) to dissuade him, he eventually got his way, and left for Paris. After spending some years (presumably) completing the study of liberal arts he had begun at the university of Naples, in his early twenties he moved to Cologne, where he spent four years studying under Albert the Great, and broadened and deepened his knowledge of Aristotle (on whose works Albert commented extensively). In 1252, Albert was asked to nominate a student to lecture on Peter Lombard's *Sentences* in Paris; struck as he was by his prize student's brilliance, Albert successfully nominated Aquinas, despite the fact that Aquinas was twenty-seven, and the post for which Aquinas was nominated was usually given to "established" scholars in their forties.

In this period, Aquinas wrote his substantial and detailed commentary on Lombard's *Sentences*, and (probably) two "primers" of broadly Aristotelian philosophy – *De Ente et Essentia* (*On Being and Essence*) and *De Principiis Naturae* (*On the Principles of Nature*).

In 1256 (after four years or so in Paris) Aquinas became a master of theology: the job involved preaching, teaching, and writing. A particularly important part of the teaching was "disputing theological questions". In a sort of mediaeval counterpart of a postgraduate and staff seminar, a so-called "ordinary" disputation of a theological question worked something like this: a theology master would set a question (usually one with a yes/no answer). Participants in the "seminar" would weigh in with arguments in favor of one or another answer to the question. After an assistant to the master of theology, in light of the arguments proposed on different sides, had made a preliminary determination of how the question should be answered, the master of theology brought the "seminar" to a close by making a final determination, explaining why *this* answer to the question he

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had set was the right one, and, if necessary, explaining where the arguments for a different answer went off the rails. Often a scribe kept a record of a disputed question, which the master of theology and/or his assistant(s) would subsequently edit.

Analogously, when a master of theology “taught a class” on a book of the Bible, the “lectures” often gave rise, first to a written record, and subsequently to a “publication” in the form of a biblical commentary edited by the master of theology and/or his assistant(s).

At least some of the theological questions Aquinas disputed during that time have been preserved in the *Quaestiones Disputatae de Veritate* (*Disputed Questions on Truth*). Much of Aquinas’ teaching on the bible from this period has also come down to us in the form of biblical commentaries. Toward the end of his first Paris stay, Aquinas also started to work on the *Summa Contra Gentiles* (*Summa Against the Unbelievers*) (the “*Summa Minor*”, as we might think of it, since it is the more compendious and less detailed of Aquinas’ two most celebrated works (*the Summa Contra Gentiles* and the *Summa Theologiae* (*Summa of Theology*)).

In 1259, the Dominican order “reassigned” Aquinas, sending him back to his native Italy, where he would spend the next nine years in Orvieto and in Rome. In these years, he completed the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, and began to write his *magnum opus*, the *Summa Theologiae*. He also wrote up another set of disputed questions – the *Quaestiones Disputatae de Potentia Dei* (*Disputed Questions on God’s Power*). While in Italy, Aquinas also launched into a series of commentaries on Aristotle (he would end up commenting on twelve Aristotelian texts, among them the *Nicomachean Ethics*, *Physics*, *Metaphysics*, and *De Anima*).

After about nine years in Italy, Aquinas returned to Paris in 1268. Over the next four years, despite doing a very substantial amount of teaching and preaching, Aquinas did an unbelievable amount of what contemporary academics call “research”. In his second Paris stay, Aquinas finished most of his commentaries on Aristotle, and finished writing the better part of all he ever wrote of the *Summa Theologiae* (which he never completed). (And the (incomplete) *Summa Theologiae* alone is over one and a half million words!)

After his second stint in Paris, Aquinas returned to Italy in 1272 – this time, to the Dominican priory in Naples. For a year and half, Aquinas continued to burn the candle at both ends, and do a superhuman amount of “research”. But towards the end of 1273, he seems to have had a kind of breakdown, after which he curtailed his routine, was at times bedridden, and never wrote again. When urged by his secretary to take up writing again he averred that, after the things that had been revealed to him, everything that he had written seemed to him “like straw”. Not long afterward, on his way to the Council of Lyon, as a result of illness or injury or both, Aquinas died at the Cistercian abbey of Fossanova, not far from his birthplace at Roccasecca.

On an English radio show called “Desert Island Discs”, the host interviews a famous guest, and asks him or her to select some favorite pieces of music,

and also a favorite book to take with him or her to a desert island. If you were going to take one work of Aquinas with you to a desert island, it would probably be the *Summa Theologiae*.

In writing the *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas might have aimed at breadth rather than depth (going not too deeply into a great many questions) or depth rather than breadth (trying to get to the heart of relatively few questions). Also, he might have tried to write a book that relative beginners would find invaluable (for its accessibility and straightforwardness), but specialists would find of limited interest, or he might have tried to write a book that would delight specialists (for the novel and subtle ways in which it “advanced ongoing debates”), but would go right over the heads of relative beginners. In fact, with respect to both breadth vs. depth, and exotericity vs. esotericity, Aquinas renounced trade-offs, and went for “the best of both worlds”. He tried to write a book that would cover a staggering number of questions, but always avoided summary or “broad brush” treatments thereof. He tried to write a book that would be accessible to someone without a great deal of background in either theology or philosophy, but also addressed vexed questions at the “research frontier”. Given that Aquinas not only aimed at but also achieved “the best of both worlds”, it is no surprise that the *Summa Theologiae* is as long as it is: it is hard to see how a shorter book could have avoided breadth/depth or exotericity/esotericity trade-offs.

Aquinas’ aims in writing the *Summa Theologiae* were ambitious in another way. He wanted to preserve a good deal of the helpfully dialectical format of a disputed question (arguments both for and against the position ultimately endorsed, explanation of where the arguments for the position ultimately rejected went wrong, and a uniform structure that made it easy to keep track of how different objections were met, and made it easy to compare objections and replies across articles of the same disputed question, and across different questions of the same set of disputed questions). At the same time, he wanted to “streamline” that format, in such a way that readers – especially non-specialist readers – would not miss the forest for the trees. He accordingly adopted a format that represents a very happy trade-off between the “non-disputational” structure of (say) *De Ente et Essentia* or *De Principiis Naturae* and the structure of the disputed questions – one in which each article of the *Summa Theologiae* is a kind of *quaestiuncula disputata* or disputed question in a nutshell.

So, for reasons of form as well as content, and style as well as substance (Aquinas expresses his thoughts with preternatural clarity), the *Summa Theologiae* is a masterpiece. To my mind, it is an ideal point of entry to Aquinas’ philosophy and theology (along with the already mentioned “primers” (the *De Ente et Essentia* and the *De Principiis Naturae*). Not that I would recommend trying read the whole *Summa* from the first article to the last (in the way that ambitious Bible study groups sometimes undertake to start with the book of Genesis, and go right through to the book of

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Revelations). The reader especially interested in Aquinas' natural theology can concentrate on the first twenty-five or so questions of the *Prima Pars* of the *Summa Theologiae*; the reader especially interested in Aquinas' views on human beings, bodies, and minds can concentrate on the so-called "Treatise of Human Nature" further on in the *Prima Pars*, and so on. Given that later questions in the *Summa Theologiae* build on earlier questions, a reader who dips into the *Summa* at a certain point may find she has to go back to earlier questions; but, given the beautifully clear layout of the *Summa Theologiae*, it is almost always easy to find which preceding articles need to be read first.

There is one respect in which this brief look at Aquinas' life and works might mislead a reader. Someone who lacked familiarity with Aquinas' works might surmise from what I have said so far that in his adult life Aquinas passionately pursued two essentially independent interests – Aristotle and theology (with the interest in Aristotle resulting in the commentaries on Aristotle, and the "philosophical primers", and the interest in theology resulting in the two *Summae*, the disputed theological questions, and the biblical commentaries).

For many reasons, this would be a misconception. First, although the *Summa Theologiae* is called the *Summa Theologiae* and not the *Summa Philosophiae*, as well as (obviously) containing a great deal of theology, it also contains a great deal of what most contemporary philosophers and contemporary theologians would classify as philosophy and theology at once, or else as simply and solely philosophy (in particular, philosophy of a broadly Aristotelian kind). Consider for example the natural theology in the first twenty-six questions of the *Prima Pars* of the *Summa Theologiae*. There Aquinas attempts to show that (a) the best explanation of the existence of changeable and contingent caused beings implies the existence of a unique, unchangeable, necessary, and uncaused cause of those beings, and (b) this unchangeable, necessary, and uncaused cause has all the properties needed for us to identify it with God. The attempt to demonstrate (a) and (b) can be thought of as belonging to (a revelation-independent branch of) theology ("natural theology"), but it can equally well be thought of as belonging to metaphysics, and thus to philosophy. Aquinas' discussion of the general nature of goodness at question 5 of the *Prima Pars* of the *Summa Theologiae*, on the other hand, would be counted by contemporary philosophers and theologians alike as philosophy, and not theology. The same could be said of Aquinas' discussion of the mind-body problem later on in the *Prima Pars* of the *Summa*, or of Aquinas' discussion of deliberation and choice toward the beginning of the *Prima Secundae* of the *Summa* (that is, to say, the first part of the second part of the *Summa (Theologiae)*).

It is true that many of the questions addressed in the *Summa Theologiae* are nowadays addressed almost exclusively in theology departments (e.g. questions about how the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation are best understood). But even in those parts of the *Summa Theologiae* in which Aquinas addresses questions that contemporary philosophers or theologians

would probably think of as purely theological, he never stops doing broadly Aristotelian philosophy.

As Aquinas saw it, Aristotle was to philosophy what Euclid was to classical geometry (hence Aquinas typically refers to Aristotle as “the Philosopher”). So, for Aquinas, understanding Aristotle was essential for understanding philosophy. And understanding philosophy was essential for doing systematic theology, because systematic theology as Aquinas conceived of it was essentially philosophical, in something like the way that physics as physicists now conceive of it is essentially mathematical. Imagine starting with a standard university-level physics textbook, and trying to take the mathematics out of it. For Aquinas, that is what it would be like to try to take the philosophy out of a proper *summa* of theology.

So Aquinas did not write all those commentaries on Aristotle because, as well as being interested in systematic theology, he was also and independently interested in Aristotle, any more than Newton developed the infinitesimal calculus because, as well as being interested in physics, he was also and independently interested in mathematical analysis. Newton saw the calculus as an indispensable *ancilla fisicae* (“handmaiden of physics”), and Aquinas saw broadly Aristotelian philosophy as an indispensable *ancilla theologiae* (handmaiden of theology).

Aquinas’ interest in Aristotle – and, more generally, in philosophy – is *in primis et ante omnia* theological. Still, oddly enough, the sort of person who would describe herself as having a great interest in theology, but scant interest in or tolerance for philosophy, might well get less out of the *Summa Theologiae* (or the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, or the *Quaestiones Disputatae*) than someone who would describe herself as having a great interest in philosophy, but scant interest in or tolerance for theology.

Imagine an eccentric neo-Pythagorean mathematician who believes that the attempt to describe fundamental features of physical reality is futile, because the entire physical world is illusory: the only things there are (on her account) are non-physical minds and non-physical mathematical objects (pure sets, numbers, and the like). Our neo-Pythagorean mathematician would have scant interest in or tolerance for the enterprise of studying the fundamental structure of the physical world, but she might nevertheless get quite a lot out of Newton’s *Principia Mathematica* (or at any rate a more accessible restatement of Newtonian physics in a university-level physics textbook), given that mathematics runs through the *Principia Mathematica* in the way that the word “Brighton” runs through Brighton Rock.

Now imagine someone who has great interest in questions about the fundamental structure of the physical world (*why do material bodies change speed or direction? what holds the parts of (composite) objects together?*, etc.) but little interest in or tolerance for mathematics. Such a person will find reading *Principia Mathematica*, or even a contemporary restatement of the themes of *Principia Mathematica* in a contemporary university-level physics textbook, a long hard slog, and will have a hard time getting much out of it.

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Analogously, someone who has great interest in theology will not necessarily enjoy or get a lot out of the *Summa Theologiae* (or, more generally, Aquinas' systematic theology). Suppose she has a limited tolerance for the definition and distinction mongering, and the emphasis on arguments, implication, and incompatibility that characterize philosophical logic (in either its Aristotelian or its contemporary form). Suppose also that she has a limited interest in questions of general metaphysics (*Are the features of substances independent of or dependent (for their existence) upon the substances that have them? Are the features of substances individuated by the substances that have them, or vice versa? Are material substances individuated by their matter? What is responsible for the unity of composite (material or immaterial) substances? What is the difference between qualitative change and coming into/going out of existence?* and so on). Then, however great her interest in theology, she will find Aquinas' *Summae* or his disputed questions hard going: they will seem to her to contain (overall) dismayingly much philosophical logic and metaphysics (and philosophy of mind, and theory of action, and ...) and dismayingly little theology.

Conversely, someone who thinks logic-chopping is much maligned, and finds philosophical logic, general metaphysics, philosophy of mind, and so on, endlessly fascinating, could spend many happy and fruitful hours reading the *Summae* or the *Quaestiones Disputatae*, even if she takes the same view of God and theology that our hypothetical neo-Pythagorean mathematician takes of the physical world and physics. Because the *Summa Theologiae* is a *Summa* of philosophical theology in just the way that the *Principia Mathematica* is (and Aristotle's *Physics* is not) a "summa" of mathematical physics, philosophers – especially philosophers who find either Aristotle or contemporary analytic philosophy congenial – are a safer bet to enjoy and profit from the *Summa Theologiae* than theologians – or indeed, than the seminarians for whose mediaeval counterparts Aquinas wrote the *Summa Theologiae*.

2 Being

The taxonomy of being

Going back at least as far as Plato's *Sophist*, metaphysicians have had a propensity to "taxonomize" being. There are various ways we could think of a taxonomy of being, but for our purposes, the following initial characterization will suffice: we start (at the top of the classificatory tree, as it were), with a broad and varied class or set of beings. We then "partition" that set of beings into subsets. A *partition* of a set S is a set of non-empty subsets of S , in which every element of S belongs to at least one of the subsets of S , and no element of S belongs to more than one of the subsets of S . Thus the natural numbers (0, 1, 2 ...) may be "partitioned into" the set of even natural numbers and the set of odd natural numbers (since every natural number is either odd or even, and no natural number is both odd and even). And the set of Polish children may be partitioned into the set of male Polish children and the set of female Polish children (since every Polish child is either male or female, and no Polish child is both male and female). We can partition one and the same set more or less "finely". For example, we could more coarsely partition the inhabitants of the USA into those currently east of the Continental Divide, and those currently west of the Continental Divide, or we could more finely partition the inhabitants of the USA into those currently in Maine, those currently in Massachusetts, and so on for all fifty states (and the District of Columbia). We could think of a taxonomy of being as a series of increasingly fine partitions of beings into ever more determinate kinds of beings, where the series either goes on for ever, or terminates in the finest possible partition of beings into kinds of beings – in other words, terminates in a partition of beings into maximally determinate kinds of beings (what Leibniz called *infimae species*).

Aquinas has a quite elaborate taxonomy of being, and it will be useful to say something about what it looks like.

We could think of it this way: we initially partition the set of beings into the set of "complete" beings and the set of "incomplete" beings. Roughly, complete beings are individuals that are not "in" or "of", or "had by" anything else: examples would include God, Socrates, and the Sun.

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Roughly, incomplete beings are individuals that are in, or of, or had by something else.

For Aquinas, a particularly important class of incomplete beings are what he calls *received forms*. Received forms are incomplete beings that make their “recipients” (the things that have or “receive” them) either be a certain kind of complete being, or be a certain way. Received forms that make a complete being be a certain kind of being are *received substantial forms*, and received forms that make a complete being be a certain way are *received predicamentally accidental forms*. An example of a received substantial form would be the humanity of Socrates, or the “equinity” of this horse, or the “solarity” of the sun. An example of a received (predicamental) accidental form would be Socrates’ paleness, or his risibility (that is, his ability to laugh). For Aquinas, another particularly important class of incomplete beings are received “existences”. In addition to having a received substantial form that makes him a human being (a rational animal), and various accidental forms that make him pale, or risible, or the like, Socrates has a received substantial *esse* or substantial existence, which makes him actually exist. (Aquinas classifies *esse* or existence as a kind of accident, but not as a “predicamental” accident because it does not fall under any of Aristotle’s “predicaments” – that is, under any of the ten Aristotelian categories.)

As far as the examples provided so far go, Aquinas’ distinction between complete and incomplete beings might be thought of as tantamount to the distinction between the things referred to by concrete nouns (such as “tree”, “animal”, “celestial body”) and things referred to by abstract nouns (such as “animality”, risibility”, “color”, “shape”). But the distinction between complete and incomplete beings does not quite align with the distinction between the referents of concrete nouns and the referents of abstract nouns.

To start with, as we shall see in [Chapter 4](#), Aquinas thinks that certain nouns that we would presumably classify as abstract refer to a complete being: “goodness itself” and “deity”, for example, both refer to the complete being, God.

Also, various beings Aquinas would consider incomplete are not picked out by abstract nouns – or, at any rate, are not picked out by the sorts of nouns people typically have in mind when they speak of abstract nouns. For Aquinas, geometrical entities such as boundaries, surfaces, points, and lines are incomplete beings, even though, I take it, very few people would offer “point” or “line” as an example of an abstract noun. (“Linearity” is an abstract noun, but “line” is not.)

On the other hand, even if points and lines are not the referents of any abstract nouns (as abstract nouns are typically construed), it does seem that points and lines (and for that matter boundaries and surface) are abstract entities (however exactly “abstract entity” is best defined). And it seems that the same can be said for entities such as the humanity or risibility or existence of Socrates. So we might think of Aquinas’ distinction between

complete and incomplete beings as corresponding to our distinction between concrete and abstract entities. After all, the term *abstract* comes from a Latin verb that means “to draw away” or “withdraw”, or “separate”. And, we might think, abstract entities are what we arrive at when in thought we separate something from the complete individual or whole individual to which it belongs. The separated something might be a property of a complete individual – a humanity, or a risibility, or an *esse* (an existence) – or it might be, say, the two-dimensional surface of a complete three-dimensional individual.

Again, though, Aquinas’ distinction between complete and incomplete beings isn’t quite the distinction between concrete and abstract beings as usually drawn (even though the two distinctions overlap significantly). To begin with, concreteness is often if not typically conceived of as implying spatiotemporality. If concreteness does imply spatiotemporality, then Aquinas’ distinction between complete and incomplete beings does not correspond to the distinction between concrete and abstract beings, inasmuch as (on Aquinas’ account) God exists outside space and time, but is a complete being.

Even if we leave God out of it, there are many things that we would unhesitatingly classify as concrete beings that Aquinas would classify as incomplete beings. Hands and feet are surely concrete beings (they occupy space and time, undergo change, and have properties such as size, shape, and mass). But, for Aquinas, hands and feet are not complete beings, inasmuch as they exist “not in themselves (*per se*), but in something else more “perfect” or “complete” (*in alio perfectioni*) – viz., the whole human being of which they are parts (*Summa Theologiae*, 3a, 2, 2, *ad 3um*). (Because the *Summa Theologiae* will be cited so often in this book, in citations “*Summa Theologiae*” will henceforth be abbreviated “*ST*”).

Here some readers may be wondering, why isn’t a human hand a complete being? To be sure, a human hand is not a complete human body, or a complete human animal; it is only a part of a complete human body or complete human animal. On the other hand, unlike, say, a finger, a human hand is not merely a part of a complete human hand; it is a complete human hand. So why isn’t a human hand a complete being (a complete being “of the hand kind”, as opposed to a complete being “of the finger kind”, or a complete being “of the human body or human animal kind”)? Why can’t a human hand be a complete being of one kind, and at the same time be in – that is, be a proper part of – something else?

Aquinas would agree that a complete being can be a part of something else. For example, he would say, a stone is a complete being and a stone can be part of a heap of stones, or a stone and timber house. But, he would say, that is only because neither a heap of stones nor a stone and timber house is what we might call a *genuine unit* – that is, a being that is one thing absolutely speaking (*unum simpliciter*), rather than one thing in a certain respect (*unum secundum quid*), a being that has genuine or real or unqualified unity. By

contrast, a human being is a “genuine unit”, and no complete being can be a proper part of a genuine unit. A being is a genuine unit only if none of its proper parts are complete beings: a being that is composed by a plurality of complete beings is, simply in virtue of being so composed, a mere “aggregate” or “assemblage” of genuine units, rather than a genuine unit in its own right. This will be so, whether the assemblage in question is “unstructured” (as in the case of a heap of stones), or structured (as in the case of a stone and timber house). If complete beings survive being put together (as stones and bits of timber survive being put together when a stone and timber house is built), they do not compose a genuine unit (cf. *ST*, IIIa, 2, 1, *responsio*). That is why, for Aquinas, there are not only abstract incomplete beings (e.g., the equator), but also concrete ones: a being that is part of a genuine unit, and thus incomplete, may be either abstract (as a surface or a boundary is), or concrete (as a hand or a foot is). (Incidentally, on Aquinas’ account, there are also, surprisingly enough, concrete incomplete beings that are not parts of any genuine units. The human nature “assumed” by the Word in the Incarnation (that is to say, the soul–body compound the Word made His own when He put on flesh) is such a being.)

For Aquinas, not every being is a substance (for example, received accidental forms are not substances). But every complete being is a complete substance, just as every complete substance is a complete being. So Aquinas’ distinction between complete beings and incomplete beings is in effect a distinction between complete substances and everything else. Equivalently, beings can be partitioned into complete beings/substances, and everything else.

Complete substances may in turn be partitioned into the perfect complete substance (which is to say, God (neglecting Trinitarian complications)), and imperfect complete substances (which is to say, created complete substances). Imperfect complete substances can be partitioned into immaterial imperfect complete substances (that is (for Aquinas) angels), and material imperfect complete substances. Angels can be partitioned into various kinds of angels: by Aquinas’ lights, the finest partition of angels into various kinds of angels partitions the set of angels into “unit” or “singleton” subsets, since no two angels are of the same maximally determinate kind (cf. *ST*, Ia, 50, 4).

Material imperfect complete substances can be partitioned into “superlunary” material imperfect complete substances and “sublunary” material imperfect complete substances. The “superlunary” material imperfect complete substances can be partitioned into ingenerable and incorruptible celestial bodies of various kinds. Again, the finest partition of celestial bodies into various kinds of celestial bodies partitions the set of celestial bodies into “unit” or “singleton” subsets, since celestial bodies, like angels, never share a maximally determinate kind (cf. *ST*, Ia, 47, 2, *responsio* and *De Spiritualibus Creaturis*, un. 8, *responsio*).

Sublunary material imperfect complete substances may be coarsely partitioned into terrestrial “bits of stuff” and terrestrial “un-bits-of-stuff”.

Terrestrial bits of stuff may be subpartitioned into bits of the four Aristotelian elements (earth, water, air, and fire), and bits of the various kinds of mixtures composed of the four Aristotelian elements. Terrestrial “un-bits-of-stuff” may be partitioned into animate and inanimate terrestrial un-bits-of-stuff. Animate terrestrial un-bits-of-stuff may be partitioned into familiar biological kinds (penultimately into various genera, and ultimately into various species). Inanimate terrestrial un-bits-of-stuff can be partitioned into the various kinds of inanimate terrestrial un-bits-of-stuff – mountains, rivers, and so on. (Interestingly, Aquinas holds that the various kinds of terrestrial un-bits-of-stuff do not include, say, the kind *hammer*, or the kind *statue*, or any other artifactual kinds: no artifactual kind is a kind of complete substance (see *De Principiis Naturae*, [chapter 2](#).)

Similarly, incomplete beings may be partitioned increasingly finely. Initially, they may be partitioned into received incomplete beings and unreceived incomplete beings. Received incomplete beings may in turn be partitioned into various kinds of received substantial forms, various kinds of received (predicamental) accidental forms, and various kinds of received *esse* (existence). (For Aquinas, a complete substance’s received *esse* may either be substantial or accidental; the former makes that substance exist *simpliciter*, and the latter makes it exist in a certain way (as white, or as musical; cf. *ST*, IIIa, 17, 2, *responsio*.) Unreceived incomplete beings may in turn be partitioned into various kinds of ordinary proper parts of complete substances (e.g., hands and feet), various kinds of unreceived essences, various kinds of unreceived substantial forms, and various kinds of unreceived bits of matter.

As Aquinas thinks of it, the essence of a complete being is what makes a complete being this complete being of this maximally determinate kind. Unless the complete being in question is God, the essence of that being will exist in and be less complete than the being itself, since the being itself will have not only an essence (which makes it be this being of this maximally determinate kind), but also predicamental accidental forms, and existence. For instance, the essence of the archangel Gabriel will be an unreceived substantial form which makes Gabriel this individual of this maximally determinate angelic kind. As Aquinas thinks of it, Gabriel’s essence has no proper parts, but the same cannot be said for the essences of (superlunary or sublunary) material complete beings. The essences of such beings are partly constituted by substantial form, and partly constituted by matter (matter that is in potentiality toward a variety of substantial forms, in the case of corruptible sublunary material complete beings, or matter (*hylē topikē* or “place matter”) that is in potentiality toward a variety of locations, in the case of incorruptible superlunary material beings (cf. *ST*, Ia, 66, 2)). (Readers should not worry if they find the notion of matter and form jointly constituting the essence of a material complete being less than clear: I shall be saying much more about it in this chapter. But, to forestall a possible misunderstanding, the bit of matter that partly constitutes the essence of a

sublunary or superlunary material complete being may not be identified with a “bit of a certain kind of stuff” in the ordinary sense (e.g., a bit of fire, or a bit of air). As we saw, for Aquinas bits of fire or air are complete beings, and the matter that partly constitutes the essence of a material complete being is only a part of a part of a complete being.)

I have characterized a Thomistic taxonomy of being via a series of increasingly fine partitions of an initial set of beings. But various series of partitions could be used to characterize that same taxonomy. Rather than initially partitioning beings into complete and incomplete beings, and then subpartitioning complete beings into perfect complete beings and imperfect complete beings, we could have initially partitioned beings into created and uncreated beings, and then subpartitioned created beings into complete created beings and incomplete created beings. (As we shall see in [chapter 4](#), on Aquinas’ account, one cannot subpartition uncreated being into complete uncreated being and incomplete uncreated being, because there is only one uncreated being, and He is complete.) Alternatively, we could have initially partitioned beings into unreceived and received beings, and then subpartitioned unreceived beings into various kinds of complete unreceived beings and various kinds of incomplete unreceived beings, and subpartitioned received beings into various kinds of incomplete received beings.

Beings are complete or incomplete, and received or unreceived. So we could think of there being four (possibly empty) categories:

complete and unreceived, complete and received, incomplete and unreceived, and incomplete and received. So we could alternatively represent Aquinas’ taxonomy of being “non-partionally” as follows:

Category 1 (*complete and unreceived*) consists of complete beings/substances: God, angels, celestial bodies, animate terrestrial complete substances, and inanimate terrestrial complete substances.

Category 2 (*complete and received*) is empty.

Category 3 (*incomplete and unreceived*) consists of:

- ordinary proper parts of complete substances (e.g., hands or feet, or (as we shall see in [chapter 3](#)) human souls)
- unreceived (and unreceivable) created substantial forms (i.e., angelic substantial forms)
- not currently received (though not intrinsically unreceivable) substantial forms (i.e., the substantial form of a human being in the period between that human being’s death and his resurrection)
- the essences of created beings
- the unreceived proper parts of essences of created beings (e.g., the bits of matter that partly constitute the essence of sublunary or superlunary material complete beings)

and

- beings that are incomplete, not because they are parts of something more complete, but because they are “assumed” by something more complete – the incarnate Word.

(Note that the subcategories of category 3 partly overlap. For instance, the subcategory *unreceived substantial form* and *essence of created being* partly overlap, because one and the same incomplete being is both the substantial form of and the essence of the archangel Gabriel. Also, readers shouldn’t worry if they are (understandably) puzzled by the idea that the substantial form of a human being can be received at one time but not at another: I’ll discuss this in [Chapter 3](#)).

Category 4 (*incomplete and received*) consists of received substantial forms, received accidental forms, and received existences (*esses*).

So far, so good. But we have been ignoring complications arising from the fact that Aquinas, like Aristotle, holds that the term “being” has a variety of senses. As Aquinas put it in *Quodlibet* 9, 2, 2, *responsio* of the *Quaestiones Quodlibetales* (*Quodlibetal Questions*):

Being (*esse*) is said in two ways (*dupliciter dicitur*). In one way ... it is attributed to anything about which one may form a judgment, whether that thing is a being (*ens*), or a privation of a being (*privatio entis*): we say there is such a thing as blindness. In another way, being (*esse*) is said to be the act of a being, inasmuch as it is a being. Taken this way, being is attributed only to things falling under the categories. ... But this kind of being is attributed to a thing in two ways. Taken in one way, it is attributed to that which properly and truly has being (*esse*) or is (*est*). Taken that way, it is only attributed to substances that subsist *per se*: what truly is, is a substance, as it says in Book 1 of the *Physics*. But all the things that do not subsist *per se*, but are in something else or with something else, whether they are accidents, or substantial forms, or any kind of parts, do not have being (*esse*) in such a way that they themselves truly are. Being is attributed to such things in a different way, that is, as that by which something is; just as whiteness is said to be, not because it itself subsists *per se*, but because on its account something gets to be white (*habet esse album*). Hence being (*esse*) is truly and properly (*vere et proprie*) attributed only to things that subsist *per se*.

Aquinas covers some of the same ground in the [first chapter](#) of the *De Ente et Essentia*, and also at *ST*, Ia, 90, 2, *responsio*:

Only substances are truly and properly (*vere et proprie*) said to be beings (*entia*). An accident doesn’t have being, though something is on its account. For this reason it is said [in the *Metaphysics*] that an accident is

better described as *of a being (entis)* than as a being (*ens*), and the same goes for all other non-subsistent forms.

These remarks make it look as though, for Aquinas, the question, “what is the taxonomy of being?” is ambiguous. If we take “being” in its broadest sense, there are beings that the taxonomy sketched above leaves out – e.g., privations such as blindness. (For Aquinas, just as a privation – say, the blindness of Homer – is not a received existence or received substantial form, neither is it a received accidental form. It is never true of an accidental form that all it does is to keep its recipient from being a certain way, but it is true of Homer’s blindness that all it does is keep Homer from being a certain way he ought to be (viz., sighted). On the other hand, if we take “being” in its narrowest sense, then our taxonomy includes all manner of non-beings: only the entities falling under Category 1 are beings in the narrowest and most proper sense. We might think that our Thomistic taxonomy of being is a taxonomy of being in an intermediate sense of “being” – one that embraces substances and accidents and matter and form, but not privations. Judging from the *Quodlibet* 9, 2, 2 passage, though, it isn’t clear that Aquinas would recognize such an intermediate sense. True, he starts out saying that being is said in two ways. But when he gets to the second way, it seems to split into a pair of different ways in which being is said: being is said primarily and more properly of complete substances, and said secondarily and less properly of accidental forms, substantial forms, and proper parts of complete substances. And there certainly are places (e.g., *Summa Contra Gentiles* [henceforth, for brevity, *SCG*], I, 32), where Aquinas appears to explicitly deny that being is said in the same way of complete substances and accidents (or the like).

For Aquinas, “being”, “there is/are”, “exists”, and the like are all ambiguous terms. More precisely, they are *analogical* terms. Here it will be useful to sketch the distinction Aquinas draws between purely equivocal, analogical, and purely univocal predication. Suppose someone points at the Bank of England, and says “that is a bank”. At the same time, someone points at the south bank of the Thames, and says “that is a bank”. Both statements are true. But what the first person says about what he’s pointing at, when he says, “that’s a bank”, is completely different from what the second person says about what she’s pointing at when she says, “that’s a bank”. In such a case, Aquinas says, *bank* is predicated of what the first person pointed at and what the second person pointed at “purely equivocally”. Contrast this with a case in which you point at the fox in our garden, and say, “that’s an animal”, and I point at the wild parakeet flying over our garden, and say “that’s an animal”. In this case, what you say about what you’re pointing at, when you say, “that’s an animal” is exactly what I say about what I’m pointing at, when I say, “that’s an animal”. In such a case, Aquinas would say, *animal* is predicated purely univocally of what I pointed at and what you pointed at.

Now, as Aquinas thinks of it, there is a kind of predication that is intermediate between purely equivocal and purely univocal predication. Suppose I point at a very fit person, and say, “she’s healthy”. You point at the low calorie, low saturated fat dinner she is eating, and say, “that’s healthy”. In this case, what I say about what I’m pointing at, when I say “she’s healthy”, is not exactly what you say about what you say about what you’re pointing at, when you say “that’s healthy”. So *healthy* is not purely univocally predicated of the diner and her dinner. On the other hand, neither is *healthy* predicated purely equivocally of the diner and her dinner. What I say about what I’m pointing at, when I say, “she’s healthy” is that what I am pointing at has health. What you say about what you’re pointing at, when you say, “that’s healthy” is that what you are pointing at contributes to health. So there is a kind of “overlap” in what I say about the diner, when I say that she’s healthy, and what you say about the dinner, when you say that it’s healthy, that is absent in the case of purely equivocal predication. Because of this overlap, Aquinas holds that *healthy* is predicated neither purely equivocally, nor purely univocally, but analogically, of the diner and her dinner (see *ST*, Ia, 13, 5, *responsio*). In this case, Aquinas would say, *healthy* is predicated primarily of the diner, and secondarily of the dinner (more generally, *healthy* is predicated primarily of things that have health, and secondarily of things that contribute to (or are indicative of) health).

So what does this have to do with terms such as “being”, “there is/there are”, and “exists”? It seems that for Aquinas all these terms resemble “healthy” in being analogically predicable of many kinds of things, and primarily predicable of one kind of thing. That is, *being (ens)* is predicable in the primary sense of complete substances, because they have *esse* (existence, subsistence *per se*). *Being (ens)* is predicable in a secondary sense of received forms, *esse*, and parts of complete substance, inasmuch as they stand in some relation other than the straightforward having relation to the *esse* (existence, subsistence *per se*) had by a complete substance. (See *ST*, Ia, 13, 10 *ad 4um*, and *De Ente et Essentia*, 1: “being (*ens*) is said absolutely and primarily (*per prius*) of substances, and secondarily (*per posterius*) and as it were in a qualified sense (*quasi secundum quid*) of accidents.”) Similarly, complete substances may be said to be or to exist in the primary sense; incomplete things may be said to be or to exist in a secondary sense.

Aquinas’ view of the non-univocality of *being* (and related terms) has, understandably enough, been challenged by various mediaeval and contemporary philosophers.

It is at least initially plausible that the meaning of “healthy” in “that looks healthy” (said of a dinner) is not identical to, but “overlaps with”, the meaning of “healthy” in “she looks healthy” (said of a diner). That the meanings in question at least overlap seems clear enough, given that one can specify (and Aquinas, following Aristotle, has specified) how they overlap (namely, they both involve standing in some relation to health). It may not be so clear that the meanings in question are not identical. For we

might say that in both “she looks healthy” and “that looks healthy”, “looks healthy” means the very same disjunctive thing – namely, “appears to be either a haver of or a contributor to health”. (If we wanted to say that “healthy” has the same meaning in “her complexion looks healthy”, as it does in “she looks healthy” and “that dinner looks healthy”, then we would have to lengthen our disjunction, and say that in all three sentences “looks healthy” means “appears to be either a haver of or a contributor to or an indicator of health”: other uses of *healthy* might require further lengthening of our disjunction).

On the other hand, the view that *is healthy* always means the same disjunctive thing – i.e., *is a possessor of or contributor to or indicator of or a ... of health*) seems problematic in a number of ways.

Here are two: if *F* is univocally predicable of *a* and *b*, then if it is true that *a* is *F*, and true that *b* is *F*, we may conclude that it is also true that *a* and *b* are *F*. The same inference seems not to be valid, if *F* is either purely equivocally predicable of *a* and *b*, or *F* is only analogically predicable of *a* and *b*. Because the disjunctive predicate *parent* is univocally predicable of mother and fathers, we may infer *that man and that woman are parents* (perhaps of different children) from *that man is a parent* and *that woman is a parent*. By contrast, because it seems that *hard* is not univocally predicable of diamonds and problems, it seems that one cannot infer *that diamond and that problem are hard* from *that diamond is hard* and *that problem is hard*. That is because it seems *hard* has a primary sense that applies to diamonds but not to problems, and a secondary sense that applies to problems, but not to diamonds. And if we use the word “hard” in the context of a particular statement, it can only have one sense in that statement. Whichever of the two senses of *hard* we take the occurrence of *hard* in *that diamond and that problem are hard* to have, it will be false, either that that diamond is hard (in that sense), or that that problem is hard (in that sense). So, in order to avoid what linguists call zeugma, we must not move from *that diamond is hard* and *that problem is hard* to *that diamond and that problem are hard*. The closest we can permissibly get to the zeugmatic *that diamond and that problem are hard* is something like *that diamond and that problem are hard in different senses*.

Now if *healthy* is a (“disjunctive”) predicate univocally predicable of diners and dinners, then from *that diner is healthy* and *that dinner is healthy*, we should be able to infer *that dinner and diner are healthy*. But *that dinner and diner are healthy* strikes us (or, at any rate, strikes me) as zeugmatic. Similarly, the question, “what’s healthier, the diner or her dinner?” seems a very strange question, because it’s zeugmatic (unless perhaps a cannibal is wondering whether to eat the diner or her dinner, in which case it’s a perfectly well-formed question).

Also, if *F* is a purely univocal predicate (i.e., a predicate that is predicated univocally of whatever it is predicated of), then, just as we don’t get a literally true non-elliptical reading of statements of the form, *a is and is not F*, we seem not to get a literally true non-elliptical reading of statements of the

form, *a is F and a is not F*. For example, just as there is no literally true non-elliptical reading of *Lisette is and is not a parent*, there is no literally true non-elliptical reading of *Lisette is a parent and Lisette is not a parent*. By contrast, if *F* can be predicated of two things non-univocally, we get no literally true non-elliptical reading of statements of the form, *a is and is not F*, but we can get a literally true (non-elliptical) reading of statements of the form *a is F and a is not F*. It will typically be difficult for a speaker to get across that reading, but not impossible. Suppose for example that we are at the zoo, and we are looking at a field in which a spoonbill crane and a mechanical crane are in plain view. You ask me, “Is the thing those zookeepers were just talking about a crane?” I realize that the zookeepers were just talking about the spoonbill crane, and not about the mechanical crane, but I’m not sure whether you are asking whether the zookeepers were just talking about a biological crane, or asking whether the zookeepers were just talking about a mechanical crane. So I answer, “The thing those zookeepers were just talking about was *a crane* [indicating the spoonbill crane in plain view], but the thing the zookeepers were just talking about was not *a crane* [indicating the mechanical crane in plain view]. What I said was, “The thing those zookeepers were just talking about was a crane, and the thing those zookeepers were just talking about was not a crane”, and what I said is (strictly and literally and non-elliptically) true (though I needed to do something “non-verbal” to communicate that truth to you).

Similarly, it seems as though a statement of the form *a is healthy and a is not healthy* may have a strictly and literally true reading, even if a speaker will have to go to some lengths to get that true reading across. Suppose we subsisted on a diet that consisted mainly of fish that were not only uncooked, but also alive at the time we ate them. Suppose that in the serving bowl there was just one fish left, and you were unsure about whether or not to polish it off. If you asked me, “do you think that fish is healthy?” I might answer: “as Aristotle would say, *healthy pollachōs legetai* (is said in many ways). That fish is swimming around energetically, so it’s healthy. But that fish is very fatty, so it’s not healthy. So that fish is *healthy* [stressed], but that fish is not *healthy* [contrastively stressed].” If *healthy* were a disjunctive but purely univocal predicate (like *parent*), there wouldn’t be a true reading of *that fish is healthy, but that fish is not healthy*, any more than there is a true reading of *Lisette is a parent but Lisette is not a parent*. Since there seems to be one, it seems that *healthy* is indeed an analogical rather than a (disjunctively) univocal predicate.

Now Aquinas’ view seems to be that in the primary (and most proper) sense of *ens* (being), only complete substances are *entia* (beings). Also, in the primary (and most proper) sense only complete substances may be said to be, or to exist. However, in a secondary (and less proper) sense, accidents and other incomplete things are beings and may be said to be or to exist: we can say that whiteness is an incomplete being, and that whiteness is or exists “incompletely”.

The problem is that both “being” and “exists” look on the face of it to be univocal (like “parent”), rather than analogical (like “healthy”). Suppose that the husband of a famous concert pianist looks on in horror as his wife crashes into a wall. A moment later, she climbs out of the wreckage of her car, and says to her husband: “Not to worry: I and both my hands still exist”. At least to my ears, what the pianist says seems non-zeugmatic, unambiguous, and literally true. But it would not be non-zeugmatic, unambiguous, and literally true, if, as Aquinas seems to say, “exists” were only analogically predicable of human beings and their hands.

Again, if “being” is analogical in the way Aquinas appears to think it is, then there should be a true reading of *that hand is a being, but that hand is not a being* (just as there is a true reading of *that fish is healthy, but that fish is not healthy*). But it seems doubtful that there is any such reading. (It is certainly difficult to imagine anyone but a philosopher committed to a certain sort of theory saying, *that hand is a being, but that hand is not a being.*) Also, if “healthy” is analogical in the way that Aquinas thinks it is, then, if the fish in the serving bowl is moribund, *that fish is not healthy* has a true reading. By the same reasoning, if “exists” is analogical in the way Aquinas seems to suppose that it is, if I wave my right hand around, and say, *this hand does not exist*, what I said has a true reading. I find this difficult to believe. (Imagine how puzzled you would be if you came across me waving my right hand around, and saying, *this hand does not exist!*)

Finally, suppose you wonder whether the person your colleagues were just talking about is a parent. Because *parent* is univocally predicated of fathers and mothers, you needn’t be wondering whether the person your colleagues were just talking about is a male parent, or wondering whether the person your colleagues were just talking about is a female parent. (Those would be different (and more specific) “wonders”, as it were.) By contrast, because *crane* is non-univocally predicated of animals and mechanical devices (and, let us suppose, nothing else), if you wonder whether the thing the zookeepers were just talking about is a crane, you must either be wondering whether the thing the zookeepers were just talking about is a biological crane, or wondering whether the thing the zookeepers were just talking about is a mechanical crane. (One could of course wonder whether the thing the zookeepers were just talking about is either a biological crane or a mechanical crane, but that “wonder” cannot properly be described as “wondering whether the thing the zookeepers were just talking about is a crane”.) Similarly, if you look into the serving bowl where the last fish is swimming around, and wonder whether that fish is healthy, you must either be wondering whether that fish is in good health, or wondering whether that fish would contribute to good health (if eaten). Suppose, though, that I hear two people talking about something not especially large, and not especially heavy. I might wonder whether what they are talking about still exists. If, as Aquinas seems to suppose, *exists* is predicated analogically of complete substances and their proper parts, then

I would either be wondering about whether what those people are talking about still exists in the (primary and most proper) sense in which complete substances exist, or wondering about whether what those people are talking about still exists in the secondary and less proper sense in which the proper parts of substances (and various other incomplete things) exist. Intuitively, though, it seems clear that I could wonder whether what those people are talking about still exists, without deploying either a concept of existence that applies only to complete beings, or a concept of existence that applies only to incomplete beings. This suggests that, just as *parent* is univocally predicable of fathers and mothers (rather than, say, being predicable *per prius* (primarily) of the former and *per posterius* (secondarily) of the latter), *exists* is predicable univocally of complete and incomplete beings (rather than being predicable *per prius* of the former and *per posterius* of the latter).

Summing up: the Thomistic thesis that “being is said in different ways” is not simply an (uncontroversial) metaphysical thesis to the effect that there are different kinds of beings, or even a (more controversial) metaphysical thesis to the effect that different kinds of beings are (i.e., exist or have being) in different ways. As Aquinas understands it, the thesis that being is said in different ways is a semantic thesis about the meaning of terms such as “being”, “is”, “exists” and the like, in exactly the same way the thesis that health is said in different ways is a semantic thesis about the term “healthy”. *Pace* Aquinas, for reasons I have tried to bring out, it appears to be a problematic semantic thesis (and certainly a less initially plausible one than the semantic thesis that “health(y) is said in different ways”).

I have spent a fair amount of time on Aquinas’ views on the analogicality of “being”, because analogicality plays an important role, not just in Aquinas’ metaphysics, but also in his philosophical theology. For Aquinas, terms such as *good*, *wise*, *powerful*, and the like (as well as *exists* and *being*) are predicable of created substances and God neither purely equivocally, nor purely univocally, but analogically (see *ST*, Ia, 13, 5 and *SCG*, I, 32-34). As far as I can see, however, the view that the terms in question are analogically, rather than purely univocally predicable of God and created substances is problematic for the same sorts of reasons that the view that being is analogically rather than purely univocally predicable of God. Briefly: if *good* and *exists* are only analogically predicable of God and creatures, then *God and created substances are (respectively) infinitely and finitely good*, and, *like creatures, God exists; unlike creatures, He exists necessarily* are zeugmatic; but they don’t look zeugmatic. Also, *God exists, but the substances He created do not and creatures exist, but the God who created them does not, and this created substance before me does not exist* all have true readings; but it seems very doubtful that they do. (Naturally, these remarks do not address Aquinas’ reasons for holding and arguments in favor of the thesis that terms such as *good*, *powerful*, *exists*, and so on are only analogically predicable of God and created substances. I think that Aquinas’ chief motivation for holding that the relevant terms are only analogically predicable of God and creatures is his

conception of divine simplicity, and I shall have a good bit to say about that conception in [Chapter 4](#).)

Of course, Aquinas accepts not just the semantic thesis that (say)

The meaning of “exists”, as predicated of complete beings (or God) is distinct from but overlaps with the meaning of “exists” as predicated of incomplete beings (or creatures),

but also the metaphysical thesis that

What it is for complete beings (or God) to exist is neither completely like nor completely unlike what it is for incomplete beings (or creatures) to exist.

And one might “decouple” the apparently problematic semantic thesis from the (for all that has been said here unproblematic) metaphysical one. But I think the result would be a “reconstrual” or “reconstruction” of Aquinas’ views on the analogicality of (say) “exists”, rather than a construal or interpretation thereof.

In any case, to return to the concerns of this chapter, in light of Aquinas’ views on the analogicality of “being”, my characterization of Aquinas’ taxonomy of being in the first part of this section is in a sense misleading. If we take Aquinas at his word, he thinks that if we are using the term “being” (*ens*) in its strictest and most proper sense, the taxonomy of being partitions beings into the uncreated (kind of) complete being and the various maximally determinate created kinds of complete being, and there is no finer partition than that. Speaking “truly and properly” (*vere et proprie*) those are all the beings there are, and proper parts of created substances, substantial and accidental forms of created substances, and essences of created substances all belong to “meontology” (that is, the taxonomy of non-being(s)), rather than to ontology (that is, the taxonomy of being(s)). Speaking “truly and properly” proper parthood is a relation that never holds between one being and another: it only holds between a being and a non-being (a stone is part of a stone and timber house), or a non-being and a being (a hand is part of a human being), or two non-beings (a finger is part of a hand). For reasons I’ve tried to explain, I don’t find this view attractive, but unless we make the rather desperate move of saying that what Aquinas means by *ens* is not what we mean by *being* (and what Aquinas means by *esse* is not what we mean by *be*) I find it hard to see how we can fail to attribute that view to Aquinas.

Be that as it may, we have a preliminary characterization of Aquinas’ taxonomy of the beings or non-beings that constitute what we might call Aquinas’ metaphysical framework. But we have said very little about Aquinas’ conception of various of the key elements of that framework (essence, accident, form, matter, and so on). That will be the task of the remaining sections of this chapter.

The non-identity of material substances with their matter

Aquinas holds that sublunary material substances are made of matter that is more long-lived than the material substances themselves are. The matter that a sublunary material substance is made of, or “constituted by” at a given time was around before the material substance came to be, and will still be around after that material substance has ceased to be. We could accordingly say that Aquinas accepts what we might call “constituting bit of matter/constituted material substance dualism”, or – less explicitly, but more felicitously – “constitutional dualism”. But putting things this way is apt to mislead, especially for someone familiar with contemporary analytic philosophy. For there is a lively debate in contemporary analytic philosophy about whether a material being is different from the bit of matter that constitutes it. But contemporary analytic philosophers who answer this question affirmatively typically have in mind something quite different from what Aquinas has in mind when he says that a material substance is different from the bit of matter that constitutes it. Indeed, it will turn out that the account of material constitution championed by contemporary analytic philosophers who say that (at least some) material beings differ from the matter that constitutes them is in significant ways less like Aquinas’ account of material constitution than the account of material constitution held by contemporary analytic philosophers who *deny* that any material beings are different from the bit of matter that constitutes them. To bring this out, it will be helpful to first say something about the about the current debate concerning the identity or otherwise of material objects with their constituting matter.

It seems natural to suppose that every material being is a bit of matter or something made of (“constituted by”) a bit of matter. After all, something that was not a bit of matter, and wasn’t even made of matter, would presumably be an *immaterial* being. And, it seems, any being that is made of matter must be made of some particular bit of matter, in the same way that any being that occupies space must occupy some particular bit of space. Now if (a) every material being is a bit of matter, or at least something made of matter, and (b) everything made of matter is made of some particular bit of matter, then (c) every material being is a bit of matter, or something made of a particular bit of matter.

If every material being is a bit of matter, or something constituted thereby, then whenever a material being is in a given place, so too is a bit of matter. It’s obvious that if a material being just is a bit of matter, that material being can’t be in a place at a time, unless some bit of matter (*viz.*, the bit of matter that material being is) is in that place at that time. It is also clear that if a material being is constituted by a bit of matter, that material being can’t be in a place at a time, unless some bit of matter (*viz.*, the bit of matter then constituting it) is in that place at that time.

So, it would seem, if a material being is somewhere “somewhen”, some bit of matter is there then. Conversely, if some bit of matter is somewhere

“somewhen”, some material being is there then. (This follows from the fact that, whether or not every material being is a bit of matter, every bit of matter is a material being.)

So, whenever we have a material being in a place at a time, we have a bit of matter in that same place at that same time, and vice versa. This suggests the following question:

If we know that x is a bit of matter in a given place at a given time, and that y is a material being in that same place at that same time, may we conclude that x and y are the very same thing?

Some contemporary philosophers answer:

Yes. Material beings (unlike, perhaps, such things as shadows) compete for space. Just as one and the same material thing cannot be in two different places at the same time, two different material things cannot be in the same place at the same time.

Others answer:

No. For it may be that a bit of matter x constitutes a material being y , even though x and y are different things. x might be, say, the bit of bronze that a statue is made of now, and y the statue now made of that bit of bronze. x and y will be in the same place now, but they won't be the same thing. For things are the same thing, only if they have all the same properties, but the bit of bronze the statue is made of now and the statue now made of that bit of bronze don't have all the same properties. The bit of bronze could go on existing in a liquid state, but the statue couldn't. The bronze statue was made by a sculptor at such-and-such a time, but the bit of bronze wasn't made by that sculptor at that time. And so on. Alternatively, x might be the bit of copper and tin that the bronze that constitutes the bronze statue now is made of now, and y might be the bit of bronze now constituted by that bit of copper and tin. Again, x and y will be in the same place now, but they won't be the same thing, because they won't have all the same properties. The bit of copper and tin existed before the bit of bronze did, but the bit of bronze obviously didn't exist before the bit of bronze did (nothing exists before it exists). So a bronze statue may be constituted by and share a region of space with a bit of “underlying” matter, which in turn is constituted by, and shares a region of space with a different bit of “(more) underlying” matter, which is the “proximate” matter of the bronze the statue is made of, and the “remote” matter of the statue made of that bronze. Perhaps every bit of underlying matter that (more or less proximately) constitutes the bronze statue is itself constituted by some bit of underlying matter. Or perhaps the bronze statue is constituted (*inter alia*) by what, following Kit Fine, we could call a bit of *ultimate* matter – that is, a bit of matter that has no underlying matter, and is not constituted by any bit of matter except itself. Be that as it may, a bronze statue shares a region of space with a bit of matter that more proximately constitutes it, and also shares a region of space with a bit of matter that more

remotely constitutes it, and neither of these bits of matter can be identified with each other, or with the statue they constitute.

So, for the *contemporary constitutional dualist*, as we might call her, a statue made of bronze and the bit of bronze the statue is made of or constituted by are two different (“co-located” or “coincident”) material beings. For the *contemporary constitutional monist*, they are not: no material being constitutes any other being, because different material beings never coincide, and different material beings would sometimes coincide, if one material being ever constituted another material being. So the contemporary constitutional monist will have to say that the statue made of bronze and the bit of bronze the statue is made of are not in fact two different material beings: either they are the very same material being, or there is such a material being as the bit of bronze, but no such material being as the statue made of bronze, or there is such a material being as the bronze statue, but no such material being as the bit of bronze the statue is made of, or there is no such material being as either the bronze statue or the bit of bronze the statue is made of. (The first option seems on the face of it the most “ontologically conservative” one for the contemporary constitutional monist to adopt – that is, the option least at variance with our ordinary way of thinking about what material beings there are. But, inasmuch as the different options have different advantages and drawbacks, each one has been defended by some contemporary constitutional monists.)

We might have supposed that in this debate, Aquinas’ sympathies would be squarely with the contemporary constitutional dualist. For we might have supposed that Aquinas held something like this view:

A bit of bronze is the matter of a bronze statue. Having some bit of bronze as matter is sufficient for being made of bronze. But having some bit of bronze as matter is evidently not sufficient for being a bronze statue (all sorts of non-statues are made of bronze). In order for something to be a bronze statue, it must have not just the right sort of matter (bronze), but also the right kind of form to make it a thing of the (substantial) kind, *statue* – a “statue-ish” substantial form. Since the bronze statue owes its existence to its statue-ish substantial form, and the bit of bronze the statue is made of does not, the bronze statue cannot be identified with the bit of brazen matter it is constituted by, and shares a region of space with.

Up to a point, the view just sketched coincides with Aquinas’ account of the relation between the bronze a statue is made of, and the statue made of that bronze. Aquinas is happy to speak of a bit of bronze as the matter of a bronze statue. And he agrees that, in order for something to be a bronze statue, it has to have, not just the matter that makes it brazen, but also a form that makes it a statue. (See *De Principiis Naturae*, 1, 6: “When a statue is made from bronze, the bronze, which is potency to the form *statue*, is the matter”.)

Crucially, though, Aquinas denies that the form that makes something a statue is a substantial form. Like all artifactual forms, he says, it is an accidental form (see *De Principiis Naturae*, 1, 7). As we have already touched on, for Aquinas substantial forms differ from accidental forms in the following way: while a substantial form makes a substance be (full stop), an accidental form makes a substance which has existence independently of that accidental form, be a certain way. Thus a human substantial form makes a man be (full stop), while an accidental form of pallor makes a man who has existence independently of his pallor, be pale. So, if the form that makes something a statue is an accidental form of a substance whose existence is independent of that accidental form, which substance is it an accidental form of? The bit of bronze that already existed before it acquired the shape of the statue, Aquinas seems to say (see again *De Principiis Naturae*, 1, 7).

If I have understood Aquinas' position here, he holds that, when a sculptor makes a statue from a bit of bronze, the same material being – the same bit of bronze – that previously existed, but didn't have the right sort of accidental form to make it a statue, acquires the right sort of accidental form to make it a statue (as well as a bit of bronze). To put the same point a different way, he holds that, when a sculptor makes a statue from a bit of bronze, the same material being that previously had the right sort of form to belong to the substantial kind, *bit of bronze*, but lacked the right sort of accidental form to belong to the accidental kind, *statue*, acquires the right sort of accidental form to belong to the accidental kind *statue* (as well as the substantial kind, *bit of bronze*). (There is an apparent problem with Aquinas' position that I shall briefly acknowledge here, since it may have occurred to alert readers. In the *De Principiis Naturae* and elsewhere, Aquinas seems to say that a bit of bronze is a kind of material substance, and that a brazen form is a material substantial form. But he also says in many places that artifactual kinds are not substantial kinds, and artifactual forms are not substantial forms. How can both of these claims be true, given that (as I take it Aquinas was aware) bronze is an artifact? Perhaps Aquinas should have said that the statue-ish form of the bronze statue is an accidental form of the bit of the "ultimate" kind of stuff that now constitutes the bit of bronze (where the ultimate stuff is a natural, rather than an artifactual kind, whatever natural kind exactly it might turn out to be. Or perhaps Aquinas would say that even if artificers make bits of bronze, brazenness is nevertheless a natural rather than an artifactual form).)

Be that as it may, if Aquinas holds that the form that makes something a statue is an accidental form of a previously existing bit of stuff, then it seems Aquinas would not agree with the contemporary constitutional dualist that a statue made of a bit of stuff and the bit of stuff that statue is made of are two different material beings; on the contrary, Aquinas' view is that the very material being which is substantially and permanently this bit of bronze (or, or at least, substantially and permanently a bit of some underlying natural stuff that now constitutes a bit of bronze) is accidentally and temporarily a statue. So, it seems, Aquinas' view on the identity or otherwise of a statue

with the bit of stuff it is made of is the view held by a particular sort of contemporary constitutional monist (the “ontologically conservative” constitutional monist described above).

Because Aquinas appears not to recognize bronze statues as beings in their own right, “over and above” (different from) the natural beings that constitute them, it appears that he would not endorse the argument just put in the mouth of the contemporary constitutional dualist. It might nevertheless be that he would take sides with the contemporary constitutional dualist, and that he would endorse arguments for contemporary constitutional dualism that are in essential respects similar to the one sketched above, but turn on *naturalia*, rather than *artificialia*.

Instead of basing her case on the non-identity of artifacts with their constituting matter, the contemporary constitutional dualist might argue as follows:

Consider a hypothetical diamond paperweight. The paperweight is constituted by a bit of diamond, (which, we shall suppose, is natural rather than synthetic). That bit of diamond is in turn constituted by a bit of carbon. But the bit of carbon that constitutes the bit of diamond is different from the bit of diamond it constitutes, because the bit of carbon existed before the diamond did. For the bit of carbon is essentially and permanently made of carbon, and only accidentally and temporarily made of diamond; the bit of diamond is instead essentially and permanently made of diamond, as well as carbon. So a bit of a more fundamental kind of stuff can constitute (and share a region of space with) a different bit of a less fundamental kind of stuff, and constitutional dualism is vindicated.

It would be anachronistic to say that Aquinas would endorse this last argument, given that he didn’t know diamonds were made of carbon. That said, we might think that for some other pair of stuffs *S* and *S'*, Aquinas and the contemporary constitutional dualist would agree that sometimes a bit of the more fundamental stuff *S* constitutes (and shares a region of space with) a different bit of the less fundamental stuff *S'*. For, we might think, Aquinas and the contemporary compositional dualist would agree that sometimes:

- (a) A newer bit of a less fundamental stuff *S'* is permanently and essentially a substance of a given kind.
- (b) An older bit of a more fundamental stuff *S* is not permanently and essentially a substance of that kind.
- (c) The newer bit of the less fundamental stuff *S'* came into existence when the older bit of the more fundamental stuff *S* came to constitute (and share a region of space with) the newer bit of the less fundamental stuff *S'*.

If that’s how things are, Aquinas comes down on the side of contemporary constitutional dualists, even if, as we have seen, he wouldn’t endorse all of the arguments dualists offer in support of their view.

In fact, it seems as though Aquinas would not think that, for some pair of substances *S* and *S'*, (a)–(c) could all be true together. To explain why, it will be useful to say something about Aquinas' account of substantial change and accidental change.

For Aquinas, a change may be either substantial or accidental. A substantial change is not a change *in* a substance, but a change *with respect to* what substances there are (just as an accidental change is not a change *in* an accident, but a change *with respect to* what accidents there are). In a substantial change, one substance goes out of existence, and another substance comes into existence (just as, in an accidental change, one accident goes out of existence, and another accident comes into existence). But in order for a substantial change to take place, it is not sufficient that one substance replace another (just as, in accidental change, it is not sufficient that one accident replace another). If God miraculously annihilated a stone, and miraculously replaced it with a different stone He created *ex nihilo*, that would constitute a change with respect to what substances there are, but it would not constitute a substantial change. (In the same way, if God miraculously annihilated a cold rock, and miraculously replaced it with a hot rock He created *ex nihilo*, that would constitute a change with respect to what accidents there are (with an accidental form of heat replacing an accidental form of cold), but it would not constitute an accidental change). In order for a substantial change to take place, the change with respect to what substances there are must come about in a particular way; it must come about as a result of one and the same bit of matter's first having one substantial form, and then a different substantial form. (Analogously, for an accidental change to take place, the change with respect to what accidents there are must come about as a result of one and the same substance's first having one accidental form, and then a different (and incompatible) accidental form.) So, we may say, a substantial change is a change *in* a bit of matter *with respect to* what substantial form that bit of matter has (just as an accidental change is a change *in* a substance *with respect to* what accidental form that substance has: cf. *ST*, Ia, 45, 2, *ad 2um*). To put it another way, in a substantial change, we have a pair of substances that do not persist (one is corrupted, and one is generated), and a bit of matter that does persist (the matter that loses the first substantial form and acquires the second). (Similarly, in an accidental change we have a pair of accidents that do not persist (one is lost, and one is gained), and a substance that does persist (the substance that loses the first accident, and gains the second).

(Actually, things are not quite so tidy. To start with, when a bit of matter loses its substantial form, and ceases to be the matter of a given kind of substance, rather than coming to be the matter of a different kind of complete substance, it may become the matter of a substance-in-the-making (about which I shall say more in [chapter 3](#)). Or it may become a "scattered" bit of matter different parts of which constitute or partly constitute different substances (or different substances-in-the-making). (This will typically happen when a tree dies and decomposes.) Or it may become a bit of matter

that constitutes a proper part of a substance (think of what happens when an animal eats a plant). In this context, though, it won't matter if we ignore these complications, just as Aquinas often does.)

For Aquinas, when a substance comes to be from a pre-existing bit of matter, that constitutes the generation of a material substance; and when a substance ceases to be, and leaves behind a surviving bit of matter, that constitutes the corruption of a material substance. I shall accordingly call the matter that is the persisting subject of a substantial change *subject of generation and corruption matter*, or *sgc-matter* for short. (It may be that Aquinas identifies sgc-matter with what he calls "prime matter"; certainly some interpreters of Aquinas have thought he does. But the question of whether Aquinas makes this identification raises some thorny questions that I prefer to avoid for the moment, so I shall simply speak of sgc-matter – a kind of matter Aquinas clearly believes in, whether or not he identifies it with prime matter.)

So far, everything I have said about sgc-matter is compatible with the idea that there is some ultimate everyday or scientific stuff of which every material being is made, and the bit of matter involved in a substantial change (in generation and corruption) is in every case a bit of that ultimate stuff. Sgc-matter could turn out to be, say, water, as long as water is the kind of stuff that is never generated or corrupted.

In fact, Aquinas would say that sgc-matter could not be water, or fire, or any other kind of everyday or scientific stuff. Why not? Because, he would say, a bit of matter that was water, or fire, or anything of that sort, could be a persisting subject of accidental change, but could not be a persisting subject of substantial change, or of generation or corruption; it accordingly could not be sgc-matter. If the ultimate matter of every material being were, say, water, there would be no sgc-matter. And if there were no sgc-matter, there would be no substantial change. If the ultimate matter of every material being were water, it's not just water that wouldn't be generated or corrupted; nothing else would be, either: the only substances there would be in the world would be bits of water, undergoing various kinds of accidental change (see *De Spiritualibus Creaturis (On Spiritual Creatures)*, un., 3, *responsio* and *ST*, Ia, 66, 1, *responsio*).

But, again, why suppose that, if the ultimate matter of every material being were water, or any other everyday or scientific kind of stuff, then nothing would be generated or corrupted? Aquinas seems to be thinking along these lines: you only have generation if a bit of sgc-matter acquires a substantial form, and you only have corruption if a bit of sgc-matter loses a substantial form. Also, and crucially, no bit of sgc-matter can ever have more than one substantial form at a time. (Notice that for Aquinas the corresponding principle for accidental forms does not hold: one and the same substance has many accidents at the same time.) To put the point another way, material substantial forms compete to inform bits of sgc-matter (in a way that accidents do not compete to inform substances, unless, say, those accidents are all different determinates of the same determinable).

As Aquinas says, “whenever [sgc] matter receives one [substantial] form it loses another, and vice versa” (*De Spiritualibus Creaturis*, un., 3, *responsio*: see also *ST*, Ia, 66, 1, *responsio*, where Aquinas says that any “supervening” form – that is, any form which “co-informs” a subject, together with some other form that had already informed it before the arrival of the supervening form – is an accidental form, rather than a substantial one.)

Call the principle that (the) substantial forms (of material beings) compete for bits of sgc-matter *the competition principle*. Suppose that the competition principle is true, and that the ultimate matter of every material being is water. Could anything be generated? Aquinas would say not. After all, he would say, we only have generation if a bit of matter acquires a substantial form it didn’t already have. But if the ultimate matter of every material being is water, then every bit of matter has always had an aqueous substantial form, so no bit of matter can ever acquire an aqueous substantial form. Could a bit of matter acquire a non-aqueous substantial form? No. To do so, it would have to acquire a non-aqueous substantial form it hadn’t previously had. But if water is the ultimate matter of every material being, then something could acquire a non-aqueous substantial form it hadn’t had previously only if a bit of matter which was already aqueously substantially informed could come to be substantially informed in some other way *as well*; and this is precisely what the competition principle rules out. By essentially the same reasoning, if the competition principle is true, and the ultimate matter of every material being is water, then nothing is corrupted.

We can now see why Aquinas thinks that if water is the ultimate matter of every material being, then neither water nor anything else is generated or corrupted. We can also see why he thinks that, inasmuch as sublunary material things are in fact generated and corrupted, there is a kind of matter – sgc-matter – which cannot be identified with water, or fire, or any other everyday or scientific kind of stuff, because it is more underlying, more persistent, and less determinate than any everyday or scientific kind of stuff.

Returning to our main concern, given his account of (substantial and accidental) change, could Aquinas accept the idea that one substance – a bit of carbon, that was essentially and permanently carbon, but wasn’t essentially and permanently diamond – could come to constitute (and share a region of space with) a new substance, which was essentially and permanently diamond? More generally, and less anachronistically, could he accept the idea that one substance – a substance which was permanently and essentially a bit of some more fundamental stuff *S*, but not essentially or permanently a bit of some less fundamental stuff *S’* – could come to constitute (and share a region of space with) a new substance – a substance that was permanently and essentially a bit of that less fundamental stuff *S’*?

No. In any scenario of this type, a new substance (a bit of diamond, a bit of the less fundamental stuff *S’*) is generated from an already existing substance (a bit of carbon, a bit of the more fundamental stuff *S*) that is not

corrupted when the new substance comes on the scene. Given that a new substance is generated, a bit of sgc-matter – the bit that is the sgc-matter of the bit of carbon, or whatever – acquires a new substantial form (the substantial form of a bit of diamond or whatever). Moreover, given that the “old” substance is not corrupted, the bit of sgc-matter that acquires a new substantial form when the new substance is generated retains the substantial form it had right before the new substance was generated (the substantial form of a bit of carbon, or whatever). So, in any scenario of the type under discussion, a bit of sgc-matter comes to be substantially informed twice over, in contravention of the competition principle. Aquinas would accordingly deem any such scenario impossible.

Summing up: contemporary compositional dualists often defend their view by arguing that one material substance can constitute another material substance. In some of these arguments, the constituting substance is a bit of a certain kind of stuff, and the constituted but distinct substance is an artifact. In others, the constituting substance is a bit of a more fundamental kind of stuff, and the constituted but distinct substance is a bit of a less fundamental kind of stuff. In both cases, we might have expected Aquinas to agree with the dualist. But the expectations are not met. Aquinas’ commitment to the competition principle prevents him from saying either that an artifact and the bit of stuff constituting it are different substances, or that a bit of a less fundamental kind of stuff and the bit of the more fundamental kind of stuff constituting it are different substances. Thus Aquinas agrees with contemporary constitutional monists both that no complete material substance ever constitutes any other complete material substance, and that no two complete substances – and no two bodies – ever occupy the same place at the same time (see *ST*, Ia, 76, 4, *ad* 4um).

We can now see that, although Aquinas and the contemporary compositional dualist might say some of the same things, they mean rather different things. If the contemporary compositional dualist says that material beings (with the possible exception of bits of ultimate stuff, if such there be) are different from their matter, she means that material beings are different from the bit of everyday stuff (e.g., water) or the bit of scientific stuff (e.g., DNA (+ keratin + ...)) that they are made of. She does not mean that material beings (with the possible exception of bits of ultimate stuff, if such there be), are different from their sgc-matter, conceived of as a kind of matter that isn’t any particular kind of everyday or scientific stuff, although it can “underlie” absolutely any kind of everyday or scientific sublunary stuff. (Most contemporary constitutional dualists don’t believe in such matter.) Equally, when Aquinas says that material substances are different from their matter, he does not mean that material substances are different from the bit of everyday stuff, or the bit of scientific stuff they are made of: Aquinas doesn’t think there are any material things that are different from the ordinary stuff they are made of. When Aquinas says that material substances are different from their matter, he means that a material

substance is made of a bit of matter that can be identified neither with that material substance, nor with any bit of everyday or scientific stuff.

Here someone might object:

Aquinas distinguishes what he calls “simple bodies” from what he calls “mixed bodies”. A simple body will be made of just one of the four elements or basic kinds of stuff (earth, water, fire, and air), and a “mixed body” will be made of all four of the basic kinds of stuff. (An example of a simple body would be a bit of air; an example of mixed body would be a stone or a tree: see *ST*, Ia, 76, 4, *ad 4um*). This suggests that Aquinas would not be averse to thinking of a mixed body as having “elementary matter” as well as sgc-matter. And in fact, he says at *SCG*, III, 22 and elsewhere that the elements are the matter of mixed bodies. Now Aquinas would agree, nothing can be partly or entirely composed of an element (say, air), without being partly or entirely composed of a particular bit of that element (say, this particular bit of air). So, Aquinas thinks, a mixed body will have as its matter bits of elementary stuff (of earth, or water, or fire, or air), where we may say that the bits of elementary stuff *jointly compose*, or *jointly constitute*, or *are jointly the matter of* the mixed body. Moreover, Aquinas would say that a mixed body cannot be identified with its elementary matter—with the bits of elementary stuff that jointly constitute it. For the bits of elementary stuff that are jointly the elementary matter of the mixed body may well have existed before the mixed body existed, and will survive the demise of the mixed body, as long as the mixed body ceases to exist by being “resolved into its elements” (rather than, say, by being annihilated). (See *ST*, IIIa, 75, 3 *responsio*, where Aquinas says that the preexisting matter into which a mixed body may be resolved are the four elements.)

It now looks as though Aquinas’ version of constitutional dualism is more like contemporary constitutional dualism than was suggested above. True, unlike contemporary compositional dualists, Aquinas thinks that material substances have a kind of “philosopher’s matter” (as opposed to everyday matter, or scientific matter). But he also thinks that at least some material substances – e.g., mixed bodies such as stones or trees – have a kind of matter less *recherché* than their sgc-matter – elementary matter. And just as a material being and its sgc-matter are different things – the material being is one thing, and the sgc-matter that constitutes it is something else – a material substance that is a mixed body and its elementary matter are different things – the mixed body is one thing, and its elementary matter is something else (or “some other things”, inasmuch as different things (different bits of elementary stuff) are jointly the matter of a mixed body).

Aquinas does say that mixed bodies are “composed” of (bits of) elementary stuff. For example, he says that human bodies are composed of (bits of) the

four basic elements (*In Boetii De Trinitate (Commentary on Boethius' De Trinitate)*, 5, 3, *responsio*). But what he means by this is something quite different from what a contemporary compositional dualist would mean, if he said that, say, a popsicle was composed of (bits of) water and sugar. As the contemporary compositional dualist thinks of it, the bits of water and bits of sugar that were around before they were components of the popsicle, are still around, now that they are components of the popsicle. And we might assume that for Aquinas, after I have drunk and “incorporated” a bit of water, the very same bits of water that were around before they were components of my body, are still around, now that they are components of my body. Simple bodies (bits of elementary stuff), we might think, obviously survive their incorporation into mixed bodies.

In fact, Aquinas thinks this is not obvious at all. He says that in a mixed body the bits of elementary stuff are not totally (*totaliter*) corrupted, but remain in the mixed body in some way (*aliqua liter*) (*De Mixtione Elementorum (On the Mixture of Elements)*, 15). Why would it be wrong, or at least misleading, to say flatly and without qualification that the bits of elementary stuff remain in the mixed body after their incorporation? Because, Aquinas thinks, when a bit of elementary stuff is incorporated into a mixed body such as a human body or a stone, it loses its substantial form. And nothing can actually survive the loss of its substantial form; as we have seen, the substantial form of a thing is what makes it be (full stop). Aquinas invokes the authority of Aristotle here:

And this is what the Philosopher says in the first book of *De Generatione et Corruptione*: “Elements do not remain in a mixed body. Nor are they corrupted ...What is preserved is their power”.

(De Mixtione Elementorum, 18)

When some bits of elementary stuff are incorporated into a mixed body, what actually remains is “the proper *qualities* of the elements, though modified” (my emphasis: *ST*, Ia, 76, 4, *ad 4um*), and not, strictly speaking, the bits of elementary stuff, or the substantial forms thereof. The elements and their substantial forms remain “virtually”, but not “actually” in the mixed body.

Moral: both contemporary constitutional dualists and Aquinas think that the things Aquinas calls “mixed bodies” have a kind of matter that we may call “chemist’s matter” (as opposed to “philosopher’s matter”). Neither contemporary constitutional dualists nor Aquinas identify the chemist’s matter of a mixed body with that mixed body, because both think that the chemist’s matter of a mixed body is the sort of thing that could already have existed before the mixed body started to exist, and could continue to exist, after the mixed body had ceased to exist. Again, though, putting things this way is apt to mislead; it’s apt to make it sound as though Aquinas and the contemporary compositional dualist have more in common than they in fact

do. For the contemporary compositional dualist, the chemist's matter of a mixed body is actually present in, actually constitutes, actually shares a region of space with the mixed body it constitutes. For Aquinas, the chemist's matter of a mixed body is "only virtually" present in, "only virtually" constitutes, "only virtually" shares a region of space with the mixed body it constitutes.

For reasons at least some of which I hope to have made evident, what we might call *Thomistic constitutional dualism* is an alternative to both contemporary constitutional dualism and contemporary constitutional monism. (Unlike the contemporary constitutional monist, the Thomistic constitutional dualist holds that a sublunary material thing has matter with which it cannot be identified. Unlike the contemporary constitutional dualist, the Thomistic constitutional dualist holds that a sublunary material thing doesn't (actually, as opposed to virtually) have any ordinary matter or "chemist's matter" with which it cannot be identified; the only sort of matter a sublunary being actually has from which it is must be distinguished is "philosopher's matter".)

Whether Thomistic constitutional dualism is a preferable or a defensible alternative to contemporary constitutional monism and contemporary constitutional dualism is of course another question. For a contemporary constitutional dualist, Aquinas will seem a rather half-hearted dualist – one who agrees that constitution is not identity, but does not acknowledge the possibility that one complete substance can constitute or coincide with another. For a contemporary constitutional monist, Aquinas may seem a monist *manqué* – one who sees that distinct complete substances can never coincide, or be related as "constituter" to "constitutee", but nevertheless distinguishes constitution and coincidence from identity, because of his belief in a kind of ultimate underlying matter that is in fact chimerical.

I shall conclude this section with a brief look at two worries about Thomistic constitutional dualism – one concerning its motivation, and one concerning its tenability.

If an individual cannot be a substance of a certain kind without having a substantial form of that kind, and if the competition principle is true, then one bit of ordinary or scientific stuff (and, more generally, one material substance) can never constitute another. (And, assuming that bits of matter neither of which constitutes the other can never coincide, one bit of stuff (and, more generally, one material substance) can never coincide with another.) But why accept the competition principle?

At *De Spiritualibus Creaturis*, un., 3, *responsio*, Aquinas writes:

Any form that an actual being (*ens actu*) underlies ... is an accident.

It is obvious, though, that any substantial form, whatever it might be, makes something an actual being (*facit ens actu*) ... Whence it follows that only the first form that comes to matter is substantial, while all those that come after are accidental.

A thing that already exists as an actual being (*praeexist ens actu*) cannot be made a being in an unqualified sense (*simpliciter*), though it can be

made a being of this particular sort – say, white, or large. Since, then, the form already in matter produces actual being, a subsequent form will not produce being in an unqualified sense ... And so all the ancients who thought that prime matter was something actual, whether fire, or air, or water, or something in between, said that to be made is only to be changed ...

The thought here seems to be the following:

An accidental form of, say, roundness, cannot “come to” (i.e., cannot come to be acquired by) a substance that is already round: an accidental form of roundness can only “come to” something which is potentially but not yet actually round. Similarly, Aquinas seems to be thinking, a form that makes something an actual being (or a being in an unqualified sense) cannot “come to” something that is already an actual being (or a being in an unqualified sense). Moreover, substantial forms, as such, make something an actual being (and a being in an unqualified sense). So, although an accidental form can come to something that already has a (different kind of) accidental form (e.g., a form of heat can come to something that is already round, making something which had been actually round and only potentially hot actually hot as well as actually round), a substantial form cannot come to something that is already an actual being (a being in an unqualified sense). Whatever already has a substantial form, cannot acquire another, since that would imply that something that is already actual (in virtue of already having one substantial form) becomes actual (in virtue of acquiring another). Hence the competition principle is true.

If this is Aquinas’ line of argument, it seems of doubtful cogency. To see this, it will be helpful to introduce a distinction between two types of potentiality. Let us say that a thing is in *primary potentiality* toward being a certain way if that thing has the potentiality of being that way. And let us say that a thing is in *secondary potentiality* toward being a certain way if that thing has the potentiality of “turning into” or “being turned into” or “becoming” something (else) that is that way. An iron skillet that is actually at room temperature is in primary potentiality toward being hot, since you could put it on the flame, and make it be hot. An iron sword, on the other hand, is in secondary potentiality toward being a ploughshare. You can turn a sword into a ploughshare, but only by turning that sword into something else that is a ploughshare. A paleozoic trilobite was in secondary potentiality toward being a fossil while it was alive: it was the sort of thing that could turn into a fossil, but only by turning into something else that was a fossil.

In the case of the sword or the trilobite, the “actuation” of the secondary potentiality to be a ploughshare or fossil involves the passing away of the subject of secondary potentiality. But it does not seem impossible for a

thing to survive the actuation of one of its secondary potentialities. A bit of iron could be in secondary potentiality toward being steel. If you actuated that secondary potentiality (by adding chromium and nickel to the iron), the iron would become (would turn into, would be turned into) steel. But rather than being replaced by the bit of steel (as the sword was replaced by the ploughshare or the (living) trilobite was replaced by the fossil), it would come to be a (proper) part of the bit of steel. Similarly an ordinary espresso is in secondary potentiality toward being a caffè corretto (that is, a coffee + a bit of grappa or other alcoholic beverage). But if you actuate that secondary potentiality by pouring a bit of grappa into your coffee, your espresso will not be replaced by the caffè corretto; rather, it will come to be a (proper) part (the non-alcoholic proper part) of your caffè corretto.

Aquinas says in many places that matter is a being “in potentiality” (*in potentia*), and indeed “in potentiality alone” (*in potentia tantum*). Although – as we shall see – the term “matter” covers lots of different things for Aquinas, it is clear that he thinks that sgc-matter (that is, the matter that is the subject of generation and corruption) is a being “in potentiality” or “in potentiality alone”. For at *ST*, Ia, 45, 2, *ad 2um*, he writes:

It is essential to change that something which is the same be different now from how it was before. Sometimes it is the same being in actuality (*ens actu*) that is different now from how it was before, as in the case of qualitative, quantitative, and locational change; sometimes it is the same being in potentiality alone (*ens in potentia tantum*), as happens in substantial change, whose subject is matter.

If (before generation takes place) a bit of sgc-matter is in potentiality, what exactly is it in potentiality toward? Toward a (not yet acquired) substantial form, but also, Aquinas seems to say, toward “actual existence” (*esse in actu*). When a bit of sgc-matter “receives” substantial form (when substantial form “comes to” that bit of matter), that bit of matter becomes a being in actuality through the coming of that form:

Matter is a being in potentiality, and becomes an actual being (*fit ens actu*) through the coming of form (*per adventum formae*).

(*De Spiritualibus Creaturis*, un., 1, *ad 5um*)

Matter acquires actual existence (*esse in actu*), by acquiring form.

(*ST*, Ia, 75, 6, *responsio*)

Here someone might have wondered how a bit of sgc-matter that was already there before a material substance was generated could fail to have already been an actual being, even before the generation of that substance. But for Aquinas, an actual being = something that is actually a being =

something that is “truly and properly” (*vere et proprie*) a being = a complete being/substance (cf. the first section of this chapter).

And a bit of sgc-matter (unlike a bit of air, or fire, or flesh) is not a complete being:

Existence (*esse*) is not said of [the] matter, but of the whole [individual substance] (*esse non dicitur de materia sed de toto*). So the matter cannot be called that which exists, but the substance itself is that which exists.
(*SCG*, II, 54)

An actual being is, say, a human being, and a bit of sgc-matter is not and never will be a human being. (As Aquinas puts it in his commentary on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* (VII, L 2, C 1289), a human being is a “materiated” (i.e., material) thing (*materiatum*), but not a bit of matter (*materia*). A bit of sgc-matter is, as such, an incomplete being:

Matter ... as such (*de se*) has incomplete being (*esse incompletum*).
(*De Principiis Naturae*, 1)

So we can see why Aquinas would say that before a human being is generated, the sgc-matter from which that human being is generated is not an actual being (*ens actu*), and does not have actual existence (*esse in actu*). If, however, completeness is a requisite of actuality, and sgc-matter as such is incomplete, how can a bit of sgc-matter be even potentially an actual being?

If sgc-matter as such is incomplete and hence non-actual, how can the advent of a substantial form (or anything else) make some sgc-matter actual? (How can the advent of a substantial form make a bit of sgc-matter something it is essentially the wrong sort of being to be?)

It is at this point that it seems helpful to appeal to the distinction between primary and secondary potentialities. Before a human being is generated, a bit of sgc-matter is in secondary potentiality toward being a complete actual being (toward having actual existence). Indeed, that bit of sgc-matter is in secondary potentiality toward being a human being. (See Aquinas’ commentary on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, IX, L 7, C 1848, where Aquinas says that, when a human being is generated, some matter that was potentially a human being (*potentia homo*) becomes actually a human being (*actu homo*).) True, a bit of sgc-matter is essentially not a human being, and essentially not a complete actual being. But that doesn’t prevent a bit of sgc-matter from having a *secondary* potentiality toward being a human being and a complete actual being. After all, a sword is essentially not a ploughshare, and a (living) trilobite is essentially not a fossil, and an espresso is essentially not made partly of grappa. Again, just because a bit of sgc-matter is essentially an incomplete “non-actual” being, that doesn’t mean that the advent of a substantial form can’t make that bit of sgc-matter a complete and actual being (can’t turn that bit of sgc-matter into a complete and actual being).

A bit of iron is essentially “100% iron”, but the “advent” (that is to say the addition) of chromium and nickel can turn a bit of iron into a bit of steel. An espresso is essentially “0% grappa”, but the addition of a splash of grappa can turn an espresso into a caffè corretto. (Notice that when a bit of (not yet “humanformed”) scg-matter is “turned into” a human being through the advent/addition of a human substantial form, the scg-matter is the *persisting* subject of a substantial change: whereas the sword or the trilobite is replaced by what it is turned into, the bit of scg-matter (like the bit of iron, or the espresso) is not replaced but “subsumed by” what it is turned into.)

To forestall misunderstandings, I don’t know of any passage in which Aquinas explicitly distinguishes primary from secondary potentialities (or “potentialities-to-be” from “potentialities-to-turn-into”). Nevertheless I think it is not implausible to suppose that he is implicitly presupposing a distinction along those lines. For without such a distinction, it is very hard to see how it could be true that a bit of scg-matter is potentially but not actually a being. (A bit of scg-matter is always and essentially an incomplete being, and accordingly is never potentially an incomplete being; a bit of scg-matter is always and essentially an incomplete being, and accordingly is not potentially a complete being, assuming potentiality of the ordinary sort (primary potentiality) is at issue.) Moreover, given the way Aquinas characterizes scg-matter, it seems not implausible to suppose that, on his account, “adding” a substantial form to a bit of scg-matter turns that bit of scg-matter into a complete substance/being (e.g., a human being), in something like the way that adding chromium and nickel to a bit of iron turns that bit of iron into steel.

So far, so good. But now let’s look again at (what appear to be) the considerations that induce Aquinas to accept the competition principle:

Any form that an actual being (*ens actu*) underlies ... is an accident.

It is obvious, though, that any substantial form, whatever it might be, makes something an actual being (*facit ens actu*) ... Whence it follows that only the first form that comes to matter is substantial, while all those that come after are accidental.

A thing that already exists as an actual being (*praeexist ens actu*) cannot be made a being in an unqualified sense (*simpliciter*), though it can be made a being of this particular sort – say, white, or large. Since, then, the form already in matter produces actual being, a subsequent form will not produce being in an unqualified sense ... And so all the ancients who thought that prime matter was something actual, whether fire, or air, or water, or something in between, said that to be made is only to be changed ...

(*De Spiritualibus Creaturis, un., 3, responsio*)

If I understand the reasoning here, it is not cogent, on the assumption that scg-matter is in secondary potentiality toward complete actual being. If we

thought of a bit of sgc-matter as (initially) in *primary* potentiality toward complete actual being, and we thought that substantial forms, as such, actuate the primary potentiality of a bit of sgc-matter toward complete actual being, then we would have to conclude that any bit of sgc-matter that has acquired one substantial form cannot retain that substantial form, whilst acquiring a new one, since that would imply that a being that is already a complete actual being (in virtue of already having the first substantial form) becomes a complete actual being (in virtue of acquiring the second substantial form). If, on the other hand, sgc-matter is only in secondary potentiality toward complete actual being, there seems no evident reason to think that one and the same bit of sgc-matter couldn't initially acquire one substantial form, and subsequently acquire a different one.

I'm not sure whether it's an urban myth, but I have been told that Coca-Cola originally contained a significant amount of cocaine (something like nine milligrams per glass). Whether or not that is true, someone might invent a new kind of beverage, *caff  supercorretto*, which consisted of caff  corretto and a bit of cocaine – in other words, of espresso, a bit of grappa (or other liquor), and a bit of cocaine. Then we could say that an ordinary espresso was in secondary potentiality toward being a caff  corretto, and also in secondary potentiality toward being a caff  supercorretto. The addition of grappa could turn an espresso into a caff  corretto, and begin the process of turning an espresso into a caff  supercorretto. The addition of the cocaine could complete the process of turning the espresso into a caff  supercorretto. At the end of the process, we would have three things: the espresso now “subsumed by” the caff  corretto, the caff  corretto that subsumed the original espresso, and the caff  supercorretto that subsumed both the caff  corretto and the original espresso.

Analogously, it seems that one and the same bit of sgc-matter might be in secondary potentiality both toward being carbon, and toward being diamond. The advent of a “carbonaceous” substantial form would actuate that bit of sgc-matter's secondary potentiality to be carbon – would turn that bit of sgc-matter into a bit of carbon, by making that bit of sgc-matter the sgc-matter of a bit of carbon. The subsequent advent of an “adamantine” substantial form would actuate that bit of sgc-matter's secondary potentiality to be diamond – would turn that bit of sgc-matter into a bit of diamond, by making that bit of sgc-matter the sgc-matter of a bit of diamond.

Summing up: Aquinas thinks that, once we reflect on the fact that nothing can be actual and potential at the same time in the same respect, and the fact that substantial forms as such actuate “absolutely” (as opposed to actuating in a certain respect, as accidental forms do), we can see that the competition principle is true, and that accordingly:

- No bit of sgc-matter can acquire a new substantial form without first giving up its old one.
- No actual material being can be simultaneously (actually, as opposed to virtually) made of a “less underlying” ordinary or scientific stuff

and a “more underlying” ordinary or scientific stuff (e.g., diamond and carbon).

- No material being can be distinguished from the bit of (elementary or non-elementary) stuff actually (as opposed to virtually) constituting it.
- Given that there is such a thing as generation and corruption, there isn’t any one kind of ordinary or scientific stuff that all (past, present, and future) sublunary material beings are made of (be that kind of stuff fire, or air, or “quark-and-lepton-stuff”).

If I have understood Aquinas, he is right to maintain that all these quite striking claims follow from the competition principle; but he is mistaken in thinking that we can get from the definitional truth that substantial forms actuate absolutely (lest they be accidental), and the conceptual truth that nothing can be in potentiality at the same time in the same respect, to the competition principle. Motivating the competition principle – and thus Thomistic constitutional dualism – is not that easy.

Naturally, the competition principle and Thomistic constitutional dualism might be true, even if Aquinas’ arguments in their favor are not as they stand convincing. That said, I think that, for various reasons, Thomistic constitutional dualism is a problematic view.

One reason is that it is not clear that it is compatible with what contemporary physics and chemistry say about the world. At least arguably, chemistry tells us that water, rather than being an Aristotelian element, is a “compound” stuff (H_2O), actually composed of two simpler stuffs – hydrogen and oxygen. Inasmuch as Thomistic constitutional dualism implies the competition principle, it seems not to leave room for the idea that one kind of (actual) stuff might be composed of two simpler kinds of (actual) stuff: as we have seen, Aquinas holds that flesh and other “mixed bodies” are only virtually, rather than actually, composed of the Aristotelian elements. (The Aristotelian elements do not remain in a mixed body, though the powers those elements had before mixing occurred do remain (albeit in an altered form).) So, if Thomistic constitutional dualism is true, either there is no such stuff as water, or there are no such stuffs as hydrogen and oxygen, or there are such stuffs as water, hydrogen, and oxygen, but hydrogen and oxygen are only “virtually present” in water. Initially at least, none of these options is especially attractive. It’s hard to believe there is no such stuff as water, or hydrogen, or oxygen, and it’s hard to believe that hydrogen and oxygen aren’t actually (as opposed to merely virtually) present in water: after all, chemistry seems to say that water is actually made of H_2O molecules, and H_2O molecules are actually made of hydrogen atoms and oxygen atoms.

A second worry about Thomistic constitutional dualism is that although it is surely at least initially plausible that there are material substances that are made of different bits of stuff at different times, Thomistic constitutional dualism appears to rule this out. To take an example discussed by Aquinas

himself (at *De Spiritualibus Creaturis, un.*, 9, ad 10um), a river is naturally thought of as a substance that is constituted by different “portions” or “quantities” of water at different times.

But this way of thinking about rivers seems unavailable to Aquinas. Though I have in effect set out the reasons for this, some readers may find it helpful for me to reiterate them.

Briefly: for Aquinas, if p is the “portion” of water now constituting a river R , p will be as it were a substance in its own right (independently of its constituting R), since “portions” (“quantities”, “bits”) of the Aristotelian elements are among Aquinas’ favorite examples of substances. p will be a substance partly “composed of” some scg-matter (matter that was once the matter of fire, or air) and an aqueous substantial form which makes that bit of scg-matter currently the matter of water, rather than fire or air. Now the scg-matter of p currently constitutes the river R . So the scg-matter which is the scg-matter of the portion of water p for as long as p exists is temporarily and currently the scg-matter of the river R . Assuming that rivers are substances, it is hard to see how we could avoid the conclusion that the very same bit of scg-matter that is “aqueously informed”, inasmuch as it’s currently the matter of p , is simultaneously “fluvially informed” inasmuch as it’s currently the matter of R . That bit of matter, it seems, was at one time in secondary potentiality both with respect to being water, and with respect to being a river. The advent of an aqueous substantial form turned that scg-matter into a bit of water, but left it in secondary potentiality with respect to being a river. The advent of a fluvial substantial form turned that bit of scg-matter into a river. Thus, after the advent of the fluvial substantial form, the same bit of scg-matter is in “secondary actuality” with respect to two different substantial forms, and two different substantial beings. (We may say that a being is in *primary actuality* with respect to being X if it is X , and that a being is in *secondary actuality* with respect to being X if it has been turned into something else that is X . Thus when the nickel and chromium have been added to a bit of iron, the bit of iron is not in primary actuality with respect to being steel (since iron isn’t steel), but it is in secondary actuality with respect to being steel (since it has been turned into steel). Analogously, when both an aqueous and a fluvial substantial form have come to a bit of scg-matter, that bit of matter is not in primary actuality with respect to being water, or with respect to being a river (since a bit of scg-matter is neither a bit of water, nor a river), but it is in secondary actuality both with respect to being water, and with respect to being a river (since it has been “turned into” both a bit of water, and a river (i.e., has become the scg-matter of both a bit of water and a river).

Aquinas can avoid all these consequences by denying that there are any material substances that are constituted by different bits of ordinary or scientific stuff at different times. But this is once again not an initially attractive option. One might have thought that one of the main attractions of distinguishing a material substance from the matter that constitutes it is

precisely that it allows us to say that one and the same bit of ordinary or scientific stuff can constitute different material beings at different times, and one and the same material being can be constituted by different bits of ordinary or scientific stuff at different times.

Substances and their received forms

There is a great deal more to be said about Aquinas' conception of matter, and about his account of the relation between a material substance and its matter. We shall in fact return to these issues later in this chapter; but it will be helpful first to say more than I have said so far about Aquinas' conception of form, and about Aquinas' account of the relation between substances and their forms.

For Aquinas, matter, as such, is an "unreceived receiver". By contrast, forms may be either received or unreceived. Accidental forms (or "accidents") are at least typically "received unreceivers". I say "typically" to avoid delicate issues concerning the "de-inherence" of accidents in the sacraments of the Eucharist (see *ST*, IIIa, 77). By contrast, substantial forms naturally or non-miraculously come in both received and unreceived varieties. Substantial forms of immaterial beings are essentially unreceived, and substantial forms of material beings are essentially received, with the exception of human substantial forms, which are received when embodied and unreceived when disembodied. In this section, I shall for the most part limit myself to some remarks about Aquinas' conception of essentially received substantial forms. Essentially unreceived forms will be discussed later on in this chapter, and human substantial forms will be discussed in the next.

As we have seen, a received substantial form makes something be a thing of some substantial kind – a bit of water, a stone, a holm oak, a beaver, a human being, or the like. (It makes one thing – an ungenerated bit of (sgc) matter – 'be' (i.e., constitute, be the sgc-matter of) a substance, and it makes another thing – a generated substance – be a substance, in the (more straightforward) sense of 'be' in which something is a substance if and only if it is identical to some substance.) As we have also seen, an accidental form (or "accident") makes something which is "already" (that is, independently) an individual of some substantial kind be a certain way – hot, or pale, or the like. (Again, "being a certain way" means "being a certain 'positive' way": Aquinas would not count privations or negations such as blindness or colorlessness as accidents, because they make a thing not be a certain way (sighted, colored), rather than making a thing be a certain 'positive' way.)

We saw in the last section that for Aquinas, an individual substance may have many different accidental forms at once, but a bit of sgc-matter cannot have many substantial forms at once, although it can have many substantial forms successively. This leaves open whether (a) one and the same accidental form may be had by different substances at the same time or at different times, (b) one and the same substantial form may be had by different

substances at the same time or at different times, or (c) one and the same substantial form may be had by different bits of scg-matter at the same time or at different times.

Re (a), we might have supposed that one and the same whiteness was an accidental form of every substance that ever has been, or is, or will be white. But this is not Aquinas' view. As he sees it, each white substance has a "proprietary" whiteness, that makes it, but no other white substance, white – a proprietary whiteness that is this whiteness, rather than any other whiteness, because and only because it is in this substance, rather than in any other substance:

Accidents are individuated by their subjects, which are substances. For something is called *this* whiteness, inasmuch as it is in *this* subject.

(*ST*, Ia, 29, 1 *responsio*)

This whiteness does not differ from another one except insofar as it is in this subject or that subject. (*[H]aec albedo non differt ab alia nisi per hoc quod est in hoc vel in illo subjecto.*)

(*De Spiritualibus Creaturis*, un., 8, *responsio*)

Again, given Aquinas' account of the metaphysics of the Eucharist, his considered view may be that this accident is this accident because and only because it is or at least originally was in this subject or substance; but that does not affect the main point, which is that, as Aquinas thinks of it, one and the same subject-individuated accidental form cannot inform two different substances at the same time. If *per impossibile* the same accidental form of whiteness currently informed both this substance and that distinct substance, it would simultaneously be this whiteness, inasmuch as it informed this substance, and that distinct whiteness, inasmuch as it informed that distinct substance. Nor could an accidental form of whiteness first inform one substance, and subsequently inform a different one. The way Aquinas thinks of it, an accidental form is the particular accidental form it is, because it informed the particular substance it initially informed; and inasmuch as it is the particular form it is, it is incapable of ever informing any other substance. (Compare: inasmuch as this footprint is the particular footprint it is, it is incapable of ever being the footprint of any other foot.) Hence "accidents cannot pass from one subject to another" (*ST*, 3a, 77, 1, *responsio*): different substances cannot share the same accident, even by taking turns.

Turning to (b), just as having *a* pair of hydrogen atoms and *an* oxygen atom (put together the right sort of way) makes something *a* water molecule, having *this* pair of hydrogen atoms and *this* oxygen atom (put together the right way) makes something *this* water molecule. Analogously, as Aquinas sees it, just as having *a* substantial form of a certain kind makes you a certain kind of substance, having *this* substantial form of that kind makes you *this*

substance of that kind. So if *per impossibile* each of two different substances (existing at the same time, or existing at different times) had the same substantial form – *this* substantial form – (at the same time, or at different times) then each of those two different substances would be the same substance (*this* substance). Hence one and the same substantial form cannot be shared by two substances either *simul* (at a time) or *successive* (at different times). As Aquinas says at *De Principiis Naturae*, 6:

Of those things which are the same in kind but numerically different, the matter and the [substantial] form are not numerically the same, but are the same in kind, as in the case of Socrates and Plato.

So individual substances – existing at the same time, or existing at different times – are the same, unless they have different substantial forms (at the same time, if they exist at the same time, or at the two different items in question, if they exist at two different times). In other words, one and the same substantial form cannot be shared by two different substances (either *simul* or *successive*).

So, it would seem, for Aquinas, different substances (existing at the same time or at different times) never have the same (substantial or accidental) form:

It is impossible for many different individuals to have one form.
(*ST*, Ia, 76, 2, *responsio*)

– and (a) and (b) are accordingly both true.

As for (c), I am unaware of any place in which Aquinas suggests that different bits of sgc-matter can “take turns” having one and the same substantial form. But it looks as though Aquinas ought to admit that this can (and does) happen.

Suppose that a bit of sgc-matter first constitutes a large plant, and then comes to constitute the small animal that ate that plant. In this scenario, it would seem, we have two bits of sgc-matter: call the bit of sgc-matter that initially “enmattered” the plant $sgcm_1$ and the bit of sgc-matter that initially enmattered the animal $sgcm_2$. We also have two substantial forms – the substantial form of the plant sf_p (which does not survive the animal’s eating the plant), and the substantial form of the animal sf_A (which does).

One and the same bit of sgc-matter ($sgcm_1$) goes from being “plantformed” to being “animalformed” (that is, from being in secondary actuality with respect to planthood to being in secondary actuality with respect to animality). Equally, though, it seems that one and the same substantial form (sf_A) goes from being $sgcm_1$ -enmattered to being $sgcm_2$ -enmattered. In other words, it seems that a substantial form as it were “migrates” – not from one primary recipient to another (that is, from one individual substance to another), but from one secondary recipient to another (that is, from one

bit of sgc-matter to another): in which case, for Aquinas, (c) (unlike (a) or (b)) is true.

In contemporary metaphysics, some philosophers (for example, those who favor a conception of properties as “universals” as conceived by David Armstrong) think that properties are shared (at a time, and over time). Other philosophers (those who conceive of properties as “tropes” or “abstract particulars” or “moments”) think that properties are not shared (at a time, or over time): the *F*-ness of *x* = the *F*-ness of *y* only if *x* = *y*. Given that received accidental and substantial forms seem to be properties, it appears that Aquinas is, in contemporary parlance, a “tropist”, rather than a “shared properties theorist”, inasmuch as he holds that there are as many whitenesses or porcinities as there are white substances or pigs, rather than one and the same whiteness or porcinity for all white substances or pigs. (Though it should be kept in mind that, whereas contemporary tropists say that the property of *F*-ness of *x* = the property of *F*-ness of *y* only if *x* = *y*, Aquinas says that the received accidental or substantial form of *F*-ness of a complete being/substance *x* = the received accidental substantial form of a complete being/substance *y* only if *x* = *y*. So far as I know, Aquinas does not rule out that the *F*-ness of *x* might = the *F*-ness of *y*, even though *x* ≠ *y*, as long as at least one of *x* and *y* is an incomplete being.)

As far as I am aware, few if any commentators on Aquinas have remarked on the strangeness of the idea that different substances have different whitenesses (perhaps, in some cases, because tropism is a familiar view in contemporary metaphysics). But it does seem to me, on the face of it, a strange idea, for reasons I shall do my best to bring out.

First off, ordinary speakers of English do not ordinarily pluralize terms such as “whiteness” (and I take it that ordinary speakers of Latin did not ordinarily pluralize terms such as “albedo”). Statements such as *look how many whitenesses!*, or *all the whitenesses I know of are like that* sound – at least to my ears – odd. To my mind, they sound odd in much the way that *look how many hydrogens!* or *all the carbons I can think of are like that* sound odd. These last two statements, I want to say, are deviant, because although there is such a thing as hydrogen, and there is such a thing as carbon, you can’t sensibly say there are 0 hydrogens or carbons, or at least 2. So too, I want to say, for “whiteness”: “whiteness”, like “hydrogen” (or “carbon”) is not an ordinary count noun, in the way that, say, “hydrogen atom” is. (Incidentally, the same spell-check that puts a red line under “hydrogens” whenever I type it, also puts a red line under “whitenesses”: my spell-check doesn’t think “whiteness” is pluralizable.)

In any case, whether or not there is something (as linguists would say) “deviant” about statements such as *look how many whitenesses*, I don’t think it can be denied that ordinary speakers of English don’t say things like that. This is a point about usage, but not simply a point about usage. For, it is at least initially plausible to suppose that if ordinary people thought that whitenesses were many, just as white things are, they would sometimes refer plurally to whitenesses, just as they sometimes refer plurally to white things.

The fact that ordinary speakers of English don't ordinarily pluralize "whiteness" (and ordinary speakers of Italian don't ordinarily pluralize "bianchezza", and (I take it) ordinary speakers of Latin did not pluralize "albedo") suggests that, at least before we start doing metaphysics, we think that whiteness, like hydrogen, is not the kind of thing there are many of. (There could of course be many *kinds* of whiteness, or many *kinds* of hydrogen or carbon, but that's a different issue.)

But the point here doesn't simply concern the (apparent) unpluralizability of terms such as "whiteness". Terms like "shape" and "color" are clearly just as pluralizable as, say, "surface" or "inside". Still, from an intuitive, pre-theoretical point of view, there is a difference between:

- (A) Trees that are in different places at the same time cannot be the same color.
or
- (B) Trees that are in different places at the same time cannot have the same shape.

on the one hand, and

- (C) Trees that are in different places at the same time cannot have the same surface.
or
- (D) Trees that are in different places at the same time cannot have the same inside.

on the other. (C) and (D) seem obviously true, because it seems obviously true that material substances occupying different places cannot have the very same surface or the very same inside. (A) and (B) seem not to be true, because it seems perfectly possible for material substances occupying different places (and thus for different material substances) to have the very same shape or the very same color. And presumably, if colors can be shared by different material substances, then whiteness can be shared by different material substances (since whiteness is a color).

To put essentially the same point a different way, compare

- (E) (Colored) material objects that are perfect duplicates must be (or have) the same color.
and
- (F) Material objects that are perfect duplicates must have the same shape.

with

- (G) Material objects that are perfect duplicates must have the same surface.
or
- (H) Material objects that are perfect duplicates must have the same inside.

(G) and (H) seem clearly false, since it doesn't follow from the fact that *a* and *b* are perfect duplicates (i.e., are exactly like each other) that *a* and *b* have the very same surface, or the very same inside. (E) and (F) seem clearly true, in that it does seem to follow from the fact that *a* and *b* are perfect duplicates that they have the very same shape or color (assuming *a* and *b* have a shape or a color). Colored and shaped things that are exactly alike needn't have the very same surface or inside, but they must have the same color and shape. That would seem to be because shapes and colors – unlike surfaces or insides – are entities that must be shared by different colored and shaped things, whenever those things are just like each other. And this again suggests that, from a pre-theoretical and intuitive point of view, at least, one and the same color, and thus one and the same whiteness can be found in more than one material substance (at one and the same time, or at different times).

Granted, someone who believes that colors and shapes are substance-individuated particulars could say that (E) and (F) have a true reading, because *a and b have the same shape* can mean *a and b have the same kind of shape*, and it is a necessary truth that if *a* and *b* are material objects that are perfect duplicates, then *a* and *b* have the same *kind of shape*, even if they don't have numerically the same shape. (Compare: *my wife and our hostess were wearing the same dress* can (and usually does) mean *my wife and our hostess were wearing the same kind of dress*.) This move is certainly available (and available to Aquinas, since he thinks that accidental forms can be either *idem numero* (one and the same) or *idem specie* (the same in kind: see *Quaestiones Quodlibetales, Quodlibet 1, 4, 1*)). The problem is that it at most explains why we are pre-theoretically inclined to regard (E)–(F) as having a true reading, and it seems (to me, at any rate) that we are pre-theoretically inclined to regard (E)–(F) as true (full stop). Also, if (E) and (F) are true, as long as we interpret *same* as *same kind of*, and false, if we interpret *same* as *numerically the same as*, the same goes for (G) and (H) (material objects cannot after all be perfect duplicates without having the same *kind of surface*, and the same *kind of inside*). So distinguishing numerical from specific identity by itself does nothing to explain why (pre-theoretically, at least), (E) and (F) seem clearly right, whereas (G) and (H) seem clearly wrong.

In order to forestall misunderstandings, it may be worth underscoring that the considerations advanced here tell only against what we might call “straightforward” (rather than “unstraightforward”) tropism. I shall (try to) explain.

A straightforward tropist will say that (i) *this seagull is white* is true in virtue of the fact that this seagull has an unshareable and untransferable whiteness. An unstraightforward tropist will say that (ii) *this seagull is white* is true in virtue of the fact that this seagull has an unshareable and untransferable whiteness-trope. We might think that (i) and (ii) are equivalent, on the grounds that an unshareable and untransferable whiteness-trope = an unshareable and untransferable whiteness. But a certain kind of tropist might resist this identification. She might take the following sort of line:

There are particular substances, and then there are kinds of substances: for instance, there are humans, and there is “humankind” (more idiomatically, if less politically correctly, “mankind”). Similarly, there are tropes and kinds of tropes: just as Plato and Aristotle are two different substances of the same substantial kind (humankind), the whiteness-trope of this seagull and the whiteness-trope of that (different) seagull are different tropes of the same trope kind (“whitenestropekind”). Just as another name for “humankind” is “humanity”, another name for “whitenestropekind” is “whiteness”. Just as there are many human beings, but only one human kind/humanity, there are many whiteness-tropes, but only one whitenestropekind/whiteness. A particular seagull is white in virtue of having a whiteness-trope that is numerically different from the whiteness-trope of any other seagull; but it is not white in virtue of having a *whiteness* that is numerically different from the whiteness of any other seagull. Whiteness (whitenestropekind) is one, even though white tropes are many, in the same way that humanity (humankind) is one, even though humans are many.

The unstraightforward tropest who distinguishes the whiteness trope of this seagull from the whiteness of this seagull in this way can say that the considerations advanced earlier in favor of the counterintuitiveness of straightforward tropeism don’t tell against her view. She can say:

I agree that statements such as *look how many whitenesses!* or *all the whitenesses I know of are like that* are deviant, and that “whiteness” is not an ordinary count noun. I agree that, although trees in different places at the same time cannot have the same surface or the same inside, they can have the same shape or the same color (that is, they can have tropes of the same “shapetropekind” or “colortropekind”). I agree that, although *a and b are material objects that are perfect duplicates* does not imply *the surface (or inside) of a = the surface (or inside) of b*, *a and b are material objects that are perfect duplicates* does imply *the shape of a = the shape of b*. Straightforward tropeism is “anti-commonsensual”, since “common sense” tells us that whiteness in particular, and more generally shapes, colors, and the like, are not unshareable, untransferable, and duplicable subject-individuated entities. (An entity is duplicable if there could be something else exactly like it.) But unstraightforward tropeism is not “anti-commonsensual”, because common sense (pre-theoretical intuition, folk metaphysics) has no view one way or the other about whether there is an unshareable, untransferable, and duplicable thing in a seagull in virtue of which that seagull is white – a whiteness trope whose presence in a seagull makes it true that that seagull has whiteness, but cannot be identified with the whiteness that seagull has.

However useful this sort of move might be in defending tropism, it does not help defend Aquinas' sort of tropism from the charge of counterintuitiveness, since Aquinas does not distinguish a seagull's whiteness from its whiteness-form.

I have tried to present an (intuitive) case against "Thomistic tropism" (more precisely, against the view that such things as whiteness and humanity are unshareable, untransferable, and duplicable particulars, just as surfaces or insides are. How would Aquinas respond to that case?

An anonymous referee of an earlier version of this book suggested that even if Aquinas' tropism seems to fly in the face of ordinary linguistic usage, there is no reason to think Aquinas would be moved by the appeal to "ordinary language". If the way we ordinarily talk about colors, shapes, *et similia* is incompatible with our best metaphysical theory thereof, Aquinas might say, so much the worse for the way we ordinarily talk: there is no reason to suppose the way we ordinarily talk is a reliable guide to how the world metaphysically is.

Is this how Aquinas would respond to the anti-tropist arguments just set out? If so, is it a good way to respond to them? I shall tackle the second question first.

As I think of it, before we roll up our sleeves and start "doing metaphysics", we already have a store of metaphysical beliefs ("folk metaphysics", if you will), in much the way that, before we start "doing physics", we already have a store of physical beliefs ("folk physics"). For example, I think that we start out believing that events, processes, and the like, have temporal parts, but living beings and material objects do not; events "fit into" an interval of time by having (proper) temporal parts that fit into sub-intervals of that time, but living beings and objects do not fit into an interval of time by having (proper) temporal parts that fit into sub-intervals of that time. So I take it that when Anselm contrasts "three-dimensional" entities such as living beings with "four-dimensional" entities such as their lives, he is simply expressing a belief of "folk metaphysics" he had as a child in Val D'Aosta, even before he started doing philosophy. Other "folk-metaphysical" beliefs include the belief that there is such a thing as coming to be and passing away, as well as alteration (i.e., change in a persisting thing).

It's not that I think folk-metaphysical views are infallible, any more than folk-physical views are. But I do think that folk-metaphysical views are "default". That is, I think there is a defeasible presumption in their favor. To vary the Berkeleyan saying, we should think with the vulgar, until or unless we have reason to think the learned do and should think differently.

So I take it that the anti-tropist arguments sketched above are not, at bottom, "appeals to ordinary language", they are appeals to the folk-metaphysical beliefs expressed by ordinary people using ordinary language. It is true that those arguments depend on the assumptions that (i) when we say, for example, that material objects that are perfect duplicates needn't have the very same surface, but must have the very same shape, we

straightforwardly mean what we say, and (ii) what we mean and say is strictly and literally true. Naturally either of these assumptions is open to challenge. My point here is just that one cannot dismiss the anti-tropist arguments under discussion on the grounds that what is at issue is (in the words of the referee) “the ontological structure of the world”, rather than the way we ordinarily talk about it.

For what it’s worth, I think that Aquinas would agree with this. For example, I think Aquinas thinks we should defer to the folk-metaphysical view that there really is such a thing as coming to be and passing away. Consider the *antiqui naturales* (as Aquinas calls them) – ancient philosophers, criticized by Aristotle, who held that nothing ever comes into or goes out of existence. Suppose one of the *antiqui naturales* said to Aquinas, “who cares if ordinary people use the language of coming to be and passing away? – that’s just a point about “linguistic usage”, with no implications for the ontological structure of the world”. I think Aquinas would find this attitude unjustifiably dismissive. What we ordinarily say about coming to be and passing away, I think Aquinas would aver, expresses our conviction that things really do come into being and pass away, and we need to know what gives the *antiqui naturales* the right to dismiss this view, in favor of a view on which everything that we normally think of as generation or corruption is really alteration in an eternal substrate.

Or, to take another case, consider a “Platonist” (to use Aquinas’ terminology) who identifies (say) Peter with his (immaterial) soul. She might say:

Although it is true that Peter animates a body that weighs 150 pounds, it is false that Peter himself (as opposed to his body) weighs 150 pounds. We are ordinarily perfectly happy to say that Peter weighs 150 pounds, but that’s a fact about how we ordinarily talk, with no implications for the nature or “metaphysical constitution” of Peter.

Again, I think Aquinas would object to this sort of dismissal of what (he would say) we not only ordinarily say, but ordinarily believe – to wit, that Peter (and not just his body) weighs (say) 150 pounds.

So I am inclined to think that Aquinas would not respond to the anti-tropist arguments just sketched by saying something along the lines of: tropism is admittedly at variance with what the folk ordinarily say and think; but who cares? I think that, instead, he would attempt to show that tropism is not really at variance with what the folk think, or with what the folk say (properly construed).

Thus Aquinas would concede that we can for example truly say that a brand new corpse has the same shape or color that the moribund human being who left the corpse behind had, just before he ceased to exist. But, he would say, that is because we can describe things as the same either because they are numerically identical (*idem numero*) or because they are the same in kind (*idem specie*). When we say that the shape that the human being had

then is the same as the shape that the corpse has now, we don't mean that the shape the human being had and the shape the corpse has are *idem numero*, but rather that the shape the human being had and the shape the corpse has are *idem specie* – which is entirely compatible with the sort of tropism he endorses. (See again *Quaestiones Quodlibetales, Quodlibet 1, 4, 1*, and note that when Aquinas says at *ST, IIIa, 77, 1, responsio* that one and the same accident cannot pass from one subject to another, he is careful to say that an accident that was at an earlier time in one subject and an accident that is at a later time in a different subject cannot be the same *in number (idem numero)*.)

More generally, I think that Aquinas would want to say that it is not just plausible to the metaphysically unsophisticated folk, but also perfectly true that whiteness or humanity is “shareable” (and shared) in a way that a human being or an angel (or the surface or inside of a material object) is not. In this connection, it is interesting that Aquinas says:

Every form existing in and individuated by a singular supposit is common to many (*communis est multis*), either in reality (*secundum rem*) or at least in the understanding (*secundum rationem*). Thus human nature is common to many really and in the understanding (*secundum rem et rationem*), and the nature of the sun is common to many, not really, but only in the understanding: for the nature of the sun can be understood as existing in many subjects (*potest enim natura solis intelligi ut in pluribus suppositis existens*).

(*ST, Ia, 13, 9, responsio*)

If, however, human nature is really common to (shared by) Socrates, Xanthippe, Plato, and so on, whither Thomistic tropism? How can Aquinas consistently say both that

every form existing in ... a singular supposit is common to many

and that

it is impossible for many different individuals to have one form (*impossibile est enim plurium numero diversorum esse unam formam*).

(*ST, Ia, 76, 2, responsio*)

How can Aquinas (consistently) acknowledge the real commonality of humanity or any other form in an individual human being, when he insists that

The unity or commonality of human nature is not real, but only conceptual (*unitas autem sive communitas humanae naturae non est secundum rem, sed solum secundum considerationem*).

(*ST, Ia, 39, 4, ad 3um*)

and

Socrates is similar to Plato in humanity, but it's not as though numerically one humanity exists in both (*Socrates est similis Platoni in humanitate, non quasi una humanitate numero in utroque existente*).

(*In II Post. Anal.* 20, n. 11)

and says, quite generally, that

nothing in Socrates is shared (*in Socrate non invenitur communitas aliqua*). On the contrary, everything in him is individuated (*quicquid est in eo est individuatum*).

(*De Ente et Essentia*, 2)

Well, Aquinas thinks that we can consider a nature such as human nature in three different ways. We can consider it “absolutely” or “as such”. A nature *absolute considerata* is neither in one or more minds, nor in one or more things outside the mind (cf. *De Ente et Essentia*, 3), since a nature simply considered as the particular nature it is, needn't be in any mind, or in any individuals outside the mind. We can also consider a nature as it exists in a finite understanding. Given that a finite understanding can embrace the general, but not the particular, a nature as it exists in a finite understanding is abstract and universal (as it were, shorn of particularity). In other words, a nature as it exists in the understanding is capable of existing in many individuals, and being predicated of many individuals. Finally, we can consider a nature as it exists in a particular individual. Thus understood, it is individuated by the individual it exists in, and cannot exist in any other individual except the one it actually exists in.

So is the human nature of Socrates shared or “proprietary”? If I have not misunderstood Aquinas, he would say: it depends. The human nature of Socrates, *as it exists in Socrates*, is proprietary – unshared and unshareable. The human nature of Socrates, *as it exists in a finite understanding*, is non-proprietary and shareable (just as the nature of the sun, as it exists in a finite understanding, is non-proprietary and shareable, even though solarly, unlike humanity, is not actually shared). Natures (and forms) are in a way proprietary and unshareable, and in a way shareable and non-proprietary. As they are in the mind, they are non-proprietary and shareable. As they are *in rerum natura*, they are proprietary and non-shareable. As they are in the mind, they are universals; as they are outside it, they are particulars.

So, by Aquinas' lights, the folk are not mistaken when they say that the shapes, colors, and species of individual substances are (typically) shared and *a fortiori* shareable, unlike the individual substances they exist in. But this does not imply that tropists are mistaken, when they say that the shapes, colors, and species of individual substances are just as unshareable as the individual substances themselves. What the folk are saying (properly construed, and

non-elliptically expressed) is that the shapes, colors, and species of individual substances, as they are in the understanding, are shareable; what tropists are saying is that shapes, colors, and species, as they are in the individuals they exist in, are just as unshareable as the individuals themselves.

Suppose that my interpretation of Aquinas is not off base, and he does indeed embrace what we might call “tropism without the error theory” (i.e., tropism without an error theory of the judgments of the folk concerning the shareability of such items as colors, shapes, and species). Does this enable him to effectively counter the anti-tropist arguments sketched earlier?

Not obviously. An anti-tropist could say:

What the folk say is that the shapes, colors, and species of individual substances are shared and *a fortiori* shareable, though the surfaces and insides of individual substances (like the individual substances themselves) are not (or at least, they are not shareable by non-coincident substances). And what the folk believe – and truly believe – is just what the folk non-elliptically say. Aquinas wants to say that the folk are not in error, when they say that the shapes, colors, and species of individual substances are shared and *a fortiori* shareable. But, as a tropist, he can say that the folk are not in error, only if he says that, when the folk say that the shapes, colors, and species of individual substances are shareable, they commit themselves to nothing stronger than the claim that the shapes, colors, and species of individual substances, *taken a certain way* (taken as existing in the understanding) are shareable. And why should we accept that this is all the folk commit themselves to when they say – without using any explicit qualifying phrases – that the shapes, colors, and species of individual substances are shareable? The motivation is presumably that – as the folk may or may not be aware – the shapes, colors, and species of individual substances, taken a certain way, are *unshareable*. But why should we believe that? Why suppose there is any way of taking Socrates’ whiteness, or his humanity, such that Socrates’ whiteness, or his humanity, taken that way, is unshareable? To put it more snappily, why suppose that anything formal in Socrates is in any way unshareable?

Here I must admit that I don’t entirely understand how Aquinas would answer this question.

Suppose that, like Aquinas, we think a human being is the particular human being he is, because he has the particular human nature he has, where that nature consists of some particular matter, and the particular human substantial form individuated thereby. It will immediately follow that both Socrates’ individuated substantial form and his individual human nature are unshareable. But inasmuch as this account of Socrates’ human nature is tropist, we cannot appeal to it in order to explain to the anti-tropist why we need to posit anything at once formal and unshareable in Socrates.

Similarly, if we start from an account on which a mind as it were “strips off” the individuating features from the nature of an individual substance as it is in that substance, to arrive at the nature of that individual as it is in the understanding, we will of course have to recognize something formal and unshareable in the individual substance. Again, though, the anti-tropist would say this picture of shareability or universality as “the work of the mind” (cf. *De Ente et Essentia*, 2) cannot be appealed to in order to motivate tropism, on pain of circularity.

Aquinas thinks that if Socrates’ humanity as it is in Socrates were not just similar to but literally identical with Plato’s humanity as it is in Plato, then Socrates and Plato would be literally identical (see Aquinas’ commentary on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, VII, 13). He makes what appears to be the same point at *De Spiritualibus Creaturis*, un., 9, *responsio*:

If two horses agreed in the numerically same thing whereby they were of the species *horse*, it would follow that two horses are one horse, which is impossible.

(Si enim duo equi convenirent in eodem secundum numerum quo speciem equi haberent, sequeretur quod due equi essent unus equus – quod est impossibile.)

But I do not understand why Aquinas thinks that *equinity considered as it is this horse = equinity as it is in that horse* implies *this horse = that horse*. Absent an antecedent commitment to tropism, why should we accept this conditional?

Not a few contemporary tropists argue that we should not think that colors, shapes, *vel similia* (as they are in their subjects), are shared (by non-coincident subjects), because that would imply that one and the same shared being is in many places at once when things in different places are both white or both human – which is impossible. But, whatever the merits of this argument, Aquinas does not think it is impossible for a being to be wholly in many places at once (see *ST*, Ia, 76, 8.)

Aquinas thinks that Plato proposed, and Aristotle refuted, a multiply indefensible version of anti-tropism (see Aquinas’ commentary on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, and on Aristotle’s *De Anima*). But Plato’s kind of anti-tropism – or rather, the kind of anti-tropism that Aquinas thinks Aristotle attributes to Plato – is by no means the only kind of anti-tropism (or, to put it positively, the only kind of shareable properties view) on offer.

Someone can believe in universals without believing in “Platonic universals” (as Aquinas understands them), or indeed without believing in universals at all. (To take some examples from contemporary analytic philosophy, David Armstrong believes in non-Platonic universals, and David Lewis believed in shareable properties that were not universals, but sets of worldbound *possibilia*.)

Now even supposing that Aristotle refuted Platonic anti-tropism, I do not see that Aristotle refuted the view that real things come in both unshareable and shareable varieties. That is, I do not think that Aristotle showed that, *pace*

Plato, rather than finding universality in (some) things, the understanding puts universality into (some) things (cf. *De Ente et Essentia*, 2: *intellectus est qui agit universalitatem in rebus*). For reasons I hope to have brought out, I consider the view that the intellect finds universality (by which I mean shareability, commonality) in some things, but not in others, “default”, *pace* De Wulf (who, to my mind, gets things backward in the following passage):

The problem of universals is the problem of the correspondence of our intellectual concepts to things existing outside our intellect ... The question ... is to discover to what extent the concepts of the mind correspond to the things they represent ... Exaggerated Realism holds that there are universal concepts in the mind and universal things in nature. There is, therefore, a strict parallelism between the being in nature and the being in thought, since the external object is clothed with the same character of universality that we discover in the concept. This is a simple solution, but one that runs counter to the dictates of common sense.

(M. De Wulf, “Nominalism, Realism, Conceptualism”, *Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911), www.newadvent.org/cathen/11090c.htm)

To be fair, it’s not as though the only possible motivation for tropism is that there are deep worries about the intelligibility or “commonsensicality” of the view that universality is found outside the mind. Moreover, I think that Aquinas has motivations for his version of tropism that are independent of worries about the intelligibility or commonsensicality of the view that universality is found outside the mind.

Aquinas thinks that in an accidental change, the subject of the change

in part remains (*quantum ad aliquid manet*), and in part passes away (*quantum ad aliquid transit*), as what goes from being white to being black remains in substance (*manet secundum substantiam*).

(*ST*, Ia, 9, 1, *responsio*)

In an accidental change, something remains (an individual substance, and its essence), something ceases to be (an accidental form – in Aquinas’ example, a whiteness), and something comes to be (another accidental form – in Aquinas’ example, a blackness). (Note that the two accidental forms cannot be conspecific (nothing changes from being white to being white), but they must be congeneric (nothing changes from being white to, say, being round).) I think Aquinas regards it as obvious – and evident to perception – that when a thing goes from white to black, the whiteness that was initially in the thing “passes away” (ceases to exist), and the blackness that was not initially in the thing comes to exist. Someone looking at the object that gradually goes from being white to being black can just see, at a certain point, that the color the thing initially had is no more.

If however, the whiteness of this substance necessarily passes away when the substance goes from being white to black, then the whiteness of this substance cannot be an accidental form shared by all white substances. For it can perfectly well happen that one substance ceases to be white, while another substance remains white. In such a case, the whiteness of the first substance will pass away, whilst the whiteness of the second substance remains. And this implies that the whiteness of this substance is numerically different from the whiteness of that substance. So the whiteness of this substance and the whiteness of that substance are numerically different (though specifically identical) accidental forms; they are not one and the same accidental form in each of two substances.

There is something plausible about the idea that in accidental change something “passes away”, and I shall return to this point later. On the other hand, it’s not clear that we should think that, when we see something turn from white to black, we see its original color go out of existence, unless we have already bought in on the view that the whiteness of a given thing is not shared with other white things. Imagine that you have four things in your top drawer, *a*, *b*, *c*, and *d*. Initially all of *a–d* are (the same shade of) white; but as you look at them you see *d* turn black. You might naturally enough say, pointing to *a*, *that color* [or *the color of this thing*] *used to be the color of all the things in this drawer, but now it’s only the color of three of them*. Taken at face value, this statement implies that although the initial color (and the whiteness) of *d* stopped being the color of *d* (and the whiteness of *d*) when *d* turned black, it did not go out of existence then, but went on being the color of *a*, *b*, and *c*.

Here someone might defend Aquinas as follows:

Aquinas says that, when I see an apple, it is manifest that the color I see is only in that apple (*ST*, Ia, 85, 2 *ad* 2um: *manifestum est quod color qui videtur non est nisi in pomo*). And he is surely right about this. For suppose that, instead of one apple, there are two apples, one of which is in a transparent box (in plain view), and one of which is in an opaque box (in plain view). In that case, I will see the color of the first apple, but I won’t see the color of the second apple. Since I cannot both see and not see the same thing at the same time, it follows that the color of the first apple (the color I see) is different from the color of the second apple (the color I do not see). This will be true, even if both apples are (the very same shade of) green. The color of (or “in”, to use Aquinas’ preposition) the first apple will be numerically different from the color of (or “in”) the second apple, even if the color of the first apple is specifically the same as the color of the second apple.

True, in the hypothetical situation described, if I were asked, “did you see the color of the apple in the first box [the transparent one]”, I would say “yes”, and if I were asked, “did you see the color of the apple in the second

box [the opaque one]", I would say "no". But does this imply that (assuming the two apples resemble each other perfectly "chromatically") the color of the first apple is numerically different from, even if specifically the same as, the color of the second one? Consider a similar case. I might have seen how many people left one room, but not how many people left another room. If you asked me, "did you see the number of people that left this room?", I'd say, "yes"; but if you asked me "did you see the number of people that left that room?", I'd say no. This clearly doesn't imply that the number of people that left this room is different from the number of people that left that room: it might perfectly well be that the number of people that left this room = 8 = the number of people that left that room. *I saw the number of people that left this room* means *I saw how many people left this room*, and *I did not see the number of people that left that room* means *I did not see how many people left that room*. And *I saw how many people left this room* and *I did not see how many people left that room* do not jointly imply *the number of people that left this room \neq the number of people that left that room*. Similarly, *I saw the color of the apple in the first box* seems to mean *I saw what color the apple in the first box was*, and *I did not see the color of the apple in the second box* seems to mean *I did not see what color the apple in the second box was*. And again *I saw what color the apple in the first box was* and *I did not see what the color of the apple in the second box was* do not jointly imply *the color of the apple in the first box \neq the color of the apple in the second box*.

Still, a defender of Aquinas might say:

If I have seen the color of the apple in the first box, then the color of the apple in the first box has as it were left traces on my visual experience. If I have not seen the color of the apple in the second box, the color of the apple in the second box has not left any traces on my visual experience. How can two things be one and the same thing, if they haven't had the same effects on me?

Here I want to say that there is something right about this argument. That is, I want to say, it is true that, in a sense, the color of the apple in the first box and the color of the apple in the second box are different things, inasmuch as they have different effects. Even so, this doesn't show that the color of the apple in the first box and the color of the apple in the second box are numerically different (even if conspecific) accidental forms.

Suppose that two bodies *a* and *b* both have mass, and that I am trying to accelerate *a*, but not *b*. Since mass implies resistance to acceleration, the mass of *a* is a cause of my expending energy in trying to accelerate *a*. But the mass of *b* is not a cause of my expending energy in trying to accelerate *a*. So the mass of *a* and the mass of *b* have different effects (one tires me out, and one doesn't). So, it seems, the mass of *a* and the mass of *b* must be different, since only different things have different effects. And yet, it seems, it is consistent with everything said about *a* and *b* that the mass of *a* = 100 kilograms = the mass of *b*. What gives?

A natural suggestion is:

An expression like “the mass of *a*” is ambiguous. It could refer to the mass that *a* has (100 kilograms, perhaps). But it could also refer to *a*’s having that mass. Taken the first way, “the mass of *a*” refers to a property – a thing that is “in” or “of” *a*. Taken the second way, it refers to what we might call a state of affairs – a thing that is not “in” or “of” *a* (*a*’s mass is in or of *a*, but *a*’s having mass is not in or of *a*). On the contrary, *a* is “in” (is a constituent of) the state of affairs, *a*’s *having mass*: *a*’s *having mass* is a complex entity “built up from” the individual *a* and the property, the mass of *a*. Once we see that expressions like “the mass of *a*” are ambiguous between properties and states of affairs involving those properties, we can see how it can be true both that (1) the mass of *a* is different from the mass of *b*, because the mass of *a* and the mass of *b* have different effects, and that (2) the mass of *a* = the mass of *b*, because the mass of *a* = 100 kilograms = the mass of *b*. (1) is true, because the state of affairs, *a*’s *having the mass it does* is different from the state of affairs, *b*’s *having the mass it does*. (2) is true, because the property, *the mass a has* is the same as the property, *the mass b has*.

If expressions like “the mass of *a*” are ambiguous in the way just described, the same can be said about “the color of *a*”. So someone who accepts the “default” view that it can happen that the color of *a* = the color of *b*, even though *a* ≠ *b*, can say:

Yes, the color of the apple in the first box has left traces on my visual experience, and the color of the apple in the second box has not. That implies that *the apple in the first box’s having the color it does* is a different state of affairs from *the apple in the second box’s having the color it does*. But it does not imply that the “chromatic property” of the apple in the first box is a numerically different property from the “chromatic property” of the apple in the second box. If the apple in the first box and the apple in the second box resemble each other chromatically perfectly, then *the apple in the first box’s having the color it does* and *the apple in the second box’s having the color it does* will be different but “overlapping” states of affairs, built up from different individuals, and the same property (i.e., the same (shared) color).

(Incidentally, to return to a point touched upon earlier, someone with the just sketched conception of properties and states of affairs can accept Aquinas’ premise that in accidental change something *transit* (“passes away”), and insist that shape, color, and the like are shared. She can say that when, as we might say, the whiteness of *a* gives way to the blackness of *a*, a state of affairs “passes away” (that is, ceases to obtain), but a color does not (at least, on the assumption that whiteness goes on being the color of some things, even after it has ceased to be the color of *a*).

So I do not think that there is a good “causal” argument for the unsharedness of accidental forms. But it may be that Aquinas would have thought that there was. That is, it may be that Aquinas would have regarded the following as a good argument:

(A1) The heat of (or in) this fire [in Paris] is keeping you warm.

The heat of (or in) that fire [in Rome] is not keeping you warm.

So the heat of (or in) this fire \neq the heat of (or in) that fire.

But the heat of (or in) this fire and the heat of (or in) that fire are accidental forms.

So the heat of (or in) this fire and the heat of (or in) that fire are numerically different (albeit conspecific) accidental forms.

Or consider the agent intellect. The agent intellect is for Aquinas a power of the soul, which as it were makes the objects of sense perception “intelligible” – a power that transforms the “phantasms” involved in sense perception into the “intelligible species” involved in abstract thought (see *ST*, Ia, 79, 3, *responsio*). (I realize that this description may be very opaque to readers not already acquainted with Aquinas’ philosophy of mind, but for current purposes it won’t be necessary to have any kind of detailed grasp of Aquinas’ conception of the agent intellect.) Aquinas argues in many places that there isn’t one agent intellect shared by all men. As he sees it, different men have different agent intellects. Hob’s agent intellect enables Hob – and does not enable anybody else – to do a certain kind of abstract thinking; Nob’s agent intellect enables Nob – and does not enable anybody else – to do that sort of thinking. So Hob’s agent intellect and Nob’s agent intellect are discernible with respect to their effects. Moreover, for Aquinas, since Hob’s agent intellect is a power of a soul (*ST*, Ia, 79, 5, *responsio*), and powers of the soul are accidents (*ST*, Ia, 77, 1, *ad 5um*), Hob’s agent intellect is an accident; and the same goes for Nob’s agent intellect. Thus Aquinas would regard the following as a good argument:

(A2) Hob’s agent intellect enables Hob to do a certain kind of abstract thinking.

Nob’s agent intellect does not enable Hob to do a certain kind of abstract thinking.

So Hob’s agent intellect \neq Nob’s agent intellect.

But Hob’s agent intellect and Nob’s agent intellect are powers of a soul, i.e., accidental forms.

So Hob's agent intellect and Nob's agent intellect are numerically different (albeit conspecific) accidental forms.

My guess is that Aquinas is a "tropist" about received forms such as whiteness or the powers of the soul or humanity or porcinity for (at least) two rather different reasons. First, he thinks that Aristotle has shown that there could not be genuine *communitas* in the world (in other words, that Aristotle has shown that a form or nature as it is in a subject could not be in any other subject). (Or at least, Aquinas thinks, Aristotle has shown that there could not be genuine *communitas* in the created world. At *ST*, Ia, 39, 4, *ad* 3um, Aquinas says that although the unity or community of human nature is not real (*secundum rem*), but only in the understanding (*solum secundum considerationem*), the form signified by the name *God* is really one and shared (*una et communis secundum rem*), and is genuinely shared by three genuinely distinct hypostases of the very same nature. Supposing that two genuinely distinct "human hypostases" genuinely share the same human nature implies that two genuinely distinct human hypostases are one and the same human being, which Aquinas holds is impossible. Supposing that three genuinely distinct divine hypostases genuinely share the same divine nature implies that three genuinely distinct divine hypostases are the very same God, which Aquinas considers mysterious but true: though Plato and Socrates are not the same human being, the Father and the Son are the same God.) Since Aquinas agrees with Aristotle that there are such things as substantial and accidental forms, he concludes that received substantial and accidental forms are unshareable, untransferable, and duplicable individuals, just like their subjects.

Second, as we have seen in the first section of this chapter, Aquinas has a metaphysical framework in which all beings belong to one of three categories. There are complete beings (beings in the truest and most proper sense). There are the incomplete beings that partly constitute complete beings (parts of substances, essences of created substances, parts of essences of created substances, and predicamental or non-predicamental accidents). Finally there are *entia rationis* (such as privations), that Aquinas says have no existence in reality (*in rerum natura*) (cf. *Quaestiones Quodlibetales*, *Quodlibet* 9, 2, 2). So where in this taxonomy of being do entities such as the heat of the fire that keeps you warm, or the power of the soul that enables Hob to do a certain kind of abstract thinking, fit in? So far as I can see, nowhere: states of affairs are neither complete beings/substances, nor incomplete beings, nor *entia rationis*. (They are, in their own way, complete beings, but of a kind different from complete substances.) But Aquinas (understandably enough) wants the heat of the fire that keeps you warm and the power of the soul that enables Hob to do a certain sort of abstract thinking to fit somewhere into his metaphysical framework, since those entities play a role in physical or psychological explanation. Moreover, it is very tempting to think that things like the heat of the fire that keeps you warm, or the power

of the soul that enables Hob to do a certain kind of abstract thinking are already in the framework, under the heading of accidental forms, since (as we have seen) expressions such as “the heat of the fire” and “the power of the soul that enables Hob to do a certain kind of abstract thinking” are naturally understood as referring to an accidental property or accidental form. If we go down that route, we shall think (as I think Aquinas does think) that arguments like (A1) and (A2) are good arguments, and we will think that the heat of the fire in Rome and the heat of the fire in Paris are conspecific accidental forms that must be different, inasmuch as they have different effects.

These considerations are admittedly speculative; as I have said, I don’t understand as well as I wish I did just why Aquinas thinks that all received forms are unshareable, untransferable, and duplicable. But I hope to have given readers a better idea of what “Thomistic tropism” is, and of why it is a substantive and contestable ontological thesis.

One substance, one substantial form

For Aquinas, created substances have a plurality of accidental forms. Various contemporaries of Aquinas thought that created substances also had a plurality of substantial forms: for example, Robert Kilwardby thought that a fire had one substantial form in virtue of which it was a fire, another in virtue of which it was a body, and a third in virtue of which it was a substance. But, Aquinas maintains, this is un-Aristotelian and mistaken:

Some say that there are many substantial forms in the same individual ... But this position, according to the true principles of philosophy which Aristotle considered, is impossible.

(De Spiritualibus Creaturis, un., 3, responsio)

In *De Spiritualibus Creaturis, un., 3, responsio* (and in the *Quaestio de Anima* (*Question on the Soul*), *un.*, 9 and 11, and *ST, Ia*, 76, 3 and 4, and *Quaestiones Quodlibetales, Quodlibet* 1, 4, 1, and elsewhere) Aquinas defends the thesis that it is impossible for an individual to have more than one substantial form. The core of his defence appears to be the claim that:

Nothing is one thing in an unqualified sense (*simpliciter unum*) save by one form through which a thing has being (*esse*); so things that are denominated by various forms are not one in an unqualified sense (*unum simpliciter*) ...

(ST, Ia, 76, 3, responsio)

If one form made Socrates an animal, and another made him rational (*si secundum diversas formas Socrates esset animal et rationale*) ... it would follow that he is one thing only “by aggregation” – like a heap, which is

one thing in a qualified sense (*secundum quid unum*) and is many things in an unqualified sense (*simpliciter multa*).

(*Quaestio de Anima, un., 11, responsio*)

It is not immediately obvious, though, why Socrates' having one form that made him an animal, and another that made him rational, would imply that, like a heap, he is an "aggregate" or "assemblage" of complete beings, rather than a "genuine unit". After all, it's not as though a heap is an assemblage rather than a genuine unit because it has too many substantial forms. On the contrary (for Aquinas), a heap of stones is an assemblage rather than a genuine unit because it has too few. A heap has no substantial form which makes the stones in that heap parts of that heap (in the way that, say, an organism has a substantial form which makes the various organs of that organism parts of that organism). True, a heap of stones has proper parts that have substantial forms (i.e., the stones composing that heap), but having many proper parts that have substantial forms is not the same thing as having many substantial forms.

So why should we think that, if (*per impossibile*), Socrates had more than one substantial form, he would, like a heap, be an assemblage, rather than a genuine unit?

When I cited the second passage above, I left out the end of the last sentence. The passage in full reads:

Nothing is one thing one in an unqualified sense save by one form through which a thing has being, and so things that are denominated by various forms are not one in an unqualified sense, as for instance a white man (*sicut homo albus*).

Compare *Quaestiones Quodlibetales, Quodlibet 1, 4, 1*:

wherever there is a multitude of forms, there isn't one thing in an unqualified sense, just as a white man isn't one thing in an unqualified sense (*non est unum simpliciter*).

In one way, this helps us see how Aquinas' argument is meant to go. For (unlike a heap) a white man is certainly both a substantially informed and a "pluriformate" (many-formed) thing, in virtue of having both the substantial form of a man, and the accidental form of whiteness.

In another way, the full passage is of no help in seeing how the argument is meant to go. For, although it is clear enough why we should think of a white man as pluriformate, it's not clear why we should think that a white man is one only in a qualified sense. On the contrary, it seems as though a white man is a pluriformate genuine unit. "Who is that white man?", we might ask. The answer might be, say, Socrates. If that white man is Socrates, then Socrates and that white man (Socrates and that man having the accidental form of whiteness) are one and the same individual: Socrates = that white man. If

Socrates = that white man, then, that white man has exactly the same properties as Socrates (since identity implies indiscernibility). But Socrates is a genuine unit. So that white man is a genuine unit. A white man is a pluriformate genuine unit – pluriformate, inasmuch as he has at least one substantial form, and at least one accidental form, and a genuine unit, inasmuch as he is a complete substance/being with a proprietary substantial form. A white man is not some kind of “mere assemblage” of man and white, because a white man is a man, and no man is a “mere assemblage” of any kind.

To forestall a possible misunderstanding: the *concept* of a white man is more complex than the concept of a man, and one might maintain that the concept of a man, but not the concept of a white man, is (in some sense) a genuine unit. But to say that the concept of a white man is more complex than, or less “one” than, the concept of a man, is not to say this white man is more complex than, or less “one” than, this man. As Aquinas would agree, one and the same being and genuine unit may be grasped via more or less complex, and more or less “unified” concepts. And the debate about the unicity or plurality of substantial forms is not a debate about concepts, but rather a debate about things outside our mind represented by concepts.

Summing up: the *ST*, Ia, 76, 3 passage (and the *Quodlibet* 1, 4, 1 passage) says that if there were one substantial form whereby Socrates is a man, and another whereby he is rational, or an animal, then Socrates would be one thing only in a qualified sense, like a white man. The *Quaestio de Anima* passage says that if there were one substantial form whereby Socrates is a human being, and another whereby he is a rational being or an animal, then Socrates would be one thing only in a qualified sense, like a heap. The *Summa Theologiae* and *Quodlibet* passages beg the question, “why suppose a white man isn’t a genuine unit?”, and the *Quaestio de Anima* passage begs the question, “why suppose that a being with many proprietary substantial forms would be a mere assemblage in the way that a being with no proprietary substantial form (a heap) is?”

A different sort of argument for the unicity of a substance’s substantial form is suggested by the *sed contra* (that is, the “on the contrary” section) of *ST*, Ia, 76, 4. (One cannot always attribute the argument in a *sed contra* to Aquinas, but in this case, it seems evidently Thomistic.) Aquinas writes:

Of one thing, there is but one substantial being (*esse substantiale*). But substantial form gives substantial being. So of one thing there is only one substantial form.

Aquinas’ idea is that for every plurality of forms, there is a corresponding plurality of “being-s” (of *esses*). Thus, as we saw in the first section of this chapter, Aquinas thinks that for every accidental form of Socrates, there is a corresponding accidental *esse*: if Socrates is white and musical, as well as having an accidental form of whiteness and an accidental form of musicality, he will have an accidental “white being”/“being white” (*esse album*) and an accidental “musical being”/“being musical” (*esse musicum*) (see *ST*, IIIa, 17, 2,

responsio, and *Quaestiones Quodlibetales*, *Quodlibet* 9, 2, 2). So, Aquinas reasons, if Socrates had one substantial form that made him a man, and a different substantial form that made him an animal, he would have two corresponding substantial *esses*. But, Aquinas thinks, Socrates has just one substantial *esse*. For Socrates to have an accidental *esse* is for him to be a certain way (white, or musical, or ...), but for Socrates to have substantial *esse* is for him to be *simpliciter* (see *ST*, Ia, 5, 1, *ad* 1um, and *Quodlibet* 11, 5, *un.*). And while Socrates has many different “being-this-or-that-way-s”, he has only one being (full stop). So we may infer the unicity of Socrates’ substantial form from the unicity of Socrates’ substantial *esse*.

Agreed, if there are as many *esses* in an individual as there are forms in that individual, then a plurality of substantial forms in an individual implies a plurality of substantial *esses* in that individual, just as a plurality of accidental forms in an individual implies a plurality of accidental *esses* in that individual. But someone who is happy to countenance a plurality of accidental *esses* corresponding to a plurality of accidental forms, and believes that substances have a plurality of substantial forms, might also be happy to countenance a plurality of substantial *esses* corresponding to a plurality of substantial forms. That would imply that a substantial *esse* of a substance (like an accidental *esse* of a substance) is not an *esse simpliciter* (a “being full stop”) but rather an *esse tale* (a “being such”): a substantial *esse*, like an accidental *esse*, would be a being of this or that kind (say, “animal being”, or “mammal being” or “human being”). But why is the notion of various kinds of substantial *esse* more problematic than the notion of various kinds of accidental *esse*? It is hard to see why someone who countenanced a plurality of substantial forms (and agreed with Aquinas that for every plurality of kinds of form, there is a corresponding plurality of kinds of *esse*) would be unhappy to countenance different kinds of substantial *esse* (none of which may be identified with *esse simpliciter*).

In *De Spiritualibus Creaturis*, *un.*, 3, and *Quaestiones Quodlibetales*, *Quodlibet* 11, 5, *un.*, Aquinas offers a different, and puzzlingly enthymematic, argument against a substance’s having more than one substantial form. The argument seems to turn on the idea that if a generable individual has a plurality of forms, only the one acquired when that individual was generated can be substantial; the others must all be accidental. Suppose, for example, we thought that one and the same individual was first a living being, and then a living being and an animal, and finally a living being and an animal and a human being. In that case we would have to say that both the form whereby that individual became an animal, and the form whereby that individual became a human being were accidental (and thus non-substantial) forms of the individual substance that acquired them, since any form acquired by an individual substance that was already in existence before it acquired that form is *eo ipso* an accidental form, and not a substantial form.

All this seems incontrovertible. “Substantial form” is a term of art, and (as Aquinas uses it) it is true by definition that only forms had permanently

and essentially are substantial. So Aquinas is right to say that if a form of animality or humanity is acquired by an individual substance at some time after its generation, then that form is an accidental form, rather than a substantial one.

From this it follows that anyone who thinks that (say) embryonic development involves the acquisition of increasingly determinate substantial forms by a persisting substance is confused (assuming she means what Aristotle and Aquinas mean by “substantial form”). If someone has an account of embryonic development on which one and the same substance is first living, and then an animal, and then a human being, then – whether she realizes it or not, whether she likes it or not – she has an account on which animality and humanity are accidents, and an individual’s becoming an animal, or a human being, is a case of alteration (qualitative change), rather than generation.

Fair enough. But it doesn’t in any obvious way follow from this that anyone who thinks that human beings have a plurality of substantial forms is confused (even if she means what Aristotle and Aquinas mean by “substantial form”). Someone who, like Aquinas, thinks that substantial forms are by definition had permanently and essentially by the substances that have them and, unlike Aquinas, believes that human beings have a plurality of substantial forms, can say that a human being acquires all its substantial forms at the first moment it exists (and retains all its substantial forms for as long as it exists).

Aquinas seems to think, though, that if we reject the idea that substances have only one substantial form, we will end up having to misclassify cases of generation as cases of alteration. As he says at *De Spiritualibus Creaturis*, un., 3, *responsio*:

[If an individual substance had a plurality of substantial forms] it would follow that in the acquisition of the last form there would not be generation in an unqualified sense (*simpliciter*), but only generation in a qualified sense (*secundum quid*). Since generation is a change from non-being to being, something is generated in an unqualified sense when it becomes a being, in an unqualified sense, from non-being in an unqualified sense. But a thing that already exists as an actual being cannot become a being in an unqualified sense; it can only become this or that [kind of] being – say [a] white [being], or [a] large [being], which is becoming in a qualified sense. Since the preceding form in matter makes something actually be, a subsequent form will not make something actually be; it will only make something be *this (esse hoc)* – say, be a man, or an ass, or a plant. So there will not be generation in an unqualified sense (*simpliciter*). And on this account, the ancients who supposed that prime matter was actually something, whether fire, or air, or something in between, said that to be made was nothing but to be changed (*feri nihil erat nisi alterari*).

Aquinas seems to be arguing here that someone who thinks that a substance has many substantial forms will (like the *antiqui naturales*) be committed to misclassifying cases of generation as cases of alteration. But I have trouble seeing why this should be so. Granted, if someone says that one and the same human being has a form whereby he is a living being, and a different form whereby he is animal, and a different form again whereby he is a human being, *and supposes that the generation of one substance involves the acquisition of just one form*, then that person will have to say that two of the three forms just described are accidental, and will have to say that an individual's becoming a human being, or an individual's becoming an animal, is a case of alteration, rather than generation. But those who think that substances have a plurality of substantial forms should and presumably will say that the generation of a substance involves the simultaneous acquisition of a whole family of (differentially "determinate") substantial forms. As long as they say that, it seems, they can agree that acquisition of a substantial form implies generation (*simpliciter*), and insist that humanity, animality, and so on are different ("differentially determinate") substantial forms of the same individual; as long as they say that, it seems, they can agree with Aristotle and Aquinas about what sorts of things are cases of generation, and what sorts of things are cases of alteration.

Aquinas has other arguments for the "one substance, one substantial form" principle – one resting on certain semantic principles about *per se* and *per accidens* predication, and one involving the powers of the soul (see *ST*, Ia, 76, 3, *responsio*). For reasons of brevity, I shall not set these arguments out, but, so far as I can tell, like the ones already considered, they turn on premises that are doubtful, unless the "one substance, one substantial form" principle is presupposed. Given that the "one substance, one substantial form" is less central to Aquinas' metaphysics than, say, the claim that there is no genuine commonality outside the mind, Aquinas offers a surprisingly large and varied number of arguments on its behalf (perhaps because he considers the unicity of substantial form principle far more controversial than the no genuine commonality outside the mind principle). Even so, as far as I can see, all the arguments in favor of the "one substance, one substantial form" principle turn on premises that someone who doubts or denies that principle would and should doubt or deny.

In attempting to understand better why Aquinas thinks one substance has only one substantial form, it may be helpful to step back a bit from the detail of his arguments in favor of that claim, and look at Aquinas' general account of matter, form, and substance.

As we have seen, in his account of substantial change, Aquinas typically takes matter to be the "recipient" of substantial form: a bit of sgc-matter comes to have different substantial forms at different times (though it only has one substantial form at any particular time). But in other contexts, Aquinas often thinks of individual substances as the "recipients" or "possessors", not just of accidental forms, but also of substantial form: a bit

of water has an aqueous form, a bit of fire has an igneous form, a man has a soul (which, we shall see, Aquinas identifies with a substantial form), and so on. (See *De Spiritualibus Creaturis*, un., 2, *responsio*: “each individual thing is actual through some form, whether substantial or accidental ... for instance, a fire (*ignis*) is actually fire through a “fireness” (*igneitas*), and actually hot through a heat.”)

So a substantial form will have both what we might call a “primary” recipient or possessor, and a “secondary” recipient or possessor. In terms of the vocabulary introduced in the last section, the primary recipient or possessor of a substantial form will be the substance that is in primary actuality with respect to being a certain kind of being (say, being a bit of fire), and the secondary recipient or possessor of a substantial form will be the bit of sgc-matter that is in secondary actuality with respect to being that kind of being (the sgc-matter that has been turned into (but is not) a bit of fire).

Given this distinction between primary and secondary recipients of substantial form, we can see that there are actually two different doctrines that might be called “the unicity of substantial form”. The first is the doctrine that no substance is ever in primary actuality with respect to two substantial forms at once. The second is the doctrine that no bit of sgc-matter is ever in secondary actuality with respect to two substantial forms at once. Because (what in the previous section I called) the competition principle says that substantial forms can “share” a bit of sgc-matter only if they take turns, the competition principle implies that no bit of sgc-matter is ever in secondary actuality with respect to more than one substantial form. If, however, some material substance were (simultaneously) in primary actuality with respect to two different substantial forms, then some bit of sgc-matter would be (simultaneously) in secondary actuality with respect to two different substantial forms. If one and the same substance were in primary actuality with respect to both a substantial form of caninity, and a different substantial form of animality, then one and the same bit of sgc-matter would be in secondary actuality with respect to both a substantial form of caninity, and a different substantial form of animality – in contravention of the competition principle. We may conclude that Aquinas’ account of the relation between matter and substantial form (insofar as it includes the competition principle) implies the “one substance, one substantial form” doctrine – or rather, the doctrine that a material substance has only one substantial form.

Do these considerations constitute a good argument for the “one material substance, one substantial form” principle? Not obviously. For one thing, as I have already argued, the competition principle implies that no material substance can be distinguished from the ordinary or scientific matter constituting it, and is accordingly problematic (and *a fortiori* unobvious). For another, it is hard to see why one would be confident that one and the same bit of sgc-matter couldn’t be in simultaneous secondary actuality with respect to (say) caninity and animality, unless one were already convinced that one and the same substance couldn’t be in primary actuality with respect to both

caninity and animality. So those who doubt or deny the “one material substance, one substantial form” doctrine would presumably say that arguing for that principle on the basis of the competition principle begs the question.

None of this implies that the “one substance, one substantial form” is indefensible, or even problematic. I’m inclined to think that Aquinas does have reasons to think that it is, at least, less obvious and more doubtful to suppose that substances have a plurality of substantial forms, than it is to suppose that substances have a plurality of accidental forms.

Let us say that kinds are *incompatible* if nothing could belong to both. And let us say that kinds are *equispecific* if neither is more general than the other. Humankind and dogkind, or firekind and waterkind are incompatible and equispecific; humankind and animality, or firekind and aristotelian elementkind are compatible, but not equispecific.

If I am not mistaken, Aquinas has the following kind of picture of substantial kinds:

Necessarily, whenever an individual belongs to two different substantial kinds, it is true that (a) one of those substantial kinds is “narrower” or “less general” than the other, and (b) membership in the narrower kind implies membership in the broader kind, inasmuch as the narrower kind is (essentially) included in the broader kind. For example, if a bit of stuff belongs both to fleshkind and mixedbodykind, then (a) one of those substantial kinds (to wit, fleshkind) is narrower than the other (mixedbodykind), and (b) membership in the narrower kind (fleshkind) implies membership in the broader one (mixedbodykind), inasmuch as fleshkind is (essentially) included in mixedbodykind.

(Notice that “accidental kinds”, should there be such, would not satisfy conditions (a) and (b). One and the same individual can belong to “orangethingkind” and “roundthingkind”, in spite of the fact orangethingkind and roundthingkind are equispecific (an orange thing is not a kind of round thing, and a round thing is not a kind of orange thing).)

Given this picture of what substantial kinds are like, it is at least initially not clear why we would need to, or why we should want to, suppose that one and the same substance has a plurality of differentially specific substantial forms. We posit an accidental form of orangeness, and a different accidental form of roundness, to explain why one and the same thing (an orange, perhaps) is both orange and round. But, it would seem, we don’t need to posit a substantial form of humanity, and a different substantial form of animality, to explain why one and the same individual (Socrates, perhaps) is both a human and an animal. For the orange’s possessing a roundness form does not guarantee its being orange (round oranges only go from green to orange when the temperature drops), but a human being’s possessing a human form does guarantee its being an animal.

In view of this, one can see why Aquinas might think there is no need to posit and no point in positing a series of increasingly generic substantial forms of Socrates, over and above his humanity: we can simply say that there is a maximally specific substantial form in Socrates which makes him a human being, an animal, a living being, a body, and a substance (see *De Spiritualibus Creaturis*, un., 3, *responsio*). The position is at least at first sight defensible – at least on the assumption that the underlying picture of the taxonomy of substantial kinds is defensible.

The identity (or otherwise) of immaterial substances with their substantial forms and essences

Towards the beginning of the first section of this chapter, I said that, for Aquinas, the essence of a complete being is what makes a complete being this complete being of this maximally determinate kind. This may have puzzled some readers, given that Aquinas says at *ST*, Ia, 3, *responsio*:

In things composed of matter and form we must distinguish the nature or essence (*natura vel essentia*) from the individual (*suppositum*). For the nature or essence includes only those things which fall under the definition of the species: thus humanity includes only those things which fall under the definition of a man, by which a man is a man. And that is what “humanity” signifies – that by which a man is a man.

If the essence of a man includes only those things which can be predicated of a man *qua* man, it looks as if the essence of Plato = the essence of Socrates. More generally, it looks as if the essence of this complete being of this maximally determinate kind will be what makes this complete being *a* complete being of this maximally determinate kind, rather than what makes this complete being *this* complete being of this maximally determinate kind.

To get to the same conclusion via another route, Aquinas often says that the essence of a thing is what is expressed by a definition (see *De Ente et Essentia* 1: “essence is what is signified by the definition of a thing”). But, for Aquinas, though you can define a species, you cannot define the individuals belonging thereto: *man* has a definition (*rational animal*), but Socrates does not (*ibid.*). In which case, it seems to follow, Socrates’ essence must be what makes Socrates (or Plato, or Aristotle) a man, rather than what makes Socrates the particular man he is.

The situation here is complicated by the fact that (for Aquinas) one and the same essence or nature is in one way shared and in another way unshared. As we have noted, for Aquinas the human nature in Socrates, *as it exists in Socrates*, is unshared (and unshareable); the human nature in Socrates, *as it is in our mind*, is shared. There is a “unity or commonality” of human nature in Socrates and Plato, but that unity or commonality is *solum secundum considerationem* (*ST*, Ia, 39, 4, *ad 3um*).

For present purposes, though, what matters is that Aquinas countenances both what we might call *specific essences* (shared essences, essences as *significata* of a definition), and *individual essences*. Socrates has both a “proprietary” individual essence and a specific essence he shares with all other human beings:

The essence of Socrates and the essence of (a) man differ only in that one is “signate” and the other is not.

(*De Ente et Essentia*, 2)

Neither Socrates’ individual essence nor his specific essence can be identified with the individual or *suppositum* Socrates, since Socrates’ predicamental accidents and his substantial *esse* are “outside” both his individual and his specific essence, but not “outside” Socrates himself.

Things are different with angels. To begin with, there is a distinction between the individual essence of a (kind of thing) *K* and the specific essence of a *K* only in cases in which the kind *K* might have had different members than it actually has. Surprisingly, Aquinas thinks this condition is not met in the case of angels: the archangel Gabriel is the only possible member of his species (see *ST*, Ia, 50, 4, *responsio*).

Why should this be? I believe Aquinas is thinking along these lines: since accidents are all by definition “extra-essential”, a specific essence will be constituted either by matter and substantial form, or by substantial form alone. But angels have no sort of matter – neither ordinary sublunary matter (i.e., *sgc-matter*), nor the superlunary “place-matter” (*hylē topikē*) of the ingenerable and incorruptible celestial bodies, nor some kind of “spiritual matter” (*pace* certain Franciscan contemporaries of Aquinas). So the specific essence of an angel is a substantial form (rather than a “compound” of matter and form).

Now, for Aquinas, a plurality of conspecific forms implies a plurality of “recipients”. As we have seen, for Aquinas there are many different whitenesses, only because there are many different whiteness-receiving substances: as Aquinas says at *De Spiritualibus Creaturis*, 8, *responsio*, if there were a “subsistent” (that is, an unreceived) whiteness, it would necessarily be the only one of its kind.

But a received substantial form is necessarily received by (a bit of) matter (see, e.g., *ST*, Ia, 75, 5 *ad lum*). In which case a plurality of conspecific substantial forms implies a plurality of substantial-form-receiving bits of matter. Just as there are many whitenesses only because there are many different whiteness-receiving substances, there are many “igneities” (“fireforms”) only because there are many igneity-receiving bits of matter.

Now (for Aquinas) inasmuch as angels are essentially immaterial beings, an angelic substantial form is incapable of being received by any bit of matter. Since no substantial form could be received, without being received by a bit of matter, it follows that an angelic substantial form is an intrinsically

unreceivable form. Since forms can only be multiplied by being received by different recipients, it follows that an angelic substantial form is “immultipliable”. But as we have seen, an angelic substantial form is an angelic essence. In which case, if angelic substantial forms are immultipliable, so too are angelic essences. And if, say, the essence of Gabriel is immultipliable, there won’t be a difference between Gabriel’s individual essence and Gabriel’s specific essence.

If these are the lines along which Aquinas is reasoning, the argument seems unlikely to convince a proponent of the possibility of a plurality of conspecific angels. Such a proponent might say:

Matter is a term of art. One can define it narrowly enough that only beings actually or virtually composed of the four elements (or the “fifth essence” (quintessence) the celestial bodies are made of) have matter. Then it will be true that angels are immaterial, but it cannot be assumed that all received substantial forms are received by bits of matter. Alternatively, one can define *matter* broadly enough that whatever receives substantial form is matter. Then it will be true that angels receive substantial forms only if they have matter; but it can no longer be assumed that angels do not have a kind of “sexessential” matter. It’s true that there is no intraspecific multiplication of form without reception: at least, the idea that there could be a plurality of whitenesses without a plurality of white things, or a plurality of leoninities without a plurality of lions (the idea of a plurality of “unowned” whiteness or leoninity tropes, as it were) is pretty weird. But the principle tying intraspecific form multiplication to reception has no implications for the possibility or impossibility of conspecific angels, and only equivocation on the term *matter* would make one think otherwise.

The Thomistic idea that a received substantial form is always an “actuator” of a bit of matter might be thought to go hand in hand with the Thomistic idea that a bit of matter is always a potential substance. Remember, though, that inasmuch as a bit of sgc-matter is an incomplete being, a bit of sgc-matter is never in primary actuality with respect to substantial form or substantial being. The advent of a substantial form does not make a bit of sgc-matter *be* a bit of fire, or a lion; it only turns a bit of sgc-matter into a bit of fire, or a lion – i.e., it only makes a bit of sgc-matter *be the matter of* a bit of fire, or a lion. Once we see that a substantially informed bit of matter is only in secondary actuality with respect to substantial form and substantial being, we can see that (assuming there is no intraspecific form multiplication without reception, and that whatever is made of matter is made of sgc-matter or the “place-matter” of the celestial bodies)

- (1) Received substantial forms are necessarily enmattered.

is tantamount to:

- (2) If we can distinguish a substance from the most determinate substantial kind to which it belongs, then we can distinguish that substance from the sgc or celestial matter it is made of.

and (2) seems not at all obvious.

Aquinas would reply that even if we define “matter” narrowly enough that only things made of sublunary or superlunary matter have matter, it will still be true that every received substantial form is received by matter. But it’s not easy to see how Aquinas could know that this is the case. At *De Spiritualibus Creaturis, un.*, 8, *responsio*, Aquinas says:

If an angel is a simple form apart from matter, it is impossible to even conceive of (*fingerere*) many angels of one species.

This is a surprising assertion. I can conceive of a portion of peas composed of just these peas, but I cannot conceive of two different portions of peas composed of just these peas. I can conceive of a genus composed of exactly these species, but I cannot conceive of two different genera composed of exactly these species. I can conceive of a geometrical point here, but I cannot conceive of two different geometrical points right here. By contrast, it seems (to me at least) that in whatever sense I can conceive of one immaterial angel of a certain species, I can conceive of two different immaterial angels of that species.

If I try to imagine two different portions of peas sharing all the same peas, or a different portion of peas comprising the same peas this portion of peas actually comprises, I encounter as it were a mental block. Likewise if I try to imagine two different geometrical points sharing the very same unextended region of space, or a different geometrical point being exactly where this geometrical point actually is. In both cases, what I try to imagine looks evidently impossible. What looks evidently impossible is that the properties *being a portion composed of these peas* and *being this portion of peas* could as it were “come apart”: those properties are either one and the same property under two descriptions, or necessarily equivalent properties (that is properties that are necessarily had by exactly the same things). Similarly, it looks evidently impossible that *being a geometrical point here* and *being this geometrical point* could come apart. What does not look evidently impossible (to me) is that *being this immaterial angel* and *being an immaterial angel of this maximally determinate kind* could come apart. When I entertain the idea of two different immaterial angels being “perfect duplicates” of each other (that is, of two different immaterial angels (with numerically different consciousnesses, and numerically different mental lives) having exactly the same intrinsic qualitative properties), it doesn’t feel (to me) as though I am entertaining (or trying to entertain) an impossibility. And if different

immaterial angels could be perfect duplicates, then different immaterial angels could be conspecific.

That's why I'm inclined to think that, even if a plurality of conspecific immaterial angels is in fact metaphysically impossible, it is not inconceivable: our concept of angels and our concept of matter leave room for the properties, *being this immaterial angel* and *being an immaterial angel of this kind* to come apart.

Naturally, it's one thing to say that the impossibility-of-distinct-conspecific-angels thesis lacks the sort of pre-theoretical intuitive backing that, say, the impossibility-of-distinct-co-located-points thesis has, and another to say that Aquinas hasn't made a good theoretical case for the former thesis. But this is where we came in. If I've understood Aquinas, his central argument (at *De Spiritualibus Creaturis*, un., 8, and *ST*, Ia, 50, 4, and elsewhere) for the impossibility of distinct conspecific angels is less than convincing, because if "matter" is construed narrowly, it cannot be assumed that all received substantial forms are enmattered, and if "matter" is construed broadly, it cannot be assumed that angels are immaterial.

So much for Aquinas on the identity of an angel's individual essence with an angel's specific essence. In the concluding part of this section, I shall look at Aquinas' account of the identity or otherwise of an angel with his individual-and-specific essence.

We have seen that, for Aquinas, although every material substance has sgc-matter, no material substance is the same as its sgc-matter. Similarly, Aquinas holds, although every material substance has a substantial form, no material substance is the same as its substantial form. To start with, as we have emphasized, the received substantial form of a material substance, unlike the substance itself, is not a complete being. Moreover, Aquinas would say, although any material substance is an "agent" (in the broad sense of "agent" that applies to inanimate as well as animate beings), the same cannot be said for its substantial form: it is fire, and not its substantial form, that makes things hot (cf. *SCG*, II, 51). Also, it is the material substance composed of matter and form, rather than the substantial form thereof, that falls under a species or genus: it's this guinea pig, rather than its substantial form, that belongs to the species *Cavia Cobaya* and the genus animal (*ST*, Ia, 76, 3, *ad 2um*).

We might have thought that Aquinas would likewise say that immaterial created substances (and thus angels) have but aren't their substantial forms, inasmuch as those substances, but not their substantial forms, are complete beings, agents, and members of species and genera.

In fact, Aquinas says in many places that angels (or immaterial substances) aren't beings that have forms; they are themselves (subsistent) forms. To take just a few:

Substances separated from bodies are merely forms (*formae tantum*).

(*De Spiritualibus Creaturis*, un., 5, *ad 10um*)

[Angels] are self-subsistent forms (*formae per se subsistentes*)
 (De Spiritualibus Creaturis, un., 8, ad 13um)

A simple form that is not its own being can be the subject of accidents
 ... And an angel is that sort of simple form.

(ST, Ia, 54, 3, ad 2um)

Why does Aquinas think the substantial form of (say) the angel Raphael is something Raphael is, rather than something Raphael (only) has? In arguing that God is the same as His essence or nature, Aquinas says:

In things composed of matter and form the nature or essence [of the individual] and the individual must be different. In things not composed of matter and form, individuation is not through individual matter (that is, *this* matter). Instead, the forms themselves are individuated *per se* (*ipsae formae per se individuantur*) and are subsistent individuals (*supposita substantia*). So in things not composed of matter and form, there is no difference between the individual (*suppositum*) and the nature.

(ST, Ia, 3, 3, *responsio*)

The reasoning seems to run along these lines: because the substantial form of an immaterial substance is not received or individuated by matter, and nothing but matter could receive or individuate a substantial form, the substantial form of an immaterial substance is “self-individuated” and subsistent. But, as we have seen, for Aquinas only complete beings are subsistent (incomplete beings exist “not in themselves, but in another”). So the substantial form of (say) the angel Raphael is a complete being. But the substantial form of Raphael cannot be a complete being different from Raphael (in the way that, say, the archangel Michael is a complete being different from Raphael). So the substantial form of Raphael must be the same complete being as Raphael himself – which is to say that the substantial form of Raphael is what Raphael is, and not merely what Raphael has. We have already flagged a worry about this argument – namely, that (assuming matter is not simply defined as the recipient of substantial form) it cannot be taken for granted that only matter can receive substantial form. But even setting this worry to one side, why should we suppose that substantial forms are either received and non-subsistent and incomplete, or unreceived and subsistent and complete? After all, as we saw in the first section of this chapter, for Aquinas some things are incomplete, non-subsistent, and received (e.g., accidental forms), and other things are incomplete, non-subsistent, and unreceived (for example, bits of sgc-matter). Why couldn’t the substantial form of Raphael, like the sgc-matter of a bit of fire, be an incomplete, non-subsistent, and unreceived being?

In fact, I believe that – at least some of the time – that is just what Aquinas thinks the substantial form of Raphael is. Even though Aquinas says in many

places that angels are (their own) substantial forms, he also says things that imply that they are not, inasmuch as angels are more complete than their essences (and thus more complete than their forms, since (as we have seen) an angel's essence is a substantial form):

In God alone is no accident found outside (*praeter*) his essence ... and thus in God individual (*suppositum*) and nature are entirely the same (*omnino idem*). But in an angel they are not entirely the same (*omnino idem*), because something beyond what belongs to the nature (*ratio*) of the species is accidental to it, both because the *esse* of an angel is outside its essence or nature, and because some other things accidental to it belong to the individual but not to the nature.

(*Quaestiones Quodlibetales, Quodlibetum 2, 2, 2, responsio*)

Not only in things composed of matter and form do we find certain accidents outside (*praeter*) the essence of the species itself, but also in spiritual substances not composed of matter and form ...

(*Quodlibet 2, 2, 2, ad 1um*)

An angel must “extend beyond” (and be more complete than) his essence, because all angels have accidents (cf. *ST, Ia, 54, 3*), and accidents, as such, are extra-essential. Hence an angel must “extend beyond”, and cannot be identified with, his substantial form. Since an angel obviously cannot be identified with anyone else's substantial form, angels cannot be identified with any substantial form (or, for that matter, with any accidental form). It follows that an angel is no more a substantial form than it is an accidental form, and no more a subsistent form than a received form. An angel just isn't a form; it is instead something that has a substantial form as (what Aquinas calls) “a formal part” (*pars formalis*).

Just as Aquinas sometimes more or less explicitly recognizes that immaterial substances/angels are not their essences, he sometimes more or less explicitly recognizes that immaterial substances/angels are not their substantial forms. Curiously enough, he sometimes does this in the same article or chapter in which he says that immaterial substances/angels are (their) substantial forms. For example, at *De Ente et Essentia, 4*, Aquinas writes:

For not every kind of form depends on matter, and the intelligences [= the angels] are forms that do not (*Non enim forma secundum omne genus suum materia indiget, et huiusmodi formae sunt intelligentiae*).

Yet in the same chapter, Aquinas avers that

It must be said that in the intelligences [angels] there is existence (*esse*) as well as (*praeter*) form; hence it is said that an intelligence is (a) form plus (an) existence (*intelligentia est forma et esse*).

If an angel is composed of form and *esse* (where *esse* is “beyond” or “outside” quiddity or form), then an angel clearly isn’t a form. (Compare: If the United States is composed of the forty-eight continental states and Hawaii and Alaska, and Hawaii and Alaska are outside the forty-eight continental states, then the United States is not the forty-eight continental states.) And in describing an angel as “form plus existence” (*forma et esse*) Aquinas says almost explicitly that angels are something more than their substantial forms (and consequently are not (the same as) their substantial forms). (Compare: someone who describes a pencil as “wood plus graphite” or “wood and graphite” says almost explicitly that a pencil is something more than (and hence is not the same as) its wood.)

To sum up: many commentators have noted that for Aquinas, material substances have substantial forms, whilst immaterial substances are substantial forms. This is true, as far as it goes, but it is only part of the truth. It might be less misleading to say something like: Aquinas frequently says that material substances have received substantial forms, and immaterial substances are subsistent substantial forms. But he also says (though probably less frequently) that created immaterial substances are something more than their substantial forms. Moreover, given his account of substance, quiddity, and form – according to which created immaterial substances have, but substantial forms do not have, an “extra-quidditative” component, Aquinas must say that created immaterial substances are more than their substantial forms, and cannot coherently say that created immaterial substances just are their forms. The identification of created immaterial substances with their substantial forms is “officially” Thomistic, but, as far as I can make out, it is antithetical to Aquinas’ overall account of form, matter, and substance.

The essence and individuation of material substances

Let us say that a property is *essential to* an individual just in case necessarily, whatever is identical to that individual has that property. And let us say that a property is *individuating of* (or *individuates*) an individual just in case, necessarily whatever has that property is identical to that individual. A property can be essential to an individual, without being individuating thereof. For example, humanity is essential to but does not individuate Socrates, because it is true that necessarily, whoever is identical to Socrates is human, but it is obviously false that necessarily, whoever is human is identical to Socrates. Equally, a property may be individuating of an individual without being essential thereto. For example, the property of being pale Socrates (i.e., the property of being both pale and identical to Socrates) is individuating of but not essential to Socrates, because it is true that necessarily, whoever is pale Socrates (i.e., is both pale and identical to Socrates) is identical to Socrates, but it is false that necessarily, whoever is Socrates is pale Socrates (i.e., is both pale and identical to Socrates). (If

things had gone differently, someone – to wit, Socrates – would have been Socrates, but not pale Socrates, because he was tan Socrates instead.)

Let us call a substance that has some matter or other *materiate*, and a substance that has some substantial form or other *substantially formate*. A bit of fire or a beech tree or a human being is both materiate and formate, and an angel is formate but “immateriate”.

For reasons already discussed, Aquinas holds that substantial formation is an essential but non-individuative property of any substance. As Aquinas sometimes put it, form is the principle of being (*forma est principium essendi* (cf. *Quaestio De Anima*, un., 14 *ad* 8um)). In particular, substantial form is the principle of substantial *esse*. Hence it is not possible for anything to be a substance without having some substantial form or other. *A fortiori*, it is not possible for anything to be identical to this particular substance, without having some substantial form or other; which is to say that substantial formation is essential to any substance. Also, Aquinas would say, substantial formation is clearly not individuative of any substance. If substantial formation were individuative of a particular substance *s*, then *s* would be the only possible formate substance, and indeed the only possible substance *tout court* (since there could not be “informat” substances). But (Aquinas would say), *pace* Spinoza, there isn’t just one possible substance. So (Aquinas would conclude) substantial formation is essential to any substance, and individuative of none.

Similarly, Aquinas would say, materiation is not individuative of any materiate substance (lest there be just one possible materiate substance). Unlike formation, materiation is not an essential property of every substance (lest there be only materiate substances). But it is an essential property of any substance that actually has it. For just as an immateriate substance has an essence that is a substantial form, a materiate substance has an essence that is “composed of” matter and substantial form. (See *De Ente et Essentia*, 2: “with respect to composite substances, the term ‘essence’ refers to something composed of matter and form” (*nomen essentiae in substantiis compositis significat id quod ex materia et forma compositum est*).) So if a substance is actually materiate, it has an essence composed of matter and substantial form, and is accordingly essentially materiate. (This is why, as we shall see in the next chapter, Aquinas holds that human beings could not survive “demateriation”, and can only have life after death via the “remateriation” involved in bodily resurrection). To put this another way, just as substantial formation is essential to any substance, and thus any substantially formate substance, materiation is essential to any materiate substance.

Whatever is substantially formate – i.e., has some substantial form or other of some kind of other – also has a particular kind of substantial form, and a particular substantial form of a particular kind of substantial form. As Aquinas sees it, if a substance actually has some substantial form or other of a particular kind, it essentially has some substantial form or other of that particular kind. (If this were not so – if an individual substance with an ovine

substantial form could instead have had an equine substantial form, then sheep wouldn't essentially be sheep, and ovinity would be an "accidental kind", rather than a substantial kind). Similarly, if a substance actually has a particular substantial form of a particular kind, it essentially has that particular substantial form of that particular kind. For the essence of Socrates is partly composed of a particular substantial form (see again *De Ente et Essentia*, 2), and more generally what we might call the individual essence (as opposed to the specific essence) of any individual substance is (partly or wholly) composed of a particular substantial form (cf. *ST*, Ia, 119, 1, *responsio*).

Although *having this particular kind of substantial form* is essential to whatever has it, notice that it needn't be individuative of whatever has it. According to Aquinas' angelology, Raphael is the only possible individual who could have the particular kind of substantial form he actually has (see *De Spiritualibus Creaturis*, un., 8, *responsio*), but Socrates is obviously not the only individual who could have the particular kind of substantial form he has (since Socrates is not the only possible human being).

On the other hand, by Aquinas' lights, *having this particular substantial form of this particular kind* is always individuative of as well as essential to the individual that has it: being a particular individual substance just is having a particular substantial form of a particular kind (whether or not that particular substantial form is necessarily the only one of its kind).

Analogously, any substance that is materiate – i.e., has some matter or other of some kind or other – has some kind of matter of some particular kind: a bit of fire will have some bit of scg-matter or other, and a celestial body will have some bit of *hylē topikē* (incorruptible and ingenerable place-matter) or other. And again, for Aquinas, just as whatever is actually materiate is essentially materiate, whatever actually has matter of a particular kind (be it terrestrial or celestial) will essentially have that kind of matter. (My daughter's labrador retriever Aurora couldn't have been made of place-matter, any more than she could have been immaterial, and the Sun couldn't have been made of generable and corruptible matter, any more than it could have been immaterial).

Suppose, though, that an arbitrary material individual substance is partly composed of a particular bit of matter of a particular kind (where, again, the two kinds of matter are terrestrial matter and celestial matter). For Aquinas, does that imply that the property, *having that particular bit of matter of that particular kind* is not only had by, but also essential to that individual substance? And does it imply that the property, *having that particular bit of matter of that particular kind* is not only had by, but also individuative of that individual substance?

Also, suppose that an arbitrary material individual substance has this particular bit of matter of this particular kind (where again, the two kinds of matter are terrestrial and celestial), and has this particular substantial form of this particular kind. For Aquinas, does that imply that the property, *having that particular bit of matter of that particular kind and that particular*

substantial form of that particular kind is not only actually had by, but also essential to that individual substance? And does it imply that the property, *having that particular bit of matter of that particular kind and that particular substantial form of that particular kind* is not only had by, but also individuating of that individual substance?

Two of these questions have straightforward answers. Assuming that the two particular kinds of matter are terrestrial and celestial, Aquinas would deny that, whenever an individual substance has a particular bit of matter of a particular kind, *having that particular bit of matter of that particular kind* is individuating of what has it. For the very same bit of terrestrial matter that is actually fireformed might have been (in fact, for Aquinas, once was) airformed instead. So the property of having that particular bit of matter of that particular kind – i.e., the property of having that particular bit of terrestrial matter – is actually had by one individual substance (the bit of fire that actually has it), but might have been had (was had) by a different individual substance (a possible or once existent bit of air). Hence *having that particular bit of matter of that particular kind* (as we are understanding “of that particular kind”) is a property that Aquinas would say is not individuating of the bit of fire that possesses it.

Equally, Aquinas would say that whenever an individual substance has a particular bit of matter of a particular kind, and a particular substantial form of a particular kind, the property, *having that particular bit of matter of that particular kind and that particular substantial form of that particular kind* is individuating of that individual substance. For this last property implies *having that particular substantial form of that particular kind*. But, as we have seen, Aquinas thinks that the property, *having that particular substantial form of that particular kind* is individuating of its possessor. Hence Aquinas would say that *having that particular bit of matter of that particular kind and that particular substantial form of that particular kind* implies a property that is individuating of its possessor, and accordingly is itself individuating of its possessor. (If nothing but this individual could have property *P'*, and having property *P* implies having property *P'*, then nothing but this individual could have property *P*.)

When we try to answer the remaining questions, as we shall see, things get complicated – fast.

According to some commentators, Aquinas would deny that, whenever an individual substance has a particular bit of matter of a particular kind, *having this particular bit of matter of this particular kind* is essential to that substance: it is possible for an individual to have a particular bit of matter of a particular kind actually, but inessentially.

For example, in *The Philosophy of Aquinas*, Robert Pasnau and Christopher Shields argue that for Aquinas

[m]atter enters into the essence of a thing only when conceived as ... something common to all members of the species. This so-called

common matter is contrasted with *signate matter*, which is the determinate matter of a certain individual ... Matter enters into the essence of a thing only insofar as its general characteristics are concerned.

(p. 57)

Now *being this particular bit of matter of this particular kind* is clearly not a “general characteristic” of a bit of matter. So I take it that, on the Pasnau/Shields interpretation, Aquinas thinks that no particular bit of matter of a particular kind enters into the essence of, say, Socrates. In which case, it would seem, even if Socrates actually has this bit of terrestrial matter, he won’t have it essentially.

Indeed, Pasnau and Shields would say, it is evident that Aquinas would not want to say Socrates has any particular bit of terrestrial matter essentially. For he holds that Socrates is a human animal, and that animals, like other organisms, are constituted by different bits of terrestrial matter at different times. And if Socrates isn’t permanently constituted by any particular bit of terrestrial matter, then *a fortiori* he is not essentially constituted by any particular bit of terrestrial matter.

(Even if there is no bit of matter of any particular kind that Socrates essentially has, it will still be true that, for Aquinas, some individual substances have a particular bit of matter of a particular kind essentially. For Aquinas holds that each celestial body essentially has the particular bit of celestial matter it actually has. But, for Pasnau and Shields, we won’t for Aquinas be able to say in general that material substances essentially have the particular bit of matter of a particular kind they actually have.)

Note that, if Pasnau and Shields are right, we may conclude that the property, *having this particular bit of matter of this particular kind and this particular substantial form of this particular kind* need not be essential to its possessor. For that property implies *having this particular bit of matter of this particular kind*, and a property *P* is not essential its possessor, if it implies a property *P'* that is not essential to its possessor. So if the property, *having this particular bit of terrestrial matter* is had by but not essential to Socrates, then the property, *having this particular bit of terrestrial matter and having this particular substantial form of the human kind* is not essential Socrates (even if it is individuating of him).

Note too that, if Pasnau and Shields are right, *having this particular bit of matter of this particular kind* can be non-individuating of as well as inessential to the individual substance that possesses that property. The bit of terrestrial matter now constituting one organism could not only cease to be the matter that constitutes that organism, but also subsequently come to constitute another organism. In which case the property of having that particular bit of terrestrial matter is actually currently had by this individual substance (the first organism), and potentially had by a different individual substance (the second organism). In which case that property is had by but not individuating of its actual current possessor (the first organism).

All this sounds plausible enough. But it also raises severe interpretative difficulties. For, as I shall try to bring out, it is not difficult to find passages in which Aquinas appears to endorse the claim that (not just some but) all materiate substances have some particular bit of matter of some particular kind essentially. And it is not difficult to find passages in which Aquinas appears to endorse the claim that (not just for some, but also) for each materiate substance, there is some particular bit of matter of some particular kind, and some particular substantial form of some particular kind, such that *having that particular bit of matter of that particular kind and that particular substantial form of that kind* is an essential as well as individuating property of that substance.

At *ST*, Ia, 119, 1, *responsio*, Aquinas writes:

Form and matter taken as common (*forma et materia in communi accepta*) belong to a thing's true nature considered in general, while signate individual matter (*materia individualis signata*) and the form individuated by that matter belong to the true nature considered as it is in this individual.

Assuming the nature of a materiate individual = the essence of that individual, Aquinas seems to be saying here that "common form" and "common matter" enter into what earlier we called the specific essence of a materiate substance, and particular (or "signate") matter and the substantial form individuated thereby enter into the individual essence of that substance.

Indeed, the same passage from *De Ente et Essentia*, 2 appealed to above, to support the idea that for Aquinas, every substance has a particular substantial form of a particular kind essentially, also seems to support the idea that, for Aquinas, some particular bit of matter is part of the individual essence of Socrates, so that Socrates has some particular bit of matter essentially:

The principle of individuation is matter ... But it's not matter taken in any way (*quolibet modo accepta*) that is the principle of individuation, but only signate matter (*materia signata*). And what I call signate matter is what is considered under determinate dimensions (*quae sub determinatis dimensionibus consideratur*). This [kind of] matter is not included in the definition of a man insofar as he is a man, but it would be included in the definition of Socrates, if he had a definition ... So it is evident that the essence of man and the essence of Socrates do differ only with respect to the signate and the non-signate (*sic ergo patet quod essentia hominis et essentia Socratis non differunt nisi secundum signatum et non signatum*).

The idea seems to be that just as Socrates' specific essence includes common matter, Socrates' individual essence includes signate or particular matter. If it does, it seems to follow that there is some particular bit of matter of some particular kind that Socrates has not just actually but essentially. And if Socrates, every bit as much as the sun, has some particular bit of matter of

some particular kind essentially, it seems a fair bet that every material substance has some bit of matter of some kind essentially.

Aquinas seems to say that an individual essence includes signate matter (individual matter, *this* bit of matter) in various other passages (e.g., *ST*, Ia, 75, 4, *responsio*), but I shall not multiply citations.

On the other hand, I would not want to deny that there are passages in which Aquinas seems to endorse the view that the essence of at least some material substances contains a particular form of a particular kind, but does not contain any particular bit of matter of a particular kind. For example, at *SCG*, IV, 81, Aquinas tells us that

in a man's body, while he lives, the parts are not the same according to the matter (*secundum materiam*), but only according to the species or form (*secundum speciem*); as far as the matter is concerned, the parts come and go (*fluunt et refluunt*). But this doesn't get in the way of the man's being numerically one from the beginning of his life all the way to the end (*nec propter hoc impeditur quin homo sit unus numero a principio vitae usque in finem*). An analogue of this can be found in a fire which, for as long as it continues to burn, is said to be numerically one, because its species or form remains (*propter hoc quod species eius manet*), although old wood is consumed and new wood is added to the fire. So it is with a human body. For the form and species (*forma et species*) of every single part of it remains continuously for life (*manet continue per totam vitam*), but the matter of the parts is consumed (*resolvitur*) through the action of natural heat, and renewed (*adgeneratur*) through nourishment.

He makes more or less the same point at *ST*, Ia, 119, 1, *ad 5um*, and at *Quaestiones Quodlibetales*, *Quodlibetum* 8, *ad 2um*, where he says:

that which is in a man remains according to the species (*secundum speciem*), although it does not remain according to the matter (*secundum materiam*). Nevertheless the true human nature (*veritas humanae naturae*) is said to remain, and the man does not stop being numerically the same man on account of the change with respect to matter (*propter mutationem quae est secundum materiam*) ... Analogously, if some wood is consumed by the fire, and other wood is added in its place, it will be the very same fire (*si unum lignum ignis consumat, et aliud loco eius apponatur, erit idem ignis numero*).

At *De Spiritualibus Creaturis*, *un.*, 9, *ad 10um*, we get what looks like another example of a substance that doesn't have any particular bit of matter of any kind permanently:

The river Seine is not this river on account of having this flowing water, but on account of its source and its bed, whence it is always said to be the river, although the waters flowing in it are different.

In these passages, and many more besides, Aquinas seems to say more or less unequivocally that some (living or non-living) materiate substances have a particular substantial form of a particular kind permanently, but do not have any particular bit of matter of any particular kind permanently. Whence, it seems we may conclude that, for Aquinas, some living and non-living materiate substances have a particular form of a particular kind essentially, but do not have any particular bit of matter of a particular kind essentially.

So Aquinas appears both to say that materiate substances always have some particular bit of matter essentially (inasmuch as materiate substances always have an individual essence, which essence is composed of a particular substantial form, and a particular bit of matter), and to say that some materiate substances don't have any particular bit of matter permanently, and hence don't have any particular bit of matter essentially. What gives?

Well, perhaps the matter Aquinas thinks a material substance has permanently and essentially is different from the matter Aquinas thinks a material substance has contingently and transiently. As we have already seen, in the [second chapter](#) of the *De Principiis Naturae*, Aquinas draws a distinction between two kinds of matter. The first kind

is composed of form (*habet compositionem formae*), like the bronze which is the matter of a statue. For the bronze itself is composed of matter and form (*est compositum ex materia et forma*).

The second kind of matter is not itself composed of matter and form: it *is* matter, but it doesn't *have* matter.

In what follows, I shall call the first kind of matter *substantial form-including* and the second kind *pure* (or *non-substantial-form-including*) *matter*. Why do I say “substantial form-including” matter rather than “substantially informed matter”? Because “substantially informed matter” is ambiguous. It might be taken to mean “matter that includes (is partly constituted by) a substantial form”. Or it might be taken to mean “matter that is “in union with” or conjoined to” some substantial form – matter that is a co-constituent (along with substantial form) of some substance. If we understand “substantially informed matter” in the second sense, Aquinas appears to hold that all matter is substantially informed (see *Quaestiones Quodlibetales*, *Quodlibet* 3, 1, 1, and *ST*, Ia, 66, 1). If we understand “substantially informed matter” in the first sense, Aquinas thinks that there could not be substantially informed matter unless there were also matter that was pure rather than substantially informed (since being wholly constituted by substantial form-including or “impure” matter implies being partly constituted by pure matter). For the same reasons I say “form-including matter” rather than “informed matter”, I say “pure matter” rather than “unformed” or “formless” matter: if “unformed matter” (or “formless matter”) means “conjoined to” no substantial form”, Aquinas appears to believe there isn't

and couldn't be any such thing, but he does believe that some matter does not include (is not partly composed of, is not partly constituted by) substantial form.

For Aquinas, form-including matter is also form-dependent matter: a bit of bronze can continue to exist only as long as its brazen substantial form continues to exist. Conversely, pure matter is form-independent matter. That is, the existence (or persistence) of a bit of pure matter is independent of its being "conjoined to" (or its continuing to be "conjoined to") any particular substantial form, or any particular kind of substantial kind of substantial form (even if a bit of pure matter could not exist without being "conjoined to" some substantial form of some kind or other, and could not continue to exist without continuing to be "conjoined to" some substantial form of some kind or other). So we could also call form-including matter *form-dependent* matter, and call "pure" matter *form-independent* matter.

I take it that the kind of matter that earlier in this chapter I called "sgc-matter" (the matter that is the subject of generation and corruption) is pure rather than substantial form-including matter. (It is the persisting subject of substantial change precisely because it is substantial form-independent, and does not pass away (even in part) in a substantial change. Moreover, the transient matter of a fire (the matter that goes from being the matter of kindling wood to being the matter of fire, and thence to being the matter of ashes) seems to be sgc-matter: what is nourishment from the point of view of the fire being fed is corruption from the point of view of the wood being fed to the fire. But is the signate or individual matter that Aquinas thinks is essential to material substance pure matter?

In the *ST*, Ia, 119, 1 passage part of which has already been cited, Aquinas writes:

Form and matter taken as common belong to a thing's true nature considered in general, while signate individual matter and the form individuated by that matter belong to the true nature considered as it is in this individual. Just as human soul and body belong to the true human nature in general, this soul (*haec anima*) and this body (*hoc corpus*) belong to the true human nature in Peter or Martin.

In a not dissimilar vein, at *ST*, Ia, 75, 4 *responsio*, Aquinas writes:

In natural things matter is part of the species – not certainly signate matter, which is the principle of individuation, but common matter. Just as it belongs to the nature of this man (*de ratione huius hominis est*) that he is composed of this soul, of this flesh, and of these bones (*quod sit ex hac anima et his carnibus et his ossibus*), so too it belongs to the nature (*ratio*) of man that he is composed of soul, flesh, and bones (*quod sit ex anima et carnibus et ossibus*).

Now it seems clear that Peter or Martin's living body is not a bit of pure (and form-independent) matter: unlike any bit of pure matter, it is a corruptible material thing that can persist only as long as the pure matter constituting it is informed in a particular way. Aquinas would agree: he says that the dead body Peter leaves behind is not identical to the living body he had before he died, because the dead body does not have the very substantial form that the living body had (*ST*, IIIa, 50, 5, *ad 1um*). Similarly, it seems clear that this-flesh-and-these-bones are jointly a *corruptibile* that cannot be identified with any bit of pure matter.

So, we might conclude, there is no difficulty about seeing how Aquinas can both say that

- (a) the particular matter that constitutes a living materiate substance (at any given time) is transient, and thus inessential to that substance,

and also say that

- (b) some particular matter is included in the individual essence of a living materiate substance, and is accordingly essential to that substance.

once we bear in mind that matter *dupliciter potest accipi* (can be taken in two ways). Any particular bit of "thin" (pure, form-independent) matter that ever constitutes Socrates or a guinea pig is transient and inessential to Socrates or that guinea pig; nevertheless, both Socrates and the guinea pig have some particular bit of "thick" (form-including, form-dependent) matter permanently and essentially. And the same goes for fires and rivers. *Pace* Pasnau and Shields, the individual essence of a materiate substance includes "proprietary matter" (matter not common to all members of the species of that substance), along with a proprietary form (a form not common to all members of the species of that substance); and *pace* Pasnau and Shields, the fact that the individual essence of a materiate substance includes proprietary matter as well as proprietary form is perfectly compatible with the fact that living beings (and, for that matter, fires and rivers) are as it were permanently constituted by transient matter.

For various reasons, this conclusion strikes me as optimistic. To start with, as we have seen, Aquinas sometimes suggests that the "thick" individual matter included in the essence of this man is this body, and sometimes suggests that the "thick" individual matter included in the essence of this man is this flesh and these bones. As far as I can tell, Aquinas thinks these suggestions are not importantly different, as the following passage suggests:

This matter and this form are included in Socrates or Plato (*in Socrate vero aut Platone includitur haec materia et haec forma*). Just as the nature of man (*ratio hominis*) implies composition of soul and body, so too, if Socrates were definable, his nature would imply composition of this

flesh and these bones and this soul (*si Socrates definiretur, ratio eius esset quod esset compositus ex iis carnibus et iis ossibus et hac anima*).

(Note the *segue* from “soul and body” to “this flesh and these bones and this soul”.)

As far as I can see, though, it is important to distinguish the claim that

- (c) This man has some individual matter essentially – viz., this body [the one belong to this man].

from the claim that

- (d) This man has some individual matter essentially – viz., this flesh and these bones [the flesh and bones belonging to this man].

(d) seems problematic in a number of ways. First, human beings exist before any of their bones do. But even if we waive this problem (which we might ascribe to the limitations of Aquinas’ scientific knowledge, and which we might think can be addressed without making philosophically important changes to Aquinas’ account of the essences of material substances), there is a deeper problem.

Suppose *A* promises to give *B* the chicken currently running around in her garden. Before *B* takes possession of it, *A* accidentally cuts off its beak. The chicken *B* takes possession of is the chicken *A* promised to give him, even though it has lost a part between the time *A* promised it to *B*, and the time *B* took possession of it. Suppose on the other hand that *C* promises to give *D* the chicken on his plate (that is, the bit of dead, cooked, chicken flesh on his plate). Before *C* passes *D* his plate, she takes a bite of chicken. In this case, *D* could protest that *C* hadn’t kept her promise: the chicken *C* promised to give *D* is not the chicken *D* took possession of. This will be so, even if there was lots of chicken on the plate, and *C* took only a small bite. The chicken on *C*’s plate is the quantity of chicken on *C*’s plate, and we haven’t still got the same quantity of chicken on *C*’s plate, if we’ve got (even just) a little less chicken on *C*’s plate.

In much the same way, I’m inclined to think, the living flesh Peter or Martin has now is the quantity of living flesh Peter or Martin has now. Suppose that *E* is a scientist who wants to carry out a certain experiment involving a large quantity of living human flesh. She finds an obese person *F*, examines him, and offers him a goodly sum to allow the relevant (harmless) things to be done to his living flesh. *F* accepts the offer, but problems with funding cause the experiment to be postponed. When, after some months, the funding finally comes through, the scientist and her colleague go find *F*. *E* ascertains, to her dismay, that *F* has lost a great deal of weight. Seeing *F* (for the first time), *E*’s colleague worries that *F* might not have enough flesh to be a suitable subject for the experiment, and asks

E: is this the flesh you wanted to use in the experiment? *E* could properly answer: it's only some of the flesh I wanted to use. The flesh that *F* had when *E* asked him to participate in the experiment = the flesh that *E* wanted to use, but that flesh \neq the flesh that *F* has now, because it's a smaller quantity, and hence a different quantity of flesh.

If this is right, then Peter doesn't have the flesh he has at (say) thirty years old permanently, much less essentially. So even if Peter has flesh essentially, he won't have *this* flesh [the flesh he has now, or the flesh he has at any time at which he exists] essentially. But this takes us back to the kind of view that Pasnau and Shields understandably (from a philosophical point of view) but problematically (from an interpretative point of view) want to ascribe to Aquinas – the view that what is included in the essence of a particular human being is common matter, and not individual or signate matter (flesh, and not this flesh).

Now even if the flesh that Peter has at one time \neq the flesh that he has at another time, it does not seem that the body Peter has at one time \neq Peter has at another time. For it seems that Peter's full-grown body is numerically the same body as Peter's not yet full-grown body, just as full-grown Peter is numerically the same as not yet full-grown Peter, and Peter's fully grown heart is numerically the same as Peter's not yet full-grown heart. (Some people think that on the last day they will acquire a new body (a body numerically different from the body they have in this life), but I don't know anyone who thinks that they have already acquired a new body (a body numerically different from the one they had at conception).) Also, it is at least initially plausible that all animals (except perhaps human animals, where dualistic complications arise) have their bodies essentially: how could anything be this very marmot, unless it had this marmot's body? (What about living material substances that aren't animals – beech trees and the like? Perhaps they have bodies too, and have them essentially, even though we don't usually speak of the body of a beech tree.)

If, however, the flesh that Peter has at one time \neq the flesh that he has at another, but the body Peter has at one time before his death = the body he has at another time before his death, then Peter's body \neq Peter's flesh and bones, and (d) and (c) don't come to more or less the same thing. This is just as well, since (d) is at best problematic.

It seems, though, that (for different reasons) (c) is also problematic. Precisely inasmuch as Peter's body is not a quantity of some sort of (homogeneous or heterogeneous) stuff, and is instead the sort of being that can be constituted by different quantities of stuff at different times, one might wonder whether it really counts as a bit of matter. Imagine looking at a photograph of Peter's body taken twenty days after his conception, and a photograph of Peter's body taken when he was fifty. Are you really looking at two photographs of the same individual matter – i.e., the same bit of matter?

There is a different worry about whether we can identify Peter's body with the Petrine matter partly composing Peter's individual essence, and

Peter's soul with the Petrine substantial form partly composing that essence. On the face of it, just as some stones and some timbers jointly compose a stone and timber house, Peter's body and Peter's soul jointly compose Peter. As we shall see in the next chapter, this is indeed the way Aquinas thinks of it: "a man is something composed of a soul and a body" (*ST*, Ia, 75, 4, *responsio*). If, however, Peter's body and Peter's soul compose Peter himself – the individual who has both Peter's essence and Peter's accidents, the individual to whom both accidents and essence belong – then Peter's body and Peter's soul do not (also) compose the essence of Peter. After all, the essence of Peter is only a part (the non-accidental part, so to speak) of Peter, and Peter's body and Peter's soul cannot simultaneously compose both a whole (Peter) and a proper part thereof (Peter's essence), any more than some stones and timbers can simultaneously compose a house and the first story of a house.

Setting this difficulty aside, there is another worry about the identification of Peter's essential individual matter with Peter's body. As we noted above, if Peter's body is a bit of matter, it would seem that it is not a bit of pure matter, but rather a bit of substantial form-including matter. (If the matter of a substance is pure, then, one should think, it would be able to survive the corruption of that substance, and (for Aquinas) Peter's body could not survive the corruption of Peter.) So suppose we say that the individual matter in Peter's individual essence is Peter's body, and the individual substantial form in Peter's individual essence is Peter's soul. Then Peter's essence will be composed of a form-including individual bit of matter (Peter's body), and an individual substantial form (Peter's soul). And we can ask: is the substantial form that is included in the bit of matter – in other words the substantial form that Peter's body includes – the same as Peter's soul?

Suppose we say that the form included in Peter's body = Peter's substantial form/soul. This seems at least in one way a very natural Thomistic move: that is, it seems natural to assume that (for Aquinas) the same form that makes Peter a human being makes Peter's body a human body, just as (for Aquinas) the same form that makes Peter a human being makes Peter's heart a human heart. But it also raises various problems, one of which I shall highlight.

Aquinas appears to think that a material substance's individual matter and individual substantial form jointly wholly constitute, but individually only partly constitute, that substance's essence. And it seems this condition is not met, if Peter's individual substantial form/soul is included in, and thus partly constitutes, Peter's body. (We don't as it were need anything "outside of" or "beyond" Peter's matter to partly constitute Peter's individual essence, if Peter's individual substantial form/soul is already included in Peter's individual matter: Peter's individual matter and Peter's individual substantial form will jointly constitute Peter's individual essence in the way that Peter's body and Peter's hand jointly constitute Peter's body). To put

this point another way, if the individual matter (the “bit of matter”) that partly or wholly constitutes Peter’s individual essence = Peter’s body, and the individual substantial form included in Peter’s body = Peter’s individual substantial form/soul, then, on Aquinas’ account, since Peter’s body wholly constitutes Peter’s individual essence, Peter’s whole individual essence can be identified with this individual matter (with this bit of matter). But to my ears, at least, it sounds very un-Thomistic to say that the essence of this human being is this matter (this bit of matter).

Distinguishing the form Peter’s body includes from Peter’s substantial form/soul avoids one set of problems, but gives rise to another. Most centrally, if the form included in Peter’s body \neq Peter’s substantial form/soul, then it looks as though the bit of sgc-matter that is the matter of both Peter and Peter’s body at a given time will then be “simultaneous doubly substantially informed” in a way ruled out by the competition principle and the doctrine of the unicity of substantial form.

To recap: for different reasons, it seems fraught to identify either Socrates’ flesh and bones, or Socrates’ body, with the individual matter that partly constitutes Socrates’ individual essence. Socrates’ flesh and bones (that is, the quantity of flesh and bones he has at a given time) seem to be an unproblematic case of individual matter of a bit of matter, but also seem not to partly constitute Socrates’ individual essence, inasmuch as there is no quantity of flesh and bones Socrates has permanently, and hence no quantity of flesh and bones Socrates has essentially. Bracketing issues to be addressed in the next chapter, it seems plausible enough that Socrates has his body essentially. But Socrates’ body seems not to be the individual matter or bit of matter that partly constitutes Socrates’ individual essence, because Socrates’ body seems not to be individual matter (a particular bit of matter) of any kind. (Note that this is not because Socrates’ body cannot be identified with any bit of pure matter. A bit of flesh or bronze is not a bit of pure matter, but it nevertheless seems to be a bit of matter, in an entirely natural sense of the term, because a bit of flesh or a bit of bronze cannot survive the sort of changes that Socrates’ body can survive.)

In light of these considerations, the distinction between “thin” (or pure) and “thick” (or substantial form-including) individual matter does not seem as helpful as we might have hoped for the purposes of reconciling Aquinas’ view that every material substance has some individual matter essentially with his views about the transience of the material parts of living beings, etc., inasmuch as the prospects for identifying some bit of “thick” matter with the individual matter that partly constitutes Socrates’ individual essence are not promising.

To complicate matters and thicken the plot, although Aquinas often makes it sound as though the essential individual matter of a living material substance can simply be identified with some “thick” matter (such as that substance’s body, or its flesh-and-bones), not everything he says suggests that the essential individual matter of a living material substance is thick.

At *SCG*, IV, 81, Aquinas responds to many and varied objections to the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. One of those objections may be summarized as follows:

If a being “yields entirely to nothingness” (goes out of existence, without leaving behind any of its parts), that being can never come back into existence. Also, when a human being goes out of existence, some of his essential principles yield entirely to nothingness. So when a human being dies, and so goes out of existence, some of his essential principles can never come back. But a human being can’t come back, unless all of his essential principles come back (if a human being could come back, even though one of his principles did not, the principle he could come back without would *eo ipso* be accidental rather than essential). It follows that when a human being goes out of existence at death, he can never come back into existence.

There are various ways in which someone might attempt to resist this argument. One way would be to deny that if a thing goes out of existence together with all its parts, it can never come back, on the grounds that if God can bring a being “out of nothingness” once, it’s surely not beyond His power to do it a second time.

In fact, though, Aquinas does not take this tack, because he is in sympathy with the idea that things that go out of existence together with all their parts can never come back. This comes out in his *Commentary on the Sentences*, IV, 44, 1, 1. There Aquinas argues: if a human being’s sensitive soul were a third essential principle of a human being, distinct from both the rational soul and the body of that human being, then no human being could come back from the dead, because one of the human being’s essential principles (to wit, the human being’s sensitive soul) would “yield entirely to nothingness” when the human being died, and neither it nor the human being of which it was an essential principle could ever come back.

Alternatively, someone might try to block the argument at issue by denying that a human being goes out of existence when he or she dies. Aquinas does not go this route, because, as he sees it, death is a substantial rather than an accidental change (cf. *Quaestiones Quodlibetales*, *Quodlibet* 2, 1, 1: “to die is to be corrupted, and not just to be changed”).

So the only way in which Aquinas can resist the above argument is by insisting that when a human being dies, all of that human being’s essential principles avoid complete annihilation:

None of the essential principles of a man yield entirely to nothingness when he dies. The rational soul, which is the form of a man, remains after death ... and the matter that was the subject of such a form also remains, under those dimensions in virtue of which it was that individual matter (*materia etiam manet, quae tali formae fuit subiecta, sub dimensionibus*

eisdem ex quibus habebat ut esset individualis materia). So, from the conjoining of the very same soul with the very same matter (*ex coniunctione ... eiusdem animae numero ad eandem materiam numero*) the man will be restored [to life] (*homo reparabatur*).

(SCG, IV, 81)

There's much to unpack here. Aquinas is saying that there is a particular bit of matter which (a) was the subject of a particular man's particular substantial form before that man's death, (b) continues to exist even after that man's death, (c) retains the dimensions which made it the particular bit of matter it was (when it was the subject of the particular man's particular form), and (d) will someday be "conjoined" to the dead man's soul, so that (e) the man will be restored (to life).

(At least, I think that is what Aquinas is saying. Charles O'Neill translates the last sentence of the passage – that is,

Ex coniunctione igitur eiusdem animae numero ad eandem materiam numero, homo reparabitur.

as

Therefore, by conjunction to a soul numerically the same the man will be restored to matter numerically the same.

I'm not sure, though, why O'Neill prefers this translation to the one I offered above. His translation makes it sound as though Aquinas is saying that (at some time after his death) a man will be conjoined to his soul, and thereby restored to the very same matter he had ante-mortem. But I'm not sure why we should think Aquinas is saying that (rather odd) thing, rather than saying (more straightforwardly) that (at some time after a man's death) the man's matter will be conjoined to the man's soul, and the man will thereby be restored to life.)

Setting this translational issue to one side, what are the "dimensions" alluded to in (c)? Aquinas may have in mind here the "indeterminate dimensions" he discusses in his Commentary on Boethius *De Trinitate* 2, 4, 2.

For Aquinas, no multipliable substantial form is the particular substantial form it is "non-derivatively" (*ex se ipsa*, as Aquinas says in his Commentary on Boethius's *De Trinitate* 2, 4, 2); any such form is the particular substantial form it is, rather than another actual or merely possible form of the same kind, because and only because it is (or at least was) in this particular bit of matter, rather than in some other actual or potential bit of matter.

At this point, it is natural to ask: if this multipliable substantial form is the particular substantial form it is because and only because it is (or at least was) in this particular bit of matter, why is this particular bit of matter the particular bit of matter it is? One answer to this question would be:

A particular multipliable substantial form – say, this igneous substantial form – is this igneous substantial form rather than some other igneous substantial form because it is in this bit of matter rather than some other bit of matter. But there is nothing to be said about why this bit of “igniformed” matter is the particular matter it is, rather than some other bit of igniformed matter: the distinctness of different bits of (form-individuating) matter is “primitive” or unanalyzable.

Another answer would be that a particular bit of matter is the particular bit of matter it is, because it is appropriately related to some particular substantial form. In that case, we would end up with a kind of circularity in individuation (with substantial forms being individuated by matter but “grand-individuated” by substantial forms), be it vicious or benign.

In his Commentary on Boethius’ *De Trinitate*, Aquinas considers the question just raised, and appears to give an answer different from both of the ones just sketched. The bit of matter that as it were provides a particular multipliable substantial form with its particular identity, has the particular identity it does, because it has the “indeterminate dimensions” (*dimensiones interminatae*) it does:

It is by having these indeterminate dimensions that some matter is made signate and form-individuating matter. (*Ex his dimensionibus interminatis materia efficitur haec materia signata, et sic individuat formam*). (*Commentary on Boethius’ De Trinitate*, 2, 4, 2)

What exactly “indeterminate dimensions” are is a vexed question in Thomistic scholarship, but it at least looks as though in this context, Aquinas is suggesting that substantial forms are individuated “materially”, and the bits of matter that individuate substantial forms are individuated “dimensionally” – where the (indeterminate) dimensions that individuate bits of matter, whatever exactly they are, are not substantial forms, or beings individuated thereby, lest we come round in a circle (with substantial forms being individuated by things that are in turn individuated by substantial forms).

One can see why commentators on Aquinas have worried about his apparent appeal to “dimensions” as the individicators of the individicators of substantial forms. If these “dimensions” are accidents, it is hard to see how we can avoid the conclusion that (i) pure matter is subject to accidents, and (ii) substance is not prior to accidents, even though Aquinas seems very much opposed to both (i) and (ii). If “dimensions” are not accidents, it is unclear what else they might be.

But whatever we think about the coherence or otherwise of the idea that matter is individuated dimensionally with the rest of Aquinas’ account of substance, accidents, and matter, the fact remains that at *SCG*, IV, 81, Aquinas seems to answer the objection under discussion by saying that this particular man (who had this particular substantial form when he was alive)

can exist (again) at some time after his death, because this particular substantial form (the one he had when he was alive) can be (re)conjoined to this particular bit of matter (the bit of matter that (a) owes its particular identity to its dimensions, (b) was the subject of the man's particular substantial form before he died, and (c) (like the substantial form it was the subject of) does not go out of existence when the man dies).

We seem to get much the same story at *Compendium Theologiae*, I, 154, where Aquinas says:

Since it was shown above that all things, even the least, fall under divine providence, it is manifest that the matter of a particular human body, whatever form it might take after that man's death, is not beyond the power or knowledge of God. That matter retains its numerical identity (*eadem numero manet*), inasmuch it is understood as existing under quantitative dimensions (*inquantum intelligitur sub dimensionibus existens*) in virtue of which [dimensions] it can be said to be this matter (*secundum quas haec materia dici potest*), and is the principle of individuation (*individuationis principium*). Since the matter retains its numerical identity, and by divine power the human body is remade from it (*hac igitur materia eadem manente, et ex ea virtute divina corpore reparato humano*), and since the incorruptible rational soul is united to the same body, this results in the (numerically) same man's being restored [to life] (*consequens fit ut homo idem reparetur*).

Again, a particular human being can come back into existence after death – on the last day, say – because two individuals that existed continuously between that human being's death and the last day – viz., some dimensionally individuated individual matter and an incorruptible individual substantial form – can (through God's power) be “reconjoined” or “reunited”. A difference between the *SCG*, IV, 81 passage and the *Compendium Theologiae* I, 154 passage is that the latter specifies that the individual matter under dimensions that makes it to the last day is not only the matter that was subject to the human being's substantial form before that human being's death, but also the principle of individuation. I take it that, by this, Aquinas means that the individual matter under dimensions that makes it to the last day is not just the matter that was the subject of the human being's individual substantial form before that human being's death, but also the matter to which the human being's substantial form owes its particular identity – the matter that makes *this* substantial form of *this* human being the particular substantial form it is. (See *Quaestiones Quodlibetales*, *Quodlibet* 7, 1, 3: “[substantial] forms are individuated by matter, which ‘contracts’ form into particularity” (*individuatio formae est ex materia, per quam forma contrahitur ad hoc determinatum*).)

At both *SCG*, IV, 81 and *Compendium Theologiae*, I, 154, Aquinas offers a very elaborate account of how (*pace* certain arguments to the contrary) it is

possible for a human being to come back from the dead. Putting the *SCG* and the *Compendium Theologiae* passages together, Aquinas says, not just that a human being comes back from the dead via the “conjoining” or “union” of that human being’s individual substantial form with some individual matter or other, but also that a human being comes back from the dead via the “conjoining” or “union” of that human being’s individual substantial form with some individual matter that (α) was the subject of that human being’s form (and the matter of that human being’s body) before that human being’s death, (β) exists continuously from the death of that human being to the last day, (γ) owes its particular identity to its dimensions, and (δ) “grounds” the particular identity of the substantial form that the human being had before death.

Notice that this account is much more elaborate than it needs to be, in order to answer the objection raised at *SCG*, IV, 80, if Shields and Pasnau are right in supposing that, for Aquinas, living material substances have their individual substantial form permanently and essentially, and their individual matter accidentally and transiently. If (as Shields and Pasnau suppose) a human being’s existing in the future requires only that that human being’s individual substance form be “conjoined with” some bit or other of matter (of a sort common to all members of the human species), there doesn’t seem to be any reason why God couldn’t bring a human being back on the last day by conjoining that human being’s incorruptible individual substantial form with some just-created individual matter. But Aquinas thinks it is important to specify that on the last day God conjoins the resurrected human being’s incorruptible individual substantial form with some individual matter that the resurrected human being had before death. I take it that’s because he thinks that no individual matter created on the last day could be the individual matter whose “conjunction” with that human being’s incorruptible individual substantial form brings that human being back into existence, because no individual matter created on the last day could be individual matter that partly constitutes the individual essence of the human being brought back into existence. Similarly, he thinks, no individual matter that had been around before that human being’s death, but had never been the matter of that human being before that human’s death (had never been the subject of that human being’s individual substantial form) could be the individual matter whose conjunction with that human being’s incorruptible individual substance brings that human being back into existence, because no individual matter that had never been the matter of that human being before that human’s death (that had never been the subject of that human being’s individual substantial form) could be individual matter that partly constitutes the individual essence of the human being brought back into existence.

So, for Aquinas, God can only bring a human being back into existence on the last day if the individual matter He conjoins with that human being’s incorruptible individual substantial form on the last day was the subject of

that human being's individual substantial form before that human being's death. Hence the individual matter that God conjoins with that human being's incorruptible individual substantial form must somehow have gotten from the time before the human being's death, when it was the subject of that human being's individual substantial form, to the last day. Given Aquinas' theory of persistence, the individual matter that God conjoins with that human being's incorruptible individual substantial form on the last day can only make it to the last day, if it exists continuously from the time at which it was the subject of the (not yet dead) human being's individual substance, right through to the last day. I take it that this is where dimensions come into the story. Since the individual matter that is conjoined to the incorruptible individual substantial form of the resurrected human being exists at all the times in between that human being's death and resurrection, it cannot be a bit of "thick" matter (such as a particular human body, or some particular flesh and bones) whose persistence is tied to the persistence of a particular substantial form. If the individual matter that God (re) conjoins to the incorruptible individual substantial form of the resurrected human being persists from that human being's death to that human being's resurrection, but does not persist thanks to the persistence of that human being's substantial form, there must be some other explanation of how that individual matter persists right through from that human being's death to that human being's resurrection. The explanation Aquinas offers at *SCG*, IV, 81, and *Compendium Theologiae*, I, 154 is that the individual matter persists, by retaining the dimensions that make it the individual matter it is.

So we can see why Aquinas endorses (α) – (γ) (that is, why Aquinas says that the individual matter God conjoins with the individual substantial form of a human being on the last day is individual matter that was the subject of that human being's form (and the matter of that human being's body) before that human being's death, exists continuously from the death of that human being to the last day, and owes its particular identity to its dimensions. But what about (δ) ? Why does Aquinas suppose that the individual matter that God conjoins with the individual substantial form of a human being on the last day is not only the quondam subject of that human being's individual substantial form, but also the individuator thereof? Why couldn't God bring back a human being on the last day by rejoining that human being's incorruptible individual substantial form with some bit of "dimensioned" individual matter that had been the subject of that human being's individual substantial form, and had existed continuously between the death of that human being and the last day, but wasn't the individuator of that human being's individual substantial form?

It may be that Aquinas has something like this in mind: many different dimensionally individuated bits of matter could be subjects of some human substantial form or other. But at most one dimensionally individuated bit of matter could be the subject of *this* particular human substantial form (say, Peter's, or Martin's). For suppose that this condition were not met. That is,

suppose that a dimensionally individuated bit of matter that actually belonged to Peter was actually the subject of Peter's substantial form, but a dimensionally individuated bit of matter that actually belonged to Martin might have been the subject of Peter's substantial form. Then the very same individual substantial form that was in one dimensionally individuated bit of matter (to wit, Peter's dimensionally individuated matter) might instead have been in a different dimensionally individuated bit of matter (to wit, Martin's dimensionally individuated matter). But in that case Peter's substantial form would have the particular identity it does, independently of being in the particular dimensionally individuated bit of matter it was in. And this, I'm inclined to think Aquinas would say, is ruled out by the fact that a particular substantial form owes its particular identity to the particular identity of the dimensionally individuated bit of matter it is in. (Compare: as Aquinas thinks of it, many different substances could be (and are) subjects of whiteness, i.e., could be (and are) subjects of some whiteness or other. Still, inasmuch as particular whitenesses owe their particular identity to the particular substance they are in, even though many different substances could be subjects of whiteness, at most one substance could be the subject of *this* particular whiteness: Martin could not have been the subject of the particular whiteness that Peter is actually the subject of.)

Here someone might object:

Aquinas manifestly thinks that even if a particular substantial form owes its particular identity to a dimensionally individuated bit of matter, it can go on existing without still being in that dimensionally individuated bit of matter. For he thinks that the particular substantial form that is Peter's soul exists in no dimensionally individuated bit of matter between Peter's death and his resurrection. So why wouldn't he also suppose that, even if Peter's substantial form owes its particular identity to a dimensionally individuated bit of matter, it could be in different dimensionally individuated bits of matter at different times?

It may be that Aquinas shouldn't hold that a particular substantial form could as it were be "orphaned" by the dimensionally individuated bit of matter to which it owes its particular identity. (I shall address some of the issues relevant to this question in the next chapter.) But whether or not he *should* hold that view, he evidently does. Nevertheless, I doubt that Aquinas allows that a particular substantial form can pass from one dimensionally individuated bit of matter to another. I suspect that Aquinas would want to say about substantial form transfer just what he says about accidental form transfer. According to Aquinas, an individual accidental form owes its particular identity to a particular substance (see again *ST*, Ia, 29, 1, *responsio*: accidents are individuated through their subject, that is a substance (*accidentia individuantur per subiectum, quod est substantia*)). This, Aquinas thinks, does not rule out that they can be orphaned by their subjects: as we

have already seen, Aquinas thinks that through God's power they are so orphaned, in the sacrament of the Eucharist. But, he thinks, it does rule out that accidents can as it were be "adopted by a different parent (from the one they had previously)": accidents cannot pass from one substance to another. (Cf. again *ST*, Ia, 77, 1, *responsio*: it cannot be that the very same accident is sometimes in one and sometimes in another subject (*non potest esse quod, [accidens] idem numero manens, sit quandoque in hoc, quandoque in alio subiecto.*)

Consider again the passages we have been looking at from *SCG*, IV, 81 and *Compendium Theologiae*, I, 154). In both passages, Aquinas clearly seems to be talking about *one* individual substantial form and *one* dimensionally individuated bit of matter (*the* dimensionally individuated bit of matter that was the subject of the man's individual substantial form before he died, remains in existence after his death, and is reconjoined to his individual substantial form when he is resurrected (*SCG*, IV, 81), *the* dimensionally individuated bit of matter that was the matter of the body of the man while he was alive, remains in existence after his death, and is remade the matter of his body when he is resurrected (*Compendium Theologiae*, I, 154)). This makes perfect sense, if Aquinas thinks that the individuator of a received substantial form is its only possible subject. If on the other hand he thinks that many different dimensionally individuated bits of matter can be subjects of the same individual substantial form *successive*, one would expect him not to assume that there is just one bit of dimensionally individuated matter that was the subject of a particular human being's individual substantial form and the matter of that particular human being's body throughout that human being's lifetime.

Finally, suppose Aquinas thought that nothing precluded that Peter's substantial form be "transferred" from one dimensionally individuated bit of matter to another in the course of Peter's lifetime. Then it's hard to see why he would think that anything precluded that Peter's substantial form be "transferred" from the bit of dimensionally individuated matter that was the subject of Peter's substantial form right before he died, to a dimensionally individuated bit of matter created on the last day. But again, the passages from *SCG*, IV, 81 and *Compendium Theologiae*, I, 154 indicate that, when Aquinas argues for the possibility that the dead will be resurrected, he thinks it important to say that, when we get to the last day, there will still be dimensionally individuated matter that was the subject of our individual substantial forms, and the matter of our bodies, when we walked the earth.

If, however, the bit of dimensionally individuated matter that actually individuates (as well as being a subject of) Peter's substantial form is the only possible bit of dimensionally individuated matter that could be a subject of Peter's substantial form, then there is no way God can get Peter back on the last day, without conjoining Peter's individual substantial form to a bit of dimensionally individuated matter that is not only the quondam subject of, but also the individuator of, Peter's substantial form – which in effect gives us (δ).

Now, if (α) – (δ) are true, then Socrates has some “non-thick” (non-substantial-form-including, substantial form-independent) individual matter essentially – viz., the dimensionally individuated bit of matter that is the only possible subject of Socrates’ individual substantial form (and the only possible dimensionally individuated matter of Socrates’ body). So, even if (as we have seen) Aquinas says many things that suggest he believes that the essential individual matter of a living materiate substance can simply be identified with something “thick” – be it a particular body of a particular sort, or some particular ordinary “stuff” of a certain sort (e.g., flesh-and-bones) – still, on a not unnatural way of understanding Aquinas’ account of the resurrection of the dead, it commits him to the claim that human beings have essential individual matter of a non-thick sort (namely, dimensionally individuated matter).

In a way, these complications are good news for a defender of Aquinas. It looked as though we had ended up in the following position: despite what Pasnau and Shields think, Aquinas is committed to the idea that materiate substances as such have some individual matter (some particular bit of matter) essentially. But, just as Pasnau and Shields think, there doesn’t seem to be anything with which the alleged essential individual matter of, say, Socrates can plausibly be identified; so Aquinas’ view that (all) materiate substances necessarily have some individual matter essentially seems indefensible. But we tentatively reached the conclusion that there wasn’t anything with which the essential individual matter of Socrates might plausibly be identified, by ruling out the two candidates that Aquinas himself seems to identify the essential individual matter of Socrates with (his flesh-and-bones, and his body). And, in the light of *SCG*, IV, 81 and *Compendium Theologiae*, I, 154, we have a new candidate for what Socrates’ essential individual matter might be identified with – a dimensionally individuated substantial-form-independent and substantial-form-individuating matter. (Notice that if the essential individual matter of Socrates is a bit of this kind of dimensionally individuated matter, there seems to be no problem about saying that Socrates’ essential individual matter is only part of Socrates’ individual essence, since Socrates’ dimensionally individuated matter does not include an individual substantial form, but Socrates’ individual essence does.)

On the other hand, the supposition that Socrates’ essential individual matter is a dimensionally individuated bit of non-thick matter engenders new difficulties and perplexities (over and above the difficulties alluded to earlier concerning the coherence or otherwise of Aquinas’ account of matter-under-dimensions with his general account of substance, matter, and accidents).

To begin with, if Socrates’ essential individual matter is not his body, or his flesh-and-bones, but rather a dimensionally individuated bit of matter that exists continuously from Socrates’ conception to Socrates’ resurrection (and beyond), it seems to follow that there are two different kinds of non-thick matter in Socrates.

How so? Well, if the matter that partly constitutes Socrates' individual essence is a dimensionally individuated bit of non-thick matter, then Socrates has some bit of non-thick matter essentially, and *a fortiori* permanently. But Aquinas seems to allow that if a human or non-human animal lives long enough, that animal will not have any bit of sgc-matter permanently (see again *ST*, Ia, 119, 5 and *ad 5um*). And if Socrates has some bit of non-thick matter permanently, and no bit of sgc-matter permanently, then Socrates has some bit of non-thick matter that is distinct from any bit of sgc-matter. Given that no bit of sgc-matter is thick, we end up with what might be called "thin matter dualism".

Note that the argument just sketched does not turn on the supposition that Socrates will have an afterlife, or for that matter a life. If the dimensionally individuated bit of matter that Socrates has essentially and permanently cannot be identified with any bit of sgc-matter, then, *pari ratione* (by the same reasoning), the dimensionally individuated bit of matter that a long-burning fire or a river has cannot be identified with any bit of sgc-matter.

I don't know of any place where Aquinas endorses (or indeed considers) thin-matter dualism, and it is not at all clear to me that he would be happy with it. It is not in any obvious way incoherent, but it is unclear how one would motivate it. An opponent of thin matter dualism might try to bring out the difficulty of motivating it as follows:

(For reasons of the sort discussed in the second section of this chapter), despite Aquinas' arguments to the contrary, it's not clear that we need to posit anything beyond "everyday" matter and "chemical" matter to explain the nature of substantial change; sgc-matter is arguably an ontological extravagance. But assume for the sake of argument that, in order to explain substantial change, we do need to posit sgc-matter as a kind of thin, substantial form-independent matter that underlies thick, form-inclusive and form-dependent everyday and chemical matter. Why do we need to posit an additional kind of thin matter (dimensionally individuated thin matter)? What sort of facts would we need this additional kind of pure matter to explain?

A defender of Aquinas might reply that we have already seen how he would answer this question: we need one kind of thin matter (sgc-matter) to explain substantial change, growth, *et similia*, and we need a different kind of thin matter to explain how the substantial forms of materiate substances get to be the particular substantial forms they are.

This raises issues too large to do justice to near the end of an already longish section. But I shall at least gesture at some of the difficulties this defense of Aquinas faces.

There are two questions that it may be helpful to distinguish here. The first one is:

- (1) Do we need to suppose that in Peter (or a beech tree, or a river) there is something (distinct from Peter (or that beech tree, or that river)) which (a) is not thick matter, (b) is not sgc-matter, (c) is essential to Peter (or that beech tree, or that river), and (d) “grounds” the particular identity of Peter’s individual substantial form (or that beech tree’s or that river’s substantial form)?

There seem to be various ways in which the answer to (1) could turn out to be “no”.

Aquinas thinks the answer to the corresponding question about the angel Raphael is ‘no’: there is nothing in Raphael (distinct from Raphael) that is neither thick matter nor sgc-matter, is essential to Raphael, and grounds or the particular identity of Raphael’s substantial form. For Aquinas, Raphael’s substantial form is individuated *ex seipsa* and not *ex aliquo alio*; that is, the particular identity of Raphael’s substantial form is not grounded in the particular identity of anything else. Or at least, the particular identity of Raphael’s substantial form is not grounded in the particular identity of anything else distinct from Raphael.

(Here is a slightly different way of explaining why Aquinas would say that if we uniformly replaced all the occurrences of “Peter” with “Raphael” in the above question, the answer to the resulting question would be “no”: if it were “yes”, there would be something that is not Raphael, and is in Raphael, that isn’t thick or sgc-matter, and is essential to Raphael, whose particular identity grounds or the particular identity of Raphael’s substantial form. Now, Aquinas would say, given that Raphael is an immaterial substance, there is nothing in Raphael but a substantial form (which is also a complete essence), and some accidents. So if there were something that isn’t Raphael, and is in Raphael, whose particular identity grounds the particular identity of Raphael’s substantial form, that something would have to be either (i) Raphael’s substantial form itself, or (ii) some accident or accidents of Raphael. The particular identity of Raphael’s substantial form can’t ground or account for the particular identity of Raphael’s substantial form, because the particular identity of x can only ground/account for/explain the particular identity of y if $x \neq y$. But (Aquinas would say) neither could the particular identity of some accident or accidents ground the particular identity of Raphael’s substantial form. For if the particular identity of some accident or accidents grounded the particular identity of Raphael’s substantial form, then – given the identity of Raphael’s substantial form with his essence – Raphael’s accidents would be individually prior to his essence, and this (by Aquinas’ lights) is backwards. Hence there isn’t anything that is different from Raphael, and is in Raphael, whose particular identity grounds the particular identity of Raphael’s substantial form.)

Even though Peter, unlike Raphael, is a material substance, it still might be that the particular identity of Peter’s substantial form is not grounded in the particular identity of anything else – or at least, is not grounded in the

particular identity of anything distinct from Peter. As we have discussed, Aquinas thinks that the particular identity of an accidental form is grounded in the particular identity of its subject or substance (consider again *ST*, Ia, 29, 1, *responsio*: “something is called *this* whiteness, because it is in *this* subject”). Similarly, someone might think, the particular identity of the substantial form of Raphael is grounded in the particular identity of its subject or substance, Raphael (and not grounded in the particular identity of anything else): Raphael’s substantial form is *this* angelic substantial form simply because it is in *this* angel (Raphael). Equally, someone might think, the particular identity of the substantial form of Peter is grounded in the particular identity of its subject or substance, Peter (and not grounded in the particular identity of anything else): Peter’s substantial form is *this* human substantial form simply because it is in *this* human being (Peter). Alternatively, someone might think, the particular identity of Raphael’s substantial form is “bedrock” or “non-derivative”: Raphael’s substantial form doesn’t owe its particular identity to the particular identity of anything else (including Raphael). Equally, someone might think the particular identity of Peter’s substantial form is “bedrock” or “non-derivative”: Peter’s substantial form doesn’t owe its particular identity to the particular identity of anything else (including Peter). To my mind, there is nothing obviously wrong with either saying that the particular identity of Peter’s substantial form is grounded in the particular identity of Peter, or saying that the particular identity of Peter’s substantial form is bedrock. But if we say either of these things, we answer question (1) above in the negative, and thus undercut the suggested motivation for supposing that Peter essentially has some dimensionally individuated bit of substantial-form-independent and substantial-form-individuating bit of matter.

A defender of Aquinas might reply that the cases of Raphael and Peter are disanalogous, precisely because Raphael is an immaterial substance, and Peter is a material substance: immaterial substances, as such, don’t depend either for their existence or their particular identity on their matter (since they don’t have any), but material substances, as such, do depend both for their existence and for their particular identity on their matter. Moreover, material substances *asymmetrically* depend for their existence and their particular identity on their matter. (This material substance depends for its existence and its particular identity on its matter; but its matter does not depend for its existence or its particular identity on this material substance). Or, rather, given that (for Aquinas) the term “matter” covers a multitude of things, material substances as such depend asymmetrically for their existence and their particular identity on their matter, considered a certain way.

Is this so? It is evident that any terrestrial material substance asymmetrically depends for its existence on the existence of terrestrial matter *in communi accepta* (taken generally). Equally, any celestial material substance asymmetrically depends for its existence on the existence of celestial matter *in communi accepta*. It also seems true that at least some particular kinds of

terrestrial material substances asymmetrically depend for their existence on the existence of certain kinds of thick matter *in communi accepta*: for example, hedgehogs asymmetrically depend for their existence on the existence of DNA *in communi accepta*.

But, given our present concerns, the crucial question does not regard the asymmetric dependence or otherwise of material substances for their existence on the existence of *materia in communi accepta*; it regards the asymmetric dependence or otherwise of material substances for their existence and particular identity on their *materia signata* or individual matter.

It is at least initially plausible that typically, a material substance *s* has some particular bit of matter *m* such that *s* owes its existence to *m*, but not vice versa.

Consider, for example a wooden table *T*. As Saul Kripke and others have argued, we are at least initially inclined to think that *T* could only have been made from the particular bit of wood *W* it was actually made from: a table made from a bit of wood numerically different from *W* would necessarily be a table numerically different from *T* (however much it might resemble the table *T*).

If, however, *T* is made from *W*, then *T* is originally made of *W*. So if necessarily, *T* is made from *W* (assuming *T* exists), then necessarily, *T* has *W* as its original matter (assuming *T* exists). This implies that *T* owes its existence to *W*. But clearly, *W* does not owe its existence to *T* (the tree that *W* was originally in might have been struck by lightning and burned to the ground just before the aspiring maker of *T* “extracted” *W* from that tree in order to make a table from *W*). So, it seems, *T* owes its existence to *W* but not vice versa.

(Aquinas would take issue with this argument, because it assumes that *T* not only would not have been a table, but also would not have existed, if the tree from which the maker of *T* had intended to extract *W* had been burned to the ground before the maker of *T* had the chance to extract *W* from it. Aquinas (inadvisedly, to my mind) would resist this last assumption, since (as we have seen in the second section of this chapter), he thinks that the tabularity of a wooden table is not a substantial form of a table made from a bit of wood, but rather an accidental form of the bit of wood itself. But we could run essentially the same argument with *naturalia* rather than *artificialia* – substituting a stalagmite and a bit of dissolved limestone for *T* and *W*.)

In this context, though, it is important to see that, as Aquinas would put it, dependence *dupliciter dicitur* (is said in two ways). Let us say that *a* *strongly simul-depend*s for its existence on *b* if *a* would not and indeed could not exist at a time, unless *b* existed at that time. And let us say that *a* *strongly depend*s on *b* for its existence if *a* would not and could not exist at a time, unless *b* existed at that time or some other time – in other words, unless *b* existed at some time or other. (Strong simul-dependence entails strong dependence, but not vice versa, because the strong simul-dependence of *a* on *b* implies that *a* could not survive separation from *b*, but the strong dependence of *a* on *b* does not.)

An animal strongly simul-depends for its existence on its body, although it is not clear that it does so asymmetrically. (If Aquinas is right, an animal's body strongly simul-depends for its existence on the animal of which it is the body.) An H_2O molecule asymmetrically strongly simul-depends on its O molecule. Arguably at least, a stalagmite strongly simul-depends on the portion of dissolved limestone that originally constitutes it.

On the other hand, for reasons brought to light by Pasnau and Shields, and emphasized by Aquinas himself, not all material substances strongly simul-depend on the bit of ordinary stuff they are originally made of. An animal or a plant can (and does) survive separation from the organic matter it was originally made of, and a river (or a waterfall) can and does survive separation from the water it was originally made of.

Now b is essential to a only if a strongly simul-depends on b . Whence we may conclude that even if each material substance owes its existence, and its particular identity, to some particular bit of ordinary stuff that does not owe its existence, or its particular identity, to that material substance, it is not true that every material substance owes its existence, and its particular identity, to some particular bit of ordinary stuff that does not owe its existence, or its particular identity, to that material substance, *and is essential to that material substance*. In other words, our intuitions about the essence and individuation of material substances do not suggest that they asymmetrically depend for their existence and their particular identity on some particular bit of ordinary stuff *that they have essentially*.

So even supposing intuition suggests that each material substance is made of some ordinary stuff whose existence and particular identity is "explanatorily prior to" or "grounds" the existence and particular identity of that material substance, intuition does not suggest that each material substance is *essentially* made of some ordinary stuff whose existence and particular identity is "explanatorily prior to" or "grounds" the existence and particular identity of that substance. Put otherwise, even if intuition suggests that the existence and particular identity of each material substance is grounded in the existence and particular identity of some particular bit of ordinary stuff, intuition does not suggest that the existence and particular identity of each material substance is grounded in the existence and particular identity of some particular bit of ordinary stuff it has essentially. Even if intuition suggests that each material substance is individuated by some particular bit of ordinary stuff, it does not suggest that each material substance is individuated by some particular bit of ordinary stuff essential to it. By the same token, intuition does not suggest that each material substance is individuated by some particular bit of sgc-matter essential to it.

Our hypothetical defender of Aquinas might point out that none of this is germane to the question of whether (1) should be answered in the affirmative: after all (1) asks whether each material substance is individuated by some matter essential to it that is neither ordinary stuff (thick matter) nor sgc-matter.

Although this last observation is true, I don't know that it helps the defender of Aquinas. Suppose it is agreed that for some material substance, there is no bit of "ordinary matter" or sgc-matter that both is essential to that substance, and grounds the existence and particular identity of that substance. This leaves open the possibility that for each material substance, there is some bit of a different kind of matter (to wit, a dimensionally individuated bit of substantial-form-independent and substantial-form-individuating matter) that is both essential to and grounds the existence and particular identity of that substance. But the answer to (1) is affirmative only if for each material substance, there not only might be but actually is a kind of matter different from both ordinary matter and sgc-matter that both is essential to and grounds the existence and particular identity of that substance. And why should we suppose there actually is? This is, as it were, where we came in: the question was why we should exclude the possibility that, either the particular identity of the substantial form of (say) Peter was bedrock, or the particular identity of the substantial form of Peter was simply grounded in the particular identity of Peter himself, rather than in the particular identity of a particular bit of (non-*sgc*) substantial-form-independent and substantial-form-individuating matter in and essential to Peter. Absent an answer to this question, we appear to lack a good reason to answer (1) in the affirmative, or a good reason to suppose that each material substance has some bit of some kind of matter essentially.

Also, suppose that, for whatever reason, we are persuaded that the particular identity of Peter's substantial form is not bedrock, and is not simply grounded in the particular identity of Peter himself, but is instead grounded in something different from Peter that is in Peter, and is essential to him. We still face the following question:

- (2) Assuming there is something individual different from Peter and in Peter and essential to Peter that grounds the particular identity of Peter's substantial form, why suppose that something is deserving of the name "individual matter"?

"Ordinary matter" (*in communi accepta*) is ordinary stuff – water, or flesh, or wood, or ... Individual or signate ordinary matter (of some kind or other) is a particular bit or portion or quantity of ordinary stuff (of some kind or other) – a particular bit or portion or quantity of water, or flesh, or wood, or ... Sgc-matter is "extraordinary stuff" (extraordinarily underlying and protean stuff) and individual or signate sgc-matter is a particular bit or portion or quantity of that extraordinary stuff. But why should we think that the individual entity that is different from Peter, and in Peter, and essential to Peter, is deserving of the term "individual matter"? Why should we think that the individual that is (a) different from Peter, (b) in Peter, (c) essential to Peter, and (d) the ground of the particular identity of Peter is a bit or portion or quantity of any kind of stuff at all?

Well, it might be said, the individual satisfying (a)–(d) has “dimensions”. And, whatever exactly “dimensions” turn out to be, the subject of “dimensions” will be a bit of portion or quantity of some kind of stuff, rather than an abstract entity, such as a haecceity.

A dimensioned individual presumably could not be a haecceity (at least, in the way contemporary metaphysicians understand the term “haecceity”). But this does not imply or even suggest that if an individual satisfying (a)–(d) has “dimensions”, it is a bit or portion or quantity of some kind of stuff or matter. For the (hypothetical) dimensioned satisfier of (a)–(d) will still be present in Peter, or a beech tree, or a river, doing its substantial-form-individuating job, even when Peter or the beech tree or the river has exchanged all his or its current sgc-matter and ordinary matter for different sgc-matter and ordinary matter, in exactly the same way that Peter’s heart, or the beech tree’s trunk, or the river’s initial stretch will still be present in Peter, or the beech tree, or the river, even when it has exchanged all its current sgc-matter and ordinary matter for different sgc-matter and ordinary matter. So it appears that a dimensioned individual satisfying (a)–(d) would be an individual made of matter, but not a bit or portion or quantity of matter, in just the way that the heart of a human being, or the trunk of a beech tree, or the initial stretch of a river, is an individual made of matter, but not a bit or portion or quantity of matter. Thus the identification of Peter’s essential individual matter with a dimensionally individuated bit of substantial-form-independent and substantial-form-individuating thin matter is subject to much the same difficulty as the identification of Peter’s essential individual matter with his body.

Just to keep sight of the forest as well as the trees, it may help to take stock. Pasnau and Shields suggest that, for Aquinas, all substances, and *a fortiori* all material substances, have some particular substantial form essentially, but not all substances, and not even all material substances, have some particular bit of matter essentially. I have argued that the view that Pasnau and Shields attribute to Aquinas is attractive, but anti-Thomistic. Essential individual matter is an integral part of Thomistic hylomorphism, inasmuch as Aquinas holds (and explicitly affirms) not just that

necessarily each material substance has a specific essence composed of substantial form *in communi accepta* and matter *in communi accepta*

but also that

necessarily each material substance has an individual essence composed of an individual substantial form and (an) individual bit of matter.

For example, Aquinas tells us, a human being has an individual essence composed of a particular soul and some particular flesh and bone (or, as Aquinas sometimes says, of a particular soul and a particular body).

It appears, however, that neither Peter's body, nor the particular flesh and bone he has at a given time could be Peter's essential individual matter: Peter's body is certainly individual, and is arguably essential to Peter, but it isn't matter; and the particular flesh and bone that Peter has at a given time is individual matter, but it isn't essential to Peter.

More generally, it is hard to see how any particular bit (portion, quantity) of ordinary stuff could be the essential matter of a human being, or a beech tree, or a river, or ..., given that any particular bit of ordinary stuff is or at any rate could be only transiently present in a human being, or a beech tree, or a river. So, if "thick" matter (substantial form including matter) is "ordinary stuff" (flesh, or wood, or water, or ...), and individual matter is a particular bit (portion, quantity) of matter, then some material substances don't have any individual thick matter essentially. And if some material substances don't have any individual thick matter essentially, then some material substances don't have any individual sgc-matter essentially. For if the doubts raised about sgc-matter in the second section of this chapter are misplaced, and there is such a thing as sgc-matter, then particular bits of sgc-matter are just are transiently present in, say, rivers, as particular "bits" (portions, quantities) of water are.

This leaves open the possibility that the individual matter that a human being (or a beech tree, or a river) has essentially is individual matter that cannot be identified either with any bit of thick matter, or with any bit of sgc-matter. In other words, it leaves open the possibility that the individual matter that a human being (or a beech tree, or a river) has essentially is a bit of thin matter of a kind different from sgc-matter.

So far as I am aware, Aquinas does not explicitly endorse this idea. But it is at least arguable that his views on the transience of ordinary stuff and sgc-stuff in living material substances, together with his account of the possibility of resurrection, commits him to the claim that living material substances have essential individual matter that is neither thick matter nor sgc-matter.

That said, the supposition that a human being or a beech tree or a river essentially has a particular bit of non-sgc thin matter that individuates its substantial form seems (for the reasons adduced) multiply problematic.

So I am inclined to think that Aquinas does not hold, but should hold, the view Pasnau and Shields think he does hold. He does not say, but should say, that every material substance is essentially formate and essentially materiate, and every material substance has some individual substantial form essentially, but not every material substance has any individual matter essentially.

I will wrap this section up with a few remarks on Aquinas' view that matter is the principle of individuation of material substances and their substantial forms.

I take it that when Aquinas says that matter is the *individuationis principium* of material substances and their substantial forms, he means that for any material substance *s* possessing a substantial form *sf*, *s* has a bit of matter *m* whose particular identity grounds both the particular identity of *sf*, and the particular identity of *s*. Note that this allows but does not imply that *sf*

essentially informs *m* and *s* essentially has *m*. If what seems to me the most natural reading of Aquinas' account of the resurrection of the dead is right, then Aquinas thinks that substances have the (thin but non-scg-) matter that grounds their particular identity essentially. But Aquinas clearly does not hold that substantial forms (as such) essentially – or even permanently-inform the matter that they owe their particular identity to. For, as we have seen, he thinks that, in the interval between death and resurrection, human substantial forms survive their separation from the bit of matter to which they owe their particular identity. (Compare: given his account of the Eucharist, Aquinas does not hold that accidental forms (as such) essentially – or even permanently – inform the substance they owe their identity to. A particular accidental form is essentially “apt to” inform the particular substance it originally informs (and essentially “inept to” inform any other substance (since an accident cannot pass from one substance to another (*ST*, Ia, 77, 1, *responsio*)). Still, an accidental form needn't always do what it is essentially apt to do. Analogously, a received substantial form is essentially “apt to” inform the particular bit of matter it originally informs, and “inept to” inform any other bit of matter; but a received substantial form needn't always do what it is essentially apt to do.)

In light of this, Aquinas' view that every material substance has some individual matter that individuates both that substance and its substantial form might be unproblematic, even if Aquinas' view that every material substance has some essential individual matter is not.

In fact, though, I think the second view, like the first, raises difficulties for Aquinas.

As we have noted, at *De Spiritualibus Creaturis*, un., 9, ad 10um, Aquinas avers that:

The river Seine is not this river on account of having this flowing water, but on account of its source and its bed, whence it is said to be the same river throughout its existence, even though it's made of different waters (*semper dicitur idem fluvius, licet sit alia aqua defluens*).

This suggests that some material substances – e.g., rivers – depend for their existence on having a particular source and a particular bed, but do not depend for their existence on having any particular thick matter (or any particular scg-matter). Such material substances, we might think, are individuated by their place and their source, rather than by their matter.

But, it might be objected, we have already seen that dependence *multipliciter dicitur* (is said in many ways). The river Seine might depend for its existence on having originally had the portion of water it actually originally had, even if it doesn't depend for its persistence on continuing to have the portion of water it actually originally had. In this sense, the Seine might be said to owe its existence – and its particular identity – to having the matter it actually has – that is, to originally having the matter it actually originally has.

I don't think this move solves the fundamental problem for "matter based" accounts of the individuation of material substances and their substantial forms that the example of the Seine brings to light. To say why, I shall have recourse to a variant of an example I have used elsewhere, involving a lake rather than a river.

Suppose that a lake comes into existence when a rain-swollen river bursts its banks and fills a very large, deep hole in the proximity of the river. Then that lake will be originally constituted by a certain portion of water *W*. Surely, though, the very same lake could have been originally constituted by a different portion of water *W'*: it would have been so constituted, if the pattern of rainfall had been different enough but not too different, or if people living in the area had flanked the stretch of river near the large deep hole with sandbanks, in an ultimately futile effort to keep the river from bursting its banks there that nevertheless delayed the moment at which the river burst its banks there.

Now whether or not the Seine depends for its existence on having originally had the thick matter it actually originally had (and having originally had the sgc-matter it actually originally had), our hypothetical lake does not. Nor does our lake depend for its existence on ever having any of the thick matter or sgc-matter it ever actually subsequently has. In other words, our lake does not depend for its existence on ever having any of the thick matter or sgc-matter that it ever actually has. But if this is so, how can there be any sense in which that lake owes either its existence or its particular identity to its matter (be that matter thick or sgc)? (Again, one might suppose that the lake owes its existence and its particular identity to some dimensionally individuated thin matter that individuates that lake's substantial form, but I have already said why I don't find this line of response promising.)

It might be suggested here that, for Aquinas, lakes and rivers aren't genuine material substances, and accordingly don't raise any problems for his account of the individuation of material substances. But I don't think this will work. Suppose an animal *A* actually comes into existence from gametes *G* and *G'* at the moment when *G* fertilizes *G'*. Suppose also that at the moment of conception, *G* is made of a portion of thick matter *M* and *G'* is made of a different portion of thick matter *M'*. In an alternative possible world, *G* and *G'* undergo gradual but ultimately complete turnover in their matter, whilst holding on to their particular substantial forms. After the material turnover is complete, *G* fertilizes *G'*. The result, I take it, is that the same animal *A* comes into existence from the same pair of gametes it actually came into existence from, but is originally constituted by a different portion of thick matter (and a different portion of sgc-matter) from the portion of thick matter (and the portion of sgc-matter) that *A* is actually constituted by. So it seems that the animal *A* does not depend for its existence on originally (or ever) having the original thick matter or sgc-matter it actually has originally. Nor does that animal depend for its existence on ever having any of the thick matter or sgc-matter it actually ever subsequently has, for familiar reasons.

(The animal might have eaten completely different food from the food it actually ate, etc.) So, it seems, we can say about the animal *A* what we said about our lake: it could have existed, without ever having had any of the matter it actually ever had. So it looks as though non-human and human animals don't owe either their existence or their particular identity to their matter. In which case, it would seem, it is not true of each material substance that it has some matter that grounds both the existence and particular identity of that substance, and the existence and particular identity of the substantial form of that substance.

Perhaps, though, I have very much gotten the wrong end of the stick about what Aquinas means when he (more or less) says that each material substance has some matter that grounds both the existence and the particular identity of that substance, and the existence and particular identity of the substantial form of that substance.

It seems natural to suppose that if the existence and particular identity of *x* is grounded in *y*'s being a certain way, then *x*'s existing and having its particular identity depends on *y*'s being that way – in other words, to suppose that *y*'s being that way is a necessary condition for *x*'s existing and having the particular identity it does. But we might instead suppose that if the existence and particular identity of *x* is grounded in *y*'s being a certain way, then *x*'s existing and having its particular identity is “nothing over and above” *y*'s being that way – in other words, that *y*'s being that way is a *sufficient*, rather than a necessary, condition of *x*'s existing and having its particular identity.

Suppose that Aquinas does not think of grounding (and individuation) in terms of necessity, but rather in terms of sufficiency. (This does not seem to be too much of a stretch, given that when Aquinas says *x* is individuated but *y* or *y* is the principle of individuation for *x*, he seems to mean that *x* has its identity because of *y*, and “because” statements often have both a reading in terms of necessity, and a reading in terms of sufficiency.) What if, when he (more or less) says that a material substance has some matter that grounds both the existence and the particular identity of that substance, and the existence and particular identity of the substantial form of that substance, he means something along the lines of:

For any material substance *s* with a substantial form *sf* of kind *K*, *s* has some bit of matter *m* such that (a) *s*'s existing and having its particular identity is “nothing over and above” *m*'s existing and being *K*-formed (i.e., *m*'s having some *K*-form or other) and (b) *sf*'s existing and having its particular identity is nothing “over and above” *m*'s existing and being *K*-formed (i.e., *m*'s having some *K*-form or other). In other words, for any material substance *s* with a substantial form *sf* of kind *K*, *s* has some bit of matter *m* such that *m*'s being *K*-formed (*m*'s having some *K*-form or other) is strictly sufficient for *s*'s existing and having the particular identity it does, and also for *sf*'s existing and having the particular identity it does.

Then, unless I'm in a muddle, the argument just sketched against Aquinas' thesis that every material substance has some bit of matter that grounds the existence and particular identity of both that substance and its substantial form misses the mark. For those arguments aimed to show that the existence of lakes and human beings is independent of their ever having any of the matter they ever actually have, and this is wholly compatible with the supposition that lakes and human beings have some bit of matter that grounds both their existence and the existence of their substantial form, if grounding is understood, not in terms of dependence (necessity), but rather in terms of "nothing-over-and-above-ness" (sufficiency).

This may look promising, but there is literally a cloud on the horizon.

Suppose a cloud is made, via an evaporation-involving process from a quantity of water originally in the sea. Suppose that cloud "rains itself out of existence", and the quantity of water that constituted it ends up back in the sea. Suppose finally that the same quantity of water that was initially in the sea, and then constituted the cloud, and then went back into the sea, ends up once again in a cloud via a second evaporation-involving process. Will the cloud that results from the second evaporation-involving process be the very same cloud as the cloud that resulted from the first evaporation-involving process? Aquinas says not:

When substances are corrupted, they do not come back into existence via any natural process, even though substances of the same kind do (*ea vero quae secundum substantiam corrumpuntur, non reiterantur eadem numero secundum operationem naturae, sed solum secundum speciem*). The cloud that produces rain and the cloud which is subsequently produced by the evaporation of the rainwater are not numerically the same (*non enim eadem numero nubes est ex qua pluvia generatur, et quae iterum ex pluviente aqua et rursus evaporante generatur*).

If Aquinas is right about cloud identity, it follows that when, at the beginning of Aquinas' story, a portion of matter is first cloudformed, one cloud comes into existence, and when, at the end of that story, that portion of matter is re-cloudformed, a different cloud comes into existence. But it is difficult to see how this can be reconciled with the idea that any material substance (including a cloud) has a bit of matter that grounds the existence and particular identity of both that substance and its substantial form – assuming that we understand grounding in terms of sufficiency, rather than necessity.

In fact, I am not sure I agree with Aquinas about the metaphysics of cloud identity. (Interested readers may find a discussion of some of the relevant issues in my "Starting Over", in A. Bottani and P. Giaretta, eds., *Individuals, Essence and Identity: Themes in Analytic Metaphysics*, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2002). But I don't think it will be a great deal of help to Aquinas if we say that in his example the very same cloud is formed and reformed. For if we understand grounding in terms of sufficiency, the principle that the identity of material substances and

their substantial forms is grounded in their matter will imply that from any particular bit of sgc-matter, and any kind of material substance, that bit of sgc-matter will be in secondary potentiality with respect to at most one material substance of that kind. And this supposition is surely indefensible, at least on the Thomistic conception of kinds. One and the same bit of sgc-matter could be “turned into” many different clouds, or lakes, or indeed human beings. If, as Leibniz supposed, all substances necessarily belonged to “unit species”, then we could say that for any particular bit of sgc-matter, and any given substantial kind, there was at most one substance of that kind one could as it were “get out of” that bit of sgc-matter. But, as Aquinas thinks of it, terrestrial substantial species, as opposed to celestial or angelic ones, are (actually as well as possibly) “plural”.

I have been looking for, but have not found, a construal of what Aquinas means when he says that material substances and their substantial forms are individuated by (have their existence and particular identities grounded in) their matter. We can construe grounding either in terms of necessity, or in terms of sufficiency. But as long as we do that in the more or less straightforward ways I have suggested, the thesis that material substances and their substantial forms have their existence and particular identities grounded in their matter seems hard to defend. (If the river doesn't get you, the clouds will.)

Perhaps this only shows that when Aquinas (more or less) says that:

material substances and their substantial forms have their existences and particular identities grounded in their matter,

i.e., when he says:

matter is the principle of individuation for material substances and their substantial forms,

he doesn't mean either that:

for every material substance s with a substantial form sf , s has some bit of matter m such that necessarily s and sf exist and have the particular identities they do, only if m exists and has the particular identity it does.

or that

for every material substance s with a substantial form sf of kind K , s has some bit of matter m such that necessarily if m exists and is K -formed (has some form or other of kind K), then s and sf exist, and have the particular identities they do.

Perhaps he means something different, and defensible, and true. It's perfectly possible; but I have not been able to figure out what that something else might be.

Essence and existence

Let us say that *a* and *b* are *really distinct* if *a* and *b* are (both) real, and *a* and *b* are distinct; and let us say that *a* and *b* are *really identical* if *a* and *b* are real, and *a* and *b* are one and the same thing. The sun and the moon are really distinct, and the sun and the closest star are really identical; the sun and the tooth fairy (or the fountain of youth and the tooth fairy) are neither really identical nor really distinct.

As we have seen, Aquinas thinks that the *esse* or existence of a created substance is really distinct from (a) the essence of that substance, (b) the “components” or “principles” of that essence (assuming the essence is composite), (c) the predicamental accidents of that substance (that is, the accidents in the last nine Aristotelian categories), and (d) the substance itself. The (substantial or “absolute”) *esse* of a substance (*esse substantiale*, as Aquinas often calls it) cannot be identified with the essence of a substance, or any part thereof, because it is something “outside” (*praeter*) that essence, that “enters into composition with” that essence (see *Quaestiones Quodlibetales*, *Quodlibet* 2, 2, 1, and 2, 2). The substantial or absolute *esse* of a created substance cannot be identified with any of that substance’s predicamental accidents, because none of the predicamental accidents of a substance make that substance be in an unqualified sense (make that substance be *simpliciter*). The substantial or absolute *esse* of a created substance cannot be identified with the substance itself, because, as we have seen, the *esse* of a substance is “disjoint from” (that is, shares no parts with) the essence of that substance, whereas the substance itself has the essence as a kind of “formal part”, and is accordingly not disjoint from it.

(Aquinas also holds that any *esse accidentale* (“accidental existence”, “mode of existence” (?)) is really distinct from the essence of that substance, the parts of the essence of that substance (if the essence has parts), the predicamental accidents of that substance, and the substance itself. But in what follows the focus will be on substantial or absolute essence, rather than the accidental *esse* that Aquinas says is only *esse* “in a qualified sense” or “in a certain respect” (*secundum quid*).)

For Aquinas, (in created substances) *esse* is to essence as substantial form is to essential, non-substantial-form-including matter. Just as the substantial form of a material substance actuates a certain secondary potentiality of a bit of thin matter, a substantial or absolute *esse* actuates a secondary potentiality of an essence (*ST*, Ia, 3, 4, *responsio*). A substantial form actuates the potentiality of a bit of matter to be the matter of a substance of a particular kind, whereas a substantial or absolute *esse* actuates the potentiality of an essence to be the essence of an actually existing being (the potentiality of an essence to be the essence of something that actually exists). Just as a bit of matter receives and individuates a substantial form, an essence receives and individuates an *esse*: in just the same way that matter is the only thing that could multiply multipliable substantial forms, essence is the only

thing that could multiply multipliable *esse* (*De Ente et Essentia*, 4, and *SCG*, II, 52). Matter and essence are actuated individuators; form and *esse* are individuated actuators.

That said, the relation between, say, the essence of a beech tree and its *esse* is unlike as well as like the relation between the matter of that beech tree and its substantial form. If by “matter” we understand the matter under indeterminate dimensions that individuates both the beech tree and its substantial form, then Aquinas’ view is that that matter was around before it was in union with (and received) the beech tree’s substantial form, and will still be around, even after it has ceased to be in union with that form (see again *SCG*, IV, 81). By contrast, the substantial form of the beech tree was not, will not be, and indeed could not be around, unless it were in union with the matter that individuates both that substantial form and the beech tree having that form. (The substantial form of a human being can survive separation from all matter, but for Aquinas it is in this respect unique among substantial forms.) The matter (under indeterminate dimensions) of a beech tree can, as it were, survive a “divorce” from (and antedate a “marriage” to) the beech tree’s substantial form, but the substantial form of a beech tree cannot survive a divorce from (or antedate a marriage to) the beech tree’s matter (under indeterminate dimensions).

Just as a beech tree’s substantial form could not be there at all, unless it were received by the beech tree’s matter under indeterminate dimensions, for Aquinas the beech tree’s *esse* could not be there at all, unless it were received by the beech tree’s essence. (The beech tree’s *esse* could not be received by any other essence, any more than the beech tree’s substantial form could be received by any other bit of matter under indeterminate dimensions. And the beech tree’s *esse* could not be unreceived, since, as we shall see in [chapter 4](#), only divine *esse* can be unreceived.)

Now someone might think that for Aquinas, just as a bit of matter under indeterminate dimensions can be only potentially in receipt of the substantial form of, say, a beech tree, an essence can be only potentially in receipt of an *esse*. But Aquinas explicitly says that, although an essence is in potentiality toward *esse*, the potentiality in question is not like the potentiality of, say, a stone to be hot. A stone can be only potentially hot (indeed, we would not normally describe a stone as potentially hot if it were actually hot). So the potentiality of a stone to be hot is a potentiality “separable from its act”. By contrast, Aquinas tells us, the potentiality of an essence to receive *esse* is a potentiality always accompanied by and inseparable from its act (*De Spiritualibus Creaturis*, un., 1, *responsio*). The “marriage” of a given essence to its *esse* is eternal and indissoluble.

So the relation between the essence of a created substance and its *esse* is less like the relation between the matter of a beech tree and its substantial form than it is like the relation between the matter of a celestial body and its substantial form (in Thomistic astronomy). The matter of a celestial

body and the substantial form of that celestial body are eternally and indissolubly joined, and the matter of that celestial body is only ever in potentiality with respect to the substantial form it actually and eternally possesses (*ST*, Ia, 66, 2, *responsio*).

As I read Aquinas, he thinks there is a real distinction between any created thing's essence and its *esse* (and a real composition of essence and *esse* in any created substance). Not all commentators on Aquinas would agree with this reading. But Aquinas does say explicitly (e.g., in *De Ente et Essentia*, 4) that if a thing has received *esse*, then its essence is different from its *esse*. It might be objected that, when Aquinas says that in things with received *esse*, essence, and *esse* are different, he has in mind what we might call a "conceptual" (as opposed to a real) difference between essence and *esse* – where a conceptual (as opposed to a real) difference between *a* and *b* is a difference between the concept of *a* and the concept of *b* (as opposed to a difference between *a* and *b*). But, to start with, Aquinas does not generally say that *a* and *b* are different (without further qualification), when he has in mind that there is a conceptual (as opposed to a real) difference between *a* and *b*: in those circumstances, he says instead that *a* and *b* differ conceptually or in their concept (*secundum rationem* or *ratione*). So the fact that Aquinas says that in things with received *esse*, essence and *esse* are different (full stop), is a good reason to think that Aquinas holds that in things with received *esse*, there is a real (and not merely conceptual) difference between the essence and the *esse* of a thing with received *esse*. Also, in his Commentary on Boethius' *De Hebdomadibus*, 2, Aquinas draws a contrast between an absolutely simple being (to wit, God) who is really identical (*idem realiter*) with His unreceived *esse*, and all other complete beings, which are not really identical to their received *esse*, and are really composite, inasmuch as they are really composed of two really different things (their essence and their *esse*).

Aquinas' insistence on a real distinction between essence and existence in created substances occasioned controversy during his lifetime, and continues to do so today. That insistence has been thought problematic for various reasons.

According to not a few of Aquinas' contemporaries and successors (among them, Descartes and Newton) separability is a mark of a real distinction, and the absence of separability is the mark of the absence of a real distinction. If mutually inseparable things are not really distinct, then either a created thing's essence and its *esse* are not really distinct, or the essence and the *esse* of a created thing are after all separable. This does not by itself constitute an argument against a real distinction between essence and existence in created substances. After all, a defender of a real distinction between essence and existence in creatures could accept that *a* and *b* are really distinct only if *a* and *b* are not mutually inseparable, and conclude that, *pace* Aquinas, a created thing's essence and its *esse* are not

mutually inseparable. (He might hold, as Henry of Ghent seems to have held, that a created being's essence has a kind of being (in virtue of which it can be the object of God's knowledge) even before that being actually exists.) But if real distinctness implies separability, then, assuming (as Aquinas does) that essence and *esse* are inseparable, it follows that essence and *esse* are not really distinct. And critics of the real distinction between essence and *esse* in creatures who agree with Aquinas about the inseparability of essence from *esse* have argued that, since real distinctness implies separability, we should conclude that essence and *esse* are not in fact really distinct in creatures.

Aquinas would say, however, that reality abounds in pairs of really distinct *inseparabilia* – <Socrates, Socrates' risibility>, <this bit of fire, this igneous substantial form>, <the Sun, the Sun's individual matter>, <the Sun's individual celestial matter, the Sun's individual substantial form>, <the Son, the Holy Spirit>, and so on. While some or all of these alleged examples of pairs of really distinct *inseparabilia* might be thought problematic, the idea that there could be pairs of really distinct *inseparabilia* seems plausible enough.

To take an example from Peter Simons, consider a kitchen knife made of a central metal bit (part of which "sticks out" beyond the knife's handles, and has a sharp edge), and two plastic bits that jointly constitute the knife's plastic handle. Necessarily, if the knife exists, the central metal bit (henceforth, for brevity, the *cmb*) exists (inasmuch as the *cmb* is an essential part of the knife). It also seems as though necessarily, if the *cmb* exists, the knife exists (inasmuch as the existence of the *cmb* is a sufficient condition for the existence of the knife (given that the knife needn't have its handles to exist)). So necessarily, the knife exists if and only if the *cmb* exists. In other words, the knife and the *cmb* are mutually inseparable. But the knife and the *cmb* are clearly really distinct items: (until or unless the knife loses its handles) the knife "outmasses" and "outvolumes" the *cmb*, and nothing can outmass or outvolume itself.

Naturally, one can use the term "real distinction" as a term of art, in such a way that it is true *ex vi terminorum* that things are not really distinct if, necessarily, both exist, or neither exists. If we use the term that way, then – assuming Aquinas is right to suppose that you couldn't have Socrates' essence without his *esse*, or vice versa – it will be true that the essence and *esse* of a created substance are not really distinct. But in that case, this last claim will be entirely compatible with Aquinas' claim that created essence and created *esse* are really distinct, since Aquinas does not use the term "real distinction" in such a way that there is a definitional link between real distinctness and separability. (Aquinas uses the term in the straightforward and intuitive way, according to which *a* and *b* are really distinct if and only if *a* and *b* are real, and *a* and *b* are distinct.)

Of course, for a number of reasons, it does not more or less immediately follow, simply from the fact that things can be mutually inseparable but

really distinct, that Socrates' essence and Socrates' *esse* are mutually inseparable but really distinct, First, someone who (like Aquinas) thinks that Socrates' essence is only in Socrates, but (unlike Aquinas) thinks that Socrates' *esse* is in everything that exists, will think that Socrates' essence and Socrates' *esse* are really distinct, but not mutually inseparable. Second, someone who (unlike Aquinas) thinks that neither Socrates' essence nor Socrates' *esse* are only in Socrates, but thinks that Socrates' *esse* is "genuinely common to" all and only things that exist, while Socrates' essence is "genuinely common to" all and only things that are human, will again say that Socrates' essence and his *esse* are really distinct, but not mutually inseparable. Finally, suppose that someone thinks (as Aquinas does) that both Socrates' essence and Socrates' *esse* are only in Socrates, because she thinks (as Aquinas does) that Socrates' essence and his *esse* are tropes that could neither exist in some individual different from Socrates, nor exist in an "orphaned" state. Then she will have to say (as Aquinas does) that Socrates' essence and his *esse* are mutually inseparable. (If Socrates' essence is an "unshareable, untransferable and unorphanable" trope, then Socrates' essence is never without Socrates. And, whether or not Socrates' essence is a trope, Socrates is never without his essence, because the essence of an individual is "by definition" something that individual is never without. So, assuming that Socrates' essence is an unshareable, untransferable, and unorphanable trope, Socrates and his essence are mutually inseparable. By the same reasoning, if Socrates' *esse* is an unshareable, untransferable and unorphanable trope, then Socrates is never without his *esse*, or vice versa. So Socrates' essence and his *esse* are both mutually inseparable from Socrates, which implies that they are mutually inseparable from each other.) But someone who (like Aquinas) thinks of Socrates' essence and his *esse* as unshareable, untransferable and unorphanable tropes might either (like Aquinas) suppose they are mutually inseparable really distinct tropes, or (unlike Aquinas) suppose they are one and the same trope under two descriptions.

Someone who thinks of Socrates' essence and *esse* as unshareable, untransferable, and unorphanable tropes could think of them as one and the same trope, rather than as two different through mutually inseparable tropes. But there is no immediately evident reason to think she *should* think of them that way.

It might be thought that we can't make sense of the very idea of really distinct but mutually inseparable tropes. If we can't, then we can't make sense of Aquinas' account of the "metaphysical constitution" of material and immaterial substances, since that account is multiply committed to really distinct but mutually inseparable tropes. In fact, though, I don't see why the idea of really distinct but mutually inseparable tropes is any less intelligible than the idea of really distinct but mutually inseparable material objects. Suppose that all electrons are essentially round, and essentially have mass *m*, and that all neutrons are essentially round. Then, it seems

natural for a tropist to say, this electron's mass and this electron's roundness are mutually inseparable (since they are both mutually inseparable from this electron), but really distinct (since this electron's shape is a trope of the same kind as that neutron's shape, but this electron's mass is not a trope of the same kind as this neutron's shape).

Or is the idea that, although there are really distinct but mutually inseparable tropes (e.g., this electron's mass, and this electron's shape), Socrates' essence and Socrates *esse* couldn't be distinct but mutually inseparable tropes? As we saw at the beginning of this section, *t and t' are really distinct tropes* can only be true if *t* and *t'* are both real tropes. But assuming there really is such a thing as Socrates' essence-trope, and there really is such a thing as Socrates' *esse*-trope, why couldn't those tropes be mutually inseparable and really distinct? One should have thought that a tropist would want to say that Socrates' essence differs not only numerically but also in kind from, say, the essence of this electron. But Socrates' *esse* is his existence, and there is no evident reason to suppose that the existence of Socrates is different not just *numero* but *specie* from the existence of this electron.

Here's another way to put essentially the same point. Even if a tropist is not thinking about respects in which this electron does and does not resemble this neutron, one would still expect her to not be immediately inclined to say that the roundness this electron has essentially = the mass this electron has essentially. For it seems obvious that this electron's roundness is its shape. But it seems far from obvious that this electron's mass is its shape. "This electron's mass is its shape", at least to my ears, sounds like a mistake: it sounds like a misidentification of items of different kinds. But, at least to my ears, "Socrates' essence is his *esse*" – that is, "Socrates' essence is his existence" – also sounds like a misidentification of items of different kinds.

As indeed it is, Aquinas would say. But how would he support this claim? Curiously, not by arguing as follows:

Essence as such is different from *esse* as such (just as shape as such is different from mass as such).

So any particular individual's essence is really distinct from that individual's *esse* (just as any particular (shaped and massive) individual's shape is really distinct from that individual's mass).

So Socrates' essence is really distinct from Socrates' *esse* (just as this electron's shape is really distinct from its mass).

Aquinas would reject this argument, since he denies its second premise: he thinks that there is in fact a unique being whose essence is really identical to his *esse* (namely, God).

Aquinas would, however, endorse the following argument:

Socrates ≠ God.

For any individual except God, that individual's essence is really distinct from that's individual *esse*.

—

Socrates' essence is really distinct from Socrates' *esse*.

For Aquinas, there is exactly one uncreated, absolutely simple being in whom essence and existence are really identical, and many created, less than absolutely simple beings in which essence and existence are really distinct (including Socrates).

But how would Aquinas argue that there is just one uncreated, absolutely simple being whose essence is not really distinct from its essence? I shall have something to say about this question in [Chapter 4](#), but in this section I shall discuss only part of the argument Aquinas would offer for this thesis – the part that aims to show that there is at most one being whose essence is not really distinct from its *esse*.

At [chapter 4](#) of the *De Ente et Essentia* Aquinas writes:

Whatever does not belong to the understanding of an essence or quiddity (*quicquid enim non est de intellectu essentiae vel quidditas*) comes from outside and enters into composition with the essence, since no essence can be understood without those things that are its parts (*quia nulla essentia sine his quae sunt partes essentiae intelligi potest*). But any essence or quiddity can be understood without anything being understood about its *esse* (*omnis autem essentia vel quidditas potest intelligi sine hoc quod aliquid intelligatur de esse suo*): I can understand what a man or a phoenix is, and still not know whether it has *esse* in reality (*in rerum natura*). So it is evident that *esse* is other than essence or quiddity (*esse est aliud ab essentia vel quidditate*) – unless perhaps there is something whose quiddity is its very *esse*, and this thing could only be one and first.

This passage presents a substantial number of interpretative challenges. In “*The Esse/Essentia Argument in Aquinas’ De Ente et Essentia*” (in B. Davies, ed., *Thomas Aquinas: Contemporary Philosophical Perspectives*), Scott MacDonald has (very helpfully) suggested the underlying logical structure of the argument contained in the passage cited above is the following:

There are three ways to account for a thing's *esse*: either
 (a) its *esse* is a part of its essence, or

- (b) its *esse* comes to its essence from without, and effects a composition with that essence, or
 - (c) its *esse* itself is the entire essence of the thing.
- It is not the case that (a).
 If it is the case (c), then it is so for just one thing.
 For all other things it must be the case that (b).

(p. 145)

In the argument we start off with three initial possibilities (*esse* is a proper part of the essence of a being, *esse* effects a composition with the essence of a being, and *esse* just is the essence of a being). The first possibility is then eliminated, leaving only the last two.

Notice that if the argument is sound, we may conclude that every being except perhaps one not only has an *esse* really distinct from its essence, but also has an *esse* really disjoint from (beyond, outside) its essence: we have an argument for the “real disjointness” of essence and *esse* in everything (except perhaps one thing).

The argument contains two premises concerning the understanding of essences: *an essence can be understood without anything being understood about its esse*, and *no essence can be understood without those things that are its parts*. It appears that these premises are in the argument to support the elimination of the initial possibility (a). (It seems to work something like this: suppose that the *esse* of, say, a man were part of his essence. Then since it is impossible to understand an essence without those things that are its parts, it would be impossible to understand an essence without its *esse*. But it is not impossible to understand an essence without understanding anything about its *esse*. So the *esse* of that man is not part of his essence.)

Commentators have spilled much ink on the question of whether Aquinas can legitimately move from his premises concerning the understanding of essences to the conclusion that the *esse* of (say) a man cannot be a proper part of his essence. But rather than adding my ink to theirs, I shall raise a different and (I think) prior worry about the completeness of the argument under consideration.

Like MacDonald, I think that Aquinas departs from the assumption that if a being *b* exists, we have (at most) three possibilities: *b*'s *esse* is a proper part of the essence of *b*, *b*'s *esse* is an “extra-essential” or accidental component of *b* (i.e., something that is in *b* but outside *b*'s essence), or *b*'s *esse* just is *b*'s essence. What I don't understand is why Aquinas starts with just these initial possibilities.

Suppose that Peter is lame. Peter's lameness, Aquinas would say, is obviously not his essence. Neither is it a proper part of his essence. Neither is it an accidental form that enters into composition with Peter's essence when he becomes lame. So Peter is lame, even though Peter's lameness is neither part or all of Peter's essence, nor an accident in composition with Peter's essence.

Why couldn't it similarly be that Socrates exists, even though Socrates' *esse* is neither part of Socrates' essence, nor the whole of Socrates' essence, nor an “impredicamental” accident outside Socrates' essence?

Of course, lameness is a privation, and *esse* is not. But why mightn't it be that *esse* is neither part of, nor all of, nor an accident outside of an essence, even though *esse* is not a privation?

In this connection, it is interesting to compare Aquinas' view of *esse* with his view of unity. Just as Aquinas thinks of creaturely *esse* as an inseparable "impredicamental" accident, one might think of creaturely unity that way. Indeed, Aquinas says, someone did:

Avicenna believed that unity ... added something to the essence (*substantiam*) of a being, as *white* adds to *man*.

(*ST*, Ia, 11, 1, *ad 1um*)

But, Aquinas avers, Avicenna was wrong. At *ST*, Ia, 6, 3, Aquinas asks whether anything but God is good through its own essence (*per suam essentiam*). He answers in the negative, on the grounds that the goodness of every created thing is not its essence, but something "superadded" to that essence (*bonitas rei creatae non est ipsa eius essentia sed aliquid superadditum*) – either its *esse substantiale*, or some additional perfection.

By contrast, Aquinas goes on to say,

It must be said that each thing is one through its essence (*per suam essentiam*).

(*ST*, Ia, 6, 3, *ad 1um*)

For, Aquinas argues,

if a thing were one through anything else but its substance, since this again would be one ... we should be driven on to infinity.

(*ST*, Ia, 11, 1, *ad 1um*)

The idea seems to be that we can (and should) account for the unity of a created substance without supposing that there is in that substance an extra-essential principle (in other words, an accident) that makes it one. A created substance is one, not through something "superadded to its essence", but through its essence (*per suam essentiam*).

Now someone who thinks that a created substance is one through its essence could identify that substance's unity with either the whole essence of that substance, or a proper part thereof: she could identify Socrates' unity with his whole essence, or with his substantial form, or with his matter.

But even though she *could*, it is hard to see why she would need to, or necessarily would want to. She could instead say something like this:

Socrates is one through his essence. That is, Socrates is one because he has an essence. But this doesn't imply that Socrates' essence = Socrates' unity, or that some proper part of Socrates' essence = Socrates' unity.

For we needn't identify Socrates' unity with any "essential constituent" of Socrates, any more than we need to identify it with any "accidental constituent" of him. Just as Socrates can be lame, without having any essential or accidental constituent that we can identify his lameness with, Socrates can be one, without having any essential or accidental constituent we can identify his unity with.

Here is an analogy. Suppose that Socrates is both cold and pale. We can say that Socrates is cold or pale through his coldness, and we can also say that Socrates is cold or pale through his paleness. (Socrates is cold or pale, because he is cold, and Socrates is cold or pale, because he is pale: his cold-or-pale-ness is as it were overdetermined.) Nevertheless, we would not want to identify Socrates' cold-or-pale-ness with any of his accidental constituents. Obviously, we cannot identify Socrates' cold-or-pale-ness with some accident of Socrates independent of both his coldness and paleness (such as his in-the-Lyceum-ness). But equally, we cannot identify Socrates' cold-or-pale-ness with his coldness, or his paleness. Since coldness \neq paleness, we cannot identify Socrates' cold-or-pale-ness with both his coldness and his paleness. Nor can we identify Socrates' cold-or-pale-ness with his coldness, rather than his paleness, or vice versa. For one thing, that would be arbitrary. For another, Socrates' cold-or-pale-ness cannot be identified with his coldness (or his paleness), because Socrates could be cold-or-pale without being cold (or without being pale). The only way in which we could identify Socrates' cold-or-pale-ness with some accident of Socrates, is if we thought Socrates had an ("irreducibly disjunctive") accidental form of cold-or-pale-ness. But (as Aquinas would agree) Socrates has no such accidental form. So (as Aquinas would agree) we should say that Socrates is cold or pale through his coldness, and also through his paleness, but there is no accidental constituent of Socrates that can be identified with his cold-or-pale-ness. *Mutatis mutandis*, what Aquinas would agree we should say about cold-or-pale-ness, we could equally well say about unity. That is, we could say that Socrates is one through his essence, but there is nevertheless no essential constituent of Socrates that can be identified with his unity (just as there is no accidental constituent of Socrates that can be identified with his unity). Socrates is one through his essence, even though there is no constituent of Socrates (be it essential or accidental) that can be identified with his unity. Socrates is one, and is one through his essence – end of story.

Does this way of thinking of things imply that Socrates is one through his essence, but not through his unity? Perhaps *Socrates is one through his unity* – understood the right way – is not only true but truistic, in the same way that *Socrates is lame through his lameness* – understood the right way – is not only true but truistic. But (on this way of thinking of things) if it is true that Socrates is one through his unity, this truth does not imply that there is anything accidental or essential in Socrates which

can be identified with the unity that makes him one, in exactly the same way that if it is true that Socrates is lame through his lameness, this truth does not imply that there is anything accidental or essential in Socrates which can be identified with the lameness that makes him lame.

To put the point in contemporary parlance, the suggestion is that Socrates is one, and is one through his essence. Perhaps there is a sense in which Socrates is one through his unity. Be that as it may, Socrates is not one through his “unity trope”, because he doesn’t have a unity trope, be it essential or accidental.

If, however, we might suppose that Socrates is one without a unity trope, why mightn’t we equally suppose that Socrates exists without an existence trope (without an *esse* trope)? Why mightn’t we suppose that, even assuming it is true that Socrates exists through his *esse*, Socrates’ existing through his *esse* does not imply that there is anything accidental or essential in Socrates which can be identified with the *esse* that makes Socrates exist? And if we might suppose this, isn’t Aquinas’ list of initial possibilities in the *De Ente et Essentia*, 4 argument too short?

To express more or less the same worry a different way, in *De Ente et Essentia* 4, Aquinas appears to take for granted that Socrates has an *esse* trope, and to argue that it is really disjoint from Socrates’ essence trope. But someone might well deny that Socrates’ *esse* trope is really disjoint from (and hence really distinct from) Socrates’ essence trope, not on the grounds that Socrates’ *esse* trope partly or wholly “overlaps with” his essence trope, but on the grounds that there is no such trope as Socrates’ *esse* trope to be really disjoint from (or distinct from, or for that matter partially or wholly overlap with) Socrates’ essence trope.

Aquinas also defends a real distinction between *esse* and essence at *SCG*, II, 54. There he seems to be thinking along these lines: the matter of a material substance, inasmuch as it is a “being in potentiality”, couldn’t be a component of that substance, unless there were some component of that substance (viz., a substantial form) that actuated it. The substantial form that actuates the matter cannot be identified with the matter it actuates, because nothing can actuate itself. Still, even though the substantial form of a material substance is in one way an actuator (an actuator of a bit of matter), it is also in another way a being in potentiality, and an “actuatee”. So again, the substantial form couldn’t be a component of the substance, unless there were some component of that substance which actuated it. And again, because nothing is self-actuated, the substantial form must be actuated by some other component of that substance, which is to the substantial form as the substantial form is to the matter (see *Summa contra Gentiles*, II, 54). That other component of the material substance – a kind of “hyperact” or “meta-act” or “act²” – will be *esse*. (See *De Potentia*, 7, 2, *ad* 9^{um}: “what I call *esse* is the actuality of all acts”.) If on the other hand a created material substance is immaterial, then its substantial form will not actuate any other

component of that substance (that way lies universal hylomorphism). But it will still be an “actuatee”, which can only be a component of that immaterial substance if there is some other component of that substance (again, *esse*) which actuates it.

But here someone who is opposed to or skeptical about the idea that essence and *esse* are really distinct in created substances will presumably ask how we can be sure that substantial form isn't (as Aristotle seems to have supposed) an unactuated or ultimate actuator of matter.

Summing up, it is clear that, for Aquinas, in order to account for the existence of a created substance, we need to go beyond Aristotle's ontology: we need to posit a *sui generis* extra-essential principle in that creature – a special kind of (hyper) or (meta) act inseparable from what it actuates. But I do not really understand why Aquinas thinks that an extra-essential principle of *esse* is an explanatory necessity, in a way that an extra-essential principle of unity is not.

3 Human beings

Materialism and dualism

According to Aquinas, the human soul is not a body (*ST*, Ia, 75, 1). Unlike a body, it is an incorruptible being that, along with its operations of will (*velle*) and understanding (*intelligere*), survives the corruption and destruction of the human body (*SCG*, II, 79 and 81). Thus a human being is a complete substance composed of an incomplete bodily substance and an incomplete spiritual substance (see *ST*, Ia, 75, 1, *pr. de homine, qui ex spirituali et corporali substantia componitur* (of man, who is composed of a spiritual and a corporeal substance), and *ST*, Ia, 75, 4, *responsio*).

All this would seem to imply that Aquinas is what contemporary metaphysicians would call a substance dualist as well as a property dualist. (Roughly, property dualists hold that mental properties cannot be identified with any physical properties: for example, consciousness cannot be identified with any physical property. Substance dualists hold that “mental (or “minded”) substances” – that is, to say substances with rational minds, persons – cannot be identified with any physical substance. It is typically assumed that (and it seems true that) substance dualism implies property dualism, since (it seems) any substance all of whose properties were physical would have to be a physical substance. On the other hand, it is not at all obvious that property dualism implies substance dualism, since it seems at least initially possible that there are physical substances that have non-physical as well as physical properties). But not all commentators on Aquinas would be happy to classify Aquinas as a substance dualist. According to Gyula Klima and Brian Davies, the Thomist conception of the mind–body relation manages (as Klima puts it) to avoid the Scylla of dualism and the Charybdis of materialism. And Robert Pasnau has said that, although Aquinas is not a materialist, neither is he a dualist “in any significant sense”. Even those commentators who take Aquinas to be a dualist of some sort are not always in agreement about what sort of dualist he is. Some commentators (for example, Eleonore Stump) regard Aquinas as a non-Cartesian substance dualist; others regard him as a property dualist, but not a substance dualist.

In attempting to ascertain whether Aquinas is a dualist, and what sort of dualist he is, if he is one, it will be useful to start with Aquinas' account of how human beings understand.

Human beings do various sorts of things – walk, see, understand ... And, Aquinas would say, human beings do various things because they have parts enable them to do to do those things. A human being walks because she has legs that enable her to walk, sees because she has eyes that enable her to see, and understands because she has a mind or intellective soul that enables her to understand. Aquinas stresses that although the parts enable a human being to perform certain actions, it is the whole human being, rather than her parts, that performs the action:

Operations are attributed to the whole through its parts. We say that a man sees with his eyes (*per oculum*) and touches with his hand (*per manum*) ... So it can be said that the soul understands, just as the eye sees. But it is more properly said that the man understands with his soul.
(*ST*, Ia, 75, 2 *ad* 2um)

Readers less familiar with Aristotle than Descartes may think that Aquinas is committed to dualism simply in virtue of holding that a man understands with his soul (as opposed, say, to his brain or some part of his brain). But Aquinas follows Aristotle in understanding the term *soul* in such a way that it is true “by definition” that if we are alive (or guinea pigs are alive, or poppies are alive) then we (or guinea pigs, or poppies) have souls. And it is true “by definition” that if we not only are alive, but also understand, then we have an intellective soul. So, as Aquinas understands the term “intellective soul”, it is definitionally neutral with respect to materiality (neither definitionally implies nor definitionally excludes materiality) in just the way that (I take it) the English term *mind* is. The intellective soul is by definition what we think or understand with, in the same way that the eyes are by definition what we see with, and the question of the immateriality or otherwise of the intellective soul is a substantive rather than a definitional question.

Aquinas thinks that we see with a corporeal organ (*per organum corporeum*), but we do not think or understand with a corporeal organ. Aquinas' argument for this last claim appears to be the following:

Human beings can know all corporeal things (all bodies).

If human beings understood with a corporeal organ, they would be unable to know all corporeal things.

Human beings do not understand with a corporeal organ.

(cf. *ST*, Ia, 75, 2, *responsio*)

Bracketing doubts one might raise about the first premise, why should we think that the second premise is true? Here I find Aquinas' reasons difficult to discern. He avers that if we understood by means of a corporeal organ, the particular nature of that corporeal organ would prevent us from understanding all corporeal natures, in something like the way tinted glasses prevent us from seeing all the colours things have (*ibid.*). Only an immaterial intellect is as it were completely "transparent", and allows any corporeal nature to "reach our minds", in something like the way transparent glass allows any color of any body to "reach our eyes".

What I don't understand here is why Aquinas thinks the corporeality of an organ of understanding would perforce compromise its "transparency". Aquinas' point here is not that a corporeal organ of understanding couldn't enable us to understand *any* corporeal natures, because matter is the wrong kind of stuff to constitute an organ of understanding. It is instead that a corporeal organ of understanding couldn't enable us to understand *all* corporeal natures. If, however, a corporeal organ of understanding – a cerebral cortex, say – is up to the job of enabling us to understand some corporeal natures, why exactly is it not up to the job of enabling us to understand others? Why is it that if we had a corporeal organ of understanding, the corporeal nature of that organ would necessarily make some natures "un-understandable" to our minds, in the way that the colour of some coloured glass necessarily makes certain colours invisible to our eyes? Aquinas thinks the cases are analogous, but I don't understand why he thinks they are. I believe that Aquinas thinks corporeality is necessarily understanding-limiting because he accepts some other theses that he does not explicitly assert in *ST*, Ia, 75, 2, but I am uncertain what those theses are. So the *ST*, Ia, 75, 2 argument seems to me an enthymeme that I don't know how to turn into a fully fleshed out and cogent argument.

(Given the dramatic relative unpopularity of *ST*, Ia, 75, 2-type arguments for the immateriality of the mind, compared to "Cartesian" modal arguments – even among champions of substance dualism – I take it I am far from alone in not finding the *ST*, Ia, 75, 2 argument as expressed cogent, and finding it hard to see how it might be fleshed out into a clearly cogent argument. So I suppose that Robert Pasnau is not unusual among commentators on Aquinas when, in discussing the *ST*, Ia, 75, 2 argument, he says, "there is nothing here that forces us to conclude, for instance, that if the mind were just the grey matter of the brain, the mind would be incapable of thinking about anything but grey matter" (*Aquinas on Human Nature*, p. 57).)

Be that as it may, it seems clear enough that Aquinas thinks that, just as we see and walk with corporeal parts of us (our eyes, and our legs) we understand with an incorporeal part of us (our minds). So Aquinas is not only a property dualist (inasmuch as he holds that understanding is a non-physical "operation"), but also a substance dualist (inasmuch as he thinks that our minds – what we think and understand with – are incorporeal or immaterial parts of us).

All this shows that Aquinas is not a materialist, which is not exactly news. But it also seems to show, *pace* various commentators, that Aquinas has a profoundly dualistic conception of human beings – a conception that implies substance dualism as well as property dualism. If a human being sees by means of a corporeal organ, but understands by means of an incorporeal “organ”, then, it would appear, a human being is at least partly constituted by an incorporeal substance.

Here someone might object that, for Aquinas, the human soul, inasmuch as it is the received form of a substance, is not itself a substance, but only a part of a substance. If the human soul is not a substance, we cannot move from the premise that (for Aquinas) a human being is composed of a human body and an incorporeal human soul, to the conclusion that (for Aquinas), a human being is composed of a corporeal substance and an incorporeal substance.

True, Aquinas says that an intellectual soul, despite its ability to exist *sine corpore* (without a body), is essentially an incomplete being: like a hand or a foot, it is not “complete in the nature of any species”. So, for Aquinas, in one sense of the term *hoc aliquid* (“this something”), an intellectual soul is not a *hoc aliquid* (cf. *ST*, Ia, 75, 2, and *Quaestio De Anima*, un., 1), and is not a substance. When he has in mind this narrow conception of substance, he says (more or less) that the soul and body are not two different substances, but different parts of the same substance:

A body and a soul are not two actually existing substances (*duae substantiae actu existentes*); instead from those two things is made one actually existing substance (*ex eis duobus fit una substantia actu existens*).
(*ST*, Ia, 75, 2, *responsio*)

On the other hand, Aquinas says that, in another sense of the term *hoc aliquid*, an intellectual soul is a *hoc aliquid* (see again *ST*, Ia, 75, 2, *responsio*, and *De Spiritualibus Creaturis*, un., 2, *ad 16um*). And he is perfectly happy to call intellectual souls and various other incomplete beings substances.

Insofar as it goes beyond the actual being of corporeal matter, having *per se* the power to subsist and to act, the human soul is a spiritual substance; but insofar as it is touched by matter, and shares its existence with matter, it is the form of a body.

(*De Spiritualibus Creaturis*, un., 2, *responsio*)

In Christ three substances were united: body, soul, and divinity.

(*Quaestiones Quodlibetales*, *Quodlibet* 2, 2, 1)

“Hypostasis” signifies, not any old particular substance, but a complete substance (*hypostasis significat substantiam particularem non quocumque modo, sed prout est in suo complemento*). That which is united to something more complete – for example a hand, or a foot – is not called a hypostasis.

Similarly, the human nature in Christ, although it is a particular substance (*substantia particularis*), is not a hypostasis, since it is united to something more complete – that is, the whole Christ.

(*ST*, IIIa, 2, *ad 2um*)

In short: if by “substance” we mean “substance complete in its species” (substance existing “in act”, substance existing in the strictest and most proper sense), then commentators such as Copleston and Stump are right, when they say that for Aquinas a human being is not composed of a corporeal and an incorporeal substance. But that is a narrow construal of “substance”. On that construal, a hand or an eye is not a substance. Also, the (early enough term) fetus of a human or non-human animal seems not to be a substance (cf. *SCG*, II, 89). If instead we mean by substance “*hoc aliquid* in the broad sense”, then for Aquinas a human being is indeed composed of a corporeal substance and an incorporeal or spiritual substance. It seems clear enough that when we speak of “substance dualism” the sense of “substance” we have in mind is more similar to Aquinas’ broader construal of “substance” than to Aquinas’ narrower construal of “substance”. (Thus contemporary anti-dualists would not be un-averse to the idea that what human beings think with is an incorporeal something, as long as it is assumed that that incorporeal something is an incomplete being (like a hand, or a foot) rather than a complete being (like a swan). It is accordingly at least potentially misleading to say that Aquinas is not a substance dualist, because he thinks a human being is a unitary substance, rather than a being composed of a corporeal substance and an incorporeal or spiritual substance.)

Aquinas’ critique of “Platonic” dualism

I have argued that, *pace* some commentators, Aquinas does not offer us a *via media* between materialism and “strong dualism” (that is, substance dualism). But Aquinas does offer us a *via media* between materialism and what we might call *quasi-cartesian dualism* or “Platonic” dualism (the scare quotes will be explained below).

Naturally, Aquinas does not discuss Cartesian dualism as such, but he does discuss and oppose a kind of dualism that he attributes (rightly or wrongly) to Plato. Even if that kind of dualism is not Cartesian dualism, it resembles in many respects the kind of dualism that readers of Descartes’ *Meditations* often attribute to Descartes.

The dualism that Aquinas attributes to Plato implies the following three theses:

- (a) A human being is not composed of a body and a soul; a human being just is a human soul “using” a human body (in such a way that the human being is in the human body like a sailor in a ship (*sicut nautam in navi*): see *ST*, Ia, 75, 4, and *De Spiritualibus Creaturis*, un., 2).

- (b) The human soul and the human body are both “complete” substances, with mutually independent essences, operations, and *esse* (cf. *SCG*, II, 57).
- (c) Relations between the human soul and the human body are exclusively causal, where the causality at issue is efficient, rather than formal. Consequently, the soul moves the body, but does not (substantially) inform the body.

In what follows, I shall attempt to explicate and (to a certain extent) evaluate Aquinas’ reasons for rejecting (a)–(c).

Against (a), Aquinas argues that a human being cannot be a human soul using a human body (*anima utens corpore*), because human beings have properties that human souls do not. Human beings have bodily parts and senses, and souls have neither. For example, a (normal adult) human being has eyes, and has sight, whereas a soul has neither (cf. *SCG* II, 57).

Naturally, even if no human being can be identified with her soul, it could still be that as per (b), a human being’s body and a human being’s soul are complete beings or substances that jointly constitute the human being, on account of their standing in the right relation to each other.

But, Aquinas would say, human beings are complete substances (complete beings), and no complete substance is composed of a plurality of complete substances (cf. *SCG*, II, 56, and IV, 49). If we have in mind the broad sense of “particular substance” (*substantia particularis*) one substance can be a proper part of another (for example, a hand is a part of a man). But if we have in mind the narrow sense of “particular substance” (i.e., complete being, complete substance, hypostasis), a hand is not a particular substance, but only a part thereof. As we have noted in [chapter 1](#), a rock can be part of a heap, but only because a heap is not a particular substance in the narrow sense (since it lacks both “genuine unity” and a proprietary substantial form (cfr. *ST*, IIIa, 2, 1, *responsio*)). A rock could also be a part of a house, but only because (for Aquinas) a house isn’t a substance in the narrow sense either (since it isn’t a “genuine unit” (an *unum per se*)).

Also, Aquinas would say, if a human being’s body were a complete substance, with an *esse*, essence, and operations independent of those of the human soul it is paired with, then a human body could survive separation from a human soul, and it cannot (see *SCG*, II, 69: “the body of a human being is not the same when the soul is present, and when it is absent”).

This leaves open the possibility that, as per (c), a human being is a complete substance composed of two *incomplete* substances (a human soul and a human body) united simply by “virtual contact” (united by relations of efficient causality between the moving soul and the moved body). But, Aquinas would reply, this cannot be right. For a whole human body, and all its parts, have substantial and specific being through the soul that is united with that body (see *De Spiritualibus Creaturis*, un., 4, *responsio*: *totum corpus et omnes eius partes habent esse substantiale et specificum per animam*); and this could not be so if the human body were moved, but not substantially informed by the soul.

Summing up: for Aquinas, “Platonic” dualism gets things wrong because (i) it misidentifies human beings with their souls; (ii) it mischaracterizes both human bodies and human souls as complete and mutually independent substances, and (iii) it misses the “formality” (and formal causality) of human souls.

The dualism championed by Aquinas is clearly significantly different from the “Platonic” kind. But to what extent does it constitute an improvement on it? To my mind, it is certainly an advantage of Thomistic dualism over the “Platonic” kind that it distinguishes human beings from their souls. A defender of “Platonic” dualism might say that, when Aquinas says that human beings have bodily parts and senses, he begs the question against the “Platonic” theory, but I don’t think this would be fair. It is true that if we accept that human beings have bodily parts, see, can be seen, walk, and so on, then we are already committed to denying that human beings are souls (since souls can’t see or be seen or walk). But the fact remains that what we believe about human beings, before we start to theorize about their nature, is incompatible with the “Platonic” view that a human being is a soul using a body. And this is surely a defeasible reason for rejecting the “Platonic” identification of human beings with their souls. (This leaves open the possibility that “Platonists” have good arguments against our pre-theoretical views: the point is not that Aquinas’ argument against (a) is irrefutable, but only that it is non-question-begging.)

For reasons already touched on in [chapter 2](#), it is not so clear to me that Thomistic dualism is more defensible than “Platonic” dualism insofar as the former rules out, and the latter implies, that both human bodies and human souls are complete substances. Aquinas thinks it is evident that complete substances cannot jointly compose a complete substance, any more than lions can jointly compose a lion (which is why (for Aquinas) the Aristotelian elements cannot be actually present in a mixed body such as flesh). But there is nothing obviously problematic about the idea that both hydrogen atoms and oxygen atoms, and also water molecules are complete substances, even though a water molecule is composed of two hydrogen atoms and an oxygen atom.

Nor is it obvious that the organs of a human or non-human animal aren’t complete substances that jointly (partly or wholly) compose another complete substance (a human or non-human animal). Aquinas thinks that hands, eyes, hearts, and so on are obviously not complete substances, because complete substances have a substantial form of their own, and hands, eyes, hearts, and so on do not: for Aquinas the very same substantial form that makes this human or non-human animal makes this eye this eye (makes this eye exist), and so on:

Since a whole consists of parts, a form of a whole which does not give being to each of the parts of the body is a form consisting in composition and order, like the form of a house; and that sort of form is accidental.

But the soul is a substantial form, and must therefore be the form and act, not just of the whole, but also of each of its parts.

(*ST*, Ia, 76, 8, *responsio*)

Thus the organs of a human or non-human animal cannot survive separation from the soul/substantial form of that animal (*ibid.* and *De Spiritualibus Creaturis, un.*, 2, *responsio*). *Pace* Aquinas, though, I take it that we think of hearts as (literally, genuinely) transplantable, and thus as separable from the human or non-human animals that they belong to at a given time – and so, as separable from the soul/substantial form of that animal. Given that the organs of a human or non-human animal seem to have “proprietary” persistence conditions, it’s not obvious why we shouldn’t think of them as having a substantial form of their own (which enables them to survive both compositional or material change, and “resiting” in new bodies), and as being complete substances or beings in their own right. (In the same way that (*pace* Aquinas) it’s unobvious that an organ must always be in the same human body, and always be joined to the same human substantial form/soul, it is unobvious that an organ must ever be in a human body, or joined to a human substantial form/soul. Doctors can grow a simple organ (e.g., a trachea or windpipe) from stem cells (and the appropriate “scaffolding”) and then “site” that windpipe in the person from whose stem cells the windpipe was made (and who no longer has a viable windpipe). Suppose that doctors set out to grow a windpipe from a patient’s cells, and subsequently “site” it in the patient, but the patient dies before the doctors could site the windpipe in that patient. Then, it seems natural to say, a windpipe existed that never belonged to any human being (that never was part of any human body, that never was joined to any human substantial form/soul).

In light of these considerations, there is nothing obviously hopeless about the idea that a human body, a human soul, and the human being that body and soul compose are all complete substances, in much the way that two oxygen atoms and the oxygen molecule they compose are all complete substances.

Another difference between Thomistic and “Platonic” dualism concerns the independence of soul and body. For “Platonic” dualists, a human soul and a human body could each survive separation from the other, whereas for Aquinas, a human soul can (and does) survive separation from a human body, but a human body does not and could not survive separation from a human soul. For Aquinas, a human body is essentially a living body, and only an ensouled body can be a living body (cf. *ST*, IIIa, 50, 5 *ad* 1um): so human bodies are essentially as well as permanently ensouled, though human souls are not essentially (or even permanently) embodied. And just as *a* human body couldn’t be a human body without being in union with *a* human soul, so *this* human body couldn’t be *this* human body without being in union with *this* human soul.

But is a human body essentially in union with the human soul it is actually in union with – and so, *a fortiori*, essentially in union with some human soul

or other? For both Aquinas and the champion of the “Platonic” view of human beings, when a human being dies, two things happen. First, an immaterial substance (using the term “substance” broadly enough to cover either incomplete or complete substances) – to wit the intellectual soul – is separated from a human body. Second, the biological life in which that body took part comes to an end.

A proponent of the “Platonic” view could (plausibly enough) argue that, on the face of it, the first of these things could happen, without the second. As long as enough bodily organs belonging to a body go on existing, and go on working together in such a way as to sustain the body’s vital functions, it would seem, the life of the body continues, and hence the body continues to exist. (Indeed, as long as enough cells – or enough atoms – go on existing, and go on working together in such a way as to sustain the body’s vital functions, the life of the body continues, and hence the body continues to exist.) But the fact that enough bodily organs (or cells, or atoms) continue to exist, and continue to work together to sustain the body’s vital functions, is clearly no guarantee that an immaterial substance (the intellectual soul) remains “attached to” that body. How could the fact that heart, lungs, brain, and so on are still working together, performing their biological functions, by itself imply that an entity of a completely different sort (an immaterial intellectual soul) is “united to” the body those bodily organs compose? A contemporary defender of the “Platonic” view might elaborate this point as follows:

However different human *beings* are from primates, a human *body* is not that different from a primate’s body. We know that a primate’s body does not depend for its existence or persistence upon union with an intellectual soul (because primates do not have intellectual souls). As long as enough of the bodily parts of a primate’s body remain, and continue to work together in the right way (in order to sustain the primate body’s vital functions), the primate’s body continues to exist. Analogously, as long as enough of a human body’s parts remained, and continued to work together in the right way to sustain the human body’s vital functions, the human body would continue to exist – even if God “decoupled” the immaterial intellectual soul from the human body it had previously been in union with.

The argument here is that, *contra* Aquinas, the existence of a human body must be independent of its union with a human intellectual soul, because the life of a human body could outlast its union with that soul. But the “Platonist” could equally have argued that the existence of a human body must be independent of its union with a human intellectual soul, because the life of a human body could antedate its union with that intellectual soul. God could create a human body and simultaneously create an intellectual soul in union with it, but God could also first create a human body, and only subsequently “attach” an intellectual soul to that body. In this context, the “Platonist” could

say, it is interesting that Aquinas does not think that God creates a human soul and a human body at the moment of conception: in the generation of a human being, soul creation and infusion happen long after embryogenesis (see *ST*, Ia, 76, 3, *ad 3um* and 118, 2, *ad 2um*). If Aquinas is right about the timing of soul creation and infusion, the Platonist might say, then the human body of a human being is actually in existence (in embryonic form/as an embryo) at a time when the human soul does not yet exist.

Here Aquinas would object that although there is a living body in the womb at the time of embryogenesis, that embryonic body is not (*proprie loquendo*) a human body. The body in the womb at the time of embryogenesis is not then, and never will be, the body of a human being. Rather, it is the body of a human-being-in-the-making, in union with a non-intellective human-in-the-making-soul. Both the human-in-the-making body and the human-in-the-making soul will undergo corruption, as will the human-in-the-making composed of them; that human-in-the-making will be replaced by a numerically different human-in-the-making, who is a bit more like a human being. At the end of a series of generations and corruptions we arrive at a human body and a human (intellective) soul composing a human being:

Both in men and in other animals, when a more perfect form supervenes the previous form is corrupted ... [I]n this way through many generations and corruptions we arrive at the ultimate substantial form, both in man and in other animals.

(*ST*, Ia, 118, 2 *ad 2um*:
also see *De Spiritualibus Creaturis*, un., 3, *ad 13um*)

Thus the body of an embryo is only a kind of “precursor” of a human body; the human being’s human body only comes on the scene when the human soul (which is to say, the human intellective soul) is created and infused (in a brand new human body).

Similarly, Aquinas maintains, when a human being’s intellective soul is separated from his or her human body, that body goes out of existence, and (unless biological processes terminate at the moment of separation) a new non-intellectively ensouled body and a new non-intellective soul come into existence (a “human-in-the-unmaking” body and a “human-in-the-unmaking” soul that compose a “human-in-the-unmaking” (cf. the *Commentary on the Book of Causes*, I, 20-21). A human body (a body of a human being) does not and could not survive separation from an intellective soul, any more than it can antedate union with an intellective soul.

Aquinas’ “multicorporeal” and “multianimate” account of the generation (and corruption) of human beings enables him to reconcile his views on the ontological dependence of human souls on human bodies with his views on the timing of human soul creation and infusion (and “de-infusion”, i.e., separation). But I imagine a “Platonist” would object (as Roger Bacon did) that there is something very counterintuitive about that account. She might say:

Aquinas would say that one attosecond before a human soul is created and infused, there is a living (albeit non-human, “quasi-human”) body in the womb; an attosecond later, that body is gone (replaced by a living human body). But how can the body that was there an attosecond earlier have gone out of existence? An attosecond earlier, some atoms were interacting with each other in such a way as to compose a living body. An attosecond later, all or virtually all those atoms are still there, still interacting with each other as they were before. So how can those atoms have ceased to constitute the body they were constituting an attosecond ago? How does the infusion of an (immaterial) intellective soul – of an immaterial *mind* – suffice to make a (material) *body* go out of existence?

Also, Aquinas’ account of the corruption of human beings implies that, if the soul departs from the body, but biological processes do not immediately come to an end, a new (non-human, “human-in-the-unmaking”) body comes (briefly) into existence. Again, though, how can separating an immaterial *mind* from a body bring a new *body* into existence?

To be sure, if (like Aquinas) we take it as axiomatic that a soul (any kind of soul, including an intellective soul) is “the first principle of life in a living being” (see *ST*, Ia, 75, *responsio*), and the “first thing by which a body lives” (*ST*, Ia, 76, 1, *responsio*), then we will have trouble with the idea of an intellective soul that can be “coupled to” an already living body, or non-fatally “uncoupled from” a living body (that is, uncoupled from a living body without fatal consequences for the body from which it is uncoupled). (How could an intellective soul be a first principle of life in a living body, if it can be coupled to an already living body, or non-fatally uncoupled from a living body?) So if the intellective soul (*anima intellectiva*) is at once the “primary animator” of a human body and the part of a human that that human thinks with (and if human bodies are essentially living) then the existence of a human body is not independent of whether or not that body is “coupled” to an intellective soul. But the “Platonist” need not concede that a human intellective soul (a human mind) is the first principle of life of a human body. The “Platonist” might say: why suppose that a human being’s mind – the part of her she thinks with – is the primary animator of her body (and the substantial form thereof)? After all, as Aquinas grants, we ≠ our bodies (see *ST*, Ia, 76, 1, *responsio*: “a body [is] a part of a man”), and living ≠ understanding.

Naturally, if a human body can antedate its union with a human intellective soul, and “postdate” (i.e. survive) its separation from a human intellective soul, then the human intellective soul cannot be the substantial form of a human body (given that a human body is not a portion of sgc-matter). So the “Platonist” view that human bodies and human (intellective) souls are mutually independent must be mistaken, if a human intellective soul is the substantial form of a human body. But again, why suppose, as Aquinas does,

that it is? Supposing that our minds (the things we think with, the things that enable us to understand and to will) are the substantial forms of our bodies is tantamount to supposing that human minds are what make human bodies human bodies. And this is far from obvious.

Intellective souls and substantial forms

Aquinas is aware that the identification of human intellective souls with substantial forms of human bodies is both un-immediately-obvious and problematic. Nevertheless, he thinks it can be shown to be right. Up to a point, I think I understand why Aquinas holds this view. As we have seen, for Aquinas, a human being is (i) a complete substance and genuine unit, (ii) a subject of both sensation and thought, and (iii) a being composed of a body and a mind. (As Aquinas sees it (*ST*, Ia, 76, 1, *responsio*), (ii) implies (iii), inasmuch as a human being cannot be a subject of sensation, unless she has a body as well as a mind (as a part).) Moreover, Aquinas thinks, any account that does not identify human intellective souls with substantial forms of human bodies will be unable to accommodate the truth of all of (i)–(iii). (“Platonists”, for example, can account for the truth of (i), but explicitly deny (iii), and (Aquinas argues) cannot make sense of (ii). If on the other hand a metaphysician thinks of human beings as composed of two different complete substances and genuine units (a human body, and a human soul), she will have no trouble accommodating the truth of (iii), but will be unable to accommodate the truth of (i), given that complete-substances-and-genuine-units cannot compose a complete-substance-and-genuine-unit, any more than, say, lions can compose a lion.

Past a certain point, though, I feel I don’t fully understand why Aquinas identifies human intellective souls with human substantial forms. Aquinas offers a variety of arguments in support of that identification, but the arguments seem to me to be problematic, to the extent that I understand them.

Thus at *ST*, Ia, 76, 1, *responsio*, Aquinas writes:

It must be said that the intellect (*intellectus*), which is the principle of intellectual operation, is the form of a human body (*humani corporis forma*). For that by which primarily something acts (*operatur*) is a form of the thing to which that action (*operatio*) is attributed ... Now it is clear that the first thing by which a body lives is the soul. And since life is manifested in different operations in different grades of living beings, that by which we primarily perform all these vital operations is the soul. For the soul is the first thing by which we are nourished, and sense, and move; and similarly it is the first thing by which we understand. So the principle by which we primarily understand (*principium quo primo intelligimus*), which is called the intellect or the intellective soul (*intellectus sive anima intellectiva*), is the form of a body (*est forma corporis*). This is Aristotle’s demonstration in Book II of the *De Anima*.

Here Aquinas would seem to be supposing that:

The first principle of the life of a body = the soul.

The first principle of the life of a body = the substantial form of that body.

The first principle of the life of a body = the first principle of the ‘vital operations’ in which that life is manifest (in the case of humans, nourishment, sensation, movement, and understanding).

So the first principle of the understanding of a human being = the soul of that human/the substantial form of that human body.

But the intellect or intellectual soul = the first principle of the understanding of a human being.

Hence the intellect or intellectual soul = the substantial form of a human body.

It is clear enough that if we grant that one and the same thing (the soul/substantial form of a human body) is both the first principle of the life of that body, and the first principle of the vital operations in which that life is manifest – including understanding – then, assuming that the intellect is the first principle of understanding, we must grant that the intellect is the substantial form of the body.

That said, reasoning of the sort just sketched seems unlikely to move someone who disagrees with Aquinas about the “formality” of the human intellect. There is no evident reason to suppose that those who think human intellects are not forms will accept the idea that the first principle of the life of the body is also the first principle of understanding, and thus of the intellect. For example, given the “Platonic” view of the independence of intellectual soul and body, “Platonists” would presumably deny that the first principle of the life of the body = the first principle of the understanding of the person with that body.

I take it that Aquinas would not expect the considerations appealed to in the just cited passage of *ST*, Ia, 76, *responsio* to convince opponents of the “formality” of the intellectual soul. For immediately after that passage, he goes on to say that those who deny that the human intellectual soul is the form of the human body must explain how it is that a particular human being understands – which, he argues at length, he will be unable to do. In effect, we have a kind of “argument by elimination” for the formality of the human intellectual soul.

This involves eliminating the hypothesis that a human intellect or “first intellectual principle” is united to a human body only as a “mover” (that is, efficient cause), in such a way that the intellect and the body form a whole

to which the act of understanding may be attributed. Aquinas says this hypothesis is hopeless for many reasons (*multipliciter vanum*). Why? A crucial part of the argument appears to be the supposition that

If ... Socrates is a whole formed from the union of his intellect with the remaining parts of Socrates, but the intellect is not united to the other parts of Socrates except as a mover, it follows that Socrates is not one thing *simpliciter*, and so is not a being *simpliciter*, since something is a being insofar as it is one.

(*ibid.*)

Aquinas does not go on (in the *responsio*) to defend this supposition. But it doesn't seem evident to me.

Pace Aquinas, for reasons already discussed, there is nothing obviously wrong with supposing that hydrogen atoms and oxygen atoms are complete substances linked at most by relations of efficient causality (no hydrogen atom is a substantial form of an oxygen atom, or vice versa), which nevertheless can jointly jointly compose a third substance (a water molecule) that is a complete substance, and hence one thing *simpliciter*, and a being *simpliciter*. Analogously, there is nothing obviously wrong with supposing that bodies and intellects are complete substances linked at most by relations of efficient causality (so that neither is the substantial form of the other) which can compose a third thing (a human being) which is a complete substance, and hence a being *simpliciter* and a genuine unit.

To be sure, if we say that a water molecule is a kind of complete substance, then – at least as long as we are hylomorphists – we will have to say that there is a substantial form whereby the water molecule is a water molecule (roughly, as Eleonore Stump puts it, “a dynamic organization or configuration” of what constitutes that water molecule). The substantial form of the water molecule will make the water molecule be a water molecule, and also make the water molecule be *simpliciter* (where making-be is a relation of formal, rather than efficient, causality). Analogously, a hylomorphist who (unlike the “Platonist”) thinks that a human being is a complete substance essentially composed of a body and an intellect, neither of which is the form of the other, would presumably want to say that there is a substantial form of that human being, which makes that human being be a human being, and also makes that human being be *simpliciter*. Assuming, as Aquinas does, that *vivere viventibus est esse* (for living things, to live is to be), and that accordingly what makes a human being be = what makes a human being live, the substantial form of a human being is what makes that human being live. (For reasons I have touched upon, and will return to, it is a further question whether the substantial form that makes a human *being* live is the substantial form that makes a human *body* live.) Now nothing prevents us from using the term “human soul” to refer to the substantial form that makes a human being live (assuming that human beings have but

one substantial form). But, Aquinas' opponents would say, if we do use the term "human soul" that way, then we are not entitled to assume that the human soul = the intellect (the part of us we think with, the part of us we understand and will with).

Suppose, though, we assume, as Aquinas does, that complete substances cannot jointly compose another complete substance, and that Socrates is a complete substance (and thus one thing *simpliciter*, and a being *simpliciter*). It is still not evident to me why it should follow that Socrates' intellect is a form (and formal cause) of Socrates' body. Suppose there were a non-human, non-rational organism, composed of just two organs. Then, Aquinas would say, that organism would have one substantial form, which would both make the organism the kind of organism it is, and make the two organs the kind of organs they are (Remember, for Aquinas, an organism and all its parts have their *esse specificum* from the substantial form/soul of that organism). Analogously, someone who doesn't believe in the formality of the human intellect might say, it could be that a human being is composed of a body and an intellect; it has a substantial form that (i) makes that human being a human being, (ii) makes that body a human body (and makes the organs of that body the kind of human organs they are), and (iii) makes that intellect a human intellect. On this picture, a human being would be a complete substance, but neither a human body nor a human intellect would be. A human intellect would be a substantial-form-dependent part of a complete substance, like an eye, or a hand, rather than (as Aquinas supposes) the substantial form of a complete substance. This account of the 'metaphysical constitution' of human beings is quite like Aquinas' in many ways: on it, a human being is a hylomorphically composite 'minimal' complete substance (i.e., a complete substance not composed of any other complete substances). But it is unlike Aquinas' account, in that it implies that Socrates' body together with his substantial form is something less than the whole Socrates in just the same way that Socrates' hand together with his substantial form is something less than the whole Socrates.

Although the account just described is an alternative to Aquinas', one might wonder why it isn't Aquinas' account. In some ways, it seems as though, if (like Aquinas) you started with a hylomorphic theory of substances on which all complete substances are "minimal" (and "maximal", i.e., neither have complete substances as proper parts, nor are proper parts of complete substances), and (like Aquinas) you thought the intellect was a part of a human being, you might at least as easily end up with the alternative account, as with Aquinas' actual account.

Why? For Aquinas, the organs of an organism owe their being and nature to, and are accordingly inseparable from, its substantial form. So, we may say, the substantial form of a lion, as well as making a lion a lion, makes a lion lion-hearted. In other words, the substantial form of a lion, as well as explaining why a lion is a lion, explains why a lion is lion-hearted (why a lion has a heart). (If the substantial form of a lion is what makes a lion a

lion, and lion-hearted, then we may say that a lion is a lion, and lion-hearted, because of its substantial form; equivalently, the substantial form of a lion explains why the lion is a lion, and is lion-hearted.) So if the intellect of a human being = the substantial form of a human being, then the intellect of a human being explains why a human being is human-hearted (why a human being has a heart). But it seems at least initially very natural to suppose that a human being's intellect is not the right sort of thing to explain why a human being has a heart, any more than a human being's heart is the right sort of thing to explain why a human being has an intellect.

Also, for Aquinas, living things have the power to grow on account of their substantial form, and living things that have the power to move themselves have that power on account of their substantial form. So, for Aquinas, we can say that a human being's substantial form makes that human being a "grower" and a mover (a being that can or does grow and move), just as it makes that human being a thinker (a being that can or does think). Again, though, at least initially it seems as though the intellect or mind of a human being is not what makes that human being a "grower" or a "mover" (a being that does or can grow or move): Socrates' intellect or mind makes him a thinker, but it doesn't make him a grower or a mover any more than Socrates' eyes do. (Socrates' intellect = what he thinks with (understands and wills with) = his mind (thus Aquinas speaks in various places (e.g., *ST*, Ia, 75, 2, *responsio*) of *intellectus vel mens*), and, on the face of it, Socrates' mind is not the first principle of the growth of Socrates' body.) So this argument takes us, by a slightly different route, to the same conclusion as the argument of the previous paragraph: a human being's intellect and her substantial form cannot be identical, because they are not as it were equipollent – they have different causal and explanatory powers.

Here a defender of Aquinas might object that the above arguments beg the question: true enough, it's not the case that Socrates' intellect, *qua* intellect, explains why Socrates has a heart, or why Socrates is a grower or a mover. But we cannot infer from this that Socrates' intellect doesn't *qua* something else (to wit, vegetative soul, or animal soul) explain why Socrates has a heart, or why Socrates is a grower, or a mover, unless we have already decided against the Thomistic account of form, soul, and intellect in human beings.

Agreed, there's something in the general neighborhood of *a human being's intellect explains why a human being has a heart* or *a human being's intellect makes a human being grow* which Aquinas can agree is false. But I don't see that this meets the objection to Aquinas under consideration. For the objection – which, to my mind, is not without plausibility – is that falsity is a property, not just of *a human being's intellect qua intellect explains why a human being has a heart* and *a human being's intellect qua intellect makes a human being grow*, but also of their "qua-less" counterparts (*a human being's intellect explains why a human being has a heart* and *a human being's intellect makes a human being grow*). Consider an analogous case: as we have seen (*SCG*, II, 57), Aquinas

argues against “Platonism” on the grounds that (i) Platonism implies the falsity of *human beings can be perceived by the senses* (since, for “Platonists”, human beings are immaterial souls, and immaterial souls cannot be perceived by the senses), but (ii) *human beings can be perceived by the senses* is in fact true. This objection – which, again, to my mind has a good deal of intuitive plausibility – is not met, if the “Platonist” points out that “Platonism” accommodates (indeed, implies) the truth of a statement in the general neighborhood of *a human being can be perceived by the senses* (say, *a human being’s body can be perceived by the senses*).

I have been suggesting that if we start from the Thomistic conception of a substantial form as something that makes a living being the kind of thing it essentially is, and makes all the organs of that living being the kinds of organs they essentially are, it seems natural, if not unavoidable, to conclude that the human intellect is not the substantial form of the human body. Coming at the question of the formality or otherwise of the intellect from the other end, it might also be argued that if we start from certain features of the Thomistic conception of a human intellect, it seems natural, or even unavoidable to conclude that the human intellect is not the substantial form of the human body.

For Aquinas, the human soul (and thus the human intellectual soul or intellect) has *esse* (see *De Spiritualibus Creaturis*, un., 2, ad 3um: “the soul has subsistent being (*esse subsistens*), inasmuch as its being (*esse*) does not depend on the body”). Moreover, it seems that for Aquinas the intellectual soul has *esse* as a part – that is, is partly composed of *esse*.

We have already seen that although Aquinas not infrequently describes angels as “subsistent forms”, his considered view is that there is more to an angel than its substantial form: an angel is composed of an essence (which is a substantial form) and an existence (*esse*). (See *Quaestiones Quodlibetales*, *Quodlibetum* 2, 2, 1, and *De Ente et Essentia*, 4: “it must be said that in the intelligences [angels] there is existence (*esse*) as well as (*praeter*) form; hence it is said that an intelligence is (a) form plus (an) existence (*intelligentia est forma et esse*).”) Now Aquinas seems to hold that what goes for angels, goes for human souls. At *Summa contra Gentiles*, II, 54, Aquinas argues that form–matter composition is different from “substance–*esse*” composition. Thus a hylomorphically composite substance is doubly composite: it is composite inasmuch as its “substance” or essence is composed of form and matter, and also composite inasmuch as it is composed of that composite “substance” or essence and *esse*. Things are different in the case of an intellectual substance (be that intellectual substance a “complete” being such as an angel, or an incomplete (but subsistent) being, such as a human soul). In an intellectual substance, the “substance” or essence is not composed of form and matter, and is instead a form. So in intellectual substances (be they angels or souls) there is “substance–*esse*” composition (i.e., substantial form–*esse* composition), but no matter–form composition. (Hence created intellectual substances are midway between God and material creatures, in that the former has neither

substance–*esse* composition, nor form–matter composition, and the latter have both.)

So Aquinas' view seems to be that *esse* is a “part” or “component” of a human intellectual soul or intellect. (See the *Commentary on the Sentences*, II, d. 3, a. 6: “since the rational soul (*anima rationalis*) does not depend on matter, it has absolute *esse* which is different from its quiddity (*aliud a sua quidditate*)”. Surely, though, *esse* cannot be a “part” or “component” of a human substantial form. Non-divine *esse* is extra-essential (is outside the essence or quiddity of anything non-divine that has *esse*), and substantial form is intra-essential (either is identical to an essence, if the subject of that essence is immaterial, or is a proper part of an essence, if the subject of that essence is material). Since what is extra-essential is *eo ipso* disjoint from what is intra-essential, the *esse* that a human soul has is disjoint from, and *a fortiori* not a part of the substantial form that informs (or previously informed) the body that soul ensouls (or previously ensouled). If, however, the *esse* that a human intellectual soul or intellect has is a “part” or “component” of that soul, and is not a “part” or “component” of a human substantial form, then a human intellect cannot be identified with a human substantial form.

Essentially the same difficulty for the identification of human intellects with human substantial forms arises concerning the predicamental accidents of human intellects. As we noted in [chapter 1](#), for Aquinas, as well as having *esse*, angels have predicamental accidents:

In God alone is no accident found outside (*praeter*) his essence ... and thus in God individual (*suppositum*) and nature are entirely the same (*omnino idem*). But in an angel they are not entirely the same (*omnino idem*), because something beyond what belongs to the nature (*ratio*) of the species is accidental to it, both because the *esse* of an angel is outside its essence or nature, and because some other things accidental to it belong to the individual but not to the nature.

(*Quaestiones Quodlibetales, Quodlibetum 2, 2, 2, responsio*)

Just as angels (spiritual or intellectual substances with a “proprietary” species and genus) have accidents other than *esse*, so too, for Aquinas, do human intellectual souls (spiritual or intellectual substances without a proprietary species or genus):

Spiritual substances are not subjects except of [predicamental] accidents that pertain to the understanding or the will.

(*De Spiritualibus Creaturis, un., 1, ad 1um*)

Souls, like angels, have accidents pertaining to the understanding and the will, because souls, like angels, understand and will. It is true that, as we have seen, Aquinas manifests a certain ambivalence about the idea that an embodied soul can understand:

It can be said that the soul understands, just as the eye sees. But it is more properly said (*magis proprie dicitur*) that the man understands with his soul.

(*ST*, Ia, 75, 2, *ad 2um*)

But Aquinas has no such ambivalence about saying that disembodied souls can understand or will (see, for instance, the discussion of what “separated” souls do and do not understand in question 89 of the *Prima Pars* of the *Summa Theologiae*, or his discussion of the wills of the damned in the Supplement of the *Summa Theologiae*). Again, though, by Aquinas’ lights, an accident (whether predicamental or not) is outside the essence of the subject that has it:

Whenever an accident is in a subject, that subject is not whatever it has in itself, since an accident does not belong to the essence of a subject. (*Cuicumque inest aliquod accidens, non est quidquid habet in se, quia accidens non est de essentia subjecti.*)

(*SCG*, I, 23)

An accident, in the broad sense, is whatever is not part of an essence (*accidens dicitur large omne quod non est pars essentiae*).

(*Quaestiones Quodlibetales, Quodlibetum 12, 5, responsio*)

The predicamental accidents of a separated human intellective soul or intellect are extra-essential components of that soul. But, for reasons already canvassed, it seems that a human substantial form (as a proper part of a human essence) is not the right sort of being to have extra-essential components: whence it appears to follow that a separated human intellect cannot be identified with a human substantial form.

Recapitulating: as Aquinas thinks of it, human intellects are unlike angels, in not being “complete in the nature of any species”. They are nevertheless like angels, in being individuals that can (in their separated state, at least) understand and will, and thus in being subjects of not just *esse* but also predicamental accidents. Now we might have thought that this likeness between separated human intellects and angels does not raise difficulties for the supposition that human intellects are substantial forms: after all, Aquinas says in many places that angels are substantial forms. In fact, though, Aquinas also says in a number of places that angels are not substantial forms (and are instead “substantial-forms-plus-*esse*-and-predicamental-accidents”). Moreover, as I have tried to show in [Chapter 1](#), that is what Aquinas *ought* to say, given his conception of angels. (By Aquinas’ lights, angels are not composed of form and matter, or of “integral” parts. So if angels are not composed of substantial form and accidents, then angels are incomposite – they are no more “pluripartite” than God is. And Aquinas regards this consequence as unacceptable.) If, however, angels are not substantial forms, inasmuch as

they have *esse* and predicamental accidents, then it seems equally true that separated human intellects are not substantial forms, inasmuch as they have *esse* and predicamental accidents.

Here someone might suggest that the problem just raised for Aquinas has less to do with his general account of the human intellect as a human substantial form, than with his views on the properties of separated souls. But I don't think Aquinas could avoid the problem simply by giving up the idea that separated souls understand and will. For it is an integral part of Aquinas' account of the intellectual soul that a hylomorphically composite being (a human being) can be said to understand or will because a hylomorphically incomposite being (a human intellect) has certain powers and operations. Given Aquinas' account of substances, powers, and operations, nothing (except God) could have powers or operations, without having accidents. So, whether or not separated souls can be said to understand and will, it still seems as though (for Aquinas) a human intellect must have accidents, and accordingly cannot be identified with a human substantial form.

This is by no means a complete survey of the difficulties one might raise concerning the substantial formality of the human intellect. But I hope to have said enough to explain why Aquinas' identification of human intellects with human substantial forms is one of his most controversial as well as one of his most celebrated theses. It's not just that, given our ordinary conception of human intellects, it's difficult to see how they could be substantial forms (as conceived by Aquinas). It's also that, given Aquinas' conception of human intellects (in this life and the next), it's hard to see how human intellects as conceived by Aquinas could be substantial forms (as conceived by Aquinas).

Animalism and personalism

In contemporary metaphysics and philosophy of mind, there is a debate between those whom we may call *contemporary animalists* and those whom we may call *contemporary personalists*. Contemporary personalists typically think along more or less these lines:

- (1) We are essentially persons.
- (2) Since we are essentially persons, and necessarily persons survive if and only if their minds do, necessarily we survive if and only if our minds do.
- (3) But the survival of our minds may not be sufficient for the survival of our bodies. (Perhaps our minds could go on without our bodies (in a disembodied state, or in an artificial, inorganic substitute for our bodies).) And the survival of our minds is certainly not necessary for the survival of our bodies. (For example, a materialist contemporary personalist might say, if someone's cerebral cortex were sufficiently damaged, but the rest of that person's brain and the other organs

remained intact, the person's body would outlive the person's mind, and hence the person. Similarly, a dualist contemporary personalist might say, if God annihilated a person's immaterial mind, but left the lower part of that person's brain, and the person's other organs intact, the person's body would outlive the person's mind, and hence the person.)

- (4) So the survival of our bodies may not be necessary for, and is certainly not sufficient for, our survival.
- (5) But if something is an animal, then – it seems – the survival of its body is necessary and sufficient for its survival.
- (6) So we are not actually (much less essentially) animals (except perhaps in the sense that bronze statues are pieces of bronze – that is, in the sense that we share a body or share some matter with some animal). Personhood and animality are disjoint substantial kinds, inasmuch as persons and animals (like bronze statues and pieces of bronze) have different persistence conditions (the survival of a person amounts to the survival of that person's mind, and not to the survival of that person's body, whereas survival of an animal amounts to the survival of that animal's body, and not to the survival of that animal's mind).

Contemporary animalists typically think along more or less these (enantiomorphic) lines:

- (1') We are essentially animals.
- (2') Since we are essentially animals, and necessarily animals survive if and only if their bodies do, necessarily we survive if and only if our bodies do.
- (3') But the survival of our minds may not be sufficient for the survival of our bodies. And the survival of our minds is certainly not necessary for the survival of our bodies.
- (4') So the survival of our minds is certainly not necessary for, and may not be sufficient for, our survival.
- (5') But if someone is a person, then – it seems – the survival of his or her mind is a necessary condition for his or her going on being a person (loss of mind implies loss of personhood).
- (6') So, even if we are actually persons, we are not essentially persons, since we can survive the loss of mind, and hence of personhood. Personhood and animality are not disjoint substantial kinds; indeed, personhood is not a substantial kind at all.

Aquinas would take issue with both contemporary animalists and contemporary personalists (as described above).

Thus Aquinas would agree with our contemporary personalist that we are essentially persons, and that we survive *only if* our minds survive; but he would deny that we survive *if* our minds survive. As Aquinas sees it, our minds can survive the destruction of our bodies (since our minds are immaterial and subsistent beings), but *we* cannot survive the destruction of our bodies (since we have our body just as essentially as we have our mind): whence it follows that the survival of our mind does not guarantee our survival. So, Aquinas would say, the survival of our bodies is after all necessary for our survival. Moreover, the survival of our bodies is sufficient for our survival. Think of it this way: *our bodies survive* implies *our bodies hold on to their substantial form*, which in turn implies *our bodies hold on to their intellectual soul or mind*, which implies *we survive*. Putting all this together, Aquinas would say the contemporary personalist has got things exactly backwards: necessarily we survive if and only if our bodies survive, and it's not the case that necessarily we survive if and only if our minds do. And we are animals, not merely in the sense that we share a body or share some matter with an animal, but in the same sense that guinea pigs or labrador retrievers are animals (although of course we are rational animals, and guinea pigs and labrador retrievers are not).

All this might make one think that in the current animalism–personalism debate, Aquinas would side with our contemporary animalist. But in fact he would have bones to pick with her as well. After all, he thinks that the survival of our minds is necessary for our survival (since we have our minds essentially) and for the survival of our bodies (since our bodies have their substantial form – which is to say our mind – essentially).

Since Aquinas holds that we are actually and indeed essentially animals, he is a kind of animalist, but an animalist of a quite different kind from contemporary animalists. Contemporary animalists reject the idea that our minds are incorporeal, and the idea that we have such powers as understanding and will, or are persons, in all the possible worlds in which we exist, or even at all the times at which we actually exist. Aquinas champions both of these ideas; he is, we might say, a “dualist personalist animalist”, for whom we are essentially not-merely-corporeal, and essentially animals, and essentially persons.

Because Aquinas is a dualist and a personalist as well as a (kind of) animalist, his account of what sort of beings we are is a kind of half-way house between contemporary animalism and contemporary personalism: some contemporary animalists might in fact regard him as a kind of personalist in animalist disguise. Contemporary animalists hold that we have a biological essence or nature, and biological persistence conditions; although for most of our lives we have psychological properties (consciousness, understanding, will) such properties are accidental to us, and have nothing to do with what we are essentially, or what our persistence conditions are. And both contemporary animalists and contemporary personalists take it for granted

that if necessarily we survive if and only if our bodies survive, then we have a biological essence or nature, and biological persistence conditions, and our psychological properties are irrelevant to our nature and our persistence conditions. Aquinas rejects both of these assumptions. That is because contemporary philosophers (whether animalists or personalists) have a conception of human animality that is very different from Aquinas'. As contemporary philosophers usually think of it, being a human animal (belonging to the species *Homo sapiens*) is a biological property, but not a psychological property – at least, not a psychological property in the sense that being a human animal implies actually having psychological properties such as consciousness, or understanding, or will (as opposed, say, to implying being a member of a species whose normal members (at least sometimes) have psychological properties such as consciousness, or understanding, or will). As we have seen, though, by Aquinas' lights, being a human animal implies actually having a human intellect, and actually having a human intellect implies actually having the powers of understanding and will. Similarly, contemporary philosophers (whether animalists or personalists) have a conception of the human body very different from Aquinas'. For Aquinas, though not for contemporary philosophers, the human body is an essentially mind-dependent being. (As we have seen, Aquinas follows Aristotle in thinking that a dead body is no more a body than a fossilized leaf is a leaf. So, for Aquinas, a human body, as well as a human animal, goes out of existence when the human substantial form/soul/intellect that had informed/ensouled/enminded it ceases to do so. Hence, for Aquinas, it's true, not just that a human being can't exist without having a mind (and will, and understanding), but also that a human body can't exist without being the body of a human animal with a mind (and will, and understanding).)

For reasons that I have adumbrated in [Chapter 1](#), but it may be helpful to set out in a bit more detail, Aquinas' commitment to the corruptibility of human bodies raises difficulties for – or at least puzzles about – his account of the relation between human beings and their bodies. In very many places, Aquinas suggests that human body and human form are to a human being as form and matter are to a complete material substance. To take just one example already seen in [Chapter 1](#):

Form and common matter belong to a thing's true nature considered in general, while designated individual matter and the form individuated by that matter belong to the true nature considered as in this individual. Just as human soul and body belong to the true human nature in general, this soul and this body belong to the true human nature in Peter or Martin.

(*ST*, Ia, 119, *responsio*)

Now, as we noted in [chapter 1](#), Aquinas distinguishes two kinds of matter: what I called "thin" matter and what I called "substantial-form-including

matter". The matter that is the persisting subject of generation and corruption is thin matter; although it is always "joined to" or "in union with" some substantial form or other, it never includes (is never partly composed of) any substantial form. (As such it is only in "secondary" rather than "primary" potentiality with respect to that substantial form.) On the other hand, bronze is "thick" or "form-including" matter (which is in "primary" actuality with respect to the substantial form it includes):

[Some matter] is composed of form (*habet compositionem formae*), like the bronze which is the matter of a statue. For the bronze itself is composed of matter and form (*est compositum ex materia et forma*).

(*De Principiis Naturae*, 2)

So, if, say, Peter's human body is a bit of matter, is it a bit of "thin" matter (the kind that is "joined to" or "united to" but not partly composed of substantial form), or is it a bit of "substantial-form-including matter" (the kind of matter that is partly composed of substantial form)? If it were a bit of "thin" matter, only "joined to" a human substantial form, it's hard to see why it should go out of existence *recedente forma* (that is, when it parts company with that human substantial form). So it is presumably a bit of "thick" or "substantial-form-including" matter: that would explain why a human body goes out of existence when it loses the substantial form (it had included), and would also explain why a human body can come to be made of completely new metabolic/sgc-matter, without going out of existence. If, however, the matter that is Peter's human body is partly composed of a substantial form, we can ask: is the substantial form that matter is partly composed of the substantial form of Peter, or not? If Aquinas says that the matter that is Peter's human body is partly composed of a substantial form different from Peter's substantial form, that would seem to contradict a principle Aquinas is (for better or worse) deeply committed to: the principle that no bit of matter is simultaneously in union with two different substantial forms. (For there is a single parcel of (thin) matter that is both the matter of Peter's body, and the matter of Peter himself; so, on the assumption that the substantial form that makes Peter's body Peter's body is different from the form that makes Peter Peter, it would seem that the thin matter of Peter and his body is simultaneously in union with both the substantial form that makes Peter Peter, and the different substantial form that makes Peter's body Peter's body.) So why not say that there is just one substantial form, which simultaneously makes Peter Peter, and makes Peter's body Peter's body (in the same way that (for Aquinas) there is just one substantial form, which makes Peter's body Peter's body, and makes Peter's heart Peter's heart? We can do that, but if we do, then (given Aquinas' background assumptions) it look as though Peter = Peter's body. For if the substantial form that makes Peter Peter = the substantial form that makes Peter's body Peter's body, then Peter and Peter's body will have the same matter, and the

same form; and, for Aquinas, things that have the same matter and the same form are the same. But Aquinas seems to think that Peter and Peter's body are not the same: as he says at *ST*, Ia, 76, 1, *responsio*, a human body is only a *part* of a human being, just as a human soul is only a part of a human being.

Whatever we say about this problem, it is clear enough that Aquinas' kind of animalism offers an alternative to both contemporary animalism and contemporary personalism, in the same way that his "hylomorphic dualism" offers an alternative to both contemporary materialism and contemporary Cartesian dualism (where Cartesian dualism is more or less "Platonic" dualism), and his kind of compositional dualism offers an alternative to both contemporary compositional monism and contemporary compositional dualism. The sense in which Aquinas' kind of animalism is (in one way) a half-way house between contemporary animalism and contemporary personalism could be put this way: contemporary animalists say that the survival of our bodies is necessary for our survival, but do not say that the survival of our minds is necessary for our survival. Contemporary personalists say that the survival of our mind is necessary for our survival, but do not say the survival of our body is necessary for our survival. Aquinas says that the survival of our body and the survival of our mind are individually necessarily and jointly sufficient for our survival (and the survival of our body is also necessary and sufficient for our survival, inasmuch as the survival of our body is sufficient (though not necessary) for the survival of our mind).

Of course, to say that Aquinas' animalism is an alternative to both contemporary animalism and contemporary personalism is not to say it is an improvement on either. I shall conclude this chapter by suggesting some ways in which Aquinas' take on the personalism/animalism debate might be deemed problematic.

Contemporary personalists might object to "Thomistic animalism" on the grounds that we could outlast our bodies. Some dualist contemporary personalists (Richard Swinburne, or C. S. Lewis, for example) would say that we will, and *a fortiori* could, exist in a disembodied state between our deaths and our bodily resurrection. Some materialist contemporary personalists might say that, just as we can and do survive the replacement of some of our organic parts by inorganic substitutes (hip joints or the like), we could survive the replacement of all our organic parts by inorganic substitutes, and would in such a case outlast our current bodies. But I shall not pursue this issue here, except to say (in Aquinas' defense) that, to my mind, we do not strongly or stably intuit that we (as opposed to some part of us) could survive disembodiment or 'disorganicization'.

Contemporary animalists, instead, would object to Thomistic animalism on the grounds that we sometimes outlast our minds, and always antedate them. They might say:

Suppose you see a heavy object fall on Bob, hitting him squarely in the head. Bob falls over with a cracked skull, bleeding profusely from the

head. You run over to him, and ascertain that he shows no signs whatever of consciousness. Someone asks you, "Is Bob alive?" You check for a pulse, and find one; and you ascertain that there's respiration as well as circulation. So you answer, "yes: I've got a pulse, and he's still breathing".

Now, independently of whether whether minds are material or immaterial, it seems perfectly compatible with the scenario just described that, at the moment you ascertain that respiration and circulation have not stopped, Bob no longer has a mind. If Bob's mind is, say, his cerebral cortex, it could be that his cerebral cortex has been destroyed by the impact of the heavy object, although the brain stem is still functioning, so that circulation and respiration go on. If Bob's mind is a subsistent immaterial "unorgan", it could be that that unorgan has separated from Bob's body (and is thus, as on Aquinas' theory, no longer Bob's mind). Even so, what you would say, is "yes, Bob's alive: I've got a pulse" (rather than "perhaps Bob's alive: at least, I've got a pulse"). And there doesn't seem to be anything rash about your answer: if you were right about the pulse and the breathing, then you were right that Bob's alive.

So it looks as though *Bob is alive* does not entail *Bob has a mind*. On the other hand, as Aquinas would agree, *Bob is alive* is equivalent to *Bob exists* (*vivere viventibus est esse*). But if *Bob is alive* does not entail *Bob has a mind*, and *Bob is alive* is equivalent to *Bob exists*, then *Bob exists* does not imply *Bob has a mind* – in which case Thomistic animalism is false (since Thomistic animalism implies that (if Bob is human) *Bob exists* implies that both *Bob has a body* and *Bob has a mind*).

Aquinas might say here that whatever we might say in the stress of the moment, we are really not justified, in those circumstances, in saying anything more committal than, "perhaps Bob's alive: at least, I've got a pulse". But suppose that your parents showed you a microscope photograph of a human sperm cell not far from a human egg cell, and said, "this is a photo of you before you were conceived". You would be inclined to say something along the lines of: "that's impossible: I wasn't there to be photographed before I was conceived". Suppose on the other hand your parents showed you a sonogram of a 10-week fetus, and said "this is a sonogram of you, before you could think" or "this is a sonogram of you before you had a mind". You wouldn't reply, "that's impossible: I wasn't there to be sonogrammed before I could think/had a mind". You might wonder how your parents knew you couldn't think/didn't have a mind when the sonogram was made. But you wouldn't think they *couldn't* know that, because it couldn't be true. After all, *I existed as soon as I was conceived* seems to be a necessary truth, and *I had the ability to think/had a mind as soon as I was conceived* does not seem to be a necessary truth; and if *I existed as soon as I was conceived* is necessary, and *I had the ability to think/had a mind as soon as I was conceived* is not, then *I had the ability to think/had a mind as soon as I existed* is not necessary. Just as we think that an equestrian-shaped statue

couldn't have existed before it acquired its current approximate shape, but don't think (and shouldn't think) that that statue couldn't have existed before it acquired its current color (which might be due to oxidation), so too we think that a human being couldn't have existed before it acquired its life, or its species, but don't think (and shouldn't think) that a human being couldn't have existed before it acquired its mind, or its ability to think.

I think these considerations constitute a quite serious challenge to Aquinas' view that we are permanently and essentially thinking or "enminded" beings, and thus to Thomistic animalism. But the challenge brings out only part of what is problematic in Aquinas' sort of animalism. The contemporary (and "impersonalist") animalist could expand his argument against Thomistic animalism as follows:

Six weeks into a pregnancy, a fetus has a heart. But, on Thomistic assumptions, that heart is not then the heart of a human being, because it is not then the heart of any individual with an intellective soul (since God does not create and infuse an intellective soul until later in fetal development (cf. *Commentary on the Book of Sentences*, Bk. III, dist. 3, q. 5, a. 2, *responsio*)). Now we might have thought that on Aquinas' view (or perhaps Aquinas' view, supplemented by the datum that six weeks into a pregnancy, a fetus has a heart, if Aquinas was not apprised of this fact) the heart the fetus has becomes the heart of a human being at the moment that the human being comes into existence. However, this cannot be right. For, on Aquinas' account (or the supplemented version thereof), the heart the fetus has at six weeks depends for its existence on the existence of a living being – a human-being-in-the-making – that no longer exists when the human being comes into existence: just as the generation of air is the corruption of water, the generation of a human being is the corruption of a human-being-in-the-making (*ST*, Ia, 118, 2 *ad* 2um). So, just as a human-being-in-the-making is replaced by a human being, the heart that the fetus has six weeks into the pregnancy is replaced by a different heart. And it's not just the fetus' heart that goes out of existence. Thin matter aside, on Aquinas' view, *everything* in the fetus at six weeks is gone at the first moment the human being exists. The six-week fetus, being a human-in-the-making with a not quite human substantial form, is gone. The organs of the six-week fetus, depending as they do on that fetus and its substantial form, are gone. The flesh of the fetus, which is likewise form-dependent, is gone. The accidents of the fetus, depending as they do on the substance that is their subject, are all gone. *Nothing* that belonged to the fetus at the six-week point of the pregnancy is still around when the human being starts to exist – except matter in an exquisitely philosophical sense (pure matter). But this is a *reductio*. With luck, you can see a fetal heart beating in a sonogram, six weeks into a

pregnancy. If we had good enough powers of observation (and all went well), we could just *see* that the heart the fetus had at six weeks keeps on working, and thus keeps on existing, right through to the moment of birth – whether or not at some time between the six-week point and birth, intellectualive soul creation and infusion takes place. (Imagine two people observing a fetus with a heart, and think how strange B’s part of the following conversation sounds:

A: Can you see the heart beating?

B: Yes.

A: The fetus has moved a bit. Can you still see the heart beating?

B: I don’t know.

A: What do you mean?

B: Well, I can see *a* heart beating, but I don’t know if it’s the same heart I was seeing before.

A: Why ever would it be a different heart?

B: Because the moment at which the fetus moved might have been the moment at which soul creation and infusion took place.)

Someone whose aim was to defend Aquinas’ dualist personalist animalism (as opposed to his views about the timing of ensoulment and “hominization”) might agree that (if all goes well) the heart we see six weeks into the pregnancy will still be around at the completion of the pregnancy, because ensoulment and “hominization” happen much earlier than Aquinas supposed (say, at the moment of fertilization). (If hominization/ensoulment has already happened as of the sixth week of pregnancy, it is not going to cause the heart we see six weeks into the pregnancy to go out of existence at a later time.)

But, for the purposes of the argument under construction, it doesn’t matter when exactly hominization/ensoulment are supposed to occur. The crucial point is that, if the observational conditions are favorable, six weeks into a pregnancy, we can be sure that a heart exists, without making any assumptions whatever about whether that heart partly composes a living being partly composed of an immaterial thinking part. And, if observational conditions are favorable, we can be sure that that heart persists, without making any assumptions whatever about whether that heart comes to, or continues to, or ceases to partly compose a living being partly composed of an immaterial thinking part. So the heart that was in a certain fetus at the six-week point (the fetus in my mother womb’s when she was pregnant with her third child), and is in me now, has an identity and an existence independent of whether it partly composes a living being partly composed of an immaterial thinking part (an immaterial mind or intellectualive soul). My heart is the particular heart it is, independently of whether it is the heart of a thinking being with an immaterial intellectualive soul, or the heart of a “mindless” being without an immaterial intellectualive soul (such as a fetus six weeks into a pregnancy, if ensoulment/hominization happen after the sixth week).

There is nothing special about my heart in this regard: it is equally true that my lungs are the lungs they are, independently of whether they partly compose something partly composed of an immaterial intellectual soul. And what goes for my organs also goes for my organ systems: my circulatory system or my respiratory system is the circulatory or respiratory system it is, independently of whether it partly composes something partly composed of an immaterial intellectual soul. In which case, it's hard to resist the conclusion that it is true of something even more inclusive than any of my organ systems – viz., my body – that it, too, is the body that it is, independently of whether it partly composes a living being partly composed of an immaterial intellectual soul. And if my body is the body it is, independently of whether it partly composes a living being partly composed by an intellectual soul, then Thomistic animalism (dualist personalist animalism) is wrong, since it implies that my body could not be the body it is, without partly composing a human being partly composed by an immaterial intellectual soul.

It may be worth underscoring that although the first contemporary animalist argument against Thomistic animalism adumbrated above relies on premises any contemporary personalist would reject, the second contemporary animalist argument against Thomistic animalism (the one just concluded) relies on premises all of which could – and so far as I can see, would – be accepted by contemporary personalists.

To my mind, neither of these two (independent) arguments is easy to rebut; taken together, they put Thomistic animalism, and the Thomistic account of the relation between mind and body, under severe pressure.

At the core of Aquinas' account of human nature is the idea that a human being is an animal essentially composed of a body and an immaterial mind, where the existence of the body is sufficient for the existence of the human being, but dependent upon the existence of the mind, and the existence of the mind is insufficient for the existence of the human being, but independent of the existence of the body. Aquinas finds this idea natural – indeed, irresistible – given his identification of a human being's mind or intellectual soul with her substantial form. The identification of human minds or intellectual souls with human substantial forms certainly does go a long way toward motivating the core idea. To start with, if human minds are substantial forms, it seems that they could hardly be material beings. Also, if we assume, as Aquinas does, that the substantial form of a human being is also the substantial form of that human being's body, then a human body will be necessarily "enminded", inasmuch as it is necessarily substantially informed. Moreover, a human body will be necessarily enminded by the particular mind it is actually enminded by, inasmuch as it is necessarily informed by the particular substantial form it is informed by. But, Aquinas (plausibly) supposes, the enminding of a human being's actual body by her actual mind is sufficient for (i.e., guarantees) the existence of that human being. Putting all this together, we may conclude that a human

being is composed of a body and mind, where the existence of the body is sufficient for the existence of the human being, and dependent upon the existence of the mind (sufficient for the existence of the human being, only because dependent upon the existence of the human mind). This leaves the part of the core idea according to which the existence of a human being's mind is insufficient for that human being's existence, and independent of the existence of that human's being body. We can arrive at this last part of the core idea by combining *minimal animalism*, according to which a human being is an animal, and animals are essentially embodied, with the thesis that a human rational mind/intellective soul has an *operatio*, and thus an *esse*, that is independent of any bodily *operatio*.

That said, for reasons I have tried to bring out in the previous section of this chapter, (a) Aquinas' arguments for the identification of human intellective souls with human substantial forms are not clearly convincing; (b) Aquinas' own background assumptions about human intellective souls and human substantial forms seem to preclude the identification of the former with the latter; and (c) that identification appears to have dramatically counterintuitive consequences. Also, the contemporary animalist arguments against Thomistic animalism presented above are in effect also arguments against the identification of human intellective souls with human substantial forms. (The first argument challenges the assumption that human *beings* are essentially enminded, and that assumption is an obvious consequence of the identification of human intellective souls with human substantial forms; the second argument challenges the assumption that human *bodies* are essentially enminded, which again is an obvious consequence of the identification of human intellective souls with human substantial forms.)

So, to sum up a chapter in a sentence: Aquinas has a strikingly original account of human nature, which involves a very distinctive, but highly problematic take on both the mind-body problem, and what we might all "the person-animal problem".

4 God

Natural theology: the existence of God

In the period between Augustine and Hume (arguably the golden age of natural theology), natural theologians are thick on the ground. Even so, it is hard to think of one more celebrated than Aquinas. And it is hard to think of a more celebrated set of arguments for God's existence than the ones Aquinas sets out at *ST*, Ia, 2, 3, *responsio* and *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I, 13 and 15. Although not all the arguments Aquinas offers there are "cosmological" or "causal" arguments, I shall focus on one that is – to wit, what we may call Aquinas' modal cosmological argument for God's existence. Different versions of this argument (or perhaps different arguments of that kind) may be found at *ST*, Ia, 2, 3 *responsio* and at *SCG*, I, 15. Although the argument set out at *ST*, Ia, 2, 3, *responsio* – the so called *tertia via* or "third way" (of showing that God exists) – has perhaps generated more discussion than the argument set out at *SCG*, I, 15, I find the *Summa Contra Gentiles* argument is in some ways less obscure, and I shall accordingly concentrate on it. The argument is concise enough that we can reproduce it in full:

We see in the world some things that are able both to exist and to not-exist – to wit, things subject to generation and corruption. But everything that is able to exist, has a cause. For if a thing is in itself equally related to existing and not existing, then, assuming it exists, that must be due to some cause. But in a series of causes we cannot go back *ad infinitum*, as was shown earlier by Aristotelian reasoning. So it is necessary to posit something which must exist. But everything necessary either has the cause of its necessity in something else, or is necessary in itself. And we cannot go back *ad infinitum* in a series of necessary causes that have the cause of their necessity in something else. Therefore we must posit a first necessary being, that is necessary in and of itself (*per se ipsum necessarium*). And this is God ...

Some preliminary remarks may help in getting to grips with this argument. In this context, *a is a cause of b* means *a causes b to exist (a makes b exist)*. So

causation, as Aquinas is thinking of it here, is a relation between things that exist, rather than a relation between things that occur or obtain – a relation between individual substances, rather than a relation between events, or facts, or states of affairs. Second, in this context Aquinas appears to be thinking of the causal relation as what mathematicians call “a strict ordering” – that is, an irreflexive, asymmetric, and transitive relation. (A relation is irreflexive if it never happens that a bears that relation to a (that is, to itself); a relation is asymmetric if, whenever a bears that relation to b , b does not bear that relation to a ; and a relation is transitive if whenever a bears that relation to b , and b bears that relation to c , a bears that relation to c . The less-than relation between numbers is a strict ordering since (i) it never happens that a number n is less than n (less than itself), (ii) whenever a number m is less than a number n , n is not less than m , and (iii) whenever a number l is less than a number m , and that number m is less than a number n , l is less than n . Analogously, Aquinas thinks, it never happens that a makes a exist (nothing can make itself exist, since only what (already or independently) exists can make something exist). And whenever a causes b to exist, b does not cause a to exist. Finally, whenever a causes b to exist, and b causes c to exist, a causes c to exist.)

At this point we can unpack the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I, 15 argument somewhat. I take it that it has something like the following structure:

Start with a contingent being z . Since z is contingent, and contingent beings are always caused, z must have a cause – call it y . Given that nothing causes itself to exist, we know that y is different from z . Now y may itself be contingent, in which case it will have a cause x which is different from y (and also from z , since, if x were identical to z , then, since x is the cause of y and y is the cause of z , it would follow that z is the cause of y , and y is the cause of z , in contravention of the asymmetry of the causal relation). Similarly, x may be contingent, and have a cause different from x , y , and z . But the series of contingent causes of z cannot go back forever, because, as Aristotle showed, no series of causes can go back forever. So, if z has contingent causes, z has a first contingent cause – call it *fcc*. Since *fcc* is contingent, *fcc* has a cause. And since *fcc* is the first contingent cause of z , *fcc* must have a necessary cause. After all, if *fcc* had a contingent cause, that contingent cause would (by the transitivity of causation) be a more remote contingent cause of z than *fcc* (and nothing can be a more remote contingent cause of z than the first contingent cause of z). So, assuming that z has a contingent cause, z also has a necessary cause (which is a cause of z 's first contingent cause). If on the other hand, z doesn't have any contingent causes, then it immediately follows that z has a necessary cause: since z is contingent, and all contingent beings are caused, z is caused, and if z has a cause, but doesn't have any contingent causes, then z has a necessary cause. So we know that z has a necessary cause *nc*. Perhaps surprisingly, Aquinas

allows that *nc* might itself have a cause, although he thinks that such a cause would have to be necessary (since, he assumes, nothing contingent can be the cause of anything necessary). If *nc* has a necessary cause *nc'*, *nc'* might in turn have a necessary cause *nc''*. Again, though, for Aristotelian reasons, this can't go on forever. So if there are any causes of *nc*, there will be a first necessary cause of *nc* (and of *z*, given the transitivity of causation). If on the other hand there aren't any causes of *nc*, then *nc* itself will be a first necessary cause of *z*. Either way, there will be a first necessary cause of *z*. And that first necessary cause of *z* is God.

Because this level of detail may make it hard to see the forest for the trees, it may help to set out the macro-structure of the argument as follows:

- (1) There are contingent beings.
- (2) A contingent being will always have a cause.
- (3) In which case – given that the causal relation is a strict ordering, and given that a series of causes cannot go back forever – any arbitrarily chosen contingent being will have a necessary cause.
- (4) In which case – again, given that the causal relation is a strict ordering, and given that a series of causes cannot go back forever – an arbitrarily chosen contingent being will have a first or uncaused necessary cause.
- (5) And that being is God.

So we can see that the crucial assumptions on which the argument rests are (A) that the causal relation is irreflexive, symmetric, and transitive; (B) that contingent beings are always caused; (C) that an infinite causal regress is impossible; and (D) that something is a first necessary cause only if it is God.

If the *SCG*, I, 15 argument is sound, it has premises stronger than they need to be. For if that argument is sound, then whatever has a cause, has a first necessary cause; in which case Aquinas doesn't need the stronger premise that there are contingent beings, but only the weaker premise that there are things that are either contingent or caused. (Indeed, for reasons of the sort discussed by Duns Scotus in *De Primo Principio*, it looks as though we could weaken the premises still further: as long as causation "strictly orders" substances, and causal chains cannot go back forever, and all contingent beings are caused, we can arrive at the existence of a first or uncaused necessary cause without the supposition that anything is contingent or caused.)

It is worth noting, however, that in order to get to (4) (that is, in order to establish that there is a first necessary cause), no two of (A)–(C) will suffice. Suppose (B) and (C) are true, but (A) is false. Then it cannot be shown that

there are any necessary causes, since it could be that all of (our arbitrarily chosen contingent being) z 's causes are contingent, and z 's first cause is the (unique) cause of itself, or it could be that z is caused by y , which is caused by x , which is caused ... by z . Suppose (A) and (B) are true, but (C) is false. Again, it cannot be shown that there are any necessary causes, since it could be that z has an infinite number of contingent and caused causes, and no necessary causes. Suppose (A) and (C) are true, but (B) is false. Once again, it cannot be shown that there are any necessary causes, since it could be that all of z 's causes are contingent, and z 's first cause is a contingent but uncaused cause.

Aquinas does not attempt to support each premise of the *SCG*, I, 15 argument in that chapter. Although he explicitly argues for the irreflexivity of the causal relation in that chapter, he doesn't explicitly invoke, much less defend, its asymmetry or its transitivity. He explicitly invokes, but does not defend the principle that every contingent being is caused, and I imagine he thinks that principle is evident enough that it does not need to be defended. He says (at *SCG*, I, 17) that he has already shown elsewhere that a series of causes cannot go back forever. The reference may be to chapter 13 of *SCG*, I, where Aquinas formulates and defends the following argument for God's existence:

There are moved movers.

Every moved mover is moved by something by else.

In which case, either every mover is moved, and there is an infinity of moved movers, or there is an unmoved mover.

But there isn't an infinity of moved movers.

So there is an unmoved mover.

And that unmoved mover is God.

This argument is obviously not entirely unrelated to the *SCG*, I, 15 argument. It appears to depend on assumptions that are counterparts of the assumptions of the I, 15 argument. Depending on the way we unpack the I, 13 argument, these might be that (A') the relation of moving that holds between a mover and a thing moved is irreflexive, asymmetric, and transitive; (B') that (just as nothing just happens to exist, without being caused to exist) nothing just happens to move (in the intransitive sense of 'move'), without being caused to move, (C') something moved cannot have an infinity of movers, and (D') something is an unmoved mover only if it is God.

That said, given that the I, 13 argument is "motion-based", whilst the I, 15 is "existence-based", it is not clear that the entirety of Aquinas' elaborate

defense of the I, 13 argument in that chapter – and, in particular, of the premise that a moved thing must have a first cause of its motion – constitutes a defense of the I, 15 argument – and in particular, of the premise that a being that has been caused to exist must have a first cause of its existence. To start with, in arguing that a moved thing cannot have an infinity of movers, Aquinas assumes both that (i) everything moved is “divisible and a body”, and (ii) the mover and the moved must exist simultaneously (*ibid.*). It does not seem, though, that the counterparts of these assumptions can be unproblematically made in defense of the *SCG*, I, 17 argument. On Aquinas’ own account, not everything caused to exist is a body (angels aren’t bodies), and efficient causes need not exist at any of the same times as their effects. A sculptor is a cause of the statue he makes (*De Principiis Naturae*, 4), but the sculptor will antedate the statue, and the statue may survive the sculptor’s demise. Similarly, a generating animal is a cause of the animal it generates, but the generating animal antedates the generated one, and the generated animal may outlive the generating one. Given that the causal relation is transitive, we may conclude that (unlike a mover and the thing it moves) a cause and its effect may exist at none of the same times (as will be the case with an animal and its remote enough descendants). (I shall return to this point later.)

Summa Contra Gentiles, I, 13 is a dense and difficult chapter, and one whose arguments involve many appeals to more or less abstruse (and contestable) features of Aristotelian physics. So it is natural to wonder whether elsewhere Aquinas gives a more straightforward explanation of why the series of causes of a caused being cannot go back forever. Aquinas’ second way might seem to provide just such an explanation:

In the world of sensible things, we find that there is an order of efficient causes. We never find that, and it could never be that, something is its own efficient cause; for such a thing would be prior to itself, which is impossible. But it is not possible to go on forever (*in infinitum*) in the order of efficient causes. For in every series of efficient causes, the first is the cause of the intermediate cause, and the intermediate cause is the cause of the last cause (whether the intermediate causes be many or one). But if the cause is taken away, so too is the effect (*remota autem causa, removetur effectus*). So if there were no first efficient cause, there wouldn’t be a last, or an intermediate cause. So if one can go back forever in the order of efficient causes there won’t be a first cause, and so there won’t be an ultimate effect, nor any intermediate cause. But this is obviously false. One must therefore posit a first efficient cause ...

(*ST*, Ia, 2, 3, *responsio*)

This passage has the virtue (from a contemporary reader’s point of view) of not relying on any especially obscure bits of Aristotelian physics. Even so, it does not seem to offer a very satisfying explanation of why it must be that not all the causes of caused beings are themselves caused. Setting aside

worries about whether there are cases of overdetermination of efficient causation that constitute counterexamples to the *remota causa, removetur effectus* principle, the passage just cited seems as much to presuppose as to explain the claim that a series of efficient causes must have a first member. The crucial bit of the passage seems to be the inference from

(α) Any given effect would not be there, in the absence of any of its efficient causes.

to

(β) Any given effect would not be there, if it didn't have a first efficient cause.

But it is hard to see why anyone should accept this inference, unless she has already bought in on the idea that everything that has an efficient cause has a first efficient cause. For suppose some effect did have infinitely many efficient causes, and no first efficient cause. It would follow that

(γ) That effect is there, even though it doesn't have a first efficient cause.

And if (γ) is true, then (β) is false.

It is worth noting that, analogously, some of what Aquinas says in *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I, 13 in defense of the idea that moved things have a first mover seems to presuppose the point he is attempting to defend:

That which moves things instrumentally (*instrumentaliter*) cannot move things unless there is something which moves things non-instrumentally (*principaliter*). But if there were an infinity of moved movers, all things would be as it were instrumental movers ... and nothing would be a principal mover.

The reasoning seems to be:

If there were an infinity of moved movers, all movers would move things *instrumentaliter*, and none would move things *principaliter*.

But there can't be things that move things *instrumentaliter* unless there is something that moves things *principaliter*.

—

So there is no infinity of moved movers.

Again, if someone thought there might for all she knew be an infinity of moved movers, and was looking for an explanation of why there wasn't (if

there wasn't), it is hard to think that this passage would make her feel explained to: if someone doesn't see why there couldn't be an infinity of moved movers, she presumably won't see why all movers couldn't be "as it were instrumental" (that is, non-principal or moved) movers.

Even assuming that nothing is in motion unless it is set in motion by something else, why suppose that not all movers are moved? Although Aquinas addresses this question in a good number of places, I cannot say I really understand his answer. I do, however, think that the following answer is tolerably clear, and essentially Thomistic (in the sense that it is "built out of" ideas Aquinas accepts):

If there is such a thing as x , and x is "in itself equally related to being and non-being" (in other words, x is a contingent being), then x has a cause, and the fact that there is such a thing as x has an explanation (since causes (as such) explain (the existence or occurrence of) their effects). This principle applies, whether x is a substance or an event. If there is such a thing as (the mountain) Pizzo d'Evigno, and Pizzo d'Evigno is a thing that could have either existed or not existed, then Pizzo d'Evigno has a cause, and the fact that Pizzo d'Evigno exists has an explanation. Equally, if there is such a thing as global warming, and global warming is a thing that could have either happened or not happened, then global warming has a cause, and the fact that global warming is happening has an explanation. Also, the principle at issue applies, whether x is an individual belonging to a kind, or a kind to which one or more individuals belong. If any particular man exists, and could have not existed, that man has causes, and the fact that that man exists has an explanation. But equally, if there is such a thing as mankind (the human species) and there might not have been such a thing as mankind, then mankind has a cause, and the fact that there is such a thing as mankind has an explanation. Analogously, if a particular rotation occurs, and might not have occurred, that rotation has causes, and there is an explanation of the fact that that rotation occurs. And if there is such a thing as rotation (not this or that rotation, but rotation), then rotation has a cause, and the fact that there is such a thing as rotation has an explanation.

Now any particular motion is a contingent being. But so too is the kind, motion: there wouldn't have been any such thing as motion, if (as might have been the case), there hadn't been any particular motions.

Since it is a contingent fact that there is such a thing as motion, there must be a cause of motion, and an explanation of the fact that there is such a thing as motion. If, however, all movers were moved, there couldn't be a cause of motion, or an explanation of the fact that there is such a thing as motion. It should be obvious that we cannot explain why there is such a thing as motion, by saying that (our arbitrarily selected moved being) z is in motion. z is in motion only because y has

set it in motion, and *y* has set *z* in motion only because *y* is itself in motion. Hence that *z* is in motion is explanatorily posterior to there being such a thing as motion, and cannot be appealed to in order to explain why there is such a thing as motion. (That *z* is in motion implies but does not explain the existence of motion, in much the way that your existence implies but does not explain the existence of mankind.) But if all movers are moved movers, then no mover will be in a better position to explain the existence of motion than *z* is: we will never reach an *a* some facts about which explain (as well as imply) that there is motion. So the existence of motion will be a contingent but inexplicable or “brute” existential fact. And there are no such facts. That is why it couldn’t be that all movers are moved.

Various questions might be raised about this argument. For example, someone familiar with Galileo and Newton’s views on inertia might wonder about the claim that anything in motion must be set in motion by something else. But we may bypass these questions, since our ultimate interest is in the *SCGI*, 15 argument, rather than the *SCGI*, 13 one.

For our purposes, what matters is that it appears that the sorts of considerations adduced above in support of the claim that not all movers are moved could be adduced in support of the claim that not all the causes of contingent beings are themselves contingent. There are various ways in which one might attempt this, but here is a promising one:

There are particular motions, and there is motion (full stop). It is a contingent fact that there is such a thing as this particular motion, because there might not have been any such thing as this particular motion, and it is a contingent fact that there is motion, because there might not have been any motions at all. Similarly, there are contingent beings, and there is what we might call contingent being (full stop). It is a contingent fact that there is such a thing as this particular contingent being, because there might not have been any such thing as this particular contingent being, and it is a contingent fact that there is such a thing as contingent being, because there might not have been any contingent beings at all.

Since it is a contingent fact that there is such a thing as contingent being, and it couldn’t be a contingent but “brute” existential fact, there must be a cause of contingent being, and an explanation of the fact that there is such a thing as contingent being. If, however, all the causes of contingent beings were themselves contingent, there couldn’t be a cause of contingent being, or an explanation of there being such a thing as contingent being: we would never be able to find a being some facts about which explained as well as implied that there is such a thing as contingent being. Whence we may conclude that not all the causes of contingent beings are themselves contingent.

Again, I am not saying that the answer just given to the question, “why suppose that not all the causes of contingent beings are contingent?” is the one Aquinas actually gives, when he sets out to explain why not all the causes of contingent beings are contingent. But I take it that the answer I’ve sketched is essentially Thomistic, inasmuch as Aquinas accepts that the contingency-causation-explanation principle alluded to at *SCG* I, 15 and elsewhere applies not just to particular contingent beings, but also to contingent being as such, in much the way he accepts that it applies, not just to particular motions, but also to motion as such.

The answer I take to be essentially Thomistic has a virtue worth underscoring. Suppose *A* is arguing for a certain thesis *T*, and *B* challenges a premise of *A*’s argument for *T*, by asking *B*, “why suppose that?” It is a good thing for *A* if her answer to that question is one that someone might accept, even if he hadn’t already bought in on the truth of *T*. If *A* replies to *B*’s “why suppose that?” with an answer that nobody would accept, unless they’d already accepted *T*, then *A*’s answer to *B* is, as we might say, dialectically useless, even if it is true. Now at *SCG*, I, 15, Aquinas is offering an argument for the existence of a first necessary cause subsequently identified with God. An objector might attempt to derail that argument by saying, “why suppose that not all the causes of contingent beings are contingent?” In that dialectical context, it would be a good thing for Aquinas if he could give a not dialectically useless answer to that question (that is, an answer that someone might accept, even if she didn’t already believe in a first necessary cause). And the answer I’ve sketched appears to be not only essentially Thomistic, but also not dialectically useless (in the relevant dialectical context). It seems that, before having been exposed to that answer, someone might be in a state in which she was pretty sure contingent existential facts are never “brute”, and pretty sure that it is not a necessary truth that there is such a thing as contingent being, but not at all sure whether there were any necessary causes (or whether there was a first necessary cause, or a God).

So far, so good. But attentive readers will have noticed that, even if we have an essentially Thomistic (and not dialectically useless) answer to the question, “why suppose there is a necessary cause?” we don’t yet have an essentially Thomistic answer to the question, “why suppose there is a first necessary cause?” (remember, for Aquinas, a necessary cause may or may not be uncaused: that is why, in our earlier five-premise summary of the *SCG*, I, 15 argument, we needed premise (4) as well as premise (3)). The case just made for a necessary cause turns on the idea that if all the causes of contingent beings were themselves contingent, we would be saddled with a contingent existential brute fact (the fact that there is such a thing as contingent being). But it’s hard to see why supposing that every necessary being is (necessarily) caused by another necessary being further back in the series of causes should saddle us with any contingent existential brute facts. Thus the case I’ve presented for a necessary being (the one I take to be essentially Thomistic) doesn’t constitute a case for the existence of a first necessary being.

If Aquinas' commitment to the contingency-causality-explanation principle alluded to above does not exclude an infinite regress of caused causes (as opposed to an infinite regress of contingent causes), what other commitments might do the job? Here it will be useful to juxtapose Aquinas' views on two kinds of causation with his views on the actual infinite.

In various places (including *ST*, Ia, 104, 1), Aquinas notes that a cause c may be the cause of an effect e in either of two ways. It may be that c is a "producing cause" (*causa secundum fieri, causa fiendi*) of e , or it may be that c is a "conserving" or "sustaining" cause (*causa secundum esse, causa essendi*) of e . Roughly, c is a producing cause of e when c makes e come to be, and c is a conserving or sustaining cause of e when c makes e go on existing. (I say "roughly", in order to finesse certain complications involving the "conservation" of an effect at its very first instant of existence.)

"Productive" causation and "conservative" causation come apart, in the sense that what brings something into existence need not (and typically will not) subsequently keep that thing in existence. To use Aquinas' example, the builder who makes a house come into existence doesn't make that house go on existing. The builder makes the house come into existence by "houseforming" some matter; but once that matter is houseformed (so that the house exists), the builder typically does not need to, and typically does not, do anything to keep the house in existence. On the other hand, in certain cases, productive and conservative causation go hand in hand. Suppose that an exceptionally long, lithe, and intelligent snake decides to make a hammock, not out of rope, but out of himself. By twisting himself into the right shape, he brings a (serpentine) hammock into existence; by retaining that shape he keeps that hammock in existence. (At least this is the way I think about it, since (unlike Aquinas) I don't think that a hammock form, like all artifactual forms, is accidental.) Or think about force and acceleration in Newtonian physics. The application of a net force to a body previously at rest (or previously in uniform motion) causes that body to accelerate. So we may think of the application of the net force to a body as the producing cause of the acceleration of the body. But, given Newton's second law, a body will continue to accelerate as long as, and only as long as, a (non-zero) net force is applied to it, and this particular acceleration (of this body, with this magnitude, and this direction) will continue only as long as this particular net force (with that magnitude, and this direction) continues to be applied to that body. So we might think of the application of this particular net force (with this particular magnitude and direction) to this body as initially the producing cause of this particular acceleration (of this body, with that magnitude, and this direction), and subsequently the conserving cause of that particular acceleration (for as long as the acceleration continues).

Now for Aquinas, the relation of the first cause (which is to say, God) to His effects is not like the relation of the builder to the house. It's not as though, once God has brought things in the world into being, He could go

off and attend to other matters, and those things could perfectly well go on with or without Him. The relation of God to His effects is like the relation of the snake to the (serpentine) hammock, or – even better – the relation of the application of a particular net force to a body, to a particular acceleration of that body. In Newtonian physics, a particular acceleration of a particular body could never come to be, unless a particular net force were applied to that body, and a particular acceleration of a particular body could never continue, unless a particular net force continued to be applied to that particular body. Equally, a created being could never start to exist, unless God made it start to exist, and could never continue to exist, unless God continued to make it continue to exist.

(There is a complication here. I have made it sound as though an effect that is conserved at a time can only be conserved at that time, if its conserving cause exists at that time. Aquinas does think this principle holds without qualification in the case of created conserving causes. But he thinks that the uncreated conserving cause (that is, God) does not literally “inhabit” our temporal present (our *nunc fluens* (“fleeting present”)), as opposed to His *nunc stans* (eternal present), to use Boethian language). So, for Aquinas, conservative causation implies either that the conserver and the conserved literally co-inhabit a time (as happens whenever one creature is a conserving cause of another) or that the conserver and conserved “quasi-co-inhabit” a time.)

At this point, we can return to Aquinas’ cosmological argument at *SCG*, I, 15. There Aquinas says that every contingent being has a cause. We can now see that this might be understood as implying either of the following statements:

(S1) For any contingent being *cb* that is not “brand new” (for any contingent being with a past) there is something, or at any rate there was something that brought *cb* into existence.

or

(S2) For any contingent being *cb* that is not “brand new” (for any contingent being with a past), there is something that is now keeping *cb* in existence.

The claim that every contingent being has a cause, as Aquinas understands it, certainly implies (S1). But it appears that, as Aquinas understands it, it also implies (S2). The way Aquinas sees it, contingent beings no more have the wherewithal (on their own) to keep on existing, than they have the wherewithal (on their own) to start existing. (Compare: in Newtonian physics, bodies no more have the wherewithal (on their own) to keep on accelerating, than they have the wherewithal (on their own) to start accelerating.)

So any contingent being with a past must have a productive cause in the past, and a conserving cause in the present. (Again, here and in what follows, for the sake of simplicity of formulation, I ignore complications

involving God's extratemporality.) Given that contingent beings have two kinds of causes, a question arises about what Aquinas is attempting to show, when he argues that a contingent being must have a necessary first cause. We might suppose that he is trying to show that a contingent being must have a first necessary producing cause in the past. But we might also suppose that Aquinas is trying to show that a contingent being must have a first necessary conserving cause in the present. In the first case, Aquinas would have to show that there was a necessary "unproduced producer" in the past; in the second, he would have to show that there is a necessary "unconserved conservator" in the present.

How, if at all, would that make a difference? Here it will be useful to take a quick look at Aquinas' views on infinity.

Aquinas accepts the Aristotelian view that even though there is a potentially infinite number of existents (that is, for no finite n is it true that n is the largest number of things there ever could be), it could never happen that there actually are an infinite number of things in existence. (However things might be, there would have to be some finite n or other such that there are actually no more than n things in existence). It seems that, as Aquinas understands the dictum that there are no actual infinities, it does not imply that for some finite n , the number of things there are or will be is at most n . Nor does it imply that for some finite n , the number of things there are or were is at most n :

Even if the infinite does not exist actually all at once, it can nevertheless exist in succession.

(SCG, II, 38)

As Aquinas appears to think of it, things that exist at different times needn't all be actual: the passage of time involves the "reduction" of potential existence to actual existence (see *ST*, Ia, 14, 13, *ad 3um*). So even if for every finite n , the number of things there are or were or will be is greater than n , it could still be (always and necessarily) true that of the infinitely many things there were or are or will be, only finitely many are actually in existence. To put this another way, just as Aquinas' (Aristotelian) antipathy toward the actual infinite does not induce him to deny that an infinite number of things could exist potentially, it does not induce him to deny that an infinite number of things could exist *successive* (over time), although it does induce him to deny that that an infinite number of things could exist *simul* (at once).

Now let us return to the *SCG*, I, 15 argument. In that argument, Aquinas rules out both an infinite regress of contingent causes, and an infinite regress of caused causes. Aquinas' remarks at *SCG* I, 15 (and elsewhere) don't make it entirely clear why he rules out an infinite regress of contingent causes. But, I tried to show, inasmuch as Aquinas accepts both that all contingent "existential" facts have an explanation, and that it is a contingent

existential fact that there is such a thing as contingent being, Aquinas does have reasons to rule out an infinite regress of contingent causes. However, those reasons seem not to be reasons to rule out an infinite regress of caused causes; they are reasons for thinking that there is at least one necessary being, but not reasons for thinking there is a first necessary being. This begged the question: does Aquinas have other reasons for ruling out an infinite regress of caused causes?

It now looks as though we may have found such reasons. Suppose that in the *SCG*, I, 15 argument, Aquinas is arguing for a necessary unconserved conserver in the present, rather than for a necessary unproduced producer in the past. In that case, he needs to show that there is a necessary conserver (in the present), and that not every necessary conserver (in the present) is itself conserved (by something else) (in the present). Given a “conservative” understanding of the contingency-causation-explanation principle, and the claim that it’s a contingent existential fact that there is contingent being (now), Aquinas can arrive at the conclusion that there is at least one necessary conserver (in the present). (If this is not immediately clear: suppose that everything contingent (in the present) has a conserving cause (in the present), and every conserving cause (in the present) of every contingent being (in the present) is itself contingent. In that case, there will be no explanation of why there is such a thing as contingent being (now) since there will be no being in existence (now) facts about which could explain, as well as imply, that there is such a thing as contingent being (now).) In which case – since it is only contingently true that there is contingent being (now) – it will be a contingent but brute existential fact that there is such a thing as contingent being (now).) Now, how can Aquinas get that not every necessary conserver (in the present) is itself conserved (by something else) (in the present)? Via his antipathy toward the actual infinite. As Aquinas seems to think of it, there could be an infinite number of produced producers in the past, since that would not imply the existence of an actually infinite multitude. But there couldn’t be an infinite number of conserved conservers in the present, since that would imply the existence of an actually infinite multitude. Hence – assuming that conservative causation is a linear ordering, so that nothing can keep itself in existence now, and things can’t keep each other in existence now – we may rule out the hypothesis that every conserving cause (in the present) is itself conserved (in the present) – *quod erat demonstrandum*.

There may also be a quicker route from Aquinas’ antipathy toward actual infinity to the denial of an infinite regress of caused causes. Suppose every necessary cause of anything that exists now is itself caused. Then – given that the causal relation is a strict ordering – there will (in a sense) be an infinite number of necessary causes, whether we are thinking of causation as production, or thinking of it as conservation. The only difference will be that, if we are thinking of causation as production, we will end up with an infinite number of necessary producers in the past, whereas if we are

thinking of causation as conservation, we will end up with an infinite number of necessary conservers in the present. But the first option, as well as the second, seems to imply the existence of an actually infinite multitude. For all the necessary producers there ever were in the past are presumably still around now (at least, Aquinas would suppose that whether or not everything that never goes out of existence is necessary, everything that is necessary never goes out of existence). So if there were infinitely many necessary producers in the past, then there are infinitely many necessary producers (or at any rate quondam producers) now. In which case it seems that *every necessary cause is caused* implies *there is an actual infinite*, and thus, by contraposition, *there is no actual infinite* implies *not every necessary cause is caused* (i.e., *there is a first necessary cause*).

Summing up: just as Aquinas' views on contingency and explanation give him reasons to deny that all the causes of contingent beings are themselves contingent, his views on infinity give him reasons to deny that all the causes of contingent beings are themselves caused. That is not to say that Aquinas' views on infinity give him *good* reasons to deny that all the causes of contingent beings are themselves caused. In fact, I doubt they do.

To begin with, I think there are hard questions about the internal consistency of Aquinas' take on infinity, and the consistency of that take with other views to which Aquinas is deeply committed.

As we have seen, Aquinas seems to hold that there is no intrinsic impossibility in the supposition that there are infinitely many days, or events, or individuals in the past (*successive* but not *simul*): that such a state of affairs does not actually obtain is due, not to its intrinsic impossibility, but to the creative choices God made before all ages. (Here Aquinas is no doubt influenced by the fact that "the Philosopher" (Aristotle) thought that the proposition that the world had an infinite past was true, and *a fortiori* possible.) Suppose, though, that there could have been an infinite number of individuals in the past (*successive*). Then, as various predecessors of Aquinas argued, it seems as though there could be an infinite number of individuals in the present (*simul*). Imagine that there are infinitely many past days, and that on each of those days God created an incorruptible being (a celestial body, or an angel). Assuming God does not decide to miraculously annihilate any of the incorruptible individuals He created, they will all still be around today. And there will be infinitely many of them.

This reasoning seems to show that if (as Aquinas concedes) it is possible for there to have been infinitely many individuals in the past in succession, then it is also possible for there to be infinitely many individuals in the present at once.

Suppose, though, that arguments like this one are subtly fallacious in some way. There remains the question of how it could be that there can be infinitely many things over time, if there cannot be infinitely many things at a time. Aquinas' answer is that it is possible because of the infinitely many things there are or could be over time, only finitely many of them could

ever be actual: different days (and different events happening on different days, and different individuals existing on different days) are “reduced from potentiality to actuality” *successive* (successively) rather than at once (*simul*) in such a way that the number of things “reduced to actuality” always remains finite (*ST*, Ia, 7, 4, *ad 1um*).

Now for Aquinas, since God is outside time, He sees all times and all events from a “temporally neutral” standpoint: from his (extratemporal) standpoint, all times and all individuals and all events are equally present or “quasi-present”. If God’s vision of the temporal and changing world is timeless and changeless, then whatever God sees, He “always” (that is, eternally and immutably) sees; there is no question about God’s first seeing one time and set of individuals and events as actual, and then seeing another time and set of individuals and events as actual. Does God eternally and immutably see no time and no set of individuals and events as actual? That would seem *inconueniens* (awkward). For surely, at least one time and at least one set of individuals and events is actual: the present time, at least, is actual, and the individuals existing in the present and the events occurring in the present are actual. In which case, if God doesn’t see any time or set of individuals and events as actual, then God’s vision seems defective, because incomplete. Does God see just one time and set of individuals and events as actual – say, the moment of the annunciation, and the individuals existing and the events happening at that moment? Presumably not: how could just one time, and one set of individuals and events be privileged in that way *sub specie aeternitate*? The natural thing to suppose is that God sees all times (past, present, or future), and all the individuals existing and events occurring at those times, as actual. This is indeed what is suggested by the analogy Aquinas draws between God’s (timeless) knowledge of events separated in time, and our knowledge (at a time) of events separated in space (cf. *ST*, Ia, 14, 13, *ad 3um*). If, however, God sees all (past, present, and future) times and all (past, present, and future) individuals and events as actual, then all (past, present, and future) times and individuals and events are actual (lest God’s vision be defective). In which case, it would seem, an infinity of individuals or events spread out over time, unlike an infinity of individuals or events spread out over “logical space” – that is, spread out over a range of “possible worlds” – is an actual infinity, rather than a merely potential one, and Aquinas cannot consistently combine his rejection of the possibility of the actual infinite with his acceptance of the possibility of infinitely many things existing over time.

In the parlance of contemporary metaphysicians, *presentism* is the view that only the things that exist in the present are actual, and *eternalism* is the view that all the things that exist at any (past, present, or future) time are actual, whether or not they exist in the present. If I have not misunderstood Aquinas, his view of infinity commits him to presentism (since he needs presentism to explain how he can coherently accept the possibility of infinitely many things over time, without accepting the possibility of

infinitely many things at a time), but his view of God's knowledge commits him to eternalism. If that is indeed so, Aquinas' views on infinity cannot be squared with his views on God's knowledge.

(To forestall a possible misunderstanding: when I say that Aquinas' explanation of why there can be infinitely many things over time, but not at a time, commits him to presentism, I don't mean by this that it commits him to the view that contemporary presentists typically hold – that is, the view that the only things that are actual are things that exist in the temporal present. I mean, instead, that it commits him to the view that the only things that are actual are the things that exist in what we might call “the broad present” – i.e., the view that the only things that are actual are the things that exist in either our temporal present or God's eternal present. The crucial point, for Aquinas' explanation, is that individuals or events that inhabit neither our temporal present nor God's eternal present be “merely potential”.)

It's true that, in the face of these difficulties, Aquinas could modify his account of infinity, in such a way that the modified account became compatible with his account of God's knowledge, but remained incompatible with the supposition that all necessary causes are caused. Aquinas could embrace the eternalism that seems to be part and parcel of his account of God's knowledge, and give up the claim that an infinite number of things can exist over time. There would no longer be a problem about explaining how infinities over time are possible, though infinities at a time are not, and there would accordingly be no need to appeal to presentism to solve that problem.

I doubt, though, that Aquinas would regard this as a remotely comfortable option. I think that Aquinas is deeply committed to the view that the whole of history (past, present, future) could comprise an infinite number of different days (and individuals, and events). This is not surprising: to my mind, it's very hard to believe that a history comprising an infinite number of days (and an infinite number of individuals and events) is impossible. (As Newton pointed out, the shoe is on the other foot. It is hard to imagine a history that is at once finite and complete, since that would involve imagining that at some point the days “run out”, and it seems as difficult to imagine the days running out at some point as it does to imagine the natural numbers running out at some point.)

In fact, I'm (at least somewhat) inclined to say that Aquinas believes that history actually comprises an infinite number of days and an infinite number of events: he thinks that history will never end, and (new) events will never stop happening.

But doesn't Aquinas think that time and history will come to an end? This question raises some delicate issues.

It's true that Aquinas says that angels exist in the *aevum* rather than in *tempus* (i.e., “time” on the default translation) and says that the *aevum* or “aeviternity” is a kind of mean between *tempus* and *aeternitas* (*ST*, Ia, 10, 5, *responsio*). And perhaps it's true that, for Aquinas, there is a last moment at which there are

beings that are neither aeviternal nor eternal. But I don't think that implies that, on Aquinas' account, time or history will come to an end.

Although Aquinas says that the *aevum* is midway between *tempus* and *aeternitas*, he also says (a) that celestial bodies and angels are aeviternal, and (b) that both celestial bodies and angels undergo change (celestial bodies, with respect to their locations, and angels, with respect to their thoughts and affections (*ibid.*)). He also seems to allow that (c) not all *aeviternalia* come into existence simultaneously (*ST*, Ia, 10, 6, *ad 3um*). Given all this, I'm inclined to think that for a being to be aeviternal is not for it to be neither in time nor in eternity (in the sense that we understand "time"); it is instead for that being to be in time, but subject to fewer kinds of changes than the things Aquinas would call *temporalia*. As I would put it, *aeviternalia* are relatively unchangeable temporal beings (temporal beings unchangeable with respect to their substantial *esse*).

So even if (for Aquinas) there is a last moment at which there is anything that is neither aeviternal nor eternal (a last moment at which there is anything possessing changeable substantial *esse*), it does not follow that (for Aquinas), there will be a last moment of time or history. Even if there is a time after which everything will be aeviternal or eternal, aeviternity could go on after that time, and aeviternity's going on implies time's going on, since aeviternity just is, as it were, relatively unchangeable time (again, given what we mean by "time", as opposed to what Aquinas (in some contexts) means by "tempus"). In fact, even if Aquinas believes that at some point, everything will be aeviternal or eternal, he also seems to believe that aeviternity – and hence time – will go on forever. In his discussion of hell at *SCG*, III, 144 Aquinas considers and rejects the view that the damned will suffer a finite number of torments over a finite period. So his view seems to be that the future of the damned – and thus the history which includes that future – is of infinite length, and will contain an infinite number of events.

Summing up: Aquinas' denial of the possibility of the actual infinite is, at very least, in severe tension with his other views. Let us call an infinite number of things existing at different times a *diachronic* infinite multitude, and an infinite number of things existing at the same time a *synchronic* infinite multitude. If actually infinite multitudes are impossible, then synchronic multitudes are clearly impossible. Moreover, either (1) "diachronic" infinite multitudes are possible, but only because they are not actually infinite multitudes, or (2) "diachronic" infinite multitudes are just as impossible as synchronic ones.

Aquinas seems clearly to plump for (1), but both (1) and (2) raise severe problems for him. First, as we've seen, it's hard to see how one can coherently concede the possibility of diachronically infinite multitudes, (or, at least, of diachronically infinite multitudes in the past) and deny the possibility of synchronically infinite multitudes (since all the things belonging to a diachronically infinite multitude in the past might make it into the present, as in the example involving *in corruptibilia*). Second, (1) appears to imply some

form of presentism, and presentism appears to be irreconcilable with Aquinas' picture of God's extratemporal knowledge of the temporal world, which requires that past and future times, individuals, and events be just as actual as present ones. Given the many ways in which (1) is problematic, one might think Aquinas would do better to plump for (2). But in that case he would have to hold that an infinitely long history, with an infinite number of days, or individuals, or events, is impossible, and that belief seems irreconcilable with other rather central views of Aquinas – e.g., those concerning the afterlife.

These problems are not my only reason for thinking that Aquinas' views on the actual infinite do not give him a *good* reason to deny that all necessary causes are caused. Even if there were no problems about reconciling what we might call Thomistic finitism with various other things he believes, there would still be worries about its plausibility. I suppose, that, at bottom, I (and, I should imagine, many of my readers) have difficulty regarding Thomistic finitism as a serious option, because, for hundreds of years, physicists have agreed that the question of whether there are finitely or infinitely many stars (or particles, or universes) is an empirical (and, presumably, contingent) question rather than one to be settled a priori. Aquinas appears committed to the view that purely a priori considerations suffice to establish that there could not be an actually infinite number of things. Some of these considerations are theological: Aquinas seems to think that (say) *there are infinitely many stars* is incompatible with the (necessary) truth that everything God does is purposeful (*ST*, Ia, 7, 4, *responsio*). But this line of reasoning is obscure (to me, at least). Other a priori considerations Aquinas advances in favor of the impossibility of the actual infinite are logico-mathematical. If I have not misunderstood him, he holds that there could not be an infinite number of things, because necessarily all numbers are finite, in the same way that there could not a married bachelor, because necessarily all bachelors are unmarried (*ibid.*). But while mediaeval mathematicians may not have been able to say much about what sort of mathematical object an “infinite number” might be (I am too ignorant of mediaeval mathematics to say), mathematicians this side of Georg Cantor can say and have said quite a lot. If mathematicians are happy to countenance infinite numbers, and physicists are happy to countenance the possibility of infinitude multitudes in the physical world, it is hard not to regard Thomistic finitism rather in the way we regard “Zenonian immobilism” (that is, the Eleatic view that motion is impossible).

To recap: the *SCG*, I, 15 argument reaches the conclusion that there is a first necessary cause via the premise that not all causes are contingent, and the premise that not all causes are caused. An opponent of the argument might ask, “why suppose not all causes are contingent?”. I suggested that Aquinas has a (not dialectically useless) answer to this question (turning on the explicability of all contingent existential facts, and the contingency of the existence of contingent being). An opponent of the argument might also ask, “why suppose that not all causes are caused?” Again, I suggested,

Aquinas has an answer to this question (turning on the impossibility of the actual infinite). But, I argued, (even if it is not dialectically useless) the answer is not a good one, given how (severely and multiply) problematic Aquinas' views on the impossibility of the actual infinite are.

Let's take a step back. In the *SCG*, I, 15 argument, Aquinas' aim is to arrive at a first necessary cause, which he will identify with God. It seems natural to assume that in this context both the contingent effects from which Aquinas starts and the necessary causes at which he arrives are what Aquinas sometimes calls "complete beings" – that is to say, beings such as humans, or celestial bodies, or angels, or God, rather than beings such as points, boundaries, surfaces, accidental forms, prime matter, or the like. In order to arrive at a first necessary cause, Aquinas argues that (a) some cause is necessary, and (b) some necessary cause is uncaused. To get (a), he invokes the impossibility of an infinite regress of contingent causes; to get (b) he invokes the impossibility of an infinite regress of necessary causes. I have been suggesting that, *pace* Aquinas, it's hard to see why an infinite regress of necessary causes is any less possible than a finite one.

But what if there are no regresses of necessary causes – be they finite or infinite – because there are no caused necessary causes? Then we could move from (a) to (b), without having to make any contestable assumptions about the impossibility of infinite causal chains. We could modify the structure of the *SCG*, I, 15 argument, ending up with something like:

- (1') There are contingent beings.
- (2') A contingent being will always have a cause.
- (3') In which case – given that the causal relation is a strict ordering, and given that a series of causes cannot go back forever – an arbitrarily chosen contingent being will have a necessary cause.
- (4') In which case – given that no necessary cause is itself caused – there is a first necessary cause.
- (5') And that being is God.

But why should anyone think that there are no caused necessary causes? Well, Aquinas appears to accept three principles that jointly imply that (assuming that a cause is a complete being) no necessary cause is itself caused. The first – which we may call "the contingency of the composite" – is:

(CC) Whatever is in any way composite is contingent.

Aquinas explicitly endorses (CC) in many places, especially in the context of arguing for divine simplicity: see for example *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I, 18.

The second principle – which we may call “no difference (between complete beings) without composition (of at least one of those beings)” (for short, “no difference without composition”) – is:

(NDWC) If *a* and *b* are different complete beings, at least one of them is in some way composite.

Aquinas accepts (NDWC) for the following reasons: suppose that *a* and *b* are distinct complete beings. All complete beings are either material or immaterial. So *a* in particular is either material or immaterial. If *a* is material (if *a* is a bit of fire, or a celestial body, or a beech tree, or a hamster, or a human being ...), then *a* will obviously be in some way composite (to start with, it will have composition of matter and form). What if *a* is a “finite” complete immaterial being” – say, an angel? One might have supposed that in that case *a* could be (in every way) incomposite. But, as we have seen, Aquinas would disagree. By his lights, in any angel or finite complete immaterial being, there are two kinds of composition of actuality and potentiality: composition of subject and accident, and composition of essence and existence (see *SCG*, II, 54, and *Quaestiones Quodlibetales*, *Quodlibet* 2, Question 2, Article 2). If, on the other hand, *a* is a complete immaterial being, but not a “finite” one – if *a* is a complete immaterial being free from composition of subject and accident, and composition of essence and existence – then *a* is (a) “pure subsistent actuality”, or (a) “pure subsistent existence”: for Aquinas, if something is a complete immaterial being, but lacks composition of subject and accident or essence and existence, then that thing must be a pure actuality or pure existence (*esse*). In which case, Aquinas thinks, *a* will be absolutely incomposite.

If *b* is a complete being we have the same options: *b* will either be a composite material being, or a composite immaterial being, or an incomposite pure subsistent actuality/pure subsistent existence. It follows that it could never happen that *a* and *b* are different complete beings, neither of which is in any way composite, unless it could happen that *a* and *b* were different pure subsistent actualities (pure subsistent existences). But, Aquinas argues, there could not be two different pure subsistent existences: if existences are different, then they must be “received existences” and incomplete beings, rather than subsistent existences and complete beings (see *De Ente et Essentia*, 4). Thus if *a* and *b* are both complete beings, and *a* and *b* are different, at least one of them is composite in some way; if *a* and *b* are both complete beings, and neither is composite in any way; then *a* = *b*, because *a* as well as *b* is a pure subsistent existence, and there is only one pure subsistent existence. In other words, (NDWC) is true.

The third principle Aquinas accepts is what we may call “the non-dependence of the necessary on the contingent”:

(NDNC) If *a* is a cause of *b*, it’s not the case that *a* is contingent, and *b* is necessary.

It seems clear enough from the way Aquinas sets out the *SCG*, I, 15 argument that he accepts (NDNC). For Aquinas says that there must be a first necessary cause, because we cannot go on forever in a series of caused necessary beings; and this claim presupposes that if a necessary cause is caused, its cause will also be necessary. (Also, the idea that a contingent being might be either the producing or conserving cause of a necessary being is surely too strange for us to suppose that Aquinas would be happy with it.)

How do we get from our three principles to the conclusion that there are no caused necessary causes? Well, given (CC) and (NDWC), we may conclude that there is only one necessary being. For suppose *a* and *b* are two different things, rather than one and the same thing. Then, by (NDWC), either *a* or *b* is in some way composite. In which case, by (CC), either *a* or *b* is contingent. So if beings are different, they aren't both necessary; which is another way of saying that there is only one necessary being. So, given that there is but one necessary being, could that being be caused? No. If it were caused, then (given the irreflexivity of causation) it would have to be caused by something else, which means that it would have to be caused by a contingent being, which would contravene (NDNC).

If this is right, then, in order to make the *SCG*, I, 15 argument work, Aquinas doesn't actually need to make any (contestable) assumptions about the impossibility of infinite (as opposed to finite) regresses of causes. He can arrive at a necessary cause, via the contingency-causation-explanation principle (together with the claim that it's a contingent fact that there is such a thing as contingent being), and get from there to a first necessary cause, via (CC), (NDWC), and (NDNC).

Here someone might object:

In the *SCG*, I, 15 argument, Aquinas is clearly conceiving of necessity in such a way that there could be both "intrinsically" and "extrinsically" necessary beings, and thus in such a way that there could be a plurality of necessary beings. If necessity is conceived of in this way, then (for Aquinas) it is not true that all beings that are in any way composite are contingent (since there can be two different things, both of which are (in the sense at issue in the *SCG*, I, 15 argument) necessary, but there cannot be two different things, neither of which is in any way composite. True, Aquinas does say in various places that whatever is composite is contingent (hence non-necessary); but the kind of contingency and necessity at issue in these claims is of a different sort from the kind of contingency and necessity under discussion in the *SCG*, I, 15 argument.

Let us assume that (for Aquinas) some beings that are in some way composite are "weakly necessary" (however exactly the notion of weak necessity should be spelled out). We still know that (for Aquinas) there is another sense of "necessary" in which (since every being that is in any way composite is contingent) no being that is in any way composite is necessary. (It is clear

that Aquinas thinks that in some sense of “necessary”, no composite beings are necessary, because Aquinas says (at *SCG*, I, 18) that all composite beings are contingent. It is also clear that he thinks that, because he clearly holds both that God is the only absolutely incomposite complete being, and that – in some sense of “necessary” – God is the only necessary being.) So we might say that, even if, for Aquinas, there are weakly necessary composite beings, it is still true that, for Aquinas, there are no strongly necessary composite beings. Let us call weak necessity *necessity*₁ and strong necessity *necessity*₂, and let us say that a being is *contingent*₁ if it is neither necessary₁ nor impossible₁, and that a being is *contingent*₂ if it is neither necessary₂ nor impossible₂. Given that we have now distinguished two sorts of contingency, when Aquinas says at *SCG*, I, 15 that everything contingent is caused, that could now be interpreted as either the claim that

(i) Everything contingent₁ is caused.

or the claim that

(ii) Everything contingent₂ is caused.

(A being is contingent₁ if it is (possible and) not even weakly necessary; a being is contingent₂ is (possible and) at most weakly necessary. Thus (i) is a weaker claim than (ii), since more things are at most weakly necessary – i.e., not even weakly necessary or weakly necessary – than are not even weakly necessary.)

Now Aquinas accepts both (i) and (ii). Also, he accepts both that it is a contingent₁ fact that there are contingent₁ beings, and that it is a contingent₂ fact that there are contingent₂ beings. So, by reasoning that should now be familiar to the reader, he can establish that there is at least one necessary₂ cause. In other words, there is a strongly necessary cause.

But (assuming strongly necessary causes are complete beings), for reasons already adduced, there cannot be any caused strongly necessary causes. Suppose *b* is a caused strongly necessary cause. Given that causal relation is irreflexive, we know that for some *a* different from *b*, *a* is a cause of *b*. If *a* and *b* are different complete beings, then at least one is in some way composite. If *a* and *b* are both composite, then they cannot both be strongly necessary (since *strong* necessity precludes composition, even if weak necessity does not). Since *a* and *b* are not both strongly necessary, and *b* is strongly necessary, we may conclude that *a* is not strongly necessary. In which case *b* is a necessary₂ effect of a contingent₂ effect – in contravention of (NDNC).

So, I want to say, however Aquinas is thinking of contingency and necessity in the *SCG*, I, 15, there is a (Thomistic) line of reasoning which will enable him to get to a first (strongly) necessary cause, without presupposing either the (extremely) doubtful thesis that there is no such thing as the actual infinite, or the doubtful thesis that there is a special problem about an *infinite* regress of necessary causes.

(To forfend misunderstandings: I have been speaking of two kinds of necessity and contingency. But in what follows, unless I explicitly say otherwise, when I say a being is necessary, I shall always mean ‘strongly necessary’, and when I say a being is contingent, I shall always mean ‘(not strongly impossible and) not strongly necessary’.)

All of which is not to say that the line of reasoning just set out is a convincing argument for the thesis that not every necessary cause is caused: I have already expressed doubts about the idea that anything that has accidental properties, or is different from its existence, is composite. But having spent quite a good bit of time on just one of the four crucial assumptions of Aquinas’ *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I, 15 argument, it is best to move on to the other three.

As the reader may no longer remember, the four assumptions were: (A) that the causal relation is irreflexive, symmetric, and transitive; (B) that contingent beings are always caused; (C) that an infinite causal regress is impossible; and (D) that something is a first necessary cause only if it is God.

We saw earlier that Aquinas spends relatively little time defending either (A) or (B). Critics and defenders of Aquinas alike have typically agreed that (A) doesn’t need a great deal of defense. The same cannot be said for (B).

Why should one accept (B)? Perhaps some people find it as obvious that no being could be contingent and uncaused, as it is, say, that no being can be both made of clay and the square root of 2. Myself, I don’t see things this way: *being contingent* and *lacking a cause* don’t look obviously incompatible (to me) in the way that *being made of clay* and *being the square root of 2* do. (An uncaused contingent being seems conceivable (to me) in a way that a being that is both made of clay and the square root of 2 does not.) I gather I am not especially unusual in this regard. For suppose most people did think there was an obvious incompatibility between contingency and uncausedness. Then one would expect many or most atheists to share this view. Now theists not infrequently say to atheists, “I can explain why the universe exists (God made it exist); but what can you say about how the universe came to exist?” If an atheist thought that contingency and uncausedness were obviously incompatible, then he’d have to answer this question in one of the following ways: (a) “the universe is a necessary being; it could not but have existed;” (b) “the universe was caused to exist by something, but whatever it was, it wasn’t God;” (c) “perhaps the universe is a necessary being, and perhaps it was caused to exist by something that isn’t God.” In fact, though, my sense is that very few atheists answer the theist’s question with any of (a)–(c). Far more frequently, they say, as Bertrand Russell said in a debate with F. C. Coplestone, that the universe “is just there, and that’s all”.

In fact, a theist, just as much as an atheist or agnostic, might find it unobvious that contingency and uncausedness are incompatible. She might say:

God is obviously uncaused, but He’s not obviously necessary; perhaps Hume was right to suppose that all existence is contingent, and there is

a contingent God (a contingently existing all-good, all-knowing, all-powerful, uncreated Creator of everything but Himself).

Since it's unobvious that God isn't contingent but uncaused, it's unobvious that contingency and uncausedness are incompatible.

A defender of the incompatibility of contingency and uncausedness might agree that the incompatibility of those properties might not be immediately evident, but argue that if it is not, it will become evident upon a little reflection. The argument might go something like this:

There surely could not be brute facts. And we can see, upon (a little) reflection, that if there were contingent but uncaused beings, there would (have to) be brute facts.

But what is a brute fact? We might say that a fact is brute just in case it doesn't have an explanation. Alternatively, we might say that a fact is brute just in case it doesn't have an explanation, and could not obtain, unless it did have an explanation. On either way of construing brute facts, questions arise about whether we can establish the impossibility of contingent but uncaused beings on the basis of the impossibility of brute facts.

At this point it will be useful to make a few remarks about facts and explanation.

As I shall use the term, the fact that *p* explains the fact that *q* just in case the fact that *p* enters into (or exhausts) what we might call *the maximal explanation* of the fact that *q*. In other words the fact that *p* explains the fact that *q* just in case there is something that can be said about why *q*, and *p* is (at least) part of the most that can be said about why *q*.

It is natural to think of explanation as a relation between facts, and it is at least initially not implausible to think that the relation of explanation, like the causal relation, is a strict ordering. It's hard to believe that, say, it's raining now can exhaust, or even enter into, the maximal explanation of its raining now. It seems plausible that if the abundance of rain last week enters into the maximal explanation of the blossoming of the honeysuckle this week, then the blossoming of the honeysuckle this week cannot enter into the maximal explanation of the abundance of rain last week. It also seems plausible that if the deregulation of the financial sector enters into the maximal explanation of the financial difficulties of the banks, and the financial difficulties of the banks enter into the maximal explanation of why so many people are unemployed, then the deregulation of the financial sector enters into the maximal explanation of why so many people are unemployed.

Suppose we think of a brute fact as a fact that has no explanation. Then *there are no brute facts* is equivalent to *every fact has an explanation*, and the argument from the impossibility of brute facts to the incompatibility of contingency and uncausedness has the following structure:

Necessarily, every fact has an explanation.

If there were contingent but uncaused beings, there would (have to) be facts without an explanation.

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There aren't (and couldn't be) contingent but uncaused beings.

(Equivalently: *there are contingent but uncaused beings* implies *there are facts without an explanation*; *there are facts without an explanation* is impossible (since *every fact has an explanation* is necessary); so *there are contingent but uncaused beings* is impossible (since only the impossible implies the impossible).

We might call this the Leibnizian construal of the argument from impossibility of brute facts to the incompatibility of contingency and uncausedness, since Leibniz insisted that necessarily, for every fact, there is a (sufficient) reason for, or explanation of, that fact.

There are, however, various reasons for doubting that every fact has an explanation. Some of these are connected with the abundance of facts. Smaller facts “sum to” bigger facts. If for example F_1 is the fact that it's warm, and F_2 is the fact that it's sunny, then there is a third fact – call it $F_1 + F_2$ – that obtains if and only if both F_1 and F_2 obtain. (Another name for $F_1 + F_2$ is “the fact that it is warm and sunny”.) It can perfectly well happen that, when a fact F_3 is explained by a fact F_2 , the fact $F_2 + F_3$ is in turn explained by a fact F_1 different from both F_2 and F_3 . Suppose the locomotive is coupled to the tender, and the tender is coupled to the caboose. It could be that the caboose accelerates because the tender accelerates, and the caboose and the tender both accelerate because the locomotive accelerates. But let F be a fact, and let \mathbf{F} be a fact that obtains if and only if all the facts that explain F obtain. F has a maximal explanation – to wit, \mathbf{F} – but it's not at all clear that the bigger fact $F + \mathbf{F}$ could have an explanation.

Suppose there were such a fact – call it F^* . What might F^* be? It's hard to believe it could be either F or \mathbf{F} . Suppose for example that F is the fact you skipped lunch and \mathbf{F} is the fact that you are hungry. (Not that your being hungry could be the maximal explanation of your skipping lunch, but let's pretend ...) \mathbf{F} explains F , but it doesn't explain $F + \mathbf{F}$. (Your skipping lunch explains your being hungry, but your skipping lunch doesn't explain your skipping lunch and being hungry, in the way that your being exceptionally busy might explain your skipping lunch and being hungry. (Imagine someone tells you that she's hungry. You say, “why's that?”. She replies, “because I skipped lunch.” You press, “but why did you skip lunch and get hungry?” She replies, “because I skipped lunch.” Would you feel “explained to”?) Of course, it might be that more than one fact explains our fact F , so

that $F = F_1 + F_2 + \dots + F_n + \dots$. Again, though, it is difficult to see how any particular F_i in $F_1 \dots F_n \dots$ could explain the fact $F + F$ (i.e., the fact $F + (F_1 \dots F_n \dots)$.) For that would imply that a fact may be explained by one of the facts that “sum to” it – which seems very odd.

On the other hand, it’s hard to see how F^* could explain $F + F$, if F^* is neither identical to F , nor identical to one of some facts that sum to F . To bring this out, we will need to appeal to the transitivity of explanation and to an ancillary assumption.

As we said earlier, it seems plausible enough that explanation is a transitive relation. Suppose it is, so that

(T) If a fact F enters into (or exhausts) the explanation of a fact F' , and that fact F' enters into (or exhausts) the explanation of a fact F'' , then the fact F enters into (or exhausts) the explanation of the fact F'' .

(T) has as a corollary that

(C) If F^* enters into (or exhausts) the explanation of F , and F enters into or exhausts the explanation of E , then F^* enters into (or exhausts) the explanation of E .

Now for our ancillary assumption. It isn’t in general true that if this fact explains that fact, then this fact explains each of the facts that jointly sum to that fact. Suppose, for example, that the tablecloth on the table in the conservatory is both warm and blue. The fact that it is sunny today enters into (though it does not exhaust) the explanation of the fact that the tablecloth is warm and the tablecloth is blue, but it doesn’t enter into the explanation of the fact that the tablecloth is blue. On the other hand, it seems that the fact that it is sunny today couldn’t enter into the explanation of the fact that the tablecloth is warm and the tablecloth is blue, unless it either entered into the explanation of the fact that the tablecloth is warm, or entered into the explanation of the fact that the tablecloth is blue. Analogously, it seems that

(AA) F^* cannot enter into (or exhaust) the explanation of $F + F$, unless it enters into (or exhausts) the explanation of F , or it enters into (or exhausts) the explanation of F .

(“AA” stands for “ancillary assumption”). So, suppose F^* enters into (or exhausts) the explanation of $F + F$. By (AA), we may conclude that either (a) F^* enters into (or exhausts) the explanation of F , or (b) F^* enters into (or exhausts) the explanation of F . But given the transitivity of explanation, we may conclude that whether (a) or (b) is true, F^* enters into (or exhausts) the explanation of F . After all (“by definition”) F enters into or exhausts the explanation of F . So, assuming F^* enters into (or exhausts) the explanation of F , F^* enters into (or exhausts) the explanation of F , and F enters into (or

exhausts) the explanation of F . In which case, by (C), F^* enters into (or exhausts) the explanation of F . Given (AA) and (C), we may conclude that if F^* enters into (or exhausts) the explanation of $F + F$, then F^* enters into (or exhausts) the explanation of F . If, however, F^* enters into (or exhausts) the explanation of F , then (given the way F was defined) either $F^* = F$, or F^* is one of some facts that sum to F .

So it looks as though there couldn't be an F^* which explained $F + F$. If there were such an F^* , it couldn't be F , or F , or any of the facts that "sum to" F (or sum to F), lest a fact be explained by one of the facts that "sum to" it. But neither could it be a fact distinct from F , F , and any of the facts that sum to F (or F).

If F^* were such a fact, it would have to explain $F + F$, without explaining F (lest it be F , or one of some facts that sum to F). But F^* couldn't explain $F + F$, without explaining F , since whatever explains $F + F$ either explains F or explains F , and (given the transitivity of explanation), whatever explains F also explains F .

If (plausibly enough) we assume both the transitivity of explanation and the disjointness of *explanantia* from their *explananda*, we seem to have to say that smaller facts that have explanations sum to bigger facts which, so to speak, have the wrong "size and shape" to have an explanation, given the nature of the explanation relation.

A defender of the view that every fact must have an explanation challenges this line of thought by questioning the transitivity of explanation. But I doubt there is much mileage in this strategy. Let us say that a fact F *hyperexplains* a fact F' just in case F explains F' , or for some "explanatorily intermediate" fact F_i , F explains F_i , and F_i in turn explains F' , or for some pair of explanatorily intermediate facts F_i and F_j , F explains F_i , F_i explains F_j , and F_j explains F' , or ... (*ad infinitum*). (Hyperexplanation is what logicians call the *ancestral* of explanation, since hyperexplanation is to explanation as ancestry is to parenthood (if someone is your ancestor, she is one of your parents, or a parent of one of your parents, or ... *ad infinitum*.) Given the way we have defined hyperexplanation, hyperexplanation is bound to be a transitive relation, even if explanation is not. In which case, we could run substantially the same argument for the existence of facts without an explanation, even on the assumption that explanation is not a transitive relation: we simply start with the fact $F + F_h$ that obtains if and only if F and all the facts in the maximal hyperexplanation of F obtain.

Even if we bracket questions involving facts with unusual shapes and sizes, there seem to be reasons to doubt that all facts have an explanation. Do all necessary facts have an explanation? Not obviously. If someone asked me, "why is everything self-identical?" I would find the question very puzzling, and feel unable to give it any kind of direct or straightforward answer. That's because, I'm inclined to think, "why is everything self-identical?" falsely presupposes that there is a reason that (an explanation of the fact that) everything is self-identical, in much the way that "what is the largest integer?"

falsely presupposes that there is a largest integer, or the way that “where is the number π ?” falsely presupposes that the number π has a location. Again, if there were an explanation of the fact that everything is self-identical, then someone ought to be able to truly say such things as “I’ve always wondered why everything is self-identical”, or “I’ve always known why everything is self-identical.” Again, both of these claims sound very strange to me.

Here someone might suggest that everything is self-identical because everything *has to be* self-identical; it’s a fact that everything is self-identical because it couldn’t be otherwise. It doesn’t seem to me as though one can explain why a fact actually obtains, by saying that it obtains in every possible world (that is, the actual one, and all the alternative possible worlds), any more than one can explain why a fact currently obtains, by saying that it obtains at all times (that is, the present time, and all past and future ones). In any case, assuming that explanation is an irreflexive relation, its being necessary that everything is self-identical cannot be explained by its being necessary that everything is self-identical. Nor is it a promising strategy to simply go up a level, and say that it is necessary that everything is self-identical because it is necessary that it is necessary that everything is self-identical. For it is a fact that, however many “necessarily”s, you put in front of “everything is self-identical”, the resulting statement is true. And what would the explanation of that fact be?

Nor is it evident that all (normal sized and shaped) contingent facts have explanations.

Suppose you find yourself in a situation in which you want to put on a pair of socks. You have (just) two pairs of socks in the bottom drawer, and the pairs look and feel exactly the same. They are equally close, equally easy for you to get hold of, of equal sentimental value to you and to your spouse, etc., etc. So what do you do? You choose one pair, and put it on.

Let p be the pair of socks you in fact chose to put on, and p' be the pair of socks you didn’t choose to put on. It is a contingent fact that you chose to put p on; you could easily have chosen to put p' on instead. Is there an explanation of why you chose to put p on? Arguably, there is. After all, it is at least arguable that there is something or other – say, your wanting to warm your feet up – that is a cause of your choosing to putting p on. (Your choosing to put p on is (at least arguably) not an event without any causes.) And if your wanting to warm your feet up was a cause of your choosing to put p on, then, it would seem, your wanting to warm your feet up enters into the explanation of your choosing to put p on: it surely isn’t explanatorily irrelevant to your choosing to put p on in the way that, say, your desire to visit Tibet some day is.

Be that as it may, it seems that the following is also a contingent fact:

When your end was to warm your feet up, and you judged that any optimal way of reaching that end involved putting on p or putting on p' , and you judged that both putting on p and putting on p' were optimal

ways of reaching the end of warming your feet up, you chose to put p on, rather than p' .

This contingent fact (which we may call CF_2) includes and “extends beyond” the fact that you chose to put p on (which we may call CF_1). Moreover, it extends beyond in it in such a way that even if your wanting to warm your feet up explains CF_1 , it cannot explain CF_2 (inasmuch as it is included in CF_2).

In certain circumstances C (ones in which your end was warming your feet up, and you judged that that end would be best reached either by putting p on, or by putting p' on), you chose to put p on, rather than p' . Does this (contingent) fact have an explanation? Presumably, not one to which you have any access. Even so, there might be a reason you chose p over p' – a reason that wasn’t accessible to you *qua* chooser, because it wasn’t your reason for choosing p over p' .

Now Aquinas holds that God sometimes makes choices that are analogous to the choice between p and p' in our example:

In nature, since prime matter is completely uniform, there is a reason why one part of it was made by God under the form of fire, and another under the form of air: it was so that there might be a diversity of species in nature. But why this particular part of matter is under this particular form, and that part is under another, depends simply on the will of God.
(*ST*, Ia, 23, 5, *responsio*)

Let us call a distribution of one or more elemental forms among different portions of prime matter a *uniform* distribution if all the portions of prime matter are informed in the same way. And let us call a distribution of elemental forms among different portions of prime matter *multiform* if different portions of prime matter are informed in different ways (e.g., some aereously, and some igneously). Finally let us call one distribution of elemental forms among different portions of prime matter a *mere permutation* of another if the distributions differ only with respect to whether, say, these particular portions of prime matter are aereously informed, and those duplicate particular portions of prime matter are igneously informed, or vice versa.

The initial distribution of elemental forms among portions of prime matter was multiform, rather than uniform. This fact depended upon God’s will, but not on “His simple will”, in Aquinas’ sense. That is, it’s not the case that the actual initial distribution was multiform rather than uniform, simply because God willed that it be multiform rather than uniform. Instead, it was multiform rather than uniform because God willed it to be multiform rather than uniform because God wanted the world to be (initially) more varied rather than (initially) less varied. To put this another way, the fact that the actual initial distribution of elemental forms among portions of prime matter was multiform rather than uniform depends on God’s will as guided

by His reasons, and in that sense does not depend simply on His will. On the other hand, the fact that the actual initial distribution of elemental forms among different portions of prime matter was *this* one (the actual one) rather than a mere permutation thereof, does depend on God's simple will, in that it depends on God's "brute" or "un-reason-guided" will. As we might say, God had no reason for initially distributing elemental forms among portions of matter in the way He actually did, rather than in a way that was a mere permutation thereof, just as you had no reason for putting on the pair of socks p , rather than the pair of socks p' .

In the case of your choice between p and p' , we said that there might be a reason that you chose p rather than p' – one that wasn't your reason for choosing p rather than p' . But Aquinas supposes, it is true not just that (a) God had no reason for choosing this initial distribution of elemental forms among portions of prime matter, rather than that mere permutation thereof, but also that (b) if God had no reason for choosing this initial distribution, rather than that mere permutation thereof, then there was no reason that God chose this initial distribution rather than that mere permutation thereof. After all, suppose there were some reason that God chose this distribution rather than this mere permutation thereof. If there were such a reason "behind" God's choosing this distribution rather than that mere permutation thereof, the fact that God chose this distribution rather than that mere permutation thereof would not depend on God's simple will. It would not be true that the actual initial distribution was this one, rather than that mere permutation thereof, *simply* because God chose this distribution rather than that mere permutation thereof; it would instead be true that the actual initial distribution was this one rather than this mere permutation thereof, because God chose this distribution rather than that mere permutation thereof because Q (where Q was the reason that God chose this distribution rather than that mere permutation thereof, even though Q wasn't God's reason for choosing this distribution rather than that mere permutation thereof).

So if Aquinas is right about some things depending on God's simple will (and about the initial assignment of substantial forms to bits of sgc-matter so depending), then it would seem that the following is a contingent but unexplained fact:

When God's end was to create a certain kind of world, and God judged that the optimal way of reaching that end involved choosing to make actual some member or other of a set of possible initial multiform distributions of elemental forms among portions of prime matter, and God judged that actualizing any one member of that set of possible initial multiform distributions was just as good as actualizing any other one – inasmuch as all those distributions were mere permutations of each other – God chose to actualize this particular initial multiform distribution (the actual one), rather than any of the mere permutations thereof.

In defending the claim that Aquinas is committed to countenancing contingent but unexplained facts, I have perhaps provided enough details to obscure the main point. If it helps, think of things this way:

Let D be the actual initial distribution of elemental forms among portions of prime matter, and let D' be a mere permutation thereof. For Aquinas, it's a contingent fact that D rather than D' was the actual initial distribution of elemental forms among portions of prime matter. If someone asks Aquinas, "so why is D rather than D' the actual initial distribution of forms among portions of prime matter?" Aquinas will answer, "Because God chose D as the actual initial distribution, rather than choosing D' as the actual distribution." For Aquinas, this doesn't merely *enter into* the explanation of why D rather than D' was the initial distribution of elemental forms among portions of prime matter; it *exhausts* the explanation. There is nothing more to say about why D rather than D' is the actual distribution, than that God chose D rather than D' as the actual explanation. Hence God's choosing D rather than D' is a fact without an explanation. And yet it is a contingent fact; God could perfectly well have chosen D' rather than D as the actual initial distribution of elemental forms to portions of prime matter.

So, as I read Aquinas, his view that some things depend on *ex simplici voluntate divina* (on God's simple will) commits him to countenancing contingent facts with no explanation (facts of the type, *in circumstances C, God chose option o over option o'*). Also, Aquinas could surely be right in supposing that some things depend on God's simple will. In which case there could be contingent facts with no explanation.

(Incidentally, Aquinas seems to think there are contingent facts with no explanation that concern creaturely choices, as well as divine ones. For at *ST*, Ia, 25, 3, *responsio*, he says that whether a builder puts this stone in this part of a wall, and that (equisized, equishaped) stone in that part of the wall, or vice versa, depends on the simple will of the builder. So, I take it, for Aquinas, there isn't any Q such that Q is the reason that the builder put this stone in this part of the wall, and that stone in that part of the wall, rather than the other way round, even though Q isn't the builder's reason for putting this stone in this part of the wall, and that stone in that part of the wall, rather than the other way round.)

So much for the Leibnizian construal of the argument from the impossibility of brute facts to the incompatibility of contingency and uncausedness. We could construe that argument in a different way, if we allowed that some facts had no explanation, and reserved the term "brute" for facts that have no explanation, and could not obtain, unless they had an explanation. (On this construal, brute facts are facts that *need* an explanation – in the sense that their obtaining depends on their having an explanation – but don't actually have an explanation. If brute facts are understood in

this way, then brute facts are obviously impossible. So the argument from the impossibility of brute facts to the incompatibility of contingency and uncausedness has the following structure:

Necessarily, there are no brute facts.

If there were contingent but uncaused beings, there would have to be brute facts (that is, facts that had no explanation, but could not obtain without having an explanation).

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There are not (and could not be) contingent but uncaused beings.

– where the soundness (or otherwise) of the argument comes down to the truth (or otherwise) of its second premise.

A proponent of this second version of the argument (as opposed to the first Leibnizian one) seems not to face any difficulties concerning the explanation of necessary facts: she can say that some (or indeed all) necessary facts – e.g., the identity of each thing with itself – are unexplained but un-brute, inasmuch as they are not the kind of facts that need to have an explanation in order to obtain.

In fact, a proponent of the second version of our argument might hold that a fact is brute if it is both contingent and unexplained, and un-brute if it is necessary or explained. There is a sense in which this suggestion is initially very plausible. One might well think that (a) no explained facts are brute, but (b) some unexplained facts (for instance, the identity of everything with itself) are not brute, because they need no explanation; and (c) the facts that need no explanation are the ones that must obtain (so there is no need to explain why they obtain rather than not obtaining). All this might appear unproblematic, if the meaning of “brute fact” were up for grabs. But in the second version of the argument, it is not up for grabs: it has been defined as a fact that has no explanation, but could not obtain without having an explanation. Given that definition, the claim that facts are brute if they are both contingent and unexplained is tantamount to the claim that there could not be contingent but unexplained states of affairs. For reasons already discussed, this claim is highly contestable. (Let F be the fact that you exist. Since you are a contingent being, F is a contingent fact. If F is contingent, so is $F + F$. But, a plausible line of reasoning seems to show, $F + F$ could not have an explanation. Also, a plausible line of reasoning seems to show that certain facts about (divine) choices (facts to the effect that in circumstances C , God chose this option over that option) could be contingent but unexplained.)

Naturally, someone could reject the second suggested definition of a brute fact, and define a brute a fact in a third way – as a contingent and

unexplained fact. Then we would end up with a third version of our argument from the impossibility of brute facts to the impossibility of contingent uncaused beings that would differ from the second in that its second premise (if there were contingent but uncaused beings, then there would have to be brute facts) would be true by definition, but whose first premise (necessarily there are no brute facts) would be very problematic.

However exactly a defender of the argument from the impossibility of brute facts to the impossibility of contingent uncaused beings modifies the original Leibnizian version of that argument, I think she will be well advised to avoid the claim that every contingent and unexplained fact is brute (for the reasons canvassed, and others besides). But if there are or at least could be unexplained contingent facts, why couldn't there be contingent and unexplained existential facts – which is to say, contingent and uncaused beings? After all, it is by no means obviously inconceivable, and thus by no means obviously impossible, that something or other is both contingent and uncaused – the cosmic egg, or the universe, or some kind of “protoverse” that “generates” each of the universes in a multiverse, or God Himself.

To summarize: one might naturally have thought that appealing to the impossibility of brute facts would be helpful in arguing for the impossibility of contingent but uncaused beings. But when we look at various ways in which we might try to move from the impossibility of brute facts to the impossibility of contingent but uncaused beings, it appears doubtful that the appeal to the impossibility of brute facts does important work in arguing for the impossibility of contingent but uncaused beings. On any plausible construal of bruteness, I'm inclined to say, there will be unexplained un-brute facts – both necessary ones, and contingent ones – and the question of whether the existence of an uncaused contingent being would be a brute or un-brute unexplained fact more or less reduces to the question of whether there could be contingent but uncaused beings. So considerations involving the nature of bruteness don't seem to give us any purchase on the question of whether there could be contingent but uncaused beings.

Here a defender of the Thomistic thesis that all contingent beings are caused might say that there is such a case to be made, but we haven't seen it, because we've been looking in the wrong place. For, she might say:

Suppose that we have often seen people throw things up into the air. Suppose also that whenever we have seen people throw something up into the air, we've seen that thing (subsequently) return to earth (assuming nothing impedes the object thrown up into the air from returning to earth, in the way that, if a child threw a morsel of food in the air, a swift might keep that morsel from ever returning to the earth (a swift may spend a year or more entirely in the air)). In those circumstances, we have good (inductive) reasons to think that everything thrown up into the air returns to earth (assuming it is not kept from doing so by a passing swift, or ...). More generally, if there are many

things that we have ascertained to be *F*, and if all the things that we have ascertained to be *F*, we have also ascertained to be *G*, then we have good reasons to think that everything that is *F* is also *G*. Indeed, for us to have good reasons to think that everything that is *F* is also *G*, it needn't be true that in each and every case in which we've ascertained that something is *F*, we've been able to ascertain that it was also *G*. Perhaps in the rapidly failing light, I could see you throw something up into the air, but I couldn't subsequently see it return to earth (or be kept from doing so). Still, as long as I've seen enough things thrown up into the air and not impeded return to earth, I can reasonably assume that everything thrown up into the air and not impeded returns to the earth. More generally, if many and most of the things we've ascertained to be *F* we've also ascertained to be *G*, then (assuming we don't have evidence that some *F*s are not *G*s) we have good reasons to think all *F*s are *G*s. The reasons are, as epistemologists say, "defeasible" (non-probative, non-conclusive). But they are good reasons to believe that all *F*s are *G*s, in the sense that, in the absence of countervailing considerations, they make it (on balance) reasonable to believe that all *F*s are *G*s.

Now, given that we are surrounded by things we have ascertained to be *generabilia* and *corruptibilia*, we are surrounded by beings we have ascertained to be contingent. All or at least a great many of the beings we have ascertained to be contingent, we have also ascertained to be caused; and we don't know of any cases of contingent but uncaused beings. Given the multiplicity of "confirming instances" of the universal generalization, *all contingent beings are caused*, and the absence of "disconfirming instances" of that generalization, it is reasonable to hold that it is true.

It is interesting that one can make a case for the principle that all contingent beings have a cause that is independent of the case for the (doubtful and to my mind un-Thomistic) principle that all contingent facts have an explanation; and it is also interesting that one can make a case for what we may call the contingency-causation principle that is a posteriori and inductive.

To evaluate that case would take us too far afield, but I shall point out one way in which the sort of inductive reasoning defended above isn't obviously congenial to Aquinas. The gist of the inductive case for the contingency-causality principle was that, since there are any number of clear cases of beings that are both contingent and caused, but no clear (or even tolerably clear) cases of beings that are contingent and uncaused, experience provides us with enough support for *all contingent beings are caused* to make it defeasibly reasonable for us to believe that thesis. But it might analogously be said that there any number of clear cases of beings that cause and are caused, but no clear (or even tolerably clear) cases of beings that cause but are not caused. So it is defeasibly reasonable to suppose that all causes are caused. Also, it

might be said, there are any number of clear cases of contingent causes, but no clear (or even tolerably clear) cases of non-contingent causes. So it is defeasibly reasonable to suppose that all causes are contingent. The moral would seem to be that if the inductive considerations appealed to above establish a presumption in favor of the contingency-causality principle Aquinas uses in arguing for the conclusion that there is a first necessary cause, they equally seem to establish – twice over – a presumption against the conclusion he uses that principle to argue for.

Agreed, in all these cases we are dealing with (defeasible) presumptions, and it might be possible to argue that the presumptions in favor of *all causes are caused* and *all causes are contingent* are defeated, but the presumption in favor of *all contingent beings are caused* is not. It's not obvious, though, how this would go.

In sum: I cannot evaluate Aquinas' case for (B) (that is, the contingency-causation principle), because, so far as I know, he doesn't make one. I surmise this is because he thinks (B) is obviously true. I don't deny that (B) is true, or that it is obvious (to Aquinas), but it's not obvious to me – or, I should imagine, to all of my readers. So I have looked at what sort of case one might make for (B), but have not found one that seems both convincing and congenial to Aquinas.

(Some readers may wonder whether the sorts of considerations discussed earlier in connection with (C) would give Aquinas the wherewithal to defend (B). As far as I can tell, they would not. Thomistic finitism is surely compatible with the existence of a first contingent uncaused being. Also, it seems that it could be true that all composite beings are contingent, and that whenever we have two different complete beings, at least one is in some way composite, and that necessary beings don't have contingent causes, even if the one entirely simple being (pure actuality/pure subsistent actuality) was both contingent and uncaused.)

Of the four crucial assumptions of the *SCG*, I, 15 argument, the only one left to discuss is (D). (D) says that only God is a necessary first cause. (D) is equivalent to the conjunction of the following pair of claims:

(D1) There is just one first necessary cause.

(D2) The first necessary cause is God.

To start with (D1), at *SCG*, I, 15, Aquinas does not explain why, even assuming that every chain of causes takes us back to some first necessary cause or other, there must be a particular first necessary cause that every chain of causes takes us back to. Nor is *SCG*, I, 13 of any obvious help in this regard. Given the affinities between the *SCG*, I, 13 argument and the third way, and more generally the overlap between *SCG*, I, 13 + *SCG*, I, 15 and the five ways, we might look to *ST*, Ia, 2, 3 for a defense of (D1), but, as best I can see, we won't find one there.

I suggested earlier that although Aquinas might be able to establish that there was at least one first necessary cause on the basis of other things he believes, one needs to look beyond *SCG*, I, 15 (and I, 13)) to find them. I think the same can be said for (D1). In fact, the same family of Thomistic views about composition, causality, and plurality that imply the existence of at least one first necessary cause imply the existence of at most one first necessary cause. If (i) a first cause is a complete being, (ii) no complete being can be first unless it is pure actuality/pure subsistent existence, and (iii) pure actuality/pure subsistent existence is necessarily one of a kind, it follows that there cannot be more than one first necessary cause.

Turning to (D2): Aquinas does not explain why the first cause is God in *SCG*, I, 15 (or *SCG*, I, 13, or *ST*, Ia, 3). Certainly there is no immediately obvious reason to think that anything which was the (only) uncaused necessary cause would have to have the sorts of properties required to be God: on the face of it, a uniquely first and uniquely necessary cause might not be omnipotent, or omniscient, or omnibenevolent, or even have a will or an intellect.

It's not that Aquinas doesn't have a story to tell about why the necessary first cause has all the properties required for being God. He has an extremely detailed and intricate story, which he sets out at length in various parts of the *Prima Pars* of the *Summa Theologiae*, and the first book of the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, and (in briefer form) in the *Compendium Theologiae*, and elsewhere. For Aquinas, a first cause, simply in virtue of being first, must be not only necessary, but entirely incomposite, and completely actual (*ST*, Ia, 3 and *SCG*, I, 18). In virtue of being completely actual, the first cause must eternal and immutable (*ST*, Ia, 9 and 10, and *SCG*, I, 15) and also perfect and (supremely) good (*ST*, I, 4 and 6, *SCG*, I, 28, 37). In virtue of being entirely incomposite, and thus immaterial, the first cause has (or is) a mind (since minds are the only immaterial beings: see *SCG*, I, 44). Since every mind involves both intellect and will, the first cause has a will as well as an intellect (*SCG*, I, 72). And so on, and so on. Whatever a hasty look at the five ways might induce someone to think, nothing could be further from the truth than the supposition that Aquinas at most demonstrates the existence of an *archē* or philosophical first principle that he simply assumes can be identified with God. But, precisely because of the size and complexity of Aquinas' case for identifying the first necessary cause with God, I will not even try to evaluate it here: we have had our hands full with Aquinas' far more compact argument for the existence of a unique first necessary cause.

Natural theology: the nature of God

In the *Prima Pars* of the *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas first argues that there is a God (*Quaestio* 2), and subsequently launches into an extended discussion of His nature. The very first essential attribute of God Aquinas discusses is His simplicity. This is no accident: as we have just seen, Aquinas thinks that

simplicity is a fundamental and crucial attribute of God, which implies (*inter alia*) His immutability and eternity, His perfection and supreme goodness, and His having an intellect and a will. Given the centrality of simplicity to Aquinas' account of God's nature, I shall try to say something about both the import and the defensibility of Aquinas' conception of divine simplicity.

When Aquinas says that God is altogether simple (*omnino simplex, totaliter simplex*), he means that God is in no way composite. Equivalently: there is no composition in God; there aren't any things that jointly compose God; there are no divine proper parts. (*a* is a *proper* part of *b* if *a* is a part of *b*, and *a* is different from *b*; *a* is an *improper* part of *b* if *a* is a part of *b*, but not a proper part of *b*.) So we might think of Aquinas' doctrine of divine simplicity as simply:

(DS) God is a being with no proper parts. ("DS" stands for "the doctrine of divine simplicity".)

Thus understood, the doctrine of divine simplicity does not seem especially surprising or controversial (by which I mean that it does not seem more controversial than any number of other claims that imply the existence of God). Why after all should one have supposed that God had any proper parts?

As we have already touched on, though, for Aquinas, composition is a far more pervasive feature of reality than one might have supposed. As he makes clear in *ST*, Ia, 3, and *SCG*, I, 18, he accepts all the following theses about composition:

(TC₁) If a being is different from its genus, that being is composite.

(TC₂) If a being is different from its differentia, that being is composite.

(TC₃) If a being is different from its substantial form, that being is composite.

(TC₄) If a being is different from its accidental forms, that being is composite.

(TC₅) If a being is different from its essence, that being is composite.

(TC₆) If a being is different from its existence, that being is composite.

(TC₇) If a being is different from its perfections (from the things in virtue of which it is perfect in this or that respect), that being is composite.

Because Aquinas accepts (TC₁), (TC₂), and (TC₄) as well as (DS), he concludes that God is not different from His genus, or His differentia, or His accidental forms. Not that God and His genus, or God and His differentia, or God and His accidental forms are one and the same thing. God and His genus aren't one and the same thing, any more than they are two different

things: *God and His genus are one and the same thing* and *God and His genus are two different things* are both false, inasmuch as there is such a thing as God, but there is no such thing as God's genus. (Similarly, there are no such things as God's differentia or God's accidental forms.) Because Aquinas accepts (TC₅) and (TC₆) as well as (DS), he concludes that God is not different from His essence or His existence. In this case, however, Aquinas is willing to say that God and His essence, or God and His existence, are one and the same thing, since he holds that there is such a thing as God's essence, and there is such a thing as God's existence. Because Aquinas accepts (DS) and (TC₃), Aquinas is committed to saying that either God and His substantial form are one and the same thing, or God and His substantial form are neither one and the same thing, nor two different things. Some of the things Aquinas says makes it appear that he would accept the first disjunct. He is certainly not averse to describing God as a form (cf. *ST*, Ia, 3, 2, *responsio*), and he sometimes describes God as a substance (see e.g., the opening lines of [chapter 4](#) of the *De Ente et Essentia*). If God is both a substance and a form, then He will presumably be a substantial form, in which case He and His substantial form will be one and the same thing. On the other hand, Aquinas says that God is not included in the genus of substance (*ST*, Ia, 5, *ad 1um*), which seems to imply that God is not a substance, and so not a subsistent substantial form. And if God is not a substantial form, then God and His substantial form are neither one and the same thing, nor two different things. Finally, Aquinas holds that God and His perfections are one and the same thing. Thus God and His goodness are one and the same thing (*SCG*, I, 38), as are God and His wisdom, God and His power, etc.

So Aquinas endorses not just (DS) but also the following pair of claims:

(NTDT) Neither God and His genus, nor God and His differentia, nor God and His accidental forms are two different things.

(OAST) God and His essence, God and His existence, and God and His perfections (His goodness, His wisdom, and so on) are one and the same thing.

("NTDT" stands for "not two different things", and "OAST" stands not for the name of a kind of building found in Kent used for drying hops but for "one and the same thing".)

Unlike (DS), (NTDT) and (OAST) are highly contentious, even on the assumption that there is a God, inasmuch as (TC₁)–(TC₇) are (all) highly contentious. So, although many defenders as well as critics of Aquinas' doctrine of divine simplicity have said that that doctrine is, at least at first sight, especially problematic, I don't find this a very perspicuous way of putting things. To my mind (Trinitarian issues aside), there isn't anything especially problematic about Aquinas' claim that God is *omnino simplex*. The problematic claims Aquinas makes are the claims about composition (that

is, $(TC_1)-(TC_2)$) that allow us to infer (NTDT) and (OAST) from the not especially problematic (DS). (Strictly speaking, $(TC_1)-(TC_2)$ allow us to infer the problematic (NTDT) from (DS), but are insufficient to allow the problematic (OAST) therefrom: to get from (DS) to (OAST) we also need to suppose that there are such things as God's essence, God's existence, and God's perfections. But this doesn't affect the point about the relative unproblematicity of (DS) with respect to (NTDT) and (OAST).)

On the other hand, given that, in the literature, "(the doctrine of) divine simplicity" is almost invariably used as a term for an exciting but problematic doctrine, it might cause confusion for me to insist that there isn't anything exciting but problematic about divine simplicity. So in what follows I shall understand "the doctrine of divine simplicity" as the strong doctrine of divine simplicity ((SDS)) – where (SDS) is the conjunction of (DS) with (NTDT) and (OAST).

Contemporary philosophers rarely talk about substances having forms (whether accidental or substantial); instead they talk about individuals having properties. We might accordingly wonder what the implications of (SDS) are for the relation between God and His properties: does (SDS) imply that, where *P* is any property of God, God and *P* are not two different things?

That will depend on how we conceive of properties. It is fairly standard in contemporary philosophy to distinguish intrinsic properties from extrinsic properties. How exactly 'intrinsic' and 'extrinsic' should be defined is a matter of debate, but for our purposes it will be enough to say that intrinsic properties are typically characterized in one of two ways – either as those properties that a thing has, independently of the relations it bears to other things ('outside of' or 'disjoint from' it), or as those properties that could never vary between actual or possible perfect duplicates (that is, between two actual or possible individuals that were exactly alike). On either characterization, a property such as *being named "Domitilla"* is extrinsic, since a thing has it only because it stands in the named-by relation to "Domitilla", and two things could be perfect duplicates, even though only one of them was named "Domitilla". And on either characterization, *being round* is intrinsic, since a thing is round independently of the relations it bears to other things outside of it, and two things couldn't be perfect duplicates of each other, if only one of them were round.

It seems that (SDS) does not exclude that, for some extrinsic property of God *P*, God and *P* are two different things. (SDS) says that (a) God has no proper parts, (b) God and His genus, or His differentia, or His accidental forms are not two different things, and (c) God and His essence, God and His existence, and God and any of His perfections are one and the same thing. Since these claims don't concern extrinsic properties, they don't (individually or jointly) exclude that, say, *being named "God"* (in English) and *being named "Deus"* (in Latin) are two different extrinsic properties of God. If, however, *being named "God"* (in English) and *being named "Deus"* (in Latin) are two different extrinsic properties of God, at least one of them must be

different from God (if x and y are two different things, and there is such a thing as z , then x and z are two different things or y and z are two different things (or both)).

One might think that (SDS) excludes that for some intrinsic property of God P , God and P are two different things. Again, though, (SDS) is not a thesis about properties. Hence (SDS) seems compatible with the thesis that there is such a property as *being divine*, and there is such a property as *being divine or being round*. Now if *being divine* and *being divine or round* are properties, they are different properties (since round things have the second property, but not the first). Moreover, both *being divine* and *being divine or round* are intrinsic properties (a being is divine, or divine or round, independently of its relations to things outside of it; two things couldn't be perfect duplicates (exactly alike), if only one of them were divine, or only one of them were divine or round). If, however, *being divine* and *being divine or round* are different intrinsic properties, then they are different intrinsic properties of God (since He is both divine, and divine or round). And if God has two different intrinsic properties, then at least one of those intrinsic properties must be different from God.

Of course, if "form" and "property" were synonyms, then (SDS) would straightforwardly imply that if P is a property of God, then P and God are one and the same thing. Equally, if "form" and "intrinsic property" were synonyms, (SDS) would straightforwardly imply that if P is an intrinsic property of God, then P and God are one and the same thing. But "form" and "property", and "form" and "intrinsic property" are surely not synonyms: the meaning of the term "form" leaves room for the possibility that there are properties – and intrinsic properties – that are not forms. In particular, it leaves room for the possibility that God is both divine and divine or round, in virtue of having two different intrinsic properties, but God is not both divine and divine or round, in virtue of having two different forms. (We can (arguably) see that, as Aquinas uses the term "form", it is not synonymous with either "property" or "intrinsic property", when we consider that Aquinas thinks that there is no such form as blindness (since forms as such are "positive" beings), but (arguably) does not think there is no such property (or no such intrinsic property) as blindness: for Aquinas, (arguably) there is such an intrinsic property as blindness, but it's a privation, rather than a form). True, privations "are not" in either of the two narrower senses of "are", but privations "are" in the broadest sense of "are" (i.e., in more idiomatic English, there are privations, in the broadest sense of "there are".)

Analogously, if a property – or an intrinsic property – were "by definition" a certain kind of proper or improper part of the thing that has it, then (DS) (and thus (SDS)) would straightforwardly imply that if P is a property – or an intrinsic property – of God, then $P = \text{God}$. But it is not true by definition that properties, or intrinsic properties, are proper or improper parts of their bearers. "Blindness is an intrinsic property of Homer, but not a proper

or improper part of Homer” is to all appearances true; but even if it is false, it is certainly not false by definition, in the way that “a square is a plane figure, but not a four-sided plane figure” is.

Let us say that *P* is a *temporary property* of a being *b* just it’s neither the case that *b* has *P* whenever *b* exists, nor the case that *b* lacks *P* whenever *b* exists. Although (SDS) is compatible with God’s having a plurality of properties, and a plurality of intrinsic properties, it does not appear to be compatible with God’s having a plurality of temporary intrinsic properties. (Or rather, to be fussy about it, the conjunction of (SDS) with *there are accidental forms* appears to be incompatible with God’s having a plurality of temporary intrinsic properties.) This may need a bit of explaining.

At a given time, one and the same complete being may be many different ways intrinsically: it may be round, solid, made of gold, and so on. But at any given time, there will be only one “complete” or “maximal” way a complete being is intrinsically: as I shall put it, at any given time, a complete being will have exactly one *total intrinsic profile*. Now, to use a bit of jargon from contemporary philosophy of mind, accidental forms are defined by their “functional role” (“explanatory role”). And it is part of the functional or explanatory role of accidental forms that (if there are accidental forms, then) fixing the facts about which substantial form a complete immaterial being has at a given time, together with the facts about exactly which accidental forms that being has at that time, fixes the total intrinsic profile of that being at that time. If God decides to create *this* particular complete immaterial being, with *this* substantial form, and exactly *these* accidental forms (at its first moment of existence), He doesn’t need to make any further decisions about how that being will be intrinsically (at its first moment of existence). If, for example, God creates an angel, with this substantial form, and exactly these accidental forms, He will not have to make any further decisions about whether that angel has the negative property of, say, *being ignorant of this particular fact*: by fixing all the facts about which substantial form and which accidental forms the angel has (initially), God fixes all the facts about what the angel initially knows and is initially ignorant of.

So, suppose that an angel has temporary intrinsic properties. It follows that that angel has different intrinsic properties at different times at which it exists, and hence different total intrinsic profiles at different times at which it exists.

Now suppose that that angel does not have different accidental forms at different times at which it exists. Then, over the (infinite) span of time through which the angel exists, we have constancy, so far as the substantial form and (all) the accidental forms of the angel are concerned, but variation with respect to the angel’s total intrinsic profile. This implies that fixing the facts about which substantial form some complete immaterial being has (at a time), together with the facts about exactly which accidental forms that being has (at that time) does not suffice to fix the total intrinsic profile of that being at that time. In other words, accidental forms are not “up to the

job” of jointly determining (along with a substantial form) the total intrinsic profile of some complete immaterial being (at a time). But, as we have seen, the notion of an accidental form is defined by a functional role that includes being up to that job. Accidental forms are not defined as forms that, along with a substantial form, *contribute* to the total intrinsic profile of a complete being (at a given time); they are defined as forms that, along with a substantial form, *fix* or *entirely determine* the total intrinsic profile of that being (at a given time). Forms that, along with a substantial form, only contributed to the total intrinsic profile of a complete being (at a time) could only be accidental forms of a particular kind. In which case, assuming that there are accidental forms, angels have temporary intrinsic properties only if they have different accidental forms at different times.

Pari ratione, assuming there are accidental forms, God has temporary intrinsic properties only if He has different accidental forms at different times. In which case (SDS), in conjunction with the assumption that there are accidental forms, implies that God cannot have a plurality of temporary intrinsic properties (or, indeed, even one temporary intrinsic property).

Let us say that *P* is a *weakly contingent* property of a being *b* just in case *b* has *P* (so that *a fortiori* it could have been that *b* had *P*), but it also could have been that *b* did not have *P*. And let us say that *P* is a *strongly contingent* property of *b* just in case *b* has *P* (so that *a fortiori* it could have been that *b* had *P*), but it also could have been that *b* existed and did not have *P*. Thus existence is a weakly contingent property of every existing being that might not have existed, but existence isn't a strongly contingent property of any being (even of one that might not have existed) since nothing could have existed whilst not having the property of existence. (Contemporary metaphysicians often call what I have called strongly contingent properties *accidental properties*, but this term might cause confusion in the present context, given that Aquinas uses the term *accidental* to mean *praeter essentiam* (outside the essence (of its subject)).) *Mutatis mutandis* the argument set out above to show that (SDS) (together with the claim that there are accidental forms) implies that God does not have any temporary intrinsic properties, can equally be run to show that (SDS) (together with the claim that there are accidental forms) implies that God does not have any strongly contingent intrinsic properties. (If God had strongly contingent intrinsic properties, without having different accidental forms in different “possible circumstances” or “possible worlds”, then we would have constancy “across possible circumstances” (“across possible worlds”) with respect to which (substantial or accidental) forms God had, but variation (across those circumstances or worlds) with respect to God's total intrinsic profile. That would imply that accidental forms weren't up to doing a job that they would (“by definition”) have to be up to doing, if they existed. I shall spare the reader the details.)

In the hope that this discussion has shed some light on what (SDS) does and does not imply, I now turn to the question of how Aquinas argues for (SDS).

Aquinas' strategy is to put together the theses about composition (TC₁)–(TC₇) with various arguments concerning the implications of composition, including:

- (AC₁) If a being is composite, it is both “posterior to” its components, and dependent upon a “compounder” of its components. So if a being is composite, it is not a *first* necessary being (*SCG*, I, 18 and *ST*, Ia, 3, 7).
- (AC₂) If a being is composite, it is at least potentially dissoluble, and at least potentially non-existent. So if a being is composite, it is not a first *necessary* being (*SCG*, I, 18).
- (AC₃) If a being is composite, it falls short of pure or complete actuality, at least insofar as its parts are (as such) in potentiality with respect to jointly composing a certain whole. But any being that falls short of pure or complete actuality is both caused and contingent. So again, if a being is composite, it is neither a first nor a necessary being (see *De Potentia*, 7, 1, *responsio*).

Assuming that (TC₁)–(TC₇) are true, and (AC₁)–(AC₃) are sound, does that (by itself) allow us to conclude that (SDS) is as well? No. For we cannot conclude simply on the basis of (the truth of) (TC₁)–(TC₇) and (the soundness of) (AC₁)–(AC₃) that there is a first cause. And if we cannot conclude simply on the basis of (TC₁)–(TC₇) and (AC₁)–(AC₃) that there is a first cause, then we cannot conclude simply on the basis of (TC₁)–(TC₇) and (AC₁)–(AC₃) that (SDS) is true, since (DS)–and a fortiori (SDS) – implies that there is such a being as God, and hence that there is a first cause (I assume that God is “by definition” uncaused).

If (TC₁)–(TC₇) are all true, and (AC₁)–(AC₃) are sound, and there is a first cause, we still can't immediately conclude that (SDS) is true: for there might be many first causes, none of which is God, in which case (DS) and (SDS) would again be false. The same holds, even if (TC₁)–(TC₇) are true, and (AC₁)–(AC₃) are sound, and there is exactly one first (and necessary) cause: in order to move from the truth of (TC₁)–(TC₇) and the soundness of (AC₁)–(AC₃) and the unicity of a first necessary cause to (SDS), we need to know that the first necessary cause has the right sort of properties to be God – a thesis Aquinas has asserted, but not yet defended, as of *ST*, Ia, 3, 7.

Still, if (TC₁)–(TC₇) are true, and (AC₁)–(AC₃) are sound, then we may draw some very non-trivial conclusions. Let us say that a being is *simple*⁺ just in case it has no proper parts, is not a different thing from its genus, or its differentia, or its accidental properties, and is the same thing as its essence, its existence, and its perfections. ((SDS) is the claim that God is a simple⁺ being.) Given this terminology, we may say that the truth of (TC₁)–(TC₇) and the soundness of (AC₁)–(AC₃) jointly imply:

- (A) If there are first causes, all of them are simple⁺ beings.
 (B) If there is exactly one first cause, it is a simple⁺ being.
 and
 (C) If there is a God, then – since nothing could be God, without being a first cause – God is simple⁺.

We might call (C) *the quasi-strong doctrine of divine simplicity* ((QSDS), for short). (QSDS) says that (SDS) is true, unless there is no God. Suppose that Aquinas can establish (QSDS) on the basis of the considerations brought to light in *ST*, Ia, 3 (that is, (TC₁)–(TC₇) and (AC₁)–(AC₃)). Suppose also that he can (later on in the *Prima Pars*) establish that there is just one first cause, which not only is simple⁺, but also has the right properties to be identified with God. If so, he can at that point, as it were, circle back and move from (QSDS) to (SDS), completing the argument for the thesis of God’s strong simplicity, which is in one sense presented, but in another sense not completely “filled in”, in *ST*, Ia, 3, in the same way that the arguments for God’s existence are in one sense presented, but in another sense not completely “filled in”, in *ST*, Ia, 2, 3.

Fair enough. But there seem to be weighty reasons to doubt the cogency of the argument from (TC₁)–(TC₇) and (AC₁)–(AC₃) to (QSDS). First, there is no obvious reason to think that beings that are different from their substantial form, or their accidental forms, or their essence, or their existence, or their genus, or their differentia, or their perfections, must be composite. If I have not misunderstood Aquinas, he accepts this last claim, because he thinks that an accidental form, or a substantial form, or an essence, or an existence, or a perfection of a complete being must be either a proper or an improper part of that being. But the idea that the accidental form, or the substantial form, or the essence, or the existence of a complete being is a part of it is not just unobvious. It is, at least on the face of it, strange.

Suppose I asked someone, “what’s your favorite thing about this lawnmower?” I could imagine her replying “its color” or “its shape”. Suppose on the other hand I asked someone, “what’s your favorite part of that lawnmower?” If someone replied, “its color”, or “its shape”, I would assume that she had misunderstood my question. I would probably say something like: “I didn’t ask what your favorite *feature* of the lawnmower was; I asked what your favorite *part* of the lawnmower was”. If, however, accidental forms were parts of what they accidentally inform, then the shape and color of a lawnmower would be parts of it, since they are accidental forms of it, and “its color” or “its shape” should be as acceptable an answer to the question “what’s your favorite part of the lawnmower?” as it would be to the question “what’s your favorite thing about the lawnmower?” Again, suppose that for some reason I thought that two people were discussing a part of a lawnmower, and I asked them, “what part of the lawnmower are you discussing?” If they replied, “its existence” or “its essence”, I would assume from their reply that they had misunderstood the question I was asking.

Also, compare (a) “You can’t change a thing’s location, without changing what properties it has” with (b) “You can’t change a thing’s location, without

changing what parts it has”: (a) sounds unobjectionable, at least on a broad construal of “property”; (b) sounds distinctly odd. As we naturally think of it, there are kinds of change that imply (constitutively involve) addition and/or loss of parts (e.g., growth and fossilization) and there are kinds of change that don’t (e.g., change in location, change of mind). But if accidental forms are parts of the complete beings they inform, then every intrinsic change in a persisting complete being will imply (constitutively involve) compositional change: a change in the will or the intellect of an angel (or the location of a lawnmower, given that place is an Aristotelian accident) will be a matter of losing one part and acquiring another every bit as much as the change that takes place when someone replaces an old barnacle-encrusted plank of a ship with a new one, or replaces a human being’s old (and failing) heart with a transplanted one. All of these examples suggest that our pre-theoretical intuitions, far from supporting the view that forms, essence, and existence are proper or improper parts of the complete beings that have them, are set against that view.

But suppose that forms, essences, existences, and perfections are all proper or improper parts of the complete beings that have them, so we can be sure that all things that are different from their forms, or their essence, or their existence, or their perfections, are composite. Even granting (TC_1) – (TC_7) , can we count on the soundness of (AC_1) – (AC_3) ? Consider (AC_2) .

According to (AC_2) , whenever $b_1 \dots b_n \dots$ jointly compose (another being) B , it could have been that $b_1 \dots b_n \dots$ did not jointly compose B , and B did not exist. This implies that if, say, the essence and the existence of a first necessary cause jointly compose that cause, it could have been that the essence and the existence of that cause did not jointly compose that cause, and that cause did not exist. Since this is impossible (if something is a necessary cause, its nonexistence is impossible) we may conclude that the essence and the existence of a first necessary being do not jointly compose that cause; instead, the essence and the existence of a first necessary cause are (each) identical to that cause.

A worry about this argument is that it seems not at all obvious that whenever $b_1 \dots b_n \dots$ jointly compose (another being) B , it could have been that $b_1 \dots b_n \dots$ did not jointly compose B , and B did not exist. There are various reasons one might have for doubting this last thesis.

One might think that the natural numbers (that is, 0, 1, 2 ...) are necessary beings. Why? Well, it is at least initially plausible that where C is any condition, it is true that:

- (A) Necessarily, nothing satisfies C if and only if the number of things satisfying $C = 0$.

Suppose, for example, that C is the condition something satisfies if and only if it is a unicorn. Then necessarily, nothing satisfies that condition if and only if the number of things satisfying that condition = 0. (More idiomatically: necessarily, nothing is a unicorn if and only if the number of unicorns = 0.)

It is also at least initially plausible that, for any natural n and any condition C , it is true that:

(B) Necessarily, if the number of things satisfying condition $C = n$, then there is such a thing as the number n .

Necessarily, if the retriever Laura is hugging = Aurora, then there is such a thing as the retriever Aurora (and Laura is hugging it). Similarly, it would seem, necessarily, if the number of things satisfying the condition of being (a) God = 1, then there is such a thing as the number 1 (and it's the number of things satisfying the condition of being (a) God). (More idiomatically: necessarily, if the number of Gods = 1, then there is such a thing as the number 1 (and it's the number of Gods there are).)

Now suppose (for *reductio*) that there were no numbers – that is, suppose that nothing satisfied the condition of being a number. By (A), we could conclude that the number of numbers = 0 (the number of things satisfying the condition of being a number = 0). By (B), we could conclude that there was such a thing as the number 0. So (necessarily) if there are no numbers, there is at least one number (*viz.*, the number 0): the hypothesis that there are no numbers is self-refuting.

If this reasoning establishes that necessarily, there are numbers, it also establishes that necessarily, there is such a thing as the number 0. Suppose that there were no such thing as the number 0 – that is, suppose nothing satisfied the condition of being the number 0. By (A), the number of things satisfying the condition of being the number 0 = 0; so by (B) there would be such a thing as the number 0. The hypothesis that there is no such thing as the number 0 refutes itself.

Now if necessarily there is such a thing as *the* number 0, then necessarily exactly one thing is the number 0 (satisfies the condition of being the number 0). But if (A) is a necessary truth, so is

(C) Exactly one thing satisfies C if and only if the number of things satisfying $C = 1$.

And if (B) and (C) are necessary truths, then, like the number 0, the number 1 is a necessary being. Think of it in this way:

Necessarily, there is such a thing as the number 0 (by (A) and (B)).

So necessarily, exactly one thing is the number 0.

So necessarily, the number of things that are the number 0 = 1 (by (C)).

So necessarily, there is such a thing as the number 1 (by (B)).

But if the number 0 and the number 1 are necessary beings, so is the number 2. For there are exactly two things satisfying the condition of being either the number 1 or the number 2. And if (C) is a necessary truth, so is

(D) Exactly two things satisfy *C* if and only if the number of things satisfying $C = 2$.

Just as we can get from the necessity of (A)–(C) to the necessary existence of the number 1, we can get from the necessity of (A)–(D) to the necessary existence of the number 2. And so on, *ad infinitum*: all the natural numbers are necessary beings.

(Does this have implications that theists should find untoward? Not obviously. If natural numbers are necessary beings, they might be beings whose existence is independent of time, space, and minds (this seems to have been the way the contemporary metaphysician David Lewis conceived of them, when he wrote *Counterfactuals*). But even on the (contestable) assumption that this view is theologically untoward, it isn't the only option for someone who regards numbers as necessary beings. As long as God (and His mind) are necessary beings, as far as I can tell, natural numbers could be mind-dependent and God-dependent beings, depending for their necessary existence on God's necessary infinite mind.)

Anyway, suppose that all the natural numbers are necessary beings. It is (no pun intended) very natural to suppose that necessarily, the natural numbers jointly compose what mathematicians call ω – that is, the set of natural numbers. (How could the natural numbers all exist, without jointly composing ω ? So, one might plausibly suppose, the natural numbers and ω constitute a counterexample to the principle on which (AC₂) depends, inasmuch as the natural numbers jointly compose ω , but it could not have been that the natural numbers do not compose ω , and ω did not exist.

True, as Otto Muck has pointed out to me, Aquinas would say that the natural numbers of *entia rationis*, rather than *entia realia*. So he could say that (AC₂) is an argument that is meant to apply to *entia realia*, rather than *entia rationis*. Moreover, Aquinas would say, since God is the *ens realissimum*, there is no worry about not being able to use (AC₃) to show that God is simple⁺. My intent was simply to suggest that, despite (AC₂), it is not immediately obvious that composition implies contingency.

Here is a very different line of thought that calls into question the crucial premise of (AC₂). Someone might argue:

Where $b_1 \dots b_3$ are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and *T* is the Trinity, $b_1 \dots b_3$ jointly compose *T*. But the Persons that jointly compose the Trinity, are all necessary beings. Moreover, the Persons that jointly compose the Trinity don't just happen to jointly compose the Trinity (in the way that, say, the players that jointly compose the Boston Red Sox just happen to jointly compose the Red Sox); they necessarily jointly

compose it. Since the Persons jointly composing the Trinity necessarily jointly compose the Trinity, the Trinity is also a necessary being (whatever necessary beings necessarily compose is itself a necessary being). So the Persons that jointly compose the Trinity, and the Trinity they jointly compose, constitute a counterexample to the principle that whenever $b_1 \dots b_n \dots$ jointly compose (another being) B , it could have been that $b_1 \dots b_n \dots$ did not compose B , and B did not exist.

Hence, an opponent of (AC₂) might say, there is no evident reason to think the crucial premise of (AC₂) is true, and various reasons to doubt that it is. (Moreover, the opponent of (AC₂) might say, it's not clear that Aquinas could or want to say that the Trinity is irrelevant to his principle, because it is an *ens rationis*).

Indeed, the opponent might say, if we assume, as Aquinas does, that

- (a) There is at least one complete being that both necessarily exists and has no accidental forms (i.e., no predicamental accidents).
- (b) Every complete being has both an essence and an existence.
- (c) Every essence, and every existence, is either a proper or an improper part of the complete being that has it.

then there are good reasons to think that cases involving incomplete beings jointly composing complete beings constitute counterexamples to the crucial premise of (AC₂). For, she might say,

Suppose that (a) there is a non-predicamentally-accidentally-informed necessary complete being *ncb*. By (b), *ncb* will have an essence and an existence. Given that *ncb* has no predicamental accidents, and given (c), we may conclude that either (i) *ncb*'s essence = *ncb* = *ncb*'s existence, or (ii) *ncb*'s essence and *ncb*'s existence jointly compose *ncb*. Now (i) is impossible. For *ncb*'s essence is that *in virtue of which ncb* is the kind of being it is, or *what makes ncb* the kind of being it is, or *what explains why ncb* is the kind of being it is. And it doesn't make sense to say that *ncb* is that in virtue of which *ncb* is the kind of being it is, or to say that *ncb* is what makes *ncb* the kind of being it is, or to say that *ncb* is what explains why *ncb* is the kind of being it is. An essence is, in a broad sense, a cause – or better, an explainer: an essence is what explains why a thing of a certain kind is a thing of that certain kind. And the only way in which *a* can explain why *b* is a thing of a certain kind, is if *a* is different from *b*. Similarly, *ncb*'s existence is that *in virtue of which ncb* exists, or what *makes ncb* exist, or what *explains why ncb* exists. And it doesn't make sense to say that *ncb* is that in virtue of which *ncb* exists, or to say that *ncb* is what makes *ncb* exist, or to say that *ncb* is what explains why *ncb* exists. Again,

an existence is, in a broad sense, a cause – or better, an explainer: an existence explains why an existent thing exists. And the only way in which *a* can explain why *b* exists, is if *a* and *b* are different. If (i) is impossible, then we are left with (ii) *ncb*'s essence and *ncb*'s existence jointly compose *ncb*. Now if it were a contingent fact that there is such a thing as *ncb*'s essence, or that there is such a thing as *ncb*'s existence, or that *ncb*'s essence and *ncb*'s existence jointly compose *ncb*, then *ncb* would be a contingent being. But *ncb* is *ex hypothesi* a necessary being. So it must be that even though *ncb*'s essence and *ncb*'s existence jointly compose *ncb*, it could not have been that *ncb*'s essence and *ncb*'s existence didn't jointly compose *ncb*, and *ncb* did not exist. Hence *ncb*'s essence, *ncb*'s existence, and *ncb* jointly provide us with a counterexample to the crucial premise of (AC₂).

It is worth underscoring that, in spite of the fact that the conclusion of this argument is anti-Thomistic, it has a great deal of Thomistic “infrastructure”.

The reason we can get an argument against a Thomistic conclusion from so many Thomistic premises is that starting from a certain set of Thomistic premise, we can run either of two “mirror-image” arguments.

Let's call the claim that, whenever $b_1 \dots b_n \dots$ compose *B*, it could have been that $b_1 \dots b_n \dots$ didn't compose *B*, and *B* didn't exist, the *double contingency principle* (since it says that, whenever $b_1 \dots b_n \dots$ jointly compose *B*, both the fact that $b_1 \dots b_n \dots$ jointly compose *B*, and the fact that there is such a thing as *B*, are contingent). And let us call the principle that, inasmuch as *a* cannot explain why *a* is an individual of the kind it is, or explain why *a* exists, *a* cannot be its own essence, or its own existence, the *difference principle* (since it says that every complete being is different from both its essence and its existence).

Now suppose we assume the Thomistic premises (a)–(c). Then we could argue, in Thomistic fashion, from (a)–(c), and the double contingency principle, to the falsity of the difference principle. Alternatively, we could argue, in anti-Thomistic fashion, from (a)–(c), and the difference principle, to the falsity of the double contingency principle.

I have argued that there are good reasons to suppose that the double contingency principle is or at least might well be false. But even setting those considerations aside, it's not clear that the double contingency principle has a great deal of initial intuitive appeal. In particular, it is not clear that it has *more* intuitive appeal than the difference principle. Myself, I have at least as much difficulty trying to get my head round the idea of a complete being making itself exist (or making itself a thing of the kind it is), as I do trying to get my head round the idea of necessarily existing beings necessarily jointly composing a composed necessary being. I find it at least as hard to conceive of a necessary God explaining why He has Deity, and why He exists, as I do to conceive of three necessary divine persons necessarily composing a necessary Trinity.

So far, I have only addressed one of the routes Aquinas takes in arguing for (QSDS). There are various other routes, e.g., one that turns on the “causedness”, rather than the contingency of all composed things. Here I shall simply register my suspicion that the same sort of difficulties that (as I see it) beset the route discussed above beset the alternative routes, and I invite the reader to try to ascertain whether my suspicion is well or ill founded.

Naturally, even if Aquinas lacks cogent argument for the strong doctrine of divine simplicity, that does not imply that the doctrine is deeply (or even mildly) problematic. That said, I think there are questions, not just about the defensibility of Aquinas’ arguments for (SDS), but also about the defensibility of (SDS) itself, and about the compatibility of (SDS) with certain other views about God to which Aquinas is deeply committed. More or less briefly, here they are:

Worry 1: Having and being

If someone is genuinely humble, she has genuine humility. If someone is really wise, she has real wisdom. If something exists necessarily, it has necessary existence. If something is plausible, it has plausibility. These examples and many more suggest that for any x , and any F -ness, it is true that

(1) If x is F , then x has F -ness.

Also, if a being exists contingently, we can say not just that it has existence contingently, but also that it has *its* existence contingency. If a suggestion is plausible, we can say not just that it has plausibility, but that it has *its* plausibility. If you are proud, we can say, not just that you have pride, but that you have *your* pride. These examples and many more suggest that, for any x , and any F -ness, it is true that

(2) If x is F , then x has x ’s F -ness (x has the F -ness of x).

Also, if Christina = Tinuviel, and kindness = Courtney’s favorite virtue, then Christina has kindness if and only if Christina has Courtney’s favorite virtue if and only if Tinuviel has Courtney’s favorite virtue if and only if Tinuviel has kindness. Generalizing, for any a , b , c , and d :

(3) If $a = c$ and $b = d$, then a has b if and only if a has d if and only if c has d if and only if c has b .

This principle should seem evidently true. If $a = c$ and $b = d$, then one and the same thing is both a and c , and one and the same thing is both b and d . If the thing that is both a and c has the thing that is both b and d , then a has b , a has d , c has d , and c has a will all be true; if the thing that is both a and c

does not have the thing that is both *b* and *d*, then *a has b*, *a has d*, *c has d*, and *c has a* will all be false.

With these preliminaries out of the way, we can now set out the first worry about (SDS). Aquinas thinks it can be shown that (i) God is good (SCG, I, 37), (ii) God is goodness itself (SCG, I, 38), and (iii) God is His goodness (*ibid.*). The last claim follows more or less directly from (SDS), since (SDS) says that God is the same as all His perfections, and His goodness is one of His perfections.

Given that God is good, and (1), we may infer that God has goodness; given that God is good, and (2), we may infer that God has His goodness. Also, given (SDS), God = His goodness. So, given (SDS), and (3) we may move from

(i) God has His goodness.

to

(ii) God's goodness has His goodness.

(iii) God's goodness has God.

(iv) God has God.

and

(v) God and His goodness have each other (from (i) and (iii)).

The difficulty is that, while (i) is unproblematic, (ii)–(v) all seem (at least) problematic. It might be argued that, even if it is initially unsettling, (ii) is upon reflection not intuitively unacceptable. For, it might be said, if God is good, then so is the goodness He has. (Compare: if God exists, so does the existence He has.) And if God's goodness is good, then God's goodness has goodness, and indeed has God's goodness. Be that as it may, from an intuitive point of view, (iii)–(v) all seem defective. One wants to say – at least I want to say: God has His goodness, but not the other way round; God has His goodness, but He doesn't have *Himself* (although, of course, He *is* Himself). Just as God is an immovable mover, He is “an unhavable haver” – incapable of being had, either by Himself or by anything else – just as much as Socrates is. If, however, (i) is unproblematic, and (iii)–(v) are defective, then the explanation would seem to be that it's true that God has His goodness, but false that God is His goodness – which implies the falsity of (SDS).

As far as I am aware, although Aquinas considers a good number of arguments against (SDS), he doesn't explicitly discuss this one. But it looks as though he might resist it in a number of ways.

(1)–(3), together with (i), imply (iii)–(v). So Aquinas has the option of challenging one of (1)–(3) + (i), and the option of conceding them all, but defending (iii)–(v). The first option splits into (at least) sub-options.

First, Aquinas could concede (1) and (2), and challenge (3). That would block the inference from the (apparently non-defective) (i) to the (apparently defective) (iii)–(v). Alternatively, Aquinas could concede (3), but challenge (1) and (2), blocking the derivation of (i) (and thus of (iii)–(v)).

As I have already suggested, though, challenging (3) is not an attractive option. If God = the creator and sustainer of all things, and God has love, then the creator and sustainer of all things has love. Equally, if God has love, and love is St. Paul's favorite virtue, then God has St. Paul's favorite virtue. By the same (apparently impeccable) reasoning, if God has His goodness, and God = His goodness, then God's goodness has God's goodness; and if God has His goodness, and His goodness = God, then God has God, and God's goodness has God.

Challenging (1) and (2) looks more promising. For it seems that Aquinas could say something like this:

God is good. But he doesn't *have* goodness, or *have* His goodness; He *is* goodness itself, and He *is* His own goodness. So where $x = \text{God}$, and x 's *F-ness* is God's goodness, we have a counterexample to (2). If we are inclined to regard (2) as true, it may be because we are failing to distinguish it from the true

(2') If x is F , then x has or is x 's F -ness.

To be sure, given (2') and (3), we can get all of the following:

(i') God has or is His goodness.

(ii') God's goodness has or is His goodness.

(iii') God's goodness has or is God.

(iv') God has or is God.

and

(v') God and His goodness have or are each other (from (i) and (ii)).

But no worries: (unlike (i)–(v)), (i')–(v') are all true.

Whatever the initial appeal of this way of resisting the argument under consideration, there are doubts about its efficacy and its "Thomistic"ness.

To start with, it is difficult to deny that the inference from *x is F* to *x has x's F-ness* is valid, even if *x = God*, and *x's F-ness* is one of His perfections. Surely, *God loves* entails *God loves someone* entails *God has love for someone* entails *God has love*. Since *God has love for someone* entails *God has His love for someone* (if God will always have love for us, it follows that He will never abandon His love for us, i.e., that He will always have His love for us), we may conclude that *God loves* entails *God loves someone* entails *God has love for someone* entails *God has His love for someone* entails *God has His love*. One could make the same argument for other divine perfections as well: if, say, God is able to create things *ex nihilo*, it follows that God has the ability (and His ability) to create things *ex nihilo*. But I hope the point is clear enough without further examples.

Also, there is reason to think that the strategy under consideration doesn't give Aquinas a way to block the argument against (SDS) that is both Thomistic and efficacious.

To the best of my knowledge, Aquinas doesn't especially often speak of God's having goodness in particular, or perfection or perfections in general: more frequently, he speaks of goodness, or perfection, or all perfections being in God. But it seems that the relevant *being in* relation and the relevant *having* relation are converses of each other: what it is for *x* to have *F-ness* just is for there to be *F-ness* in *x*. (Hence we could either say that if we are not healthy, we have no health, or that if we are not healthy, there is no health in us.) In light of this, it appears that we could run essentially the same argument against (SDS) as the one just set out in terms of *being in* rather than *having*, as follows:

We know that

(1*) (For any *x* and any *F-ness*) if *x* is *F*, *F-ness* is in *x*.

(2*) (For any *x* and any *F-ness*) if *x* is *F*, *x's F-ness* is in *x*.

(3*) (For any *a, b, c, d*) if *a = c* and *b = d*, then *a is in b* if and only if *a* is in *d* if and only if *c* is in *d* if and only if *c* is in *b*.

Given that God is good, and (1*), we may infer that goodness is in God; given that God is good, and (2*), we may infer that God's goodness is in God. Also, given (SDS) God = His goodness. So, given (SDS), and (3*) we may move from

(i*) God's goodness is in God.

to

(ii*) God is in God.

(iii*) God is in God's goodness.

(iv*) God's goodness is in God's goodness.

and

(v*) God and His goodness are in each other (from (i*) and (iii*)).

But whatever might be said in defense of (ii*), (iii*)–(v*) seem defective: (in the sense of 'in' in which God's goodness is in God), God cannot Himself be in either Himself or anything else. Since (i*) is unproblematic, and (iii*)–(v*) are defective, we may conclude that (SDS) is false.

Now someone who blocked the "having" version of the argument against (SDS) by challenging the claim that God has goodness, or His goodness, would have to block the "being in" version of it by challenging the claim that goodness, or God's goodness, is in God. But Aquinas wouldn't want to challenge those claims, since he often makes such claims himself.

This leaves Aquinas with the strategy which contemporary analytic philosophers often call "biting the bullet" – that is, insisting that (iii)–(v) (and (iii*)–(v*)), however odd they might initially sound, are all true.

What should we make of this last strategy? It's not as though I know of any arguments for the falsity of (iii)–(v) (or (iii*)–(v*)) that would convince someone who was initially disposed to doubt or deny their falsity. Surely, though, (iii)–(v) (and (iii*)–(v*)) seem pretty obviously false: isn't that a good enough reason to suppose that they are false? (Imagine you overhear a bit of a conversation. One person asks, "So what has God?" (or "what is God in?"), and the other one replies "God's goodness" (or "God"). Wouldn't you find it hard to believe that a sensible question had been asked, and a true answer had been given?)

Here a defender of (SDS) might say:

Agreed, it initially sounds weird to say that God and God's goodness have or are in each other, or to say that God has or is in Himself. But Aquinas has a defensible explanation of why it sounds weird, but is nevertheless true. It sounds weird, because in almost all cases (in every case except the case of God) it's impossible for an x and its F -ness to have or be in each other, or for an x to have or be in itself. It's nevertheless true, because God is all the perfections He has, and is all the perfections in Him. In particular God is the goodness He has, and is the goodness in Him. And if God is the goodness He has (the goodness in Him), it follows, by the reasoning we've been through, that God and His goodness have and are in each other, and that God has and is in Himself.

True, if we suppose that God both is and has His goodness, and that His goodness both is in and is Him, we may conclude that (iii)–(v) (and (iii*)–(v*)) are just as true as (i). (and (i*)). But, an opponent of (SDS) might say, how does that overturn the presumption in favor of the falsity of (iii)–(v) (and (iii*)–(v*)) arising from the fact that all those statements look to be pretty obviously false? Our hypothetical opponent might elaborate on this point as follows:

Suppose we asked Aquinas whether things are ever parts of themselves, or parts of each other. He would say, ‘no’. *The whole is greater than the part* is perhaps Aquinas’ favorite example of an obviously self-evident truth, and it implies both that things are never parts of themselves, and that things are never parts of each other (given that the greater than relation is both irreflexive and asymmetric).

Now there is a branch of contemporary logic called mereology, which is all about (the logic of) parts and wholes. Contemporary mereologists might challenge Aquinas’ answer to the question under discussion. They might say:

We need to distinguish two kinds of parts: *maximal* parts and *submaximal* parts. A part p of a whole w is a maximal part of that whole just in case everything that is part of w is part of p , and a part p of a whole w is a submaximal part of that whole if some part of w is not a part of p . Assuming a whole has a plurality of parts, it will have a plurality of submaximal parts. But even a whole with a plurality of submaximal parts will have only one maximal part – itself. Now it does initially sound weird to say that a thing is a part of itself, or that things are parts of each other. But we can explain why it sounds weird, but is nevertheless true. It sounds weird, because in almost all cases (in all cases, except the case in which the part of the whole is maximal), it is impossible for a part to be a part of itself, or for parts to be parts of each other. It is nevertheless true, because, in the special case in which a part p is a maximal part of a whole w , w not only has, but also is p – in which case it follows, as the night does the day, that p is a part of itself (since p is a part of w , and $w = p$), and that p and w are parts of each other (by the analogue of (3) and (3*) for the *part-of* relation).

Aquinas would be unimpressed with our mereologist’s argument, and with good reason. He would say: *assuming* there are maximal as well as submaximal parts, then a whole can not only have but also be its part, in which case that part will be a part of itself, and the part and the whole will be parts of each other. But we have no good reason to suppose that there are any maximal parts, or that there are any cases in which a whole not only has but also is its part. On the contrary, we have a good

reason to suppose that there could not be maximal parts – namely, that if there were maximal parts, that would imply that some things are parts of themselves, and some things are parts of each other, and both of these claims are obviously false.

Analogously, *assuming* that God not only has but also is His goodness, then God will have God, and God and His goodness will have each other, and be in each other. But we have no good reason to suppose that it's true that God not only has but also is His goodness. On the contrary, we have a good reason to suppose it could not be true – namely, that its being true would imply that God has (and is in) God, and that God and His goodness have (and are in) each other, and both of these claims are on the face of it pretty obviously false.

The analogy the hypothetical objector to (SDS) draws between the mereologist's position and Aquinas' is suggestive, but imperfect. It is true that mereologists (typically) suppose that the part-of relation is what mathematicians call a weak ordering rather than a strict ordering. That is, while Aquinas starts out with a conception of the *is a part of* relation on which *is a part of* is logically equivalent to *is a part of and is distinct from*, mereologists start out with a conception of the *is a part of* relation on which *is a part of* is logically equivalent to *is a part of or is identical to*. But my sense is that it's not that mereologists think that Aquinas or, more generally, non-mereologists, are confused about the properties of the part-of relation. It is instead that, for various technical reasons, the relation that mereologists focus on is not the part-of relation (as ordinarily conceived), but a slightly different relation that stands to the part-of relation (ordinarily conceived) as the less-than-or-equal-to relation between numbers stands to the less-than relation between numbers. (The less-than-or-equal-to relation, unlike the less-than relation, is neither irreflexive nor asymmetric (every number is less than or equal to itself, and m and n can be less than or equal to each other (as long as $m = n$)).) As they might say, mereologists study the part-of relation construed mereologically, which is almost but not quite the same as the part-of relation ordinarily construed. I ascribe this view to mereologists because mereologists, typically call maximal parts *improper parts*, and call submaximal parts *proper parts*. The terminology signals a recognition on the part of mereologists that – on the ordinary as opposed to the technical conception of parthood – a thing is not properly, but only improperly, described as a part of itself. As Aquinas would put it, only a proper part is a part *proprie loquendo* (properly speaking).

Now we have already considered ways in which Aquinas might try to block the argument against (SDS) under consideration by denying that acceptance of (SDS) commits one to (iii)–(v) (or (iii*)–(v*)). We are currently considering the alternative strategy of conceding that acceptance of (SDS) commits one to (iii)–(v) (and (iii*)–(v*)), and insisting that there is nothing untoward about (iii)–(v) (or (iii*)–(v*)). And if Aquinas

avails himself of this alternative (“bullet-biting”) strategy, his view of *nothing can both have and be any of its perfections* cannot be like the mereologist’s view of *nothing can both have and be any of its parts*. This may need a bit of explaining.

For the mereologist, the statement, *nothing can both have and be any of its parts* is true, as long as all the terms therein have their ordinary meanings; it is false, if “part” has a technical (mereological) meaning. If Aquinas took this sort of line with respect to *nothing can both have and be any of its perfections*, that would involve saying that the statement is true, as long as all the terms therein have their ordinary meaning, and false, if some of the terms therein have some technical (“philosophico-theological”) meaning. But Aquinas cannot concede that *nothing can both have and be any of its perfections* is true, as long as all the terms therein have their ordinary meaning, if his aim is to defend (SDS) via the bullet-biting strategy.

If *nothing can both have and be any of its perfections* is true, as long as the terms therein have their ordinary meaning, then either (i) will come out true, as long as the terms therein have their ordinary meaning, but (iii)–(v) will come out false, as long as the terms therein have their ordinary meaning, or all of (i)–(v) come out false, as long as the terms therein have their ordinary meaning. If (i) comes out true (on its straightforward construal) and (iii)–(v) come out false (on their straightforward construal), then we no longer have a defense of (SDS).

If (i) (straightforwardly construed) is true, and (iii) (straightforwardly construed) is false, then the following statement (straightforwardly construed) is true:

God has God’s goodness, but not vice versa.

And if that statement (straightforwardly construed) is true, it follows that

God and His goodness are not one and the same thing.

in which case (SDS) is false.

If Aquinas says that (ii)–(v) are all false, he could still have a defense of (SDS), but not of the bullet-biting variety. He would be back to saying that although (iii)–(v) (and, indeed (ii)) are objectionable, their objectionability does not tell against (SDS), because they are not consequences of (SDS). We’re back to the already canvassed non-bullet-biting strategy on which (presumably) we deny (2), and insist that, for example, *God will always love Peter* does not imply *God will always have His love for Peter*. (Again, implementing this strategy for the starred version of our argument would involve saying that *God will always love Peter* does not imply *God’s love for Peter will always be in God* – something which, we have seen, Aquinas appears not to want to say.)

So – assuming he wants to bite the bullet– Aquinas’ attitude toward *nothing can both have and be any of its perfections* cannot be like the contemporary

mereologist's attitude toward *nothing can both have and be any of its parts*. It must instead be like a certain kind of four-dimensionalist's attitude toward *nothing can both have and be its history*.

According to a philosophical tradition that goes back at least as far as St. Anselm, there are "three-dimensional" entities we may call *substances*, and "four-dimensional" events we may call *events*. Substances exist, but do not happen, or take place, or occur; events happen, or take place, or occur, but do not (*proprie loquendo*) exist. (An atheist will say, "God doesn't exist", not "God never happened", and will probably say, "the resurrection never happened", not "the resurrection never existed".) A substance is a "three-dimensional" (or "enduring") being, in that the whole substance, and not just a part thereof, exists within every subinterval of the total interval over which the substance exists. An event is a "four-dimensional" (or "perduring") being, in that the whole event does not take place within any subinterval of the total interval over which the event takes place. If an event takes place over a period of thirty seconds, that event does not take place within any fifteen-second subinterval of that thirty-second period. (What takes place in the first fifteen seconds is not the whole event, but the first half of the whole event; what takes place in the second fifteen seconds is not the whole event, but the second half of the whole event.) Substances "fill" larger stretches of time by themselves filling all the smaller stretches of time that make up the larger stretch of time; events "fill" larger stretches of time by having smaller parts that fill up the smaller stretches of time that make up the larger stretch of time. (To put this another way, events fill larger stretches of time in the same way that (material) substances fill larger regions of space. Just as a material substance fills a larger region of space by having smaller spatial parts that fill up sub-regions of that region of space, an event fills a larger stretch of time by having smaller temporal parts that fill up sub-stretches of that stretch of time.)

A fair number of recent and contemporary metaphysicians have rejected Anselm's dualism of substance and event, and argued for a view we may call *event monism*. According to the event monist, all there are, are four-dimensional beings, and the things Anselm thinks are three-dimensional substances rather than four-dimensional events are in fact events, even if they are a rather special sort of event, differing from most of the things we ordinarily call events. The things that Anselm thinks of as three-dimensional substances are actually four-dimensional beings, with earlier and later (temporal) parts. So a human being, just like a human being's life, has earlier and later parts; a human being, just like a human being's life, is too big to "fit into" any (proper) part of its total lifetime. Indeed, for an event monist, it's not simply that a human being is rather more like her life than three-dimensionalists imagine. A human being *is* her life, in that the human being and her life are both identical to a certain long-running event, composed of many and varied shorter running events. More generally, if by the "complete history" of an individual we mean the event composed of all the events that have ever

happened or are happening or will ever happen to that individual, every individual is its complete history.

Some celebrated metaphysicians (e.g., W. V. O. Quine) have championed event monism. Others have regarded it as untenable. An opponent of event monism might argue against it as follows:

It makes no sense to identify a human being with its life, or to identify an individual with its complete history. For surely,

(i_f) This human being has (more idiomatically, lives) this human being's life.

is true, and

(ii_f) This human being's life has (lives) this human being's life.

(iii_f) This human being's life has (lives) this human being.

(iv_f) This human being has (lives) this human being.

and

(v_f) This human being and this human being's life have (live) each other. are all false. But (i_f) would imply each of (ii_f)–(v_f), if it were true that this human being = this life. So we cannot identify the human being that has a life with the life the human being has – or, more generally, identify the individual that has a complete history with the complete history that individual has.

(Notice that this argument can be transformed into an argument against (SDS) simply by replacing the occurrences of “this human being” in its premises by “God”, given that, for Aquinas, God's life is one of God's perfections, so that God = His life (see *SCG*, I, 98).)

If someone wants to defend event monism in the face of this argument, it is hard to see what option she has other than biting the bullet, and challenging the falsity of (ii_f)–(v_f). (If this human being and this human's being life are the very same thing, what sense does it make to say the former has the latter but not vice versa? And how can one challenge the truth of *this human being has (lives) this human being's life*?) If the defender of event monism does go the bullet-biting route, she will have to say that our “pre-theoretical” intuitions about how human beings are related to their lives are quite wrong; for even if she insists that (ii_f)–(v_f) are true, she cannot deny that to those who are not “philosophically sophisticated”, they very much seem not to be. Although the mereologist doesn't need to (and doesn't) say “common sense” gets it wrong about the properties of the

part-of relation, the event monist does need to say that “common sense” gets it badly wrong about the relation holding between a human being and that human being’s life.

Similarly, I am inclined to think, the only way in which Aquinas can defend (SDS) from what we might call the argument from having, and the argument from being in, is by insisting that common sense gets it badly wrong about the relation holding between God and His goodness, and God and His existence, and indeed God and His life.

In fact, I think that Aquinas is at least not a million miles away from saying this. At *ST*, Ia, 13, 1, *ad* 1um he notes that we use both concrete and abstract terms to signify God – abstract ones (such as “goodness”, or “deity”) to signify His simplicity, and concrete ones to signify His subsistence (that is, His “completeness”). But both kinds of names fail to express God’s mode of being. For God is both subsistent and simple; and abstract terms signify something as simple, but not as subsistent, whereas concrete terms signify something as subsistent, but not as simple. In a similar vein, at *SCG*, I, 30, Aquinas says that because *goodness* signifies something as non-subsistent (*bonitas significat ut non subsistens*) and *good* signifies something as concrete (*ut concretum*) neither term signifies God perfectly, hence (as Dionysius says) both terms may be both affirmed and denied of God.

If I understand this passage, Aquinas is suggesting that we naturally conceive of the referents of abstract terms – of “nesses”, as we might call them, as simple, but ontologically “incomplete”, or “non-subsistent”, or “dependent”, or “received”. That is, we naturally think of “nesses” as necessarily being in, or being of, or being had by, something else. As for the referents of concrete terms (such as “Socrates”, or “this man”) we naturally conceive of them as “subsistent” or “independent” or “unreceived” (indeed, “unreceivable”) – as beings that are not, and could not be, in, or of, or had by anything else – but also as composite. Hence God, in His subsistent simplicity, is radically unlike both concrete and abstract beings, as we naturally conceive of them.

Now if, before we do philosophical theology, we naturally conceive of the referents of abstract terms as essentially “received” – as essentially had, and hence essentially haveable beings, and we naturally conceive of the referents of concrete terms as essentially unhad and unhaveable beings, then, before doing philosophical theology, we naturally regard statements such as (i) and (i*) as true, and statements such as (iii)–(v) and (iii*)–(v*) as false. We will intuit that God’s goodness, inasmuch as it is a simple “ness”, is in, or received by, or had by something – to wit, God – whereas God, inasmuch as He is a complete or subsistent being, is not in, or received by, or had by, anything else. In other words, our natural way of conceiving concrete and abstract beings – pre-philosophically reflective common sense, if you will – gets the relations between God and His goodness, or God and His existence, or God and His life, badly wrong.

But why suppose pre-philosophically-reflective common sense gets things wrong? Why suppose that that it’s not the case that God’s goodness, or

God's existence, or God's life is an essentially haveable being, whilst God is an essentially unhaveable being? Because, Aquinas says, it can be demonstrated that God must be both subsistent and simple. We know that (SDS) is true; pre-philosophically-reflective common sense conflicts with (SDS); therefore pre-reflective common sense gets things wrong.

But if this is Aquinas' view, then it seems that he should concede that the falsity of (SDS) (like the falsity of event monism) is the "default" view: unless there are reasons to think (SDS) is true, we should think it is false. Indeed, I think that Aquinas should concede that unless there are powerful arguments for (SDS), we should think (SDS) is false, since we strongly intuit that (iii)–(v) (and (iii*)–(v*)) are false (just as we strongly intuit that (ii_c)–(v_c) are false. For reasons I have tried to at least partly explain, I doubt that Aquinas has powerful arguments for (SDS).

Worry 2: Choice

Suppose I have a choice about how things are outside of me (that is, about how things are in the external world). Then, it seems, I must also have a choice about how things are within me (that is, about my internal states). Suppose, say, I have a choice about whether this salt shaker ends up here, and that pepper shaker ends up there, or vice versa, inasmuch as I have a choice about whether I put this salt shaker here, and that pepper shaker there, or vice versa. If I have a choice about where I put the salt and pepper shakers, it seems, that can only be because I have a choice about what internal states I shall be in: I have a choice about whether to be in an internal (presumably cerebral) state which will (ultimately) result in the salt and pepper shakers being (respectively) here and there, or a different internal (presumably cerebral) state which will (ultimately) result in the salt and pepper shakers being (respectively) there and here. (In various philosophical and science-fictional contexts, a mad scientist leaves a victim no choice at all about which internal states (in particular, which cerebral states) he or she is in. We assume, without even thinking about it, that in such cases the mad scientist has left the victim no choice about whether (e.g.) the mad scientist turns off the brain-controlling device, or for that matter has a cup of tea.)

It seems that the same would hold, even for an immaterial being who could put salt and pepper shakers where she wanted by telekinetic acts of will. Such a being could have a choice about where the salt and pepper shakers ended up, without having a choice about what cerebral or somatic states she was in (*ex hypothesi*, she wouldn't have any), but couldn't have a choice about where the salt and pepper shakers ended up, if she were "locked into" all her internal states. At least, I cannot see how a being – whether immaterial or material – could have a choice about how things go "outside her", if she has no choice about how things go "within her".

Now being in an internal state implies having an intrinsic property (in the sense discussed earlier in this chapter). So, assuming that a being can

have a choice about the external world only if that being has a choice about his or her internal states, a being can have a choice about the external world only if that being has a choice about his or her intrinsic properties.

If, however, a being has a choice about whether he or she has a certain property, then, whether or not that property is intrinsic, it must be possible for that being to (exist and) have that property, and also possible for that being to (exist and) not have that property. (If everything must be self-identical, then nobody has a choice about being self-identical; if nothing is possibly self-distinct, then nobody has a choice about being self-distinct.) So, assuming that a being has a choice about whether or not to have a property P , either P or its complement (that is, the property things have if and only if they lack P) will be a strongly contingent property of that being (in the sense of “strongly contingent” defined earlier in the chapter). (If a being that has a choice about having P chooses to have P , then P will end up being a strongly contingent property of that being; if a being that has a choice about having P chooses to lack P , then P 's complement will end up being a strongly contingent property of that being.)

So if a being has a choice about how the external world is, then that being has a choice about its intrinsic properties, and if that being has a choice about its intrinsic properties, it has strongly contingent intrinsic properties. But, for reasons already adduced, it seems that (SDS) implies that God has no strongly contingent intrinsic properties. (SDS) accordingly seems to imply that God has no choice, either about how He is intrinsically (since that is precluded by His not having any strongly contingent intrinsic properties), or about how anything outside Him is (since that would imply His having a choice about how He is intrinsically). These (apparent) consequences of (SDS) are obviously unacceptable to Aquinas.

Worry 3: Change of mind

Suppose we think of (genuine, as opposed to “mere-Cambridge”) change as change in intrinsic properties, so that a being (genuinely) changes over time only if its complete intrinsic profile at an earlier time is different from its complete intrinsic profile at a later time. And suppose we say that a person changes her mind if at an earlier time she accepts (and does not reject) a proposition that at a later time she rejects (and does not accept), or at an earlier time rejects (and does not accept) a proposition that at a later time she rejects (and does not accept). (The rather tiresome parenthetical clauses are inserted, because I don't want to pronounce on the question of whether (inconsistent) believers can accept and reject the same proposition at the same time.)

Is change of mind a genuine change? It certainly seems so. If the only differences between how the world was before, and how the world is now, concern how things are outside a person, it seems as though that person couldn't now accept a proposition she rejected (and did not accept) before,

or now reject a proposition she accepted (and did not reject) before. How could changes in the outside world which left no traces at all on the intrinsic mental properties of a person result in a person's now accepting a proposition she rejected before, or now rejecting a proposition she had accepted before?

When a person goes from accepting (and not rejecting) a proposition to rejecting (and not accepting) it, or vice versa, let us say that the *polarity* of that person's attitude toward that proposition changes. (Acceptance is the attitude toward a proposition with "positive polarity" and rejection is the attitude toward a proposition with "negative polarity"; we might think of suspension of belief as having "neutral polarity".)

If change of mind is a genuine change, then the following principle holds:

- (V_T) Variation over time in the polarity of a person's attitude toward one and the same proposition implies variation over time in the complete intrinsic profile of that person.

Now the polarity of a person's attitude toward a given proposition could vary either "temporally" or "modally". This may need a bit of explaining.

Two months ago, I was in Venice, and I believed I was in Venice, so the polarity of my attitude toward the proposition *I am in Venice* was positive, rather than negative. Now I am no longer in Venice, and I believe I'm no longer in Venice, so the polarity of my attitude toward the proposition *I am in Venice* is negative, rather than positive. So, we could say, the polarity of my (actual) attitude toward *I am in Venice* varies between an earlier time and a later time belonging to the same "possible world" – the actual world.

On the other hand, if the past had gone differently, I would still be in Venice, and I would still believe I was in Venice. So in an "alternative" possible world, I now accept the proposition that I now reject in the actual world (that is, *I am in Venice*). Thus the polarity of my current attitude toward *I am in Venice* varies between different possible worlds sharing the same time (the present). Analogously, if God is an extra-temporal being, and $t = \text{now}$, then God (timelessly) rejects the proposition *Hughes is in Venice at t* in the actual world, and (timelessly) accepts that proposition in an alternative possible world in which I am still in Venice. So the polarity of God's ("untimely") attitude toward *Hughes is in Venice at t* varies between possible worlds sharing the same (divine) "untime".

A person has a *changed* view about whether p just in case there is what we might call *merely temporal variation* between the polarity of that person's current view about whether p and the polarity of the view that that person used to hold about whether p . A person has a *strongly contingent* view about whether p just in case there is what we might call *merely modal variation* between the polarity of that person's current or untimely view about whether p , and the polarity of the current or untimely view about whether p that that person would have held (now, or timelessly), if an alternative possible world had been actual.

(V_T) says that merely temporal variation in the polarity of a person's attitude toward a proposition implies merely temporal variation in that person's intrinsic properties. It seems at least initially plausible that if (V_T) is true, the same can be said for the following modal analogue of (V_T):

(V_M) Merely modal variation in the polarity of someone's attitude toward a proposition implies merely modal variation in the complete intrinsic profile of that person.

(V_T) says (roughly) that if a person accepts (and does not reject) a proposition now, and rejected (and did not accept) it before, it cannot be that that person is intrinsically exactly as she was before, when she rejected the proposition, and only the world outside that person has changed. (V_M) says (roughly) that if a person accepts (and does not reject) a proposition now (or "un-now"), but might have rejected (and not accepted) it now (or "un-now"), then it cannot be that that person is intrinsically exactly as she (or he or He) would have been if she had rejected the proposition, and only the world is different from how it would have been, if she (or he or He) had rejected that proposition.

When *being F* and *being G* are different properties, we may say there is a difference between *being F* and *being G*. When two things cannot be *F* and *G* respectively without differing intrinsically from each other, we may say that there is an intrinsic difference between *being F* and *being G*, or that the difference between *being F* and *being G* is, as such, intrinsic. For example, there is an intrinsic difference between being round and being square, because two things cannot be round and square respectively without differing intrinsically from each other.

If we accept (V_T), it is presumably because (plausibly enough) we think that the difference between accepting (rather than rejecting) and rejecting (rather than accepting) one and the same proposition is, as such, an intrinsic difference (like the difference between being round and being square, and unlike the difference between having a true belief and having a false belief, or having an influential belief and having an uninfluential belief). If, however, the difference between accepting (rather than rejecting) and rejecting (rather than accepting) one and the same proposition is, as such, an intrinsic difference, then accepting (and not rejecting) a proposition (now or "un-now") in the actual world that one rejects and does not accept (now or "un-now") in an alternative possible world will imply being different ways intrinsically in different worlds, every bit as much as accepting (and not rejecting) a proposition at one time in the actual world, and rejecting (and not accepting) it at another time in the actual world, implies (actually) being different ways intrinsically at different times. In other words, if there is an intrinsic difference between accepting (rather than rejecting) a proposition and rejecting (rather than accepting) it, then (V_M) as well as (V_T) is true.

As Aquinas sees it, there is no proposition p about which we could say that God has a changed view about whether p :

Our judgment (*cognitio*) varies, either with respect to truth and falsity, as happens when something changes but our opinion of it does not, or with respect to opinion (*secundum diversas opiniones*), as happens when we first judge that someone was sitting, and then judge that he wasn't sitting after all. Neither sort of variation can be found in God.

(*ST*, Ia, 14, 15, *ad* 3um)

By contrast, for Aquinas, whenever p is contingent, God has a contingent view about whether p . As we have seen, God only contingently rejects (and does not accept) the proposition *Hughes is in Venice at t*. (He accepts (and does not reject) that proposition in all the alternative possible worlds in which it is true.) If God has a contingent view about whether I am in Venice now, then the polarity of God's attitude toward *Hughes is in Venice at t* varies between the actual world and some alternative thereto (in the actual world, the polarity of God's attitude toward *Hughes is in Venice at t* is negative; in some alternative possible world, the polarity of God's attitude toward that proposition is positive). So, for Aquinas, even though there is not, and could not be, merely temporal variation in the polarity of God's attitude toward a proposition, there is merely modal variation in the polarity of God's attitude toward some propositions (namely, the contingent ones).

If, however, there is merely modal variation in the polarity of God's attitude toward some propositions, and (V_m) is true, it follows that there is merely modal variation in God's complete intrinsic profile (in other words, in God's intrinsic properties). And if there is that sort of variation, then God has strongly contingent intrinsic properties, in which case (by reasoning previously set out) (SDS) is false.

The moral seems to be that, given Aquinas' background beliefs (concerning contingency and omniscience), (SDS) commits him to the view that (V_m) is false, and the difference between accepting (rather than rejecting) and rejecting (rather than accepting) one and the same proposition is not, as such, an intrinsic difference. Instead of being like the difference between, say, being euphoric and being dysphoric, the difference between accepting (rather than rejecting) and rejecting (rather than accepting) one and the same proposition will be like the difference between being euphoric or celebrated and being dysphoric or uncelebrated. (Even if a is euphoric or celebrated, and b is dysphoric or uncelebrated, a and b could be exactly like each other intrinsically, as long as neither a nor b is either euphoric or dysphoric, and a is celebrated, and b is uncelebrated.)

Again, the reader should ask herself: if we have to choose between (SDS) and (V_m) , is (V_m) the thesis to abandon?

Worry 4: The mysteries of the faith

According to the doctrine of the Trinity, there are three divine persons (as opposed, say, to one divine person with three different names, or one divine person with three different properties). Thus the person who is the Father \neq the person who is the Son, the person who is the Son \neq the person who is the Holy Spirit, and the person who is the Father \neq the person who is the Holy Spirit. Now numerical identity is what logicians call a *Euclidean* relation. That is, if $a = c$, and $b = c$, then $a = b$. (Equivalently, if two things are each identical to a third thing, then they are identical to each other.) By contraposition, if $a \neq b$, then either $a \neq c$ or $b \neq c$ (or both). (If two things are different from each other, then at least one of them must be different from a third thing.) So, inasmuch as the doctrine of the Trinity implies that the Father \neq the Son, it implies that either the Father \neq God, or the Son \neq God (or both).

Indeed, the doctrine of the Trinity appears to imply that both the Father \neq God, and the Son \neq God. According to that doctrine, the divine persons are all “coequal” (to borrow a term from the *Quicumque Vult* (Athanasian Creed)). But if it were true both that the Father = God, and the Son \neq God, that would presumably compromise the coequality of the persons (the Father would be God Himself, and the Son would be something else). To put more or less the same point a slightly different way, suppose that God were identical to the Father, but distinct from both the Son and the Holy Spirit. Then – given that the Trinity is composed of the three divine persons – it would follow that the Trinity was composed of God and two other individuals. And this last claim is surely not part of (or even compatible with) the doctrine of the Trinity.

For Aquinas, a being cannot be a human being, unless there is (a) humanity in it (that is, in him or her). Analogously, a person cannot be a divine person, unless there is (a) divinity in Him. Also, a divine person cannot be the particular divine person He is, unless there is a particular “personal property” in Him. A divine person cannot be the Father, unless there is (a) Paternity in Him, a divine person cannot be the Son, unless there is (a) Filiation in Him, and so on (see *ST*, Ia, 40, 1).

So, Aquinas thinks, inasmuch as the first person of the Trinity is both the Father and divine, there is Divinity in Him, in virtue of which He is divine, and there is Paternity in Him, in virtue of which He is the Father. Equally, inasmuch as the second person of the Trinity is both the Son and divine, there is Divinity in Him, in virtue of which He is divine, and Filiation in Him, in virtue of which He is the Son.

Could it be that Filiation = Divinity = Paternity? It seems not. Humanity makes whatever it is in be human, and Divinity makes whatever it is in be divine. In the same way, Paternity makes whatever it is in be the Father. If Paternity = Filiation, then whatever is true of Paternity is true of Filiation. But it is true of Filiation that it is in the Son. So, on the assumption that

Paternity = Filiation, Paternity must be in the Son. If Paternity is in the Son, and Paternity makes whatever it is in be the Father, then Paternity makes the Son be the Father, so that the Father = the Son. But, as we have seen, the Father ≠ the Son. Whence we may conclude that Paternity ≠ Filiation, and that either Paternity ≠ Divinity, or Filiation ≠ Divinity (or both).

To get to the same conclusion via a slightly different route, one and the same divinity is in both the Father and the Son:

In three individuals of a human nature, there are three humanities (*tres humanitates*), but in the three divine persons there is just one divine essence. (ST, Ia, 39, 3, *responsio*)

On the other hand, different “personal properties” are in different divine persons:

The form signified by the name *person* is not an essence or a nature (*essentia vel natura*) but a personality (*personalitas*). So, since there are three personalities (*personalitates*) – that is three personal properties (*proprietates personales*) in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – *person* is predicated of the three not in the singular, but in the plural (*non singulariter sed pluraliter*).

(ST, Ia, 39, 3, *ad 4um*)

The form whereby the Father is divine is shared with the other two persons of the Trinity; the (particular) “personality” whereby the Father is the Father is not shared with the other two persons of the Trinity (or anything else). So the form whereby the Father is divine must be distinct from the form whereby the Father is the Father, since anything that is shared is distinct from anything that is unshared.

Now, on Aquinas’ conception of form, any form is either (a proper) part of or identical to the being it informs. If the Father has two different forms (a shared divinity, and an unshared “personality”), it cannot be that both of those forms are identical to the Father (since, as we’ve seen, any two things that are each identical to a third thing are identical to each other). So Aquinas’ account of the Trinity appears to commit him to the “multiformateness” of the Father (and the other divine persons), and thus to the falsity of (SDS).

Also (and unsurprisingly) Aquinas’ account of the Trinity commits him to the claim that each divine person is God. (I say ‘unsurprisingly’, because *each divine person is God* is pretty obviously required by any orthodox conception of the Trinity.)

If, however, the Father is composite, and the Father is God, it would seem to follow that God is composite. At least, it’s very hard to see in what sense of ‘is’ it would make sense to say that a composite being is an absolutely simple being. So it appears that Aquinas’ account of the Trinity leaves no room for (SDS).

Aquinas would agree that *the Father is God* would have to be false, if *the Father is composite and God is simple* were true. But, he would say, the Father is just as simple as God (see, for example, *ST*, Ia, 32, 2, 3 and *ad 3um*, and *ST*, Ia, 40, 2, 1 and *ad 1um*). Still, how could the Father be completely simple, if He has an (unshared) personality as well as a (shared) nature?

Well, Aquinas would say, in exactly the same way God is His Deity, each divine person is His “personality”:

We must say that the [personal] properties are in the persons, and nevertheless are the persons, just as we say that the [divine] essence is in God, and nevertheless is God.

(*ST*, Ia, 40, *responsio*)

Personal properties are the same as the persons (*idem cum personis*) ... as Paternity is the Father Himself, and filiation is the Son, and procession is the Holy Spirit.

(*ST*, Ia, 40, *ad 1um*)

The Father’s Paternity, just like the Father’s divinity, is the Father. Hence the Father is not composed of His divinity and His Paternity; He = His divinity and He = His Paternity. Hence nothing stands in the way of our saying that the Father is completely simple; hence no problem arises about how a composite Father can be a “uniformate” (and simple+) God. Analogously, the Son is not composed of His divinity and His filiation; He = His divinity and His filiation, and the Holy Spirit = His divinity and His procession.

That is what Aquinas appears to say; but for reasons already adduced, I do not understand how what he appears to say can be logically coherent. If the “personality” or “personal property” of each divine person is the same as the divinity of that divine person (inasmuch as both the personal property and the divinity are the same as the person), and if there is only one divinity in the three divine persons, it seems to follow straightforwardly that there is only one personal property in the divine persons; but, as we have seen, Aquinas says there are three personal properties in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To put essentially the same point slightly differently, a (divine) personality is something that distinguishes a divine person from the other two divine persons. A divinity is not something that distinguishes any divine person from any other divine person. How can the thing in the Father that distinguishes Him from the other divine persons and the thing in the Father that doesn’t distinguish Him from the other divine persons both be the very same thing (namely, the Father)?

Aquinas would insist that the Father cannot be any less simple than God, because the Father is the same as God:

When we say, *God or the divine essence is the Father*, that is an identity statement (*praedicatio per identitatem*).

(*ST*, Ia, 39, 6, *ad 2um*)

Again, though, how can this be? A *praedicatio per identitatem*, I take it, says that *a* and *b* are the very same thing. But God and the Father appear not to be the very same thing, in that the Father has exactly one of the three (different) divine “personalities”, and God does not.

One reaction to the line of argument I have been setting out might be:

I agree that Aquinas has difficulties in fitting together (SDS) with his account of the Trinity. But that doesn't raise any worries concerning (SDS). The doctrine of the Trinity implies that the Father = God, and the Son = God, but the Father ≠ the Son. This last claim is a logical falsehood (given that identity is Euclidean). Since the doctrine of the Trinity is logically incoherent, it's no surprise that Aquinas cannot tell a logically coherent story about how the doctrine of the Trinity and (SDS) could both be true. The conclusion should not be, so much the worse for (SDS), but rather, so much the worse for the doctrine of the Trinity.

Agreed, it's a truth of logic that if $a = c$ and $b = c$, then $a = b$. It's also a consequence of the doctrine of the Trinity that the Father is God, and the Son is God, but the Father is not the Son. But I don't think these last two claims imply that the doctrine of the Trinity is logically incoherent. For I don't think that *the Father is God* (on its true reading) is of the form $a = b$. However exactly *the Father is God* should be understood, it is not an identity statement (*praedicatio per identitatem*). (This is not the venue for me to defend this claim, but if there are any readers who are interested in my ideas about how such a defense might go, they may consult my “Defending the Consistency of the Doctrine of the Trinity” in T. McCall and M. Rea, *Philosophical and Theological Essays on The Trinity*, pp. 293–314.)

If there are issues about (SDS) and the doctrine of the Trinity, there are also issues about (SDS) and the doctrine of the Incarnation.

According to St. John, the same Word that in the beginning was with God, and was God (John 1: 1), subsequently put on flesh and dwelt with us (John 1: 14). As Aquinas understands this, the Word that in the beginning was “merely” divine, became divine and human.

Now something can only become *F* and *G* if *being F* and *being G* are compatible: nothing can become round and square, or black (all over) and white (all over). So *the Word became divine and human* implies *being divine and being human are compatible*. Now the following statements are jointly inconsistent:

- (1) *Being human* and *being divine* are compatible.
- (2) *Being human* and *being simple[†]* are incompatible.
- (3) *Being divine* implies *being simple[†]*.

(If *F*-ness and *G*-ness are compatible, but *F*-ness and *H*-ness are not, *G*-ness cannot imply *H*-ness.)

If the doctrine of the Incarnation (as Aquinas understands it, at any rate) is true, then (1) is true. (2) looks very hard to challenge: how could something be at once human and free from composition of matter and form, composition of subject and accidents, composition of essence and existence, temporary or strongly contingent intrinsic properties, and so on? But if (2) is a necessary truth, then (given that (1)–(3) are jointly incompatible), (1) must be incompatible with (3). And if (1) is incompatible with (3), then (1) is incompatible with (SDS). So it looks as though the doctrine of the Incarnation (straightforwardly (and Thomistically) understood) implies the falsity of (SDS).

It's not as though Aquinas would have nothing to say in reply to this argument: very roughly, he would say that one and the same person of the Trinity can (and does) subsist in two natures, and is simple inasmuch as He eternally and necessarily subsists in an "unassumed" divine nature, and genuinely human inasmuch as He non-eternally and contingently subsists in an "assumed" human nature (see *ST*, IIIa, 3, 2). I have difficulty understanding Aquinas' reply at crucial junctures, and, to the extent that I do understand it, I do not find it convincing. That is, on the supposition that assuming a human nature is sufficient for becoming genuinely human, I cannot see how an initially absolutely simple being can assume a human nature.

(In setting out worry (4), I have given a very quick and partial characterization of Aquinas' very detailed views on the Trinity and the Incarnation. For example, I have not discussed what Aquinas has to say about relations in the Trinity, or about the various kinds of distinction and sameness. Nor have I said how Aquinas thinks of the hypostatic union of human nature and divine nature in Christ. Aren't all these matters relevant to the question of the consistency of (SDS) with the mysteries of the faith (and Aquinas' understanding thereof)? Yes. But at the end of the day I think that it remains very doubtful that Aquinas can consistently hold onto both (SDS) and an (orthodox) account of either the Trinity or the Incarnation. I shall not argue the point here, because I argued it at length in another book I wrote (long ago) on Aquinas.)

In any case, in sketching worries (1)–(4), I hope to have gotten across how many and varied are the worries one might have about the defensibility of Aquinas' account of divine simplicity, and about the coherence of that account with what Aquinas himself wants to say about God's choices or knowledge, or about the Trinity and the Incarnation.

We have spent a whole lot of time on one argument for God's existence, and one divine attribute – simplicity. Ever so much more could be said about Aquinas' accounts of God's other attributes, but only at the cost of making this a book on Aquinas' natural theology, rather than a book on Aquinas. At least the interested reader should be in a good position to be able to follow and evaluate Aquinas' derivation of a host of other divine attributes from God's simplicity.

Evil, sin, and hell

Natural atheology is the attempt to construct good arguments for the non-existence of God. Some contemporary atheologists argue for the non-existence of God by arguing that everything is material, or physical, or “natural” (in a sense that contrasts with “supernatural”). Some argue for the non-existence of God by arguing that there would not be evil – or there would not be evils of a kind there in fact are – if there were a God. (Here and in what follows, “evil” should be construed as applying to anything bad, whether or not that thing is *morally* bad, as in the phrases “the lesser of two evils”, or “sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof”.)

We have already seen how Aquinas would respond to “naturalistic” arguments for the non-existence of God: he thinks it can be shown that naturalism is false, inasmuch as, necessarily, there are natural things, only if there is something supernatural (see *ST*, Ia, 2). As Aquinas sees it, in just the way that there could be something supernatural, without there being anything natural, but not vice versa, there could be good, without there being evil, but not vice versa (this follows from the doctrine that being as such is good, and evil as such is a privation of goodness (see [Chapter 5](#))). Moreover, there could be an infinite good, without there being any finite goods, but not vice versa. Since the (only possible) infinite good is God, we may conclude that there cannot be a sound argument from the existence of evil (or from the existence of some particular kind of evil) to the non-existence of God, given that there is a sound argument from the existence of evil to the existence of God. As Aquinas puts it at *SCG*, III, 71:

In *The Consolation of Philosophy*, Boethius introduces a certain philosopher who asks if there is a God, whence evil? But it may be argued, on the contrary, if there is evil, then there is a God. For there would be no evil were the order of good taken away, since its privation is evil. And there would be no such order, if there were no God.

Someone who agrees with Aquinas here might nevertheless wonder *why* God created an evil-containing, rather than an evil-free, world. After all, there is no obvious reason to think He would. We would naturally expect a good Creator to create a good-containing world, as we would naturally expect an evil Creator to create an evil-containing world. But why would a Creator who was wholly good make a world that was partly bad?

If the existence of created beings implied the existence of evil – as it would, if createdness implied limitation or finitude, and limitation or finitude were an evil – then the reason that God didn’t create an evil-free world, would be that He couldn’t have done so. But it seems that Aquinas is right to reject the idea that limitation or finitude is an evil, and accordingly reject the idea that God couldn’t have created an evil-free world. (Aquinas would say that God

could have created a world containing, say, only incorruptible celestial bodies, and such a world would have been evil-free: this seems right.)

Alternatively, if the existence of created goodness (though not the existence of created beings) implied the existence of evil, then we could see why God would not want to create an evil-free world, even if He could (what would be the point of creating a good-free world?) But, for Aquinas, if the existence of created being is independent of the existence of evil, it follows that the existence of created goodness is as well, given that *omne ens inquantum est ens est bonum* (beings as such are good (*ST*, Ia, 5, 3, *responsio*)). And even if, *pace* Aquinas, there can be being without goodness, it still seems that God could have created a world with good, and without evil.

So if God could have created a world with good, and without evil, why didn't He? The same question might be raised about particular kinds of evil. For instance, someone who shares Aquinas' belief in sin and hell might ask: if God could have created a world without sin and hell, why didn't He? (If sinning is defying God's will, why does God allow His creatures to defy Him? If God wants everyone to be saved (1 Timothy, 2: 4), why doesn't God get what He wants?)

Let us start with the question of why God created an evil-containing world rather than an evil-free one. Perhaps the most familiar and influential attempt to answer this question is what I shall call *the free will explanation*.

To see how the free will explanation works, it will be helpful to see it emerge as a response to a certain sort of skeptical challenge:

SKEPTIC: There is no explanation of why (a perfectly good) God would create an evil-containing world, rather than an entirely good world. Or at any rate, there's no explanation we'll ever fathom.

THEOLOGIAN: In a way, God did create an entirely good world. It may be true that the barista made an entirely good espresso, even if the customer subsequently ruined it by putting salt or too much sugar in it. The world God made was entirely good ("and God saw everything He had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Genesis, 1:31)). Only subsequently did the entirely good world God made come to be partly bad – only when sin entered the world.

SKEPTIC: Let me say it a different way. We have no idea why a (perfectly good) God would create an only temporarily evil-free world, rather than a permanently evil-free world. Surely, an (all-powerful) God had the option of creating a permanently evil-free world. Why didn't He exercise it?

THEOLOGIAN: Agreed, God had the option of creating a permanently evil-free world. He didn't exercise that option, because (He knew) the world would not have been as good as the world actually is, if He had exercised that option.

SKEPTIC: I can see why if God had exercised His option of creating a permanently evil-free world in certain ways, the world would have not

have been as good as the world actually is. If, say, God had created a permanently love-free, sentience-free, thought-free, and life-free permanently evil-free world, the world would presumably not have been as good as the world actually is. But there are infinitely many ways in which God might have exercised His option to create a permanently evil-free world. Why suppose that in whichever way He had exercised that option, the world would not have been as good as it actually is?

THEOLOGIAN: Because if God had exercised His option to create a permanently evil-free world, the world would have lacked free will, and free will is a great good. (Think how important it is to us that we and those we love should have it.)

SKEPTIC: Suppose I grant that free will is an important enough good that the world would not have been as good it actually is, if the world had lacked free will. That doesn't help explain why God created a non-permanently evil-free world, rather than a permanently evil-free one. God had the option of creating a free-creature-containing, but permanently evil-free world, and we haven't a clue about why God didn't exercise His option to such a world, rather than the one He actually created.

THEOLOGIAN: God didn't have the option of creating a world that was permanently evil-free, but contained free creatures.

SKEPTIC: You must be supposing that there couldn't be free creatures unless there were evil. But, so far as I can see, that would be true only if, necessarily, free creatures (sometimes) did evil. And why suppose that? Even if freedom implies the *ability* to do evil, it doesn't imply that that ability is ever *exercised*. As Augustine and Aquinas would agree, there is no impossibility in the idea that some genuinely free angels never sin.

THEOLOGIAN: I agree that there could be – indeed there are – free creatures who never do evil.

SKEPTIC: So why do you think God couldn't have created a permanently evil-free world inhabited by free agents?

THEOLOGIAN: I don't think he couldn't have created such a world. *Ante omnia saecula* (before all ages) God had the possibility of creating that sort of world.

SKEPTIC: But you said earlier that God didn't have the option of creating a world with free creatures, but without evil.

THEOLOGIAN: I did say that. God had the *possibility* of creating a world with free creatures and without evil; but He didn't have the *option* of doing that.

SKEPTIC: Explain.

THEOLOGIAN: Agents often do something by doing something else. For example, I unlock the door by turning the key. When I do something by doing something else, it may be that I do the something else by doing yet another thing: I turn the key by rotating my wrist. But there are some things I do, but *not* by doing anything else. When I do something, but not by doing anything else, I perform a *basic action*; when I do something by doing something else, I perform a *non-basic* action.

SKEPTIC: And this is relevant because ...?

THEOLOGIAN: When an agent performs a basic action, his or her (performing that) action may make (the obtaining of) a certain state of affairs or (the performance of) a certain non-basic action inevitable. Suppose I have promised you I will *never* (deliberately) go on thinking about myself: once I catch myself thinking about myself, I'll do everything in my power to stop forthwith. If I perform the (presumably basic) action of going on (deliberately) thinking about myself, I make inevitable the (current) obtaining state of affairs, *my breaking the promise I made you*. On the other hand, an agent's performing a certain basic action may in fact result in, but not make inevitable, the obtaining of a certain state of affairs. Suppose that standing in front of the counter of your newsagent, you decide to buy a lottery ticket. If you are very lucky, the basic actions you perform in buying the lottery ticket will in fact result in your winning the lottery, even though your performing those actions does not make your winning the lottery inevitable (at the time you perform those basic actions, it's true that you might sell or give away the ticket you'll get to someone else before the drawing, a number different from the number on the ticket you'll get might be drawn, and so on).

Now when we perform basic actions, we typically do so with a view toward performing a non-basic action that makes the external world a certain way. But the basic actions we perform with a view toward making the external world a certain way typically only raise the probability of the world's being that way (as opposed to making the world's being that way inevitable). For example, the basic actions you perform when you buy a lottery ticket don't even make your buying a ticket inevitable (never mind your winning the lottery); the newsagent could still decide for some reason not to sell you a ticket. It's different with God: when He performs a basic action, with a view to the external world's being a certain way, the performance of that action typically makes the world's being that way inevitable. When God performs the (presumably basic) action of saying *fiat lux* (let there be light), His performing that action makes it inevitable that there is light.

On the other hand, it's not as though, for any state of affairs involving the external world, there is some basic action God can perform that will make the obtaining of that state of affairs inevitable. For instance, there wasn't any basic action God could have performed that would have made inevitable the obtaining of the state of affairs, *Eve's freely choosing to refrain from eating the forbidden fruit*. For that matter, there wasn't any basic action God could have performed that would have made inevitable the obtaining of the state of affairs, *Eve's freely choosing to eat the forbidden fruit*.

SKEPTIC: Why isn't there any such basic action?

THEOLOGIAN: Because necessarily, Eve freely chooses to eat (or to refrain from eating) the forbidden fruit only if Eve has a genuine choice about whether to eat the fruit – only if eating or not eating the fruit is up to Eve.

But it cannot be up to *Eve* whether or not she eats the fruit, if the performance of some basic action by someone else makes it inevitable that she will eat the fruit, or makes it inevitable that she will refrain from eating the fruit. (That is, it cannot be up to *Eve* whether or not she eats the fruit, if for some basic action some other agent performs, it's inevitable that if that other agent performs that basic action, *Eve* will eat the fruit (or refrain from eating the fruit.) If God's performing some basic action makes it inevitable that *Eve* will eat the fruit, or makes it inevitable that she will refrain from doing so, then her eating or refraining from eating the fruit is up to God, rather than up to her. So, although God can perform a basic action whose performance (by God) makes it inevitable that *Eve* will eat the fruit (or refrain from eating it), He cannot perform a basic action whose performance (by God) makes it inevitable that *Eve* will *freely* eat the fruit (or *freely* refrain from eating it). What God can do is to perform basic actions that will raise the probability of *Eve*'s freely eating, or freely refraining from eating, the fruit.

Sorry this is taking so long, but we're almost there. An agent has the *option* of performing a non-basic action NBA, if there is some basic action BA such that (a) it's up to the agent whether she performs BA, and (b) her performing BA would make her performing NBA inevitable. If, for example, you've promised me that you won't go on deliberately thinking about yourself at exactly 9:00, and you catch yourself thinking about yourself, you have the option of breaking your promise (since it's up to you whether you perform a basic action BA whose performance will make it inevitable that you perform the non-basic action NBA of breaking the promise you made to me). An agent has the *possibility* of performing a non-basic action NBA if there is some basic action BA such that (a) it's up to the agent whether she performs BA, and (b) her performing BA might result in her performing NBA. Suppose, for example, that in the course of attempting to persuade you to do something, I put my hands together, as if in prayer. Assuming that (right before I put my hands together) it's possible that you will be persuaded to do that thing by my putting my hands together, I have the possibility of persuading you to do that thing (since there's some basic action such that (a) it's up to me whether I perform it, and (b) my performing it might result in my performing the non-basic action of persuading you to do that thing). Assuming that you still might not be persuaded, however hard I try to persuade you, I do not have the option of persuading you, since there's no basic action such that both it's up to me whether I perform it, and my performing it would make inevitable my persuading you. As the examples hopefully bring out, whenever an agent has the option to do something, she has the possibility of doing it, but the converse does not hold. An option is something you can *opt for*, or *simply choose to do* (or *simply decide to do*) and whatever you could simply choose to do (or simply decide to do), you could end up doing.

A non-basic action that's a possibility for you is something you can *end up* doing, and it's not the case that whatever you could end up doing is something you could simply *choose* to do: assuming it's up to me whether or not I cooperate with you, you could end up persuading me to cooperate with you, but you couldn't simply choose or decide to persuade me to cooperate with you (at most you could simply choose or decide to *try to* persuade me to cooperate with you).

So, did God have the possibility of performing the non-basic action that is creating a world in which some creatures were genuinely free, but no creatures ever did evil? Yes: if all the free creatures God created had made certain free choices (that they had the possibility, and indeed the option, of making) God would have ended up creating such a world. Did God have the option of creating a world with free creatures, and permanently without evil? No. There is no basic action God could have performed that would have made it inevitable that He would end up creating a world in which some creatures were genuinely free, but no creatures ever did evil. That's why I said earlier that God had the possibility, but not the option, of creating a world in which there were free creatures, but there was never any evil.

SKEPTIC: In which case, the explanation of why God created an only temporarily evil free world with free creatures, rather than a permanently evil-free world inhabited by free creatures is that ...?

THEOLOGIAN: God couldn't simply choose (or simply decide) to create a permanently evil-free world inhabited by free creatures: he could only *end up* creating such a world, and he could only end up creating such a world if we free creatures co-operated. Sadly, we didn't cooperate, so God ended up creating an only temporarily evil-free world inhabited by free creatures, rather than a permanently evil-free world inhabited by free creatures.

To recapitulate: the free will explanation explains God's creating a non-permanently-evil-free world in terms of three properties of creaturely freedom: its great goodness (which explains why God wanted to put it into His creation), its "intrinsic riskiness" (which explains why God couldn't put it into His creation without "risking" that bad things would happen), and its creaturely misuse (which explains why, when God created the world, bad things not only could have happened, but in fact did happen). As I have suggested, the idea that we could appeal to these three features of freedom (or something very like them) to explain why God created a non-permanently-evil-free world is very widely shared. To take just two examples, we find it in a highly philosophically articulated form in Alvin Plantinga's "free will defense" (although we shall see that the intrinsically risky good for Plantinga is what he calls "significant freedom"), and in a more popular form in C. S. Lewis's *The Problem of Pain*. (See especially [chapter 5](#), where Lewis avers that free agency as such involves the risk of the sin of self-idolatry, and that God deemed this risk worth running.)

It is worth pointing out, though, that it seems the free will explanation will work only if we make a certain contestable assumption. To wit: no basic action is such that it was up to God to perform or refrain from performing it, and *ante omnia saecula* God knew that if He performed that basic action, He would *in fact* (even if not inevitably) end up creating a permanently evil-free world inhabited by free creatures. If it is not immediately clear why we need to make this assumption, suppose there were some basic action that *ante omnia saecula* it was up to God whether to perform or refrain from performing those actions, and *ante omnia saecula* God knew that if He performed those basic actions, He would in fact (even if not inevitably) end up creating a permanently evil-free world inhabited by free creatures. Then, it seems, God could after all have simply chosen or decided to create such a world. Suppose that there were some basic action it was up to me perform, and I *knew* that if I performed it, I would in fact (even if not inevitably) persuade you to share your cake with me. Then, it seems, I could simply choose or decide to persuade you to share your cake with me (and not merely choose or decide to *try* to persuade you to share your cake with me). In just the same way, suppose there were some basic action that *ante omnia saecula* it was up to God to perform, and He knew that if He performed that action, He would in fact (even if not inevitably) create a permanently evil-free world inhabited by free creatures. Then, it seems, He could simply choose or decide to create such a world (and not merely choose or decide to try to create it).

To put essentially the same point another way, the free will explanation depends on the idea that God couldn't make certain that there would be freedom, but there would never be evil. However, "certain" has both a non-epistemic sense (according to which it means something like "inevitable") and an epistemic sense (according to which it means "known"). If we say (retrospectively) of a man who swallowed some poison, "though no one knew it at the time, his death was already certain", we're using "certain" in the non-epistemic sense. If we say, "whether or not the process is deterministic, on our current total evidence, the outcome is not certain (uncertain)", we're using "certain" ("uncertain") in the epistemic sense. Corresponding to the non-epistemic and epistemic senses of "certain", there are non-epistemic and epistemic senses of "make certain". To say that, by doing *x*, an agent makes it certain that *p* in the non-epistemic sense is to say that by doing *x*, the agent makes it inevitable that *p*. To say that by doing *x* an agent makes it certain that *p* in the epistemic sense is to say that by doing *x* the agent makes it known to that agent that *p*. Now if there were some basic action such that *ante omnia saecula* it was up to God to perform or refrain from performing, and *ante omnia saecula* God knew that if He performed that action, He'd end up in fact (even if not inevitably) creating a world with freedom and forever without evil, it would follow that God could have made certain – in the epistemic sense – that the world would be both inhabited by free creatures and permanently evil-free. In which case,

we could ask: why did God create a world that contains evil as well as freedom? Why didn't God make certain (in the epistemic sense) that He'd create a world with freedom but forever without evil, by performing the basic action He knew would result in His creating such a world?

The moral is that "free will explainers" will need to deny that there are any basic actions God could have performed, the performance of which He knew would (in fact, even if not inevitably) result in His creating a world with free creatures, but forever without evil. But we shouldn't conclude from this that the free will explanation is indefensible, or even obviously problematic. For there are divers reasons why someone might want to deny that there are any basic actions God could have performed, the performance of which He knew would (in fact, even if not inevitably) result in His creating a world with free creatures, but forever without evil. Someone might think (as Alvin Plantinga has suggested might be the case) that no matter which (possible) free creatures God had made, and no matter what circumstances He'd put them in, they would all *in fact* have gone wrong (done evil, sinned) at least once (despite the non-inevitability of their ever sinning). Alternatively, someone might think (as Arthur Prior did) that it cannot be true that doing *x* will (or would) in fact result in doing *y*, unless doing *x* will (or would) inevitably result in doing *y*. Someone might think (as Richard Swinburne does) that, not even (an omniscient) God could know that doing *x* will (or would) result in doing *y*, unless doing *x* will (or would) inevitably result in doing *y*.

Two final remarks: the free will explanation is an explanation of *one* reason God created a world that was (or became) partly bad. It allows (though it does not imply) that there are other reasons that have nothing to do with creaturely free will. True, the free will explanation (as I have characterized it) involves the idea that evil entered the world when (and because) sin did. But this allows (though it does not imply) that there are evils that entered the world after sin did, which God put into the world, or at least allowed to come into the world, for reasons that have nothing to do with creaturely free will.

Also, the free will explanation is an explanation of why God created a world in which there is evil, but it obviously is also an explanation of why God created a world in which there is sin. Though it is not, as it stands, an explanation of why God created a world in which there is hell, it seems that it could be extended in a number of ways to answer the question of why God created a world in which there is hell. Here is one: suppose that hell is not a penalty God metes out to stubbornly impenitent sinners. Suppose instead that it is simply the state of permanent estrangement from God, and so is the direct and inevitable result of a creature's freely deciding to estrange himself or herself from God. Then, one might say, God had the possibility of creating a hell-free world. And, as 1 Timothy, 2: 4 suggests, He would rather have created such a world. But He chose not to guarantee the existence of a hell-free world, because He wanted His rational creatures to be free, even to

permanently estrange themselves from Him. And He ended up with a non-hell-free world, because some of His creatures availed themselves of the possibility of sentencing themselves to hell. (For an explanation of hell along something like these lines, see *The Problem of Pain*, chapter 8.)

Now that what I mean by the free will explanation of evil, or of sin, or of hell is (I hope) sufficiently clear, we can ask: what would Aquinas make of the free will explanation? Is he in fact a “free will explainer”? If his explanation of why God created a world with evil (or sin, or hell) moves along different lines, are those lines more or less consonant with, or neutral with respect to, or antithetical to, the free will explanation?

Perhaps because contemporary theodiscists so often offer a free will explanation of evil, sin, and hell, I have not infrequently found that my students are (at least initially) convinced that Aquinas must endorse the free will explanation of evil, sin, and hell. As far as I know, though, Aquinas never explicitly sets out the free will explanation (as I have characterized it). There are various places in which Aquinas discusses the question of why God created a world in which there are evils (e.g., *ST*, Ia, 48, 2, and *SCG*, III, 71). So far as I am aware, in none of those places does Aquinas say that, in creating creatures that are free to do good or evil, He “runs risks with creation”, or appeals to anything like the distinction between God’s possibilities and God’s options, and argue that creaturely freedom essentially limits the latter.

This leaves the possibility, however, that Aquinas in fact accepts the crucial elements of the free will explanation of why God created a non-permanently-evil-free world. That is, it leaves open that Aquinas accepts that (i) God put creaturely freedom into the world because it is a great, though intrinsically risky good, and (ii) evil entered the world when (and because) some rational creatures misused their freedom.

Interestingly, Aquinas appears not to think that evil entered the world only when (and because) sin did. This is partly because of Aquinas’ construal of evil, which may seem idiosyncratically broad to us. For reasons to be discussed in the next chapter, by Aquinas’ lights, corruption (that is, the ceasing-to-be of a substance) is always an evil, just as generation (that is, the coming-to-be of a substance) is always a good. Accordingly, whenever air is corrupted and fire is generated, something bad as well as something good happens (see *ST*, Ia, 48, 2 *ad* 3um). So there is a class of evils whose entry into the world is quite independent of the entry of sin into the world – a class of evils which were, as Aquinas thinks of it, part of God’s “blueprint” for the world from the beginning (*ibid.*).

Here someone might object:

We have a choice between saying that, for Aquinas, the transformation of air into fire is, by its very nature, at least partly (what we mean by) “a bad thing”, or saying that Aquinas’ term *malum* cannot be translated as “a bad thing”, precisely because it applies, not just to such things as sin,

and suffering, and death, but also to such things as the transformation of air into fire. Surely charity dictates the second option.

But even if the Latin term *malum* applies to more things than the English term “bad”, Aquinas still appears not to accept that evil came into the world with and because of the fall. Alexander of Hales and St. Bonaventure apparently held that, before the fall, there were no predators, and no prey. Aquinas disagrees: as he sees it, even when man was *in statu innocentiae*, it was the nature of some sentient animals to devour the flesh of others (*ST*, Ia, 96, 2, *ad* 2um). Just as the transformation of air into fire was in God’s “blueprint” for the world, so too was the killing of asses by lions (cf. *ST*, Ia, 48, 2, *ad* 3um): that nature is “red in tooth and claw” is due to God, and not to Adam and Eve (or Lucifer). (Those of us who resonate to Isaiah, 11 (“the wolf will live with the lamb ... and the lion will eat straw like the ox”) will find the Bonaventure/Alexander of Hales view at least initially more congenial than Aquinas’.)

So it seems that Aquinas would reject the free will explanation of why God created a non-permanently-evil-free world. But that does not imply, or even suggest, that he would reject the free will explanation of why God created a world that contains sin: even if certain evils antedated the fall, it could still be that God created (i.e., ended up creating) a sin-containing world because freedom (a) is a great good, and (b) is an intrinsically risky one, and (c) was misused. Again, Aquinas agrees with the first and third of these claims; but does he also accept the second?

There is a sense in which Aquinas thinks that creaturely freedom (unlike divine freedom) implies the possibility of evil. For Aquinas, in much the way that creatures, as such, have the possibility of not existing, free creatures, as such, have the possibility of going wrong: among rational natures, only God has a free will that is impeccable by nature, and the possibility of sin is a consequence of creaturely free will (cf. *De Veritate*, 24, 7, *responsio* and *ad* 4um).

In this context, however, it is important to attend to a distinction between two sorts of possibilities. When we say that a state of affairs is a possibility, we might mean that it is a state of affairs that could obtain or could have obtained. Alternatively, we might mean that it is a state of affairs that could still obtain. Consider, for example, the state of affairs of your celebrating your fifth birthday. That state of affairs is a possibility in the first sense, inasmuch as it is a state of affairs that could or could have obtained (and probably once did obtain). That’s not to say it’s a possibility in the second sense: unless you are an exceptionally precocious reader of this book, the state of affairs of your celebrating (as opposed, say, to commemorating) your fifth birthday is not one that could still obtain. Your celebrating your fifth birthday is, as we might say, no longer a possibility (that is, no longer a possibility in the second sense), although it is still and forever will remain a possibility in the first sense, since it is and forever will remain a state of affairs that could obtain or could have obtained. As the example brings out,

whatever is possible in the second sense is also possible in the first sense, but not vice versa: we may accordingly call the first kind of possibility *weak possibility* and the second kind *strong possibility*.

Now when Aquinas says that all rational agents except God have the possibility of sinning, does he have in mind weak possibility or strong possibility? That is, is his view that free creatures, as such, are beings that could still sin, or just that free creatures, as such, are beings that could sin or could have sinned?

Someone who thinks that necessarily, free creatures could still sin (and believes in the blessed in heaven) will have to say either that the blessed in heaven are no longer free, or that the blessed in heaven could still sin. Aquinas does not want to say that freedom, like death, is something the blessed leave behind when they get to heaven. Nor does he want to say that the blessed in heaven could still sin, since, as he sees it, that would undermine the “security and immutability” that are essential to blessedness. So, Aquinas concludes, the blessed in heaven, though free, are “confirmed in goodness” in such a way as to no longer have the possibility of sinning (see *De Veritate*, 24, 8, *responsio*).

How can this be? Well, Aquinas would say, agents, insofar as they have a will, have the capacity to “turn toward”, or “turn away” from various things. But insofar as agents are rational, these turnings toward or away from are grounded in judgments about the goodness or otherwise of the things turned toward or away from. A rational agent cannot turn toward something, if she doesn’t see anything good or desirable (*appetibile*) in that thing. Equally, a rational agent cannot turn away from something, if she sees that thing as an unqualified and unrivalled good (that is, as something that “has no bad side to it”, and is better than any of the alternatives available in the circumstances). This doesn’t imply that rational agents always turn toward things that are in fact unqualifiedly and unrivalledly good. But a rational agent, insofar as she is rational, cannot turn away from something that she sees is an unqualified and unrivalled good.

Since error is possible, there are truths that a given person can regard as false. But, Aquinas thinks, there are also truths that a person cannot regard as false. For example, he would say, if you contemplate the truth that the whole is greater than any of its proper parts, you can’t regard it as false: if that truth presents itself to your mind, it presents itself to your mind as true.

Analogously, Aquinas thinks, some things can be unqualifiedly or unrivalledly good, without being regarded by that agent as such. (An adulterer commits adultery on a given occasion, because – even if he thinks that fidelity is in general a good thing – he does not think that on this particular occasion fidelity is an unrivalled good (even though it is). But Aquinas thinks, just as there are truths that any person who has them in view must realize are “completely” true and “truer than the alternatives”, there are goods that any person who has them in view must realize are unqualified and unrivalled goods. Such goods present themselves to any

person as good “through and through”, and better than all the alternatives, in much the way that those truths that Aquinas calls “self-evident *quoad nos*” present themselves to a person as “completely” true (and truer than the alternatives). Persons, *qua* rational agents, cannot turn away from such goods, since (i) they cannot help seeing that they are unqualified and unrivalled goods, and (ii) they cannot turn away from what they see are unqualified and unrivalled goods.

So, for Aquinas, freedom of the will does not imply the ability to turn away from just *any* good, or turn toward *any* evil; whether or not a created or uncreated free agent has the ability to turn away from a certain good will depend on whether or not that good can, as it were, present itself to that agent in a “spurnable” guise. Symmetrically, whether a created or uncreated free agent has the ability to turn toward a certain evil will depend on whether or not the evil can present itself to that agent in an “eligible” guise.

A corollary of this is that God cannot sin. God’s sinning would imply an evil presenting itself to God in an eligible guise – which is to say, in disguise – (as, say, adultery presents itself to the adulterer), and that could never happen. “Freedom to sin” – that is freedom of the sort that makes sinning an option – is necessarily absent from God, because it is very much a mixed blessing: it essentially involves something good (freedom of the will) together with something bad (an absence of the kind of clear-eyed vision of goods and evils that would make it impossible for evils to present themselves to the agent as eligible).

If, however, it is freedom of the will together with the absence of a sufficiently clear-eyed vision of goods and evils (as opposed to freedom of the will as such) that makes it possible for a being to sin, then there’s no obvious reason to think only God could be incapable of sin: perhaps, by improving a creature’s vision, God could – by grace – confer on that creature an inability to sin which he or she did not possess by nature. And Aquinas’ view is that this is what God does with the blessed in heaven. Given everything the blessed (clearly, vividly, occurrently) know – about the goodness of God, about the badness of separation from God, and about which things separate us from God – the blessed cannot use their wills to separate themselves from God (and hence cannot sin) (see again *De Veritate*, 24,8, *responsio* and 22, 6 *responsio*).

When God confirms the blessed in goodness, their free will is not thereby taken away. Nor (Aquinas would say) is it diminished or impaired (in the way that a person’s ability to speak might be impaired by a stroke). True, the blessed can no longer “(mis)incline” their wills in ways they used to be able to; but their acquired inability to misincline their will no more counts as an impairment of their free will, than God’s permanent and essential inability to misincline His will counts as an impairment of His free will.

Now if God could confirm a creature in goodness, without taking away or even impairing that creature’s free will, it seems that God could confirm a creature in goodness at the very first moment of its existence, without

precluding or impairing that creature's free will. Surely God could impart to a rational creature, from the very first moment of his or her life (or the very first moment of his or her free agency), the knowledge He imparts to the blessed at a non-initial moment of their lives. His imparting such knowledge to a rational creature at the very first moment of life or free agency would make it (weakly) impossible for that creature to sin – without taking away or impairing that creature's free will (on Aquinas' account, at any rate). (If such knowledge is not freedom-precluding or freedom-impairing, when it is imparted to a creature after that creature has exercised free agency for a time, why should it be freedom-precluding or freedom-impairing, when it is imparted to a creature at the beginning of that creature's life or free agency?)

So far as I can see, Aquinas would not take issue with this. His response to objection 7 of *De Veritate*, 24, 8, or the *responsio* of *ST*, Ia, 62, 1 would be natural places for him to challenge the claim that God could have created a creature in a state of confirmed goodness, rather than *in statu innocentiae* (in a state of innocence), and he does not challenge it there. (At *ST*, Ia, 62, 1, Aquinas avers that God would not have thought it a good idea to create an angel who was confirmed in goodness from the start, but that is a different point.) Nor am I aware of any place where Aquinas (implicitly or explicitly) challenges the view that confirmation-in-goodness would be non-freedom-precluding and non-freedom-impairing, irrespective of the point in a creature's life at which that creature were confirmed.

Now if God could have made a rational creature who was confirmed in goodness from the word go, and if such a creature would have unimpaired free will, then God could have made a rational creature with a free but permanently impeccable will (not naturally impeccable, as Aquinas insists in his response to objection 7 of *De Veritate* 24, 8, but permanently impeccable *per donum gratiae* (by gift of grace)). But if God could have made a rational creature with a free but permanently impeccable will, it seems, God could have made only rational creatures that had free but permanently impeccable wills. God could have simply chosen (simply decided) *ante omnia saecula* to make rational and free creatures, but only free and rational creatures whose wills His grace had made permanently impeccable. In which case, God could have simply chosen (simply decided) to create a world with free creatures, and permanently without sin: creating such a world was not just a possibility for God, but also an option. And if creating a world with free creatures and permanently without sin was among God's options, then the free will explanation of sin goes by the board.

If this is right, then the free will explanation of sin is antithetical to Aquinas, because (in his view) it underestimates the range of God's creative options. If so, the same goes for the free will explanation of hell: for if God had (not just the possibility but also) the option of creating a world with free creatures, but permanently without sin, then God likewise had the option of creating a world with free creatures, and without hell.

This leaves open that Aquinas accepts a certain variant of the free will explanation of sin, which I shall call *the peccable free will explanation* of sin. The peccable free will of explanation (PFWE, for short) has this form:

God wanted to create a world that contained creatures with “peccable” wills – that is, creatures with free will who could (at least temporarily) use their will to sin. But even if God could have made certain that free creatures never used their will to sin (by making their wills impeccable from the start), He couldn’t make certain that free creatures with peccable wills never used their will to sin. God ended up creating a world with sin, because He chose to create a world containing creatures with peccably free will, and some of those creatures chose to use their will to sin.

(I take it that what it is for a creature to have peccably free will is more or less what it is for that creature to be “significantly free”, in Plantinga’s sense of the term (see his *God, Freedom, and Evil*). So I might have called the variant of the free will explanation “the significantly free will” explanation. I prefer to speak of the peccable free will explanation, because it is natural to understand “significantly free will” as meaning something like “free will that can be exercised in morally significant choices”, and it is not obvious that every morally significant choice is a choice between right and wrong (or between “unsin” and sin). If an agent is choosing between doing *x* and doing *y*, and both are supererogatory, but one is significantly “more supererogatory” than the other, then the choice is, on a natural way of understanding the term (though not according to Plantinga’s official definition) morally significant, but it is not a choice between right and wrong (or “unsin” and sin).)

Aquinas’ conception of acts of will as grounded in judgments of goodness, and his account of the blessed in heaven, are, as best I can see, compatible with (PFWE). Of course, this does not imply that Aquinas would accept (PFWE), and for a number of reasons I’m not inclined to believe that he would.

We have seen that for Aquinas those who end up in heaven go through an initial stage in which their wills are not “confirmed in goodness”, before acquiring impeccable wills *per donum gratiae* (by gift of grace). Aquinas thinks there are persons who (again, thanks to grace) go through the initial stage without actually sinning (for example, the Virgin Mary). Now if I understand Aquinas, such persons are not permanently incapable of sinning: their wills are not impeccable from the word go (see *De Veritate*, 24, 9, *responsio*). But if God actually created a world in which there are some free creatures who never sin, despite having (initially and temporarily) peccable wills, then presumably God could have created a world in which all free creatures are like that (in other words, a world in which no free creatures ever sin, despite having (initially and temporarily) peccable wills).

Perhaps there are some basic actions such that (a) before all ages, it was up to God whether He performed them, and (b) before all ages, He knew that if He had performed them, He would have ended up creating a world in which there is peccable free will, but no sin. If that is the case, then God could after all have made certain (in the epistemic sense) that creatures with peccable free will never used their will to sin, and (PFWE) fails. Now, so far as I know, nothing Aquinas says implies, or even suggests, that he thinks God could not have made epistemically certain that creatures with peccable free will never used their will to sin. In which case it would seem that Aquinas is at best neutral with respect to (PFWE).

More centrally, I suspect that (PFWE), like (FWE) is foreign to the way Aquinas conceives of creaturely free will – and in particular, of the relation between divine causation (and providence) and free will.

A central feature of Aquinas' account of creaturely free will is that all creaturely acts of will are caused: a created will "moves" (that is, inclines), only when it is moved (acted upon) by something else – an apprehended good. Equally, a created will "moves" only when it is moved (acted upon) by someone (better, Someone) else. Every time a created will moves (inclines to something) God is the cause of that movement. Someone might think that if the will is moved by an agent different from the agent whose will it is, then that will does not move freely. Aquinas insists this is not so: God's moving the will a certain way is perfectly compatible with the will's freely moving that way (*SCG*, III, 89).

Suppose that God does move the will, even when it moves freely. There remains a question about whether God can make certain (in the sense of "inevitable") that a creature's will moves freely in a given direction. For reasons I shall sketch, it seems that the proponent of either (FWE) or (PFWE) will answer this question in the negative.

As we have seen, a free will or peccable free will explainer (henceforth, for brevity, "a P/FW explainer") would say:

If an agent can make certain (i.e., inevitable) that p , then there is some basic action (or some basic actions) such that (i) it's up to the agent whether or not she performs that action (or those actions), and (ii) her performing that action (or those actions) would make it certain that p . Suppose that there is some basic action such that it's up to an agent A whether to perform that action, and A 's performing it would make certain (i.e., inevitable) that B 's will shall move in a given direction. Suppose also that A performs that basic action, and so makes certain or inevitable that B 's will moves in that direction. Then B 's will (which was certain to move in that direction once A performed that basic action), moved that way at A 's bidding, rather than moving that way freely.

So, for a P/FW explainer, even if God can move a freely moving created will, He cannot make inevitable that it will freely move in the particular

direction in which it actually moves, because making inevitable that someone else's will moves in such-and-such a direction = making someone's else's will move in such-and-such a direction at one's bidding, and necessarily, if someone else's will moves in such-and-such a direction at one's bidding, that someone else's will does not move freely.

So, for the P/FW explainer, there is a very natural (to my mind, the most natural) sense of "make certain" in which there is nothing God can do to make certain that a created will shall freely move in this particular direction. For the P/FW explainer, fixing all the facts about which of the things it is up to God to do or not do He in fact does, does not fix all the facts about which of the ways in which a created will could freely move it in fact moves. To put it another way, for the P/FW explainer, assuming it is up to God whether or not to do something, His doing it will be at best a "chancy" (non-necessitating, "non-inevitabilizing") cause of a created will's freely moving in a particular direction.

Here someone might object:

The P/FW explainer surely can grant that it's up to God what He wills. God can simply choose, or decide, to will this or that. In particular, God can simply choose, or decide, to will that a creature's will will freely move a certain way. Equally, the P/FW explainer can grant that God's will is necessarily efficacious, and that accordingly, it is inevitable that if God wills that p , then p . So a P/FW explainer can – indeed should – say that there is something God can do (to wit, will that a creature's will freely moves a certain way) such that God's doing it makes it certain, in both the epistemic and non-epistemic sense of "certain", that the creature's will will freely move that way. Even for the P/FW explainer, the answer to the question, "is there anything God can do to make certain that a creature's will freely moves a certain way" can and should be a flat "yes".

I don't think this is right. A P/FW explainer might accept that inevitably, if God wills that p , then p (especially if she thinks of God's willing that p as God's commanding that p rather than as God's desiring that p). But if she does accept this claim, she cannot also say that God can simply choose or decide to will that a creature's will freely moves in a certain direction. If God can simply choose to will that a creature's will freely moves in a certain direction, then there is some basic action such that (a) it's up to God whether or not He performs it, and (b) inevitably, if He performs that action, He wills that that creature's will freely moves in that direction. (The basic action might just be *willing that that creature's will freely moves in that direction*; it doesn't matter to the argument.) In which case, assuming that inevitably, whatever God wills comes to pass, we may infer that there is some basic action such that (a) it's up to God whether or not He performs it, and (b') inevitably, if He performs that action, that creature's will shall

freely move in that direction (since inevitably, if God performs that basic action, He wills that that creature's will freely moves in that direction, and inevitably, if He wills that, it will come to pass, given the inevitable efficaciousness of His will). But this last claim is one that P/FW explainers reject: they think that *B*'s will cannot freely move in a certain direction, unless it is free either to move or not move in that direction, and *B*'s will cannot be free either to move or not move in a given direction, if there was something it was up to *A* to do or not do, and *A* simply chose to do it, and *A*'s doing it guaranteed *B*'s will's moving in that certain direction. (For, P/FW explainers think, if there was something it was up to *A* to do or not do, and *A* simply chose to do it, and *A*'s doing it guaranteed (made inevitable) *B*'s will moving in a certain direction, then *B*'s will moved in that certain direction at *A*'s bidding, and hence did not move in that direction freely.) So P/FW explainers who concede that God's will is necessarily efficacious must either say that God never does will that a creature's will freely inclines a certain way, or that He never simply chooses to will that, even if He may sometimes end up willing that.

The P/FW explainer can perfectly well grant that there is something such that it's true both that God has the possibility (as opposed to the option) of doing that thing, and it's inevitable that if God does that thing, then a creature's will shall freely move a certain way. After all, the P/FW explainer can say that *ante omnia saecula* God has the possibility of getting this creature's will to freely move this way, and it is inevitable that if God gets the creature's will to freely move this way, the creature's will will freely move this way. But this does not imply that (on any remotely natural way of understanding the claim) there is anything God can do to make certain (in the non-epistemic sense) that a creature's will shall freely move a certain way. Compare: my wife has the possibility (though not the option) of winning the lottery, and it is inevitable that if she wins the lottery, she will be minted (for readers unfamiliar with English slang, very rich). That does not imply that (on any remotely natural construal of the claim) there is anything my wife can do to make certain (in the non-epistemic sense) that she will be minted!

At this point, it will be useful to (temporarily) look away from (FWE) and (PFWE), and look at Aquinas' account of providence. In his treatment of providence in Book III of the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Aquinas considers two questions about providence – one concerning its “scope”, and the other concerning its “certainty”, or “infallibility”, or “indefectibility”.

As Aquinas notes, some have supposed that the movements of the will were outside the scope of God's providence:

[C]ertain people said that providence does not concern those things that are subject to free will – that is to say, choices; instead, providence only has to do with external events (*exteriores eventus*).

(SCG, III, 89).

This view, Aquinas says, is quite wrong. Acts of choice (and movements of will) are subject to providence, not merely in the sense that God's providence as it were "takes them into account", but in the sense that, as part of His providential design, God causes rational creatures to make certain free choices, in just the same way that, as part of His providential design, He causes non-rational creatures to non-freely behave in other ways. The same divine providence that causes a stone to move toward the center of the earth (by natural necessity, and not by choice) causes a rational agent to move toward a good ((typically) by free choice and not by natural necessity). (Again, see *SCG* III, 89 and 90.)

A second question about providence addressed by Aquinas concerns its certainty. What does it mean to ask whether providence is certain?

As Aquinas thinks of it, creaturely agency involves both choice and ends. Moreover, creaturely agents have ends that go beyond the performance (or non-performance) of actions that they can simply choose or decide to perform (or refrain from performing). For example, a creaturely agent might have as her end not just trying to slake her thirst, but also slaking her thirst. Because creaturely agents have ends that go beyond the performance or otherwise of acts whose performance or otherwise is up to them, creaturely agency involves a gap between what the agent can simply choose or decide to, and what the agent aims to do. My aim (or end) may be sinking a basket from fifty feet away, or persuading you to marry me, but I cannot simply choose to sink a basket from fifty feet away, or simply choose to persuade you to marry me. In the right circumstances I can (typically) simply choose to try to sink the basket, or try to persuade you to marry me, and perhaps I can make it (at least somewhat) more likely that I will sink the basket or persuade you to marry me; but I cannot guarantee that I will do either of those things. Creatures have ends, and act for their sake, but creaturely agents don't always attain their ends: "time and chance and happeneth to them all." To put it another way, creaturely designs are often thwarted (by other creaturely designs, or by nature, or by God) and *a fortiori* "thwartable".

For Aquinas, divine agency, like creaturely agency, involves choice and ends. For instance, God's end may be that someone be "confirmed in goodness" in such a way as to no longer be able to sin. Then, in pursuit of that end, He will choose to give that person increased knowledge of His goodness, of the badness of separation from Him, and of which things separate a person from Him.

Does divine agency, like creaturely agency, involve a gap between what the agent can simply choose or decide to do, and what the agent aims to do? Are God's designs sometimes thwarted, or at least thwartable (by "time or chance" or creaturely uncooperativeness)?

As best I can tell, Aquinas would answer this question in the negative. Just as we have our designs, God has His all-embracing providential design for the world – a design that specifies a multitude of interrelated divine ends (and a multitude of actions performed for the sake of attaining those ends). But

unlike us, God never has the misfortune of making a choice with an end in view, without actually attaining the end for which He made that choice. Whenever, in His providential government of the world, God makes this choice, in order to attain that end, He attains the end for which He made the choice. And this is not simply good luck. For God's providence is, Aquinas says in various places, "certain", or "immutable" or "indissoluble" or "indefectible": providence, as such, never "falls short of its effect" (*ST*, Ia, 22, 4, *ad 3um*).

So, if I have not misunderstood Aquinas, his view is the following: creatures and God both make choices and have designs and ends. And someone might try to thwart a creature's designs (i.e., bring it about that that creature's choices fail to attain the end(s) for which they were performed). Likewise, someone might try to thwart God's (providential) designs (i.e., bring it about that God's choices fail to attain the end(s) for which they were performed). But whereas someone could succeed in his attempt to thwart a creature's designs, any attempt to thwart God's providential designs is certain to fail (in both the epistemic and non-epistemic sense of "certain"), in view of the certainty and indefectibility of providence).

Now let us return to the free will and peccable free will explanations. There is no inconsistency in subscribing to the free will or peccable free will explanation, and also to the thesis that providence is certain and indefectible, and God's providential designs are accordingly unthwartable. One could quite consistently hold both these views, if, say, one held that God's providential design embraces only certain kinds of *exteriores eventus* – say, the motions of the celestial bodies.

But what if a P/FW explainer, like Aquinas, thinks God's providential government embraces not just the motions of celestial bodies, but also the free motions of created wills? That is, what if a P/FW explainer, like Aquinas, thinks that sometimes, in His providential government of the world, God makes certain choices whose end is that some created will freely moves in a certain direction? Then, it seems, the P/FW explainer cannot consistently believe that divine providence is always certain and indefectible, and God's providential designs are accordingly always unthwartable.

For suppose that, as part of His providential government of the world, God has simply chosen or decided to perform some basic action, whose end is that I freely choose something. And suppose that on this occasion, God's providential designs are not thwarted, inasmuch as I do freely choose that thing. Still, the P/FW explainer will say, if I *freely* choose to do that thing, then my choosing to do that thing isn't guaranteed (made inevitable) by anything that God simply chose or decided to do. Even holding fixed all the facts about what God simply chose or decided to do (in pursuit of which ends), I could still have failed to choose that thing (and chosen something else instead). In which case, it seems to follow, I could have thwarted some part of God's all-embracing providential design (i.e., I could have brought it about that some of God's choices failed to attain the end for which they were performed).

So it looks as though the P/FW explainer can agree with Aquinas either about the scope of providence, or about the indefectibility and unthwartability of providence, but not about both. For a P/FW explainer, either God is not a cause of a created will's freely moving a certain way, or He is a "defectible" or chancy cause of that will's moving that way (a cause that could "fall short of" (i.e., fail to produce) its effect). For Aquinas, God, or God's will, is just as much an indefectible or "failsafe" cause of the particular motions of free wills, as it is an indefectible or failsafe cause of the particular motions of celestial bodies. There is in fact no way a created will could freely move a certain way, except by God's indefectibly causing it to freely move that certain way. (See *ST*, Ia, 105, 4, *responsio*, where Aquinas says that God not only moves created wills but also moves them "sufficiently and efficaciously" (*sufficienter et efficaciter*).

But how can God be a failsafe cause of a created will's freely moving a certain way? If I have understood Aquinas, he would say that the crux of the matter is that God's will is necessarily efficacious, not merely with respect to what happens, but also with respect to the way in which what happens happens.

Aquinas often makes this point with regard to contingency and necessity:

Since the divine will is maximally efficacious (*efficacissima*), it follows not just that things happen that God wills to happen, but also that things happen in the way God wills. But God wills that some things happen necessarily, and some things happen contingently.

(*ST*, Ia, 19, 8, *responsio*)

But I think Aquinas holds that the point applies equally to freedom and unfreedom. Necessarily, if God wills that a stone moves "unfreely" (and by what Aquinas calls "natural necessity") toward the center of the earth, that stone will not only move toward the center of the earth, but also move unfreely toward the center of the earth. Equally, if God wills that a creature's will moves freely toward a certain good, then that will shall not only move toward that good, but also move freely toward that good.

So when God wills that a creature's will freely moves in a certain direction, God's will is a failsafe cause of that creature's will's moving in that direction (in virtue of the necessary efficaciousness of God's will (with respect to where the creature's will "ends up"), but the creature's will freely moves in that direction (in virtue of the necessary efficaciousness of God's will, with respect to how that creature's will gets there). At *SCG*, III, 88, Aquinas avers that whenever a created will freely inclines to something, God inclines it to that something. A P/FW explainer might say: if (as Aquinas supposes) God indefectibly inclines a created will to something, how can that will's so inclining be free? But if God's indefectibly inclining that will to something = God's seeing to it that that will inclines to something, and if God can see to it that that will inclines to something freely, then God's indefectibly inclining a created will to something is perfectly compatible with that will's

freely inclining to that thing. Because Aquinas does not share the fundamental intuition of the P/FW explainer – that as long as something God simply chose or decided to do is a failsafe cause of a created will's moving in a certain direction, that movement cannot be free – Aquinas sees no incoherence in saying that God simply chooses or decides to move our wills a certain way, and nevertheless our wills move that way freely.

If I have not misunderstood Aquinas, his account of the relation between divine causation and creaturely freedom is an interesting alternative to each of two opposed views. A certain kind of philosophical theologian – call her a libertarian – might argue as follows:

Suppose that (on a given occasion) a rational creature freely turns her will in a certain direction. Then the creature's will moves in that direction, because the creature exercised her option to turn it in that direction.

If a creature's will moves in that direction, because the creature exercised her option to turn it in that direction, then the creature's will does not move in that direction, because God exercised His option to turn it in that direction.

If (on a given occasion), a rational creature freely turns her will in a certain direction, then (on that occasion) that creature does not freely turn her will in a certain direction because God exercised His option to turn it in that direction. The free action of a rational creature is not the result of the exercise of a divine option, in the way that, for example, the motion of a celestial body is the result of the exercise of a divine option.

A different kind of philosophical theologian – call her an “illibertarian” – might argue as follows:

Whenever a rational creature turns her will in a certain direction, she does so because God exercised His option to turn her will in that direction.

If a creature's will moves in a certain direction because God exercised His option to turn her will in a certain direction, then the creature's will does not move in that direction, because the creature exercised her option to turn it in that direction.

Whenever a rational creature turns her will in a certain direction, the creature does not turn her will in that direction because she exercised her option to turn it in that direction. In just the same way that God

exercises options to turn His own will this way or that way, God exercises options to turn creature's wills this way or that; in just the same way that creatures do not exercise options to turn God's will this way or that way, creatures do not exercise options to turn their own wills this way or that way. How God's will turns is up to God, and not to us; how our wills turn is likewise up to God and not to us.

It seems to me that Aquinas would reject both of these arguments, because he rejects the premise they share. How a rational creature's will turns is up to God. For it is He who inclines or turns our will this way or that way, and He can simply choose or decide to turn them this way or that way:

So it is said in Proverbs (21: 1): The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will.

(*Summa Contra Gentiles*, III, 88)

Even so, how a rational creature's will turns is up to that creature. For God turns a creature's will a certain way by making that will freely turn that way. And – setting to one side special cases in which the intellect presents the will with an unqualified and unrivalled good – when a will freely turns a certain way, it is up to the rational creature who has that will whether or not it turns that way, and the rational creature who has that will can simply choose or decide whether (or not) it turns that way; the rational creature who has that will can make certain that the will inclines that way (or does not incline that way). By rejecting the idea that the turning of a will can be up to at most one agent, Aquinas aims to preserve both divine sovereignty (since how the wills of rational creatures move is up to God) and creaturely freedom (since how the wills of rational creatures move is up to them).

But how could a will's turning a particular way be completely up to each of two different agents? At *SCG*, III, 88, Aquinas himself says that no creature can be an indefectible cause of another creature's will's turning a certain way. For one created substance cannot act on the will of another, except "as a persuader" (*per modum persuadentis*), issuing as it were an invitation to the other agent's will to turn toward a certain end or good – an invitation that may or may not be accepted. If that's the way it is with creatures, why should it be different with God?

It's different with God, Aquinas would say, because God, as the creator and sustainer of both the faculty of will, and its operations, works on the will "from the inside", and not "from the outside". Here Aquinas cites Philippians 2: 13 ("For it is God who works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure"). Thus God can move the will directly (and "non-violently", and indefectibly), rather than indirectly (and defectibly).

Perhaps non-theological cases could help us make some headway in getting our heads round this idea. As readers familiar with the contemporary literature on personal identity will be aware, certain philosophers have

thought that two different persons could survive fusion with each other. That is, they have thought that two persons who originally had two different intellects and wills could go on existing, in a condition in which they shared just one intellect and will between them – an intellect and a will they shared, not in the sense that two different families can share a “duplex” or two-family house (one has this part of the house, and one has that part of the house), but in the sense that two different persons can share a phone number (they have the same phone number, and they do not have different parts of the same phone number). Suppose this is indeed possible. Then it seems that, whatever was up to one of the “fused” agents would be up to the other; anything that was completely up to either would be completely, but non-exclusively, up to both. For, given that they share a single intellect and will (and share each part of that single intellect and will), the “fused” agents would (in Pauline language) inevitably “work in each other, to will and to do”. To be sure, the analogy with my will’s turning’s being up to both me and God is in some ways quite remote: the “fused” agents share an intellect and a will, and God and I do not. In another way, though, the analogy is not so remote. Although Aquinas does not think that my will and intellect “overlap” with God’s in the way that the fused agents’ wills and intellects overlap with each other (identity implies overlap, though not conversely), Aquinas does think that there is a sense in which my *agency* overlaps with God’s: by Aquinas’ lights, there is not, and there could not be, any such thing as agency disjoint from divine agency.

In contemporary discussions of the problem of free will, the view that our choices or actions are free, even though they are determined by the past, together with the laws of nature, is often called *soft determinism*. Let us call the view that our choices and actions are free, even though they are determined by what God simply chooses or decides *theological soft determinism*. As I read Aquinas, he is a soft theological determinist. (See *SCG*, III, 90, where Aquinas agrees that our acts of choice and will are subject to determination by providence, though not in such a way as to exclude their contingency.)

It should be noted that the view of how God moves created wills I take Aquinas to hold is in some respects distinctly more problematic than the one that a P/FW explainer would hold. Let us say that p and q are *truth-conditionally equivalent* just in case p and q have the same truth-value in any actual or possible circumstances. (An example of a pair of truth-conditionally equivalent statements might be: *event e is earlier than event e'* and *event e' is later than event e* .) The following principle seems to me hard to deny:

If p and q are truth-conditionally equivalent, and it’s up to me whether p (so that I can simply decide whether p), then it’s also up to me whether q (so that I can simply decide whether q).

If, say, it is up to me whether a ends up next to b , and if a ends up next to b and b ends up next to a are truth-conditionally equivalent, then it is *absque*

dubio up to me whether *b* ends up next to *a*: if I can just decide whether *a* ends up next to *b*, I can also just decide that *b* ends up next to *a*.

As I have said, Aquinas appears to think that (i) necessarily whenever a created will moves in a certain direction (inclines to something), God causes it to move in that direction (incline to that something). Aquinas obviously thinks that (ii) necessarily whenever God causes a created will to move in a certain direction, it moves in that direction. (The meaning of “cause” guarantees the truth of (ii).) Putting (i) and (ii) together, we get

- (iii) Necessarily a created will moves in a certain direction if and only if God causes it to move in that direction.

Moreover, Aquinas appears to think that

- (iv) Necessarily God causes a created will to move in a certain direction if and only if God exercises His option to move that created will in that direction.

Now, for Aquinas, it is necessarily up to God whether He, as it were, “tries to” move a created will in a certain direction (He can simply decide to “try”, or simply decide not to “try”). And necessarily, if God doesn’t “try” to move a created will in a certain direction, it is not going to move in that direction anyway (of its own accord). And necessarily if God does “try” to move a created will in a certain direction, He is bound to succeed (given the certainty and indefectibility of providence). So God can simply decide whether or not a created will shall move in a certain direction, by simply deciding whether or not to “try” to move it in that direction, since His “trying” to move that will in that direction is both necessary and sufficient for His moving that will in that direction, and His moving that will in that direction is both necessary and sufficient for its moving in that direction. In other words, necessarily God has the option of either moving or not moving a created will in a certain direction, and He moves a created will in a certain direction if and only if He exercises His option to move it in that direction.

In which case (for Aquinas) *my will moves in this direction* is truth-conditionally equivalent to *God exercises His option to bring it about that my will moves this way*, and *my will moves freely in this direction* is truth-conditionally equivalent to *God exercises His option to bring it about that my will moves freely in this direction*. In which case (assuming the principle just formulated about options and truth-conditional equivalence) Aquinas’ account of how God moves the will implies that whenever it’s up to me whether my will freely moves a certain way, it is also up to me whether God exercises His option to bring it about that my will freely moves that certain way. But it is hard to believe Aquinas would be happy with this last claim. After all, unlike our hypothetical theological illibertarian, Aquinas thinks I have options that it is up to me whether I exercise (or not). But would he be happy with saying that *God* has options that it is up to me whether *He* exercises (or not)?

Would he be happy with saying, not just that I can simply decide whether my will turns this way or that way, but also that I can simply decide whether God turns my will this way or that way?

There are at least two reasons to doubt he would be. First, saying that I have (and exercise) such options seems to attribute to me what Aquinas would consider a theologically *inconueniens* (unfitting) power over how God exercises His options. One might think that the Son has options that it is up to the Father (as well as the Son) whether the Son exercises – so that the Father as well as the Son decides which options the Son exercises. But it's hard to believe that Aquinas would be happy with the idea that there are divine options that some creature can (and does) decide whether God exercises.

Second, as Aquinas thinks of it, there is an analogy between how God moves a freely moving will, and how an artisan moves an instrument. Suppose a sculptor voluntarily moves a chisel in a certain direction. The chisel moves in that direction, because the sculptor moves the chisel in that direction; it's not the case that the sculptor moves the chisel in that direction because the chisel moves in that direction. Analogously, if a person voluntarily moves her hand in a certain direction, her hand moves in that direction because she moves it in that direction; it's not the case that she moves her hand in that direction, because it moves in that direction. If, however, it's up to me whether God exercises His option to bring it about that my will moves in this direction, or exercises His option to bring it about that my wills move in that direction, it's hard to see how there can be the kind of asymmetric explanatory relation between God's moving my will in a certain direction and my will's so moving that Aquinas thinks there is. Suppose that, when I moved my hand, it was somehow up to my hand whether I moved my hand. In those circumstances, it is far from clear that it could be true that my hand moves because I moved my hand, but it's not the case that I move my hand, because my hand moves. (In the envisioned circumstances, we might say, I would move my hand only because my hand didn't as it were "exercise its veto" over my moving my hand.)

Here someone might object that the problem arising for Aquinas' account of the relation between divine causation and creaturely free will also arise (albeit in a different form) for any plausible account of the relation between divine causation and creaturely free will that a P/FW explainer might offer. For, the objection would go (*pace* Roderick Chisolm), on any plausible account of the relation between divine causation and creaturely free will, rational creatures could not be unmoved movers of their own wills. So necessarily, a created will shall move in a certain direction if and only if it is moved in that direction by something or someone (or Someone) else. Indeed, necessarily, a created will shall move in a certain direction if and only if God moves it in that direction; necessarily, my will shall freely move in a certain direction if and only if God causes my will to freely move in that direction. Hence, on any plausible account of the relation between divine causation and creaturely free will available to the P/FW explainer, *my will*

freely moves in a certain direction and *God causes my will to freely move in that direction* will be truth-conditionally equivalent. In which case – the objection goes – the P/FW explainer (just as much as Aquinas) will have to explain how it can be that I can choose in which direction God causes my will to turn, and how it can be that God’s causing my will to turn in a certain direction explains why my will turns in that direction, but not vice versa.

But a P/FW explainer can say that God is a defectible or chancy cause of my will’s freely moving in a certain direction. So, she can say, even if I have no choice about whether God *tries to* cause my will to freely move in a certain direction, I can and do have a choice about whether God *in fact* causes my will to freely move in that direction. None of this implies what is theologically *inconveniens* – that I can decide what God chooses, what God decides, what it is up to God to do. (God simply chooses or decides to try to cause my will to freely move in a certain direction, but He does not simply choose or decide to actually cause it to freely move in that direction; trying to cause my will to freely move in that direction is up to Him, but causing my will to freely move in that direction is not.)

As for the point involving explanatory asymmetry, the P/FW explainer can simply say that, *pace* Aquinas, there is no such asymmetry. God defectibly causes my will to freely move in a certain direction, because I freely move my will in that direction – because I let Him defectibly cause my will to freely move in that direction. Compare: suppose that you persuaded, rather than compelled, me to do something. You persuaded me, i.e., caused me to be persuaded, only because I was persuaded – only because I let you persuade me.

Leaving open the question of the defensibility of Aquinas’ account of the relation between God’s free choices and ours, I hope to have brought out the reasons for which I think that that account is incompatible, not just with (FWE), but also with (PFWE). If I have not misread Aquinas, he cannot give either a free will, or a peccable free will explanation of why God created a world that contains evil (or sin), because he does not believe that either creaturely free will, or creaturely and peccable free will, is an intrinsically or essentially risky good.

I have argued this at considerable length, for two reasons. First, as I have already suggested, the P/FW explanation is very influential (in philosophical theology, and also in apologetics). Perhaps because it is so influential, if my experience with students is a guide, not a few readers of Aquinas assume (whether explicitly or implicitly) that his account of why God created an evil-containing world must involve or at least be compatible with the P/FW explanation. Since I think this is a misapprehension, I wanted to correct it. Moreover, as I hope has become clear, getting clearer on why Aquinas is not a P/FW explainer sheds light on Aquinas’ account of will, freedom, causation, and providence.

But if God’s creating a world that contains evil (or sin) is not to be explained in terms of the essential riskiness of creaturely freedom (or creaturely and peccable freedom), how is it to be explained?

I don't think this question has the same urgency for Aquinas that it has for contemporary philosophical theologians (or apologists) who don't share Aquinas' view that the existence of a perfect God can be demonstrated philosophically, and who are more wont than Aquinas is to regard the existence of evil (or, at least, of certain kinds of evil) as strong *prima facie* evidence against the existence of a perfect God. Nevertheless, Aquinas does address the question of why a wholly good God created a partly bad world in various places – among them, *ST*, Ia, 48, 2, and *SCG*, III, 71.

Rather than asking why God created a world that contains evils, we might ask why God created a world at all. Aquinas would say that inasmuch as God is supremely and perfectly good, He wants His goodness to be shared. For Aquinas, God's existence, in and of itself, guarantees that His goodness is shared, since the existence of God implies the sharing of His goodness by the persons of the Trinity. Hence God needn't create, in order for His goodness to be shared. Still, Aquinas would say, because God is generous, He wants His goodness to be shared by beings outside Him: He wants, as it were, for goodness to extend beyond His borders – for goodness to be found without as well as within Him. Since everything that exists, is good, insofar as it exists, for God to create just is for Him to bring it about that goodness is found without as well as within Him.

For Aquinas, nothing "outside" God can be as good as God. It follows that God cannot, so to speak, share "all" of His goodness with any one creature. When God, as Aquinas puts it, "communicates His goodness" to a given creature, the goodness that the creature receives "participates in" God's perfect goodness imperfectly, and resembles or "represents" God's perfect goodness "inadequately". Consequently, what it is for God to create is for Him to bring it about that goodness extends beyond the perfect to the imperfect.

Because any given creature has a limited capacity to "participate in" or "represent" God's unlimited goodness, and God creates precisely so that His goodness may be participated in and represented, God creates not one thing, but many:

God brought things into being so that His goodness might be communicated to and represented by them. And since His goodness could not be adequately represented by just one creature, He made many and varied creatures, so that the deficiencies of one thing in representing divine goodness might be compensated by another. For goodness, which is simple and uniform in God, is many and divided in creatures.

(*ST*, Ia, 47, 1, *responsio*)

So God wants different things to share and represent His goodness in different ways. But more than that, He wants different things to share and represent His goodness in differentially perfect ways. He doesn't want to create a whole bunch of things, each of which has a distinctive way of "participating in" or "representing" His goodness as much as any creature

ever could. Instead, He wants to create a whole bunch of things, some of which more perfectly participate in and represent His goodness, and some of which less perfectly participate in and represent His goodness.

For this reason, God creates angels, who participate in and represent His goodness to a very high degree, in being incorruptible, living, and rational beings. But He also creates beings that are incorruptible, but neither living nor rational (celestial bodies); beings that are living and rational, but not incorruptible (human beings), beings that are living, but neither rational nor incorruptible (marmots), and beings that are neither incorruptible, nor living, nor rational (bits of fire, or any of the other Aristotelian elements). As Aquinas says at *ST*, Ia, 48, 2, *responsio*, God didn't simply want many kinds of created goodness to exist; He also wanted both lower and higher "grades" of created goodness to exist.

But (Aquinas avers) the existence of low enough grades of goodness brings with it the existence of evil. Things with a low enough grade of goodness have a goodness that can and sometimes does fail; and the failure of goodness is always an evil. For example, a thing with a low enough grade of goodness can and will undergo corruption, and corruption is an evil.

In His liberality, God wants His goodness to be communicated to imperfect beings outside Him: not just to imperfect beings with higher grades of goodness, but also to imperfect beings with lower grades of imperfect goodness – even to imperfect beings with a low enough grade of goodness to be subject to evils. God could have created only incorruptible rational beings "confirmed in goodness" and incorruptible celestial bodies; then nothing He created would be subject to evil. But that would have been less generous or "liberal" than creating corruptible as well as incorruptible beings. And if God had been less liberal, the result would have been that the world – despite being evil-free – would have been less good, rather than better:

God ... makes what is better in the whole, and not what is better in each and every part ... But the whole itself – that is, the totality of created things (*universitas creatarum*) is better and more perfect, if it includes some things which can fail in goodness, and sometimes do fail ...

(*ST*, Ia, 48, 2, *responsio*)

In short, God's desire that His goodness be communicated *ad extra* as well as *ad intra* (that is, without the Trinity as well as within it) leads Him to create a world; God's desire that the world as a whole have more rather than less goodness communicated to and represented by it leads Him to create an evil-containing world, rather than an evil-free one. That's why a wholly good God created a partly bad world – although I imagine Aquinas would say that it is at best misleading to say that God created a partly bad world, and it would be better to say that God created a world that is "bad in parts", or – better still – "has bad parts". For saying that the world is partly bad suggests that the world is good (or neutral) in some respects, and bad in

others, and, Aquinas would say that it no more follows from the fact that the world has bad parts, that it is bad in some respects, than it follows from the fact that the world has small parts, that it is small in some respects.

One might have various puzzlements about this explanation of why God created an evil-containing world. It does not seem incredible that God would want to communicate His goodness to (and have His goodness represented by) both things which resemble Him more distantly, and things which resemble Him less distantly – and, as part of this, would want to create *generabilia* and *corruptibilia* as well as *ingenerabilia* and *incorruptibilia*. But, as we have already seen, it seems not at all clear that corruption (in the Aristotelian/Thomistic sense) is (as such) an evil (in any current sense of the word “evil”). On the face of it, some air’s being corrupted (or, to take an example from contemporary chemistry, a water molecule’s breaking up and leaving behind two hydrogen atoms and an oxygen atom) is not in and of itself a bad thing.

What if the corruption is the corruption of a living being? Well, suppose that in the mitotic phase of the cell cycle, the “mother” goes out of existence, and generates two “daughter” cells. Again, I want to say, it’s not as though something bad happens (the corruption of the mother cell) and something good happens (the generation of the two daughter cells): the cell cycle is a process of a kind that could take place in an evil-free world. When a mother cell goes out of existence, it doesn’t suffer a misfortune. Nor does it malfunction. On the contrary, if a cell didn’t go out of existence via mitosis, it would not be functioning properly – it would not be doing what it is meant to be doing, and what it is good for it to do.

It is I take it different with other kinds of living beings. When a wolf kills a lamb, that is bad for the lamb (even if it is good for the wolf). And the lamb’s dying is a bad thing, even if the lamb’s dying allows a wolf to survive, and the wolf’s surviving is a good thing (which is why, I take it, Isaiah looks forward to the wolf’s lying down with, rather than killing, the lamb). So if lambs “undergo corruption” (that is, die) because God wanted to create a world that has enough “grades of goodness” (as Aquinas calls them) to represent God’s goodness in a sufficiently “variform” way, then the fact that there is evil (i.e., the fact that there are some evils of some kind) can be explained by reference to God’s desire to create a world that has enough “grades” of goodness to represent His goodness in a sufficiently variform way. That said, I’m not sure why not containing wolves devouring lambs, or more generally predators devouring prey, would get in the way of the world’s having enough grades of goodness to represent God’s goodness in a sufficiently variform way.

Be that as it may, Aquinas’ discussion of evil at *ST*, Ia, 48, 2 and *SCG*, III, 71 suggests that he accepts both a claim about a particular evil and a particular good, and a more general claim about evils and goods. Before stating the particular claim (PC) and the general claim (GC), it will be useful to introduce a bit of terminology. Let us say that a good is *entangled with an evil* if it’s absolutely impossible for that good to exist at some time

without the evil's existing at some (possibly distinct) time. And let us call a good that is entangled with some evil *entangled*, for brevity. The particular claim Aquinas accepts is:

(PC) God created a world with the evil of corruption, because He judged that the world would be better if it contained the evil of corruption, together with the good of sufficient variation of grades of being that is entangled with that evil, than if it did not contain the evil of corruption.

(PC) is questionable, if it is questionable that there is any such thing as the "the evil of corruption".

But if (PC) is true, so is:

(GC) For some evil, God created a world with that evil, because He judged that the world would be better if it contained that evil, together with some good entangled with it, than if it did not contain that evil.

(GC) could be true, even if (PC) is false, since there could be many entangled good and entangling evil pairs which make (GC) true, even if no such pair comprises an entangled good and corruption (because corruption is not an evil, and so is not an entangling evil). Indeed, Aquinas appears to think that there are many entangled good/entangling evil pairs that make (GC) true but do not involve corruption. Aquinas appears to think it is true not just that

(A) God created a world containing the evil of "aerial corruption", because He judged that the world would be better if it contained that evil, together with the good of "igneous generation" that is entangled with it, than if it did not contain the evil of aerial corruption. (cf. *ST*, Ia, 48, 2, *responsio*)

but also that

(B) God created a world containing the evil of the shortening of an ass's life, because He judged that the world would be better if it contained that evil, together with the good of the lion's life's being lengthened by the shortening of the ass's life that is entangled with that evil, than if the world did not contain the evil of the shortening of the ass's life. (*ibid.*)

and

(C) God created a world containing the evil of the malicious persecution of the just, because He judged that the world would be better if it contained that evil, together with the good of that persecution's being patiently endured and subsequently punished that is entangled with it, than if it did not contain the evil of the malicious persecution of the just. (*SCG*, III, 71)

As Aquinas thinks of it, reality is permeated by entangled goods, and by entangled good/entangling evil pairs that satisfy (GC):

If divine providence totally excluded evil from the order of things, a multitude of good things would have to be lost.

(SCG, III, 71)

(A multitude of good things would *have* to be lost (not just *might*, or *would* be lost), because the goods at issue are not only accompanied by but also entangled with evils, in such a way that not even God could exclude the evils, and retain the goods.)

Someone might or might not agree with Aquinas about (B) and (C). In the case of (C), she might say:

Surely we would not judge that it would be better for malicious persecution to continue (along with the patient endurance and subsequent punishment thereof), than for malicious persecution to come to an end. So why suppose that (*ante omnia saecula*) God judged it would be better for there to be malicious persecution (along with patient endurance and subsequent punishment thereof), than for there to be no malicious persecution to be patiently endured or subsequently punished?

But however plausible one might consider (B) and (C), the Thomistic claim that, precisely inasmuch as He is good, God would not want to exclude all evil from the world is not without plausibility.

A way to see this is to ask whether you would want your life (or the life of someone you loved) to be completely free from evils. One's first reaction might be: "of course; why ever not?". But think: a completely evil-free life obviously leaves no room for heroic virtue of any kind, since heroic virtue is an entangled good. Indeed, a completely evil-free life doesn't even leave room for everyday virtues such as patience: patience is entangled with trial. A completely evil free life excludes any kind of love with (an even mildly) sacrificial element. Moreover, it's not as though a completely evil-free life would be deficient, only in ways that involve relations with others. A completely evil-free life excludes all overcoming of adversity, all disappointment, all anxiety. So a completely evil-free life is one in which "we shall never overcome" (because there is nothing to overcome), in which we shall always get everything we want (lest there be disappointment), and can always count on getting everything we want (lest there be anxiety). A life of that sort, it appears, excludes the possibility of making meaningful choices: choose this, that, or the other, and you're bound to get everything you want. Every choice is a choice of evident indifference, like the choice of Buridan's ass to head for this pile of hay, or that equidistant pile of hay. Is this really the kind of life you'd like to have? (For a very helpful discussion

of these sorts of points, see Mark Sainsbury, "Benevolence and Evil", *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 58, 2 (1980), pp. 128–34.)

Now if we would not want our lives to be evil-free – if we judge that our lives are better, for containing certain evils (and the goods entangled therewith), than our lives would be, if they were evil-free – then (assuming our judgments about the circumstances under which our lives would be better are not radically defective) it seems plausible that (before all ages) God would judge that the world would be better, for containing certain evils (and the goods entangled therewith), than the world would be, if it were evil-free. After all, one would expect God to judge that in a better world, rational creatures have better lives.

Now if (GC) is true, it is likewise true that

(FTBE) God created an evil-containing world, because He judged that the world would be better if it contained evil (together with entangled good), than if it did not contain evil.

(If God created a world containing a particular evil, because He judged that the world would be better if it contained that particular evil (and a particular entangled good), then God created a world with evil (i.e. created a world containing some evil of some kind) because He judged that the world would be better if it contained evil (and entangled good (i.e., some entangled good of some kind)).

"FTBE" stands for "for-the-best-explanation". (FTBE) says that God created an evil-containing world, because He judged that it was "for the best" if there was evil in the world. (For the best, for the world as a whole, and not necessarily for every part of the world: it's better for the world (and for rational creatures) if rational creatures don't have completely evil-free lives, but it isn't better for celestial bodies.)

So Aquinas' alternative to the free will or peccable free will explanation of why God created an evil-containing world is the for-the-best explanation. For at least some evils, God created a world containing those evils because He deemed the occurrence of those evils for the best. Indeed, if I have got Aquinas right, he thinks that for every evil there is, God created a world containing that evil because He deemed the occurrence of that evil for the best. To put more or less the same point another way, as well as thinking that there is evil only because God judges that it is for the best for there to be evil, Aquinas thinks that for every particular evil there is, there is such a thing as that particular evil, only because God judges that it is best for there to be such a thing. And this applies not just to natural evils, but to sins (e.g., malicious persecution).

Aquinas' for-the-best explanation contrasts with the sort of free will or peccable free will explanation contemporary readers may be more familiar with in many ways, two of which may be worth underscoring. First, P/FW explainers are not committed to the claim that God wanted there to be evil:

they can perfectly well hold that the world God would have wanted to create – the world He would have created, if only His creatures had been more cooperative – was evil-free. Second, P/FW explainers are committed to the idea that for at least some evils, the occurrence of those evils is explanatorily prior to God’s creation of a world in which they occur. It’s not that Eve falls because God creates a world in which she falls. Instead, God creates a world in which Eve falls, because she falls. That is, God ends up creating a world in which Eve falls (equivalently, creates a world in which Eve ends up falling) because Eve ends up falling. Aquinas’ account is certainly not committed to, and arguably leaves no room for, this kind of explanatory asymmetry. That’s because, as Aquinas seems to think, however Eve’s will actually moves after her encounter with the serpent, God’s moving her will that way is explanatorily prior to Eve’s will moving that way. So, if Eve’s will moves toward an inferior good – precipitating her fall – it moves in that direction because God moved in that direction.

Here a reader may wonder how Aquinas could avoid the claim that Eve’s falling is explanatorily prior to God’s creating a world in which Eve falls. For at *De Malo* 3, 1 (and elsewhere) Aquinas endorses the view that Augustine held (at least in *De Libero Arbitrio*) according to which sinners are the cause of their sins, but God is not. This might naturally be thought to imply that God leaves it to Eve to determine whether He ends up creating a world in which Eve falls or not, and that God accordingly ends up creating a world in which Eve falls only because Eve ends up falling.

This raises deep and difficult questions to which I cannot hope to do justice here. Very briefly, though, at *De Malo*, 3, 2 Aquinas admits – indeed insists – that God is the cause of what he calls “acts of sin” (*actiones peccati*): an act of sin is something real, and everything real is from God, so an act of sin is from or caused by God. Thus Aquinas wants to distinguish between the act of sin, which is caused by God, and the sin itself (which is not). For reasons I cannot go into without making an already long section longer still, the distinction Aquinas wants to draw here seems to me obscure and problematic. Be that as it may, we are still left with the following deep difference between Aquinas and P/FW explainers: for P/FW explainers, but not for Aquinas, there are some “movements of the will” (some *actiones*) such that God’s ending up creating a world with those movements of the will is explanatorily posterior to the occurrence of those movements of the will.

Having said something about Aquinas’ account of why God created a world containing evil (and sin), we may round off this section with Aquinas’ account of why God created a world containing hell.

In broad outline, it goes:

The ultimate end (the ideal end-state) of any rational creature is to see God as He is: rational creatures who attain that end will quite literally want for nothing. But although God created some things in their ideal end-state (celestial bodies), rational beings were not among them.

Since no rational creature was created in its ideal state, the best any rational creature can do is to subsequently attain that state.

In fact, though, it is no more possible for a rational creature to attain its ideal state through the use of its natural powers than it is for Peter to walk on the water through the use of his natural powers (see *ST*, Ia, 62, 2 (where the rational creatures under discussion are angels, and *SCG*, III, 147 (where they are human beings)). God accordingly gave His rational creatures something beyond the natural powers He endowed them with, to help them attain their ideal state – grace.

But although the provision of grace makes it possible for a rational creature to attain its ideal state, it does not make it necessary that that creature will attain that state, or compel that creature to attain that state. When God gives grace to an angel, He imparts a certain inclination to that angel's will, but that inclination does not impose any necessity on that will; hence an angel has it in his power not to use the grace he is given, and to turn his will toward sin, rather than toward God (*ST*, Ia, 62, 3, *ad 2um*).

That is, in spite of having been given grace, an angel can use his free will to move from his initial state of innocence – a state in which the angel's will is sinless, though peccable – to a state of sin, rather than from a state of innocence to a state of blessedness (a state in which the angel's will was impeccable as well as sinless). And the same goes for the first human beings: the grace Adam and Eve had been given did not compel them to move from a state of innocence to a state of blessedness, and left it within their power to move instead from a state of innocence to a state of sin.

An angel's falling into sin is the defining tragic moment of his life. Given that angels by nature have fixed and immutable wills, once they freely choose to turn toward sin and away from God, they can never turn back: a fallen angel's will is "confirmed in badness" in the same way that the wills of the blessed in heaven are confirmed in goodness (*ST*, Ia, 64, 2).

It's different in the case of human beings, because they have mutable wills. Hence God can deliver human beings from sin, and in His mercy wants to.

No human being can move from a state of innocence to a state of blessedness without the help of grace. Equally, no human being can move from a state of sin back to his or her original state of innocence, without the help of grace (*SCG*, III, 157). Nevertheless, God can, through His grace, free human beings from sin.

There is, however, a complication. When grace is given to a person in a state of innocence, that person can choose either to use that grace, or not to use it. That is, a person *in statu innocentiae* can choose either to go along with God's grace, or to get in its way. (Michael, Gabriel, and so on chose to go along with God's grace, and so attained blessedness; Lucifer chose to get in the way, and so did not).

Having given grace to a person *in statu innocentiae*, God does not need to give a person in the state of innocence more grace, to prevent that person from getting in the way of the grace already given; the ability to impede or not impede grace is within the scope of free choice of the person (*SCG*, III, 159).

The situation is different for a human being who has fallen from the state of innocence. A person in this condition does *not* have it within his or her power not to offer an impediment to grace. For, although a sinful human will is not inevitably fixed in evil in the way that a sinful angelic will is, a sinful human will, as such, resists the grace without which that will cannot turn away from sin and back to God (*SCG*, III, 160)

How does God's mercy address this problem? With "extra help":

Even though someone who sins offers an impediment to grace ... God, out of the abundance of His goodness, offers His help in advance, even to those who put an impediment in the way of grace, turning them away from evil and toward good.

(*SCG*, III, 161)

However, just as God does not give sight to everyone who is blind, or cure or all those who are ill, He does not give this "extra help" to all human sinners:

God does not help all those who impede grace, so that they might be turned away from evil and toward good, but only some.

(*SCG*, III, 161)

Those grace-impeding human sinners to whom God does not give extra help remain turned toward evil and away from good, just as fallen angels do (though for different reasons).

Now justice requires that those who remain permanently estranged from good (and from God) be punished. In one way, permanent estrangement from good and from God is its own punishment: those who are permanently estranged from good and from God are *eo ipso* permanently excluded from happiness. But God punishes those who are permanently estranged from Him in additional ways. And the venue of those punishments is hell.

So the existence of hell is overdetermined. On the angelic side, certain angels, *in statu innocentiae*, used their free will to move from their original state of innocence to a state of sin, rather than a state of blessedness. Given the nature of angelic wills, not even God could deliver fallen angels from their sins. There was nothing he could do to save fallen angels, and the best He could do, from the point of the overall goodness of the world, was to punish them eternally. This He did, which is why hell exists. On the human side, almost all human

beings used their free will to move into a state of sin. God gave some but not all of them enough help to make it possible for them to dig themselves out of the hole they had freely chosen to dig themselves into. Hence some human sinners never did get out of that hole. Again, the best thing God could do, from the point of the overall goodness of the world, was to punish them eternally. This He did, which (again) is why hell exists.

So hell exists because some angels misused their free will (and God is just). Also, hell exists because some human misused their free will, and weren't given enough help to afford them the possibility of turning back to God (and God is just).

As I have represented Aquinas' view, the existence of hell is explained in terms of creaturely sin and divine justice (in the case of angels), and of creaturely sin, divine non-assistance, and divine justice (in the case of humans). This seems natural enough, given that Aquinas thinks of hell as punishment (indeed, the worst punishment of all). However, it might be thought that (for Aquinas) the existence of hell can be explained simply in terms of creaturely sin (in the case of angels), and creaturely sin and divine non-assistance, in the case of humans. For it might be thought anyone who is permanently excluded from happiness is thereby in hell, whether or not any additional punishments are imposed. If that is so, then – assuming (as Aquinas would) that permanent exclusion from happiness is the inevitable consequence of permanent estrangement from God – whatever explains the permanent estrangement of some creatures from God would also explain the existence of hell. Now we don't need to appeal to divine justice to explain why, say, Lucifer became permanently estranged from God. Thus one might interpret Aquinas' account in such a way that divine justice does not after all need to be appealed to in order to explain why there is such a thing as hell (but only to explain why hell is bad in all the ways it actually is).

As Aquinas is aware, someone might think that Aquinas' account of hell is incompatible with divine justice. Unless a sinner is given enough help to overcome the impediment to grace that every sinner, *qua* sinner, puts in the way of grace, the sinner will never be delivered from sin. But it's not up to a sinner whether he or she is given enough help; it's up to God. So, it seems, it's not up to the sinner whether the sinner goes on sinning. In which case, the objection goes, how can God justly punish people for going on sinning?

Aquinas answers that, even though a sinner cannot avoid blocking grace (and going on sinning), in the absence of special help, sinners can still be justly punished, even if that special help is not provided, because they got themselves into the mess they are in. They are responsible for, and may be justly punished for, going on sinning, for the same reasons that a drunken man is responsible for a homicide committed in a drunken stupor, assuming that he is responsible for having gotten drunk in the first place (SCG, III, 160).

Still, why does God help some grace-impeding sinners, and not others? One answer might be that God helps those grace-impeding sinners He deems to be more deserving of help, and doesn't help those grace-impeding sinners He deems less deserving. But for Aquinas, this sort of answer is heretical (and Pelagian). Another answer would be:

I can fail to help you either because I didn't try to help you, or because I tried to help you, but you wouldn't let me. Analogously, God could fail to help grace-impeding sinners either because He doesn't try to help them, or because He tries to help them, but they won't let themselves be helped.

After all, it is up to a grace-impeding sinner whether or not he or she lets God help him or her. In fact, God tries to help all grace-impeding sinners; the ones He helps are the ones who don't thwart His attempts to help them.

Yet another answer would be:

There are grace-impeding sinners that God doesn't help, and doesn't even try to help. But he tries to help all grace-impeding sinners, except those who – He knows – would not let themselves be helped: He tries to help (and indeed helps) all (and only) those He knows there's a point in trying to help.

On these answers, the fact that God helps some grace-impeding sinners and not others (or helps these grace-impeding sinners and not those grace-impeding sinners) is explained by reference to differences in the actual or counterfactual responses of grace-impeding sinners to God's actual or counterfactual attempts to help them.

Aquinas' own answer to the question of why God helps some grace-impeding sinners, but not others, seems to move along quite different lines:

God does not help all those who impede grace, so that they may be turned away from evil and toward good, but only some, in whom He wants His mercy to appear, so that in others the order of justice might be made manifest. Hence the Apostle says in Romans 9: 22–23, “What if God, willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had before prepared unto glory?”

God came to the aid of some grace-impeding sinners, so that His mercy might be made manifest, and not to others, so that His justice might be made manifest. As Aquinas thinks of it, if God came to the aid of no grace-impeding sinners – leaving all to be permanently excluded from happiness

– then the world would be less good, inasmuch as it would represent His mercy less well than it actually does. Equally, though, if God came to the aid of all grace-impeding sinners, rather than letting some go on sinning, and be permanently excluded from happiness, the world would be less good, inasmuch as it would represent His (avenging) justice less well than it actually does (cf. *ST*, Ia, 23, 5, *responsio*).

For Aquinas, that is why God, in regard to men who are held back by the same sins, comes to the assistance of some, and allows others to go on sinning. If we ask why God comes to the assistance of these sinners, and not those ones, Aquinas says, that depends on His will alone. Aquinas offers the following analogy (though I have extended and modified it somewhat): suppose a potter started with some clay, and used half of the clay to make a bowl, and the other half to make a cup. We might ask her why she did things that way, rather than using both halves of the clay to make bowls, or both halves of the clay to make cups. Then she would say that she deemed it better to have a bowl and cup, than two bowls, or two cups, because ... If, on the other hand, we asked the potter why she used this half of a (homogeneous) bit of clay to make a bowl, and that half to make a cup, rather than the other way round, she would say: I simply chose to. That the artisan makes this half of the clay into a bowl, and that half into a cup, depends on the “simple will” of the artisan; in the same way, that God helps this grace-impeding sinner to turn away from sin toward Him, and allows that grace-impeding sinner to go on sinning, depends on His “simple will” (*SCG*, III, 161 and *ST*, Ia, 23, 5, *ad 3um*).

Notice that the potter analogy that Aquinas takes from Romans 9: 21 (and the variants of that analogy Aquinas offers in *ST*, Ia, 23, 5 *ad 3um*, and elsewhere) would seem manifestly inappropriate, if Aquinas were in sympathy with either the second or third suggested explanation of why God helps some but not all grace-impeding sinners. On those explanations, the reason God didn’t help all grace-impeding sinners was either that He tried to help all grace-impeding sinners, but some wouldn’t let Him, or that He didn’t even try to help some, because He knew the attempt would be futile. If the first explanation were the right one, then the case of the potter would be analogous to the case of God and grace-impeding sinners, only if the potter had attempted to make two cups out of the two halves of the clay, and one half had defied her best efforts to make it into a cup, and insisted on turning into a bowl. If the second explanation were the right one, then the case of the potter would be analogous to the case of God and grace-impeding sinners, only if the potter made a cup out of one half of the clay, and didn’t even try to make a cup out of the other half, because she knew that the other half of the clay would resist all her efforts to be made into a cup, and would insist on turning into a bowl.

That God’s turning this person away from sin, and allowing that one to persist in sin, depends on His simple will, Aquinas insists, is perfectly compatible with divine justice: God doesn’t owe sinners anything, and can

give anyone He wants more or less, just as He pleases (*pro libito suo: ST, Ia, 23, 5 ad 3um*).

Even if this is so, it seems to me that there are severe difficulties in trying to reconcile Aquinas' account of why some but not all sinners are saved with the idea that God is Love.

Consider a variant of the parable of the prodigal son in which both of the father's sons claim their half of their inheritance, leave home, and proceed to squander their property in reckless living. The father knows that all this is going on, and grieves. But he doesn't just grieve: he goes out, finds one of his sons, persuades him that he should come home, and makes it possible for him to do so.

After he gets home, the returning son asks whether his brother has also returned. The father shakes his head sadly. Imagine that the conversation continues in this vein:

SON: Were you unable to persuade my brother to swallow his pride and come home?

FATHER: No, I didn't even try.

SON: You didn't even try to persuade him to come home, because you knew the attempt would be futile?

FATHER: No.

SON: So why didn't you go to the same lengths to get him to come home, as you did to get me to come home? Had he done something to offend you even more deeply than I had offended you?

FATHER: No; both of you had hurt me very badly, and neither of you was entitled to any help from me.

SON: But you helped me, and you didn't even try to help him: why?

FATHER: In my relations with my children, I want to be both a just father, and a merciful one. By allowing one son that had sinned before me to come to a desperately bad end, I made my justice manifest: that a son who had treated me so badly should come to a thoroughly bad end was a just and fitting outcome. But I wanted to be a merciful father as well as a just one. By finding one son, persuading him that he should come back, and making it possible for him to do so, I made my mercy manifest. That is why I helped one of my sons come home, but not both. As to why I helped you, and not him – that decision depended on my simple will.

At the end of this conversation, can the returning son think of his father as supremely loving? I find it hard to think so. However much affection the father had for his sons, in the end, it mattered more to him to make his (avenging) justice manifest, than to try to get both his sons home. And it is hard not to see this as a limit to the father's love of his sons.

If, however, the father in the variant of the parable of the prodigal son is less than supremely loving, then, it would seem, the same can be said for

God, as characterized on Aquinas' account of grace, salvation, and damnation. For the variant of the parable was (evidently) constructed in such a way as to make the choices the father makes concerning his prodigal sons as much as possible like the choices that (on Aquinas' account) God makes concerning his grace-impeding sinners.

In this context, it is striking that, in discussing predestination and reprobation, Aquinas says:

Those to whom [God] decided from eternity not to give His grace He is said to have reprobated or to have hated, in keeping with what we find in Malachias (1: 2-3): "I have loved Jacob, but have hated Esau."

(*Summa Contra Gentiles*, III, 163; see also *ST*, Ia, 23, 3 *ad* 1um)

As Aquinas thinks of it, God loves all beings, but this doesn't keep Him from hating some beings, since God can love a being under one aspect, and hate that being under another. In particular, God loves the reprobate insofar as they are real beings or natures (*naturae quaedam*), and hates them insofar as they are sinners, and thus deficient in being (cf. *ST*, Ia, 20, 2, 4 and *ad* 4um). God loves the reprobate, just as He loves the predestined – but He doesn't love the reprobate in such a way as to prevent Him from choosing to let the worst possible thing that could ever happen to anyone happen to them.

Some readers may think that the doctrine of hell itself, and not merely Aquinas' account of hell, is difficult or impossible to reconcile with the idea that God is Love. (Various philosophers and non-philosophers have argued for or endorsed such a view; cf., for example, Marilyn McCord Adams, "The Problem of Hell: A Problem of Evil for Christians", in E. Stump, ed., *Reasoned Faith: Essays in Philosophical Theology in Honor of Norman Kretzmann*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993, pp. 301–27, and Madeleine L'Engle, *The Irrational Season*, New York: Harper Collins, 1997.) This is not the place to address this question, but I will say that Aquinas' conception of hell (and, in particular, of how human beings who end up in hell get there) is problematic in ways that certain alternatives (e.g., C. S. Lewis's) are not. Those who hold that God does everything non-coercive He possibly can to turn sinners away from sin and back toward Him, and hold that hell is simply permanent estrangement from God, can say (as Lewis does) that inasmuch as God loves His rational creatures, He respects their free agency; and inasmuch as He respects their free agency, He cannot forcibly keep them from choosing permanent estrangement from Him – which is to say, He cannot forcibly keep them from consigning themselves to hell. God is not like the father in the variant of the parable of the prodigal son. He is instead like the father in a different variant of that parable, in which the father does his utmost to persuade both of the prodigal sons to come back. One son lets himself be persuaded; the other has hardened his heart, and does not. Even though he could, the father does not have the son who does

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not let himself be persuaded tied up, and dragged home bodily; instead he goes home with only one of his sons, and with a heavy heart. In this variant of the parable, it does not seem obvious that there are limits to the father's love for his sons, even though one son came home, and one did not: the father leaves one of his sons in the miserable state he got himself into, not out of love for "parental justice", but out of respect-involving love for the son he leaves in that state.

5 Goodness

Goodness and being

In his *Commentary on the Sentences* (Book 2, d. 34 q. 1 a. 2 ad 1) Aquinas says that good(ness) is convertible with being (*bonum et ens convertuntur*). (For brevity I shall call this claim (CGB) (short for “the convertibility of good with being”).) (CGB) seems to imply (at least) that the terms “good” and “being” are co-extensive, so that all beings are good and all goods are beings (equivalently: all and only beings are goods). Indeed it seems to imply that “good” and “being” are (in contemporary philosophical parlance) co-intensive, so that necessarily, all and only beings are goods. In other words, (CGB) seems to imply that *being* is both necessary and sufficient for *being good*.

In a not dissimilar vein, at *ST*, Ia, 5, 1, Aquinas says that good and being are really identical (*bonum et ens sunt idem secundum rem*), even though the concept of good and the concept of being are different. As I understand Aquinas, when he says that *a* and *b* are really identical, he typically uses “really” (*secundum rem, realiter*) to indicate that *a* and *b* are one and the same thing (full stop), even though or even if the concept of *a* and the concept of *b* are different concepts. So in this context, Aquinas seems to be saying that *being good* and *being* are in fact one and the same thing, even though our concept of being good is different from our concept of being, in the same way that (for Aquinas) omniscience and omnipotence are one and the same thing (God, pure act, subsistent *esse*), even though our concept of omniscience and our concept of omnipotence are different concepts. Let us call the claim that goodness and being are really identical (RIGB) (short for “real identity of goodness and being”). (RIGB) arguably goes beyond (is marginally controversial with respect to) any of the implications of (CGB) set out above. The reason for this is that if *being good* and *being* are one and the same, then *being good* is obviously both necessary and sufficient for *being*, but the converse is not beyond doubt. Some philosophers have thought that *being an equilateral triangle* and *being an equiangular triangle* are really distinct, even though *being an equilateral triangle* is both necessary and sufficient for *being an equiangular triangle*, and one might take the same line about *being* and *being good*.

Aquinas is aware that one might well take issue with (RIGB). At *ST*, Ia, 5, 1, he considers a number of challenges to both, including the following:

It seems that good is really different from being. For Boethius says ... I intuit that it is one thing for things to be good and another for things to be (*intueor in rebus aliud esse quod sunt bona, et aliud esse quod sunt*). So good and being are really different.

(*ST*, Ia, 5, 1, obj. 1)

Also, good can be more or less (*bonum suscipit magis et minus*). But being (*esse*) cannot be ... So good is really different from being (*bonum differt secundum rem ab ente*).

(*ST*, Ia, 5, 1, obj. 3)

The first objection seems less an argument against (RIGB) than a denial of it. Why suppose we intuit that it is one thing for things to be good, and another thing for things to be? One possible reason appears at *ST*, Ia, 5, 3, obj. 2:

Nothing bad is good: [as it says in] *Isaiah*, V 20, *woe to you who call what is bad good, and what is good bad*. But some beings are said to be bad. So not all beings are good.

If not all beings are good (have goodness), but (trivially) all beings are beings (have being), then (CGB), and thus (RIGB) are false.

Given that the first objection of *ST*, Ia, 5, 1 doesn't provide any support for the claim that it is one thing for things to be good, and another thing for things to be, we might have expected Aquinas to reject objection 1 as question-begging. In fact, Aquinas' response to that objection is less dismissive and more interesting:

Although good and being are really the same (*idem secundum rem*), since they differ conceptually (*different secundum rationem*), a thing is not said to be a being *simpliciter* and good *simpliciter* in the same way ... A thing is said to be a being *simpliciter* on account of that by which it is primarily distinguished from what is only in potentiality. But this is the substantial being (*esse substantiale*) of a thing. So any being is said to be *simpliciter* on account of its substantial being (*unde per suum esse substantiale dicitur ens simpliciter*) ... Whatever is ultimately perfect is said to be good *simpliciter*; whatever does not have the ultimate perfection it should have, even though it has some perfection inasmuch as it is an actual being (*ens actu*), is still not said to be perfect *simpliciter* or good *simpliciter*, but only [perfect or good] in a qualified sense (*secundum quid*). So a thing is said to be a being *simpliciter* and good *secundum quid* (that is, insofar as it is a being) on account of its first *esse* (*secundum primum esse*); but a thing is said to be a being *secundum quid* and good *simpliciter* on account of its

last actuality (*secundum ... ultimum actum*) ... A thing is said to be a being *simpliciter* on account of its first actuality (*secundum primum actum*) and good *simpliciter* on account of its last actuality (*secundum ultimum [actum]*) ... Nevertheless a thing is in a way good (*quodammodo bonum*) on account of its first actuality, and is in a way a being (*quodammodo ens*) on account of its last actuality.

(*ST*, Ia, 5, 1, *ad* 1um)

So, Aquinas concludes, Boethius didn't get things wrong when he said that it is one thing for things to be good, and another for them to be. But the intuition he was expressing was that it is one thing for things to be good *simpliciter*, and another for them to be *simpliciter* (*ibid.*).

In responding to objection 3, Aquinas again appeals to the distinction between the first actuality in virtue of which a thing is said to be *simpliciter*, and a subsequent (or supervenient) actuality in virtue of which it is said to be good:

Good is said to be more or less on the basis of subsequent actuality (*bonum dicitur secundum magis et minus secundum actum supervenientem*), such as knowledge or virtue.

(*ST*, Ia, 5, 1, *ad* 3um)

I don't really understand how Aquinas' very detailed reply to objection 1 (or his very concise reply to objection 3) is meant to work. It's not that I find the particular things Aquinas is saying in his reply to objection 1 (or his very quick reply to objection 3) opaque. It's just that (for reasons I shall try to get across) I don't see how those things add up to a defense of the thesis that objection 1 (or objection 3) is an objection to – viz., the thesis that being and good(ness) are really identical.

Since Aquinas' response to objection 1 turns on the difference between being *simpliciter*, and being good *simpliciter* on the one hand, and being *secundum quid* and being good *secundum quid* on the other, it will be useful to review how Aquinas understands the distinction between being (or being *F*) *simpliciter*, and being (or being *F*) *secundum quid*.

As we have seen in [chapter 2](#), in the *De Principiis Naturae* and elsewhere, Aquinas distinguishes alteration or accidental change from substantial change. When accidental change takes place, we have generation (and corruption) *secundum quid*, but not generation (or corruption) *simpliciter*; when a human being is conceived, we have generation *simpliciter* (and when a human being dies, we have corruption *simpliciter*). Also, at *De Unione Verbi Incarnati*, un., 3, Aquinas notes that what can be predicated of a part of a thing, but not of the whole thing itself, is predicable of that thing *secundum quid* but not *simpliciter*: an Ethiopian with white teeth is white *secundum quid*, but not white *simpliciter*. Finally, as we have seen in [Chapter 3](#), Aquinas suggests that a heap of stones is one thing *secundum quid*, but is many things

simpliciter (see *ST*, IIIa, 2, 1, *responsio*, where Aquinas says that when stones are heaped together, the result is not one thing *simpliciter*, but only one thing *secundum quid* (*non fit unum simpliciter, sed secundum quid*). A human being, by contrast, is one thing *simpliciter* – though many things *secundum quid*, as Aquinas says at *De Unione Verbi Incarnati*, un., 3, *responsio*: “Socrates, inasmuch as he is white and musical, is many things, not *simpliciter*, but *secundum quid*.” And, in the same way that Socrates is one *simpliciter*, in virtue of being one hypostasis or *suppositum*, but many *secundum quid* in virtue of having many accidents, the incarnate Word is one *simpliciter*, in virtue of being one hypostasis or *suppositum*, but two *secundum quid*, in virtue of having two natures (one human, and one divine).

I take it that in these examples, and in general for Aquinas, to say that “*a* is *F simpliciter*” (or “*a* is said to be *F simpliciter*”) is to say something like:

“*a* is *F*” (just as it is, without additions or modifications or qualifications) is strictly and literally true.

or

Someone who non-elliptically said, “*a* is *F*” would say something that was strictly and literally true.

– and to say “*a* is *F secundum quid*” (or “*a* is said to be *F secundum quid*”) is to say something like:

a suitably qualified or modified version of “*a* is *F*” (just as it is, without further additions or modifications or qualifications) is strictly and literally true.

or

someone who non-elliptically uttered a suitably qualified or modified version of “*a* is *F*” would say something that was strictly and literally true.

For example, when Socrates was conceived, he was generated *simpliciter*. To be generated is to come to exist (from something or someone else). And, at the moment of Socrates’ conception, “Socrates has come to exist (from something or someone else)” (just as it is, without additions or modifications or qualifications) becomes strictly and literally true. At that moment, someone who non-elliptically said, “Socrates has come to exist (from something or someone else)” would say something strictly and literally true.

Similarly, when Socrates died, he was corrupted *simpliciter*. To be corrupted is to cease to exist. And at the moment of Socrates’ death, “Socrates has ceased to exist” (just as it is, without additions or modifications or qualifications) becomes strictly and literally true.

Suppose on the other hand that Socrates undergoes an accidental change – say, ceases to be pale and becomes tan. When Socrates loses his pallor, he does not cease to exist. But we could say that he ceases to exist *as pale*. So there is a suitably qualified or modified version of “Socrates has ceased to exist” – viz., “Socrates has ceased to exist as pale” – that (just as it is, without additions or modifications or qualifications) becomes strictly and literally true at the moment that Socrates loses his pallor. Since undergoing corruption = ceasing to exist, we can say there is a suitably qualified or modified version of “Socrates has undergone corruption” – say, “Socrates has undergone corruption with respect to his pallor” – that (just as it is, without additions or modifications or qualifications) becomes strictly and literally true at the moment that Socrates loses his pallor. We can accordingly say that when Socrates loses his pallor, he undergoes corruption *secundum quid* (though not, of course, *simpliciter*).

Likewise, when Socrates acquires a tan, he does not start to exist. But, we could say, he does start to exist *as tan*. So, by the reasoning just sketched, we can say that when Socrates acquires a tan, he undergoes generation *secundum quid* (though not, of course, *simpliciter*), since a suitably modified or qualified version of “Socrates has undergone generation” – say, “Socrates has undergone generation with respect to his tan – (just as it is, without additions or modifications or qualifications) becomes strictly and literally true at the moment. Thus, if Socrates loses pallor and acquires a tan *simul*, he is simultaneously generated and corrupted *secundum quid* (even if nothing can be generated *simpliciter* and corrupted *simpliciter* at the very same time).

Similarly, if this Dane is a typical Dane, then this Dane will be white *simpliciter*, since “this Dane is white” (just as it is, without additions or modifications or qualifications) will be strictly and literally true. And if this Ethiopian is typical, then this Ethiopian will not be white *simpliciter*, since “this Ethiopian is white” (just as it is, without additions or modifications or qualifications) will not be strictly and literally true. But an Ethiopian who is not white *simpliciter* can still be white *secundum quid*, as long as he has white teeth. For if the Ethiopian is white-toothed, then there is a suitably modified or qualified version of “that Ethiopian is white” – say, “that Ethiopian is white of teeth” – that (just as it is, without additions or modifications or qualifications) is strictly and literally true. (Similarly, in terms of the *simpliciter/ secundum quid* distinction, we could describe a certain debate in contemporary medical ethics as concerning whether human beings that are “brain-dead” (no longer have a living higher brain) are dead *simpliciter*, or only dead *secundum quid*.)

As for the heap of stones, I think Aquinas holds something like the following view: there are stones, and there are stones “arranged heapwise” (as Peter van Inwagen would say). But it’s a mistake to think there really are heaps of stones, as well as stones (including stones arranged heapwise). A pair of earrings, grammatical appearances notwithstanding, is two things

(viz., two, earrings), and not one thing (a pair of earrings) made of two things (two earrings). Similarly, a heap of stones, grammatical appearances notwithstanding, is many things (many stones arranged heapwise), and not one thing (a heap of stones) made of many things (viz., many stones). Grammatical niceties aside, a heap of stones, like a pair of earrings, “is a many”, rather than a “one made of many”.

Because a heap of stones is a many, rather than a one, “a heap of stones is one” (just as it is, without additions or modifications or qualification) is not strictly and literally true. Hence a heap of stones is not one *simpliciter*. (By contrast, a human being is one *simpliciter*, and not just one *secundum quid*, because, although a heap of stones is many stones arranged heapwise, a human being is not many organs or many cells or many atoms arranged humanwise). Even so, we speak of (and perhaps think of) heaps of stones as though they were ones, rather than manys. As we might put it, even if a heap of stones is not really one, it is one in a manner of speaking. Hence there is a suitably modified or qualified version of “a heap of stones is one” – to wit, “a heap of stones is one in a manner of speaking” that (just as it is, without additions or modifications or qualifications) is strictly and literally true. Hence a heap of stones is one *secundum quid*, even though it is not one *simpliciter*.

Let us call expressions such as “*simpliciter*”, “simply”, “wholly”, “partly”, “necessarily”, “eternally”, “allegedly” and also expressions such as “as you know”, “in fact”, “to a certain extent”, and “in a manner of speaking” *modifiers*. Let us say that the modifier “*G*-ly” is *subtractible* just in case necessarily, (for any *F*) only things that are *F* are *G*-ly *F*. (I use the term “subtractible” here, because if necessarily (for any *F*), only things that are *F* are *G*-ly *F*, then I can always ‘subtract’ the modifier “*G*-ly” from “*a* is *G*-ly *F*” *salva veritate* (that is, I can always remove the modifier “*G*-ly” from “*a* is *G*-ly *F*” without turning a truth into a falsehood).)

The modifiers “necessarily” and “eternally” are both subtractible, because (for any *F*) necessarily, only things that are *F* are necessarily *F* or eternally *F*. The modifier “allegedly” is not subtractible, since it is not necessary (or even true) that, say, only irresponsible individuals are allegedly irresponsible.

Let us call a modifier “*G*-ly” *addible* just in case necessarily (for any *F*) all things that are *F* are *G*-ly *F*. (I use the term “addible” here, because if necessarily (for any *F*) all things that are *F* are *G*-ly *F*, then I can always add the modifier “*G*-ly” to “*F*” (prefix the “*F*” in “*a* is *F*” with “*G*-ly”) *salva veritate* (without turning a truth into a falsehood).

A modifier such as “accidentally or essentially” is addible, given that necessarily (whatever *F* might be) all things that are *F* are accidentally or essentially *F*.

As may (or may not) be immediately clear, subtractibility does not imply addibility. “Eternally” is a subtractible modifier, since necessarily (for any *F*) only things that are *F* are eternally *F*. But it is not an addible modifier, since it is not necessary (or even true) that (for all *F*) all things that are *F* are eternally *F*. (For example, not all patient persons are eternally patient.) To

take another example, Gödel's incompleteness theorems show that "provably-in-Peano-arithmetic" is subtractible but not addible (only true statements of mathematics are provably true in Peano arithmetic, but not all true statements of mathematics are provably true in Peano arithmetic).

Equally, addibility does not imply subtractibility. "Accidentally-or-essentially or allegedly" is an addible modifier, since necessarily (for any F) all things that are F are accidentally or essentially F , and thus accidentally-or-essentially or allegedly F . But it is not a subtractible modifier, since it is not necessary (or even true) that, for all F , only things that are F are accidentally-or-essentially or allegedly F . For example, it is not true that only individuals that are criminals are accidentally-or-essentially or allegedly criminals: some non-criminals are allegedly criminals, and are accordingly accidentally-or-essentially or allegedly criminals.

Although subtractibility does not imply addibility, or vice versa, neither does subtractibility rule out addibility, or vice versa: subtractibility and addibility are compatible, and mutually independent. "Accidentally or essentially" is a modifier that is both subtractible and addible. (Necessarily (for any F) all and only things that are accidentally or essentially F are F .) Similarly, the modifier "in fact" is both subtractible and addible: necessarily (for any F) all and only things that are in fact F are F . We may call a modifier that is both subtractible and addible *redundant*. (I use the term "redundant" here because if necessarily all and only things that are G -ly F are F , then being G -ly F and being F "come to the same thing", so that removing the " G -ly" from any statement about things that are G -ly F cannot make a difference to the truth value of that statement.)

If a is F *simpliciter* means " a is F " (just as it is, without additions or modifications or qualifications) is strictly and literally true, then "*simpliciter*" is a subtractible modifier. For whenever it's true that a is F *simpliciter*, " a is F " (just as it is, without additions or modifications or qualifications) will be true. So " a is F " will be true. So, (by "semantic descent") a will be F . (To say the same thing a different way: it could not possibly be that " a is F " (just as it is, without additions or modifications or qualifications) is strictly and literally true, if a were not F .)

Also, if a is F *simpliciter* means " a is F " (just as it is, without additions or modifications or qualifications) is strictly and literally true, then "*simpliciter*" is an addible modifier. Suppose that this ball is round. Then I can non-elliptically say "this ball is round", and say something strictly and literally true. In which case, "this ball is round" (just as it is, without additions or modifications or qualifications) is strictly and literally true. In which case this ball is round *simpliciter*. If this ball is in fact round, then I can (without recourse to ellipsis) say that the ball is round, and stop, and say something strictly and literally true. In which case I can also truly say that the ball is round full stop, or round in an unqualified sense, or round *simpliciter*. Think of it this way: if something can be round, without being round *simpliciter*, then simply being round doesn't guarantee being round *simpliciter*. But how could being round *simpliciter* require more than simply being round?

If this is right, then the modifier “*secundum quid*” is not subtractible. Consider an Ethiopian who is not white *simpliciter*, but has white teeth. Assuming that “*simpliciter*” is addible as well as subtractible, *that Ethiopian is white* implies *that Ethiopian is white simpliciter*. So, by contraposition, *that Ethiopian is not white simpliciter* implies *that Ethiopian is not white*. In which case (by modus ponens) we may conclude that that Ethiopian is not white. If, however, that Ethiopian has white teeth, then that Ethiopian is white *secundum quid*. If “*secundum quid*” were a subtractible modifier, *that Ethiopian is white secundum quid* would imply *that Ethiopian is white*. So if “*secundum quid*” were a subtractible modifier, we would be able to conclude (by modus ponens) that that Ethiopian is white. If “*secundum quid*” were a subtractible modifier, then we could truly say that that Ethiopian is not white (because he is not white *simpliciter*, which implies that he is not white), and we could truly say that Ethiopian is white (because he is white *secundum quid*, which implies that he is white). In which case, we could truly say that that Ethiopian is white and not white. But “that Ethiopian is white and not white” could not be true (even if “that Ethiopian is white *secundum quid* and not white *simpliciter*” could be). The moral is that “*secundum quid*” is not a subtractible modifier: being *F secundum quid* is no guarantee of being *F* (just as it is no guarantee of being *F simpliciter*).

Now let us return to *ST*, Ia, 5, 1, *ad 1um*. In that passage, Aquinas says that a substance is said to be a being *simpliciter* in virtue of its substantial *esse* (*per se esse substantiale*), which is its first actuality. Thus a substance’s having substantial *esse*/first actuality guarantees its being an *ens simpliciter* and its having *esse simpliciter*. On the other hand, Aquinas says, a substance is said to be good *simpliciter* on account of its ultimate actuality (*secundum ... ultimum actum dicitur aliquid ... bonum simpliciter*). Moreover, Aquinas clearly seems to say, a substance is said to be good *simpliciter only* on account of its last actuality. That is to say, a substance that is deficient enough in ultimate actuality is not said to be good *simpliciter*, despite having substantial *esse*/first actuality:

Whatever does not have the ultimate perfection it should have, even though it has some perfection inasmuch as it is an actual being (*ens actu*), is still not said to be perfect *simpliciter* or good *simpliciter*, but only [perfect or good] in a qualified sense (*secundum quid*).

So Aquinas’ view is that a substance can be *simpliciter* without being good *simpliciter* (since it can have substantial *esse*/first actuality, without also having the ultimate perfection it should have), but a substance cannot be good *simpliciter* without being *simpliciter* (since a substance cannot have the ultimate perfection it should have, without also having first actuality/substantial *esse*). For a substance to be good *simpliciter* is as it were “more difficult” than for that substance to be *simpliciter*, inasmuch as a substance gets to be *simpliciter* simply by having first actuality, but a substance gets to be good *simpliciter only* by having first actuality, *and* having the sort of ultimate actuality/ultimate perfection it should have (where a substance’s

having first actuality is no guarantee of its having the ultimate actuality/ultimate perfection it should have).

If, however, a substance can be *simpliciter* without being good *simpliciter*, then being *simpliciter* does not guarantee being good *simpliciter*. Now if “*simpliciter*” is a subtractible modifier, *being simpliciter* guarantees *being*. If *being simpliciter* guarantees *being*, but *being simpliciter* does not guarantee *being good simpliciter*, then *being* doesn’t guarantee *being good simpliciter*. (If A guarantees B, but A does not guarantee C, then B does not guarantee C; for if B *did* guarantee C, A would also guarantee C, by the transitivity of guarantee (by guaranteeing something (namely, B) that guaranteed C).) Furthermore if “*simpliciter*” is an addible modifier, *being good* guarantees *being good simpliciter*. In which case, if *being* does not guarantee *being good simpliciter*, then *being* does not imply *being good*. If *being* did guarantee *being good*, then (given that, by addibility, *being good* guarantees *being good simpliciter*), we could conclude (by the transitivity of guarantee), that *being* implies *being good simpliciter*. (That is, we could reason as follows: *being* guarantees *being good*; *being good* guarantees *being good simpliciter* (by the addibility of “*simpliciter*”); so (by the transitivity of guarantee) *being* guarantees *being good simpliciter*).

In short: if the modifier “*simpliciter*” is redundant – that is, both subtractible and addible – *being* does not guarantee *being good*. And if *being* does not guarantee *being good*, then *being* and *being good* cannot be one and the same attribute (under two different descriptions). (If attribute A does not guarantee attribute A’, then A and A’ cannot be the very same attribute, since every attribute is self-guaranteeing.)

Drawing our threads together: in his response to *ST*, Ia, 5, obj. 1, Aquinas avers that *being simpliciter* and *being good simpliciter* are really distinct (since the former does not guarantee the latter), but maintains that nevertheless *being* and *being good* are not really distinct. The difficulty is that, given the way Aquinas understands “*simpliciter*”, it seems that *being* and *being simpliciter* come to the same thing (i.e., are necessarily attributes of exactly the same things), as do *being good* and *being good simpliciter*; in which case *being* and *being good* must be really distinct, assuming that *being simpliciter* and *being good simpliciter* are.

I hope this explains why I said earlier that I do not understand Aquinas’ very detailed response to *ST*, Ia, 5, 1, obj. 1. That response is built around the idea that it is possible that something is said to be *simpliciter*, but not said to be good *simpliciter*. And, given Aquinas’ own understanding of the modifier *simpliciter*, this idea seems incompatible with the thesis objection 1 is an objection to – to wit, the real identity of being and goodness.

Turning to *ST*, Ia, 5, 1, obj. 3, here the objection is that since (a) being is not subject to degree, but (b) goodness is, it follows that (c) being and goodness are really discernible, and thus really distinct. Aquinas’ (telegraphic) reply is:

Good is said to be more or less on the basis of subsequent actuality (*bonum dicitur secundum magis et minus secundum actum supervenientem*), such as knowledge or virtue.

I confess not to understand how Aquinas' reply addresses the objection. What Aquinas seems to say in his response is that goodness is subject to degree inasmuch as it is tied to second actualities (e.g., knowledge and virtue) that are subject to degree. But this last claim seems perfectly compatible with the truth of both (a) and (b). Since, I take it, (a) and (b) jointly entail (c) – so that the objection is sound unless at least one of {(a), (b)} is false – Aquinas' response appears to be entirely compatible with the soundness of the objection.

To be sure, Aquinas can concede that goodness *suscipit magis et minus* without conceding the objection, as long as he maintains that being is subject to degree. In his response, though, Aquinas doesn't explicitly say, or even suggest, that being is subject to degree. (For what it's worth, I think Aquinas thinks that being – or at least, being *simpliciter* – is *not* subject to degree, but I shall not argue the point here.)

Is being subject to degree? An individual could be knowledgeable, or virtuous, to a higher or lower degree (more idiomatically, could be more or less knowledgeable, or virtuous). But it doesn't obviously make sense to say that an individual could *be* (be *simpliciter*, as opposed to be this or that way) to a higher or lower degree, or could *be* (be *simpliciter*, as opposed to be this or that way) more or less. "Is that individual more *F* or less *F*?" makes sense (for the right sort of *F*); "Is that individual more or less?" doesn't seem to. (Compare: if someone asked me, "Is Winterland no more?", I wouldn't respond, "is it no more *what*?"; if someone asked me, "Is Winterland more or less?" / "Is Winterland to a higher or lower degree?", I would respond, "Is it more or less *what*?" / "Is it *what* to a higher or lower degree?")

Setting Aquinas' response to objection 3 of *ST*, Ia, 5, 1 to one side, what we have said about his response to objection 1 raises worries, not just about the import and adequacy of that response, but also about the coherence of Aquinas' overall account of goodness and being. It looks as though Aquinas is committed to the real identity of goodness and being, and also committed to the real distinctness of goodness and being (inasmuch as he is committed to the real distinctness of goodness *simpliciter* from being *simpliciter*, and the real identity of goodness with goodness *simpliciter*, and the real identity of being with being *simpliciter*).

In *Aquinas*, Eleonore Stump makes an admirably dogged attempt to both expound and defend Aquinas' account of goodness and being. (Sometimes, in writing about Aquinas, I worry that I'm too quick to throw up my hands, and say, "this argument (or view) I can't make sense of". I never have that worry about Stump.) In what follows, I will say something about how she understands that account, and about how she thinks it can overcome the difficulties raised by objections 1 and 3 of *ST*, Ia, 5, 1.

For Aquinas, as Stump sees it, being = actuality = perfection = goodness. But actuality may be either first actuality, or second actuality. A substance has first actuality (simply) in virtue of having a substantial form and substantial *esse*. A substance has second actuality only in virtue of having a certain "operation" – that is, in virtue of actualizing ("reducing to act")

certain potentialities that are implied by having that substantial form (or, indeed, any substantial form of that kind):

[Goodness] consists principally and per se in in perfection and in actuality. But there are two kinds of actuality: first [actuality] and second [actuality]. First actuality is the form and integrity of a thing; second actuality is *operatio*.

(*ST*, Ia, 48, 5, *responsio*)

The second actuality (*actus secundus*) referred to here, seems to be the last actuality (*ultimus actus*) of *ST*, Ia, 5, 1, *ad 1um*:

Goodness *simpliciter* consists in actuality, and not in potentiality; but the ultimate actuality (*ultimus actus*) is *operatio*.

(*ST*, Ia, 48, 6, *responsio*)

So a substance is good to the extent that it is in actuality. Since every substance has some actuality (in virtue of having first actuality (aka substantial *esse*)), every substance is good; since a substance can be “secondarily actualized” (or “operative”) to a greater or lesser degree, a substance can be more or less good (more or less good than one of its conspecifics is now, or more or less good than it was in the past or will be in the future).

Stump argues that this account of goodness is coherent and defensible – in particular, defensible in the face of objections 1 and 3 of *ST*, Ia, 5, 1. Let us start with objection 3. If a substance cannot have more or less being, but a substance can have more or less actuality (inasmuch as it can be more or less “operative”), then, it seems, it cannot after all be that being = actuality = perfection = goodness. Does it really make sense to say that a substance can have more or less being? Stump answers:

Considered *absolutely*, being is the instantiation of a thing which has (or is) a certain substantial form; this is the mere existence of a thing of some sort. But since each substantial form also includes a specifying potentiality, when that potentiality is actualized, the thing actualizing it is more fully a thing of that sort, a better specimen. When being is considered in this second way, it is correct to say that *in a certain respect* there is an increase in being for that thing. The ordinary sense of ‘being’ is being considered absolutely, that is, a thing’s mere existence as the instantiation of a thing with a substantial form conferring a nature that includes a specifying potentiality. On the other hand, the actualization of a thing’s specifying potentiality is also the being of a thing, and the general state of ‘goodness’ is being understood in this way, what Aquinas, following Aristotle, calls ‘second actuality’. This is the state each thing naturally aims at, and it is in this state that the thing is said to have goodness.

(*Aquinas*, p. 68)

It may be right to say of existence that it is all or nothing; and, for Aquinas, the ordinary sense of ‘being’ is existence *simpliciter*. But every instance of existence is existence *as* something or other, and existence *as* something or other typically admits of degrees. A thing can be a more or less fully developed actualized specimen of its kind; it can have actualized its specifying potentiality to a greater or lesser degree. The ordinary sense of ‘goodness’, however, has to do with this actualization of specifying potentiality. And so it is by no means true that being in general is all or nothing. On Aquinas’ view, there is more to being than just existence; the actualization of the specifying potentiality of a thing is also being of a sort. Furthermore, unlike mere existence as a thing of a kind, the actualization of a specifying potentiality can be gradual, so that the being of the thing whose specifying potentiality is being actualized can admit of degrees. Consequently, although on Aquinas’s account, ‘being’ and ‘goodness’ both refer to being, because their senses are different, it can still be true that there are things which are not good.

(*ibid.*, p. 73)

The last sentence of the second passage is puzzling. The idea seems to be that we can truly say of an insufficiently “developed” or “operative” substance that it is not good. If, however, only some substances are good, then being and goodness must be really different, inasmuch as being, but not goodness, will be a property of each and every substance. Also, Aquinas says explicitly at *ST*, Ia, 1, 5, 3 that every being – and thus, every substance – is good. I shall return to these points when we consider Stump’s discussion of Aquinas’ response to *ST*, Ia, 5, 1, obj. 1.

My main worry about Stump’s defense of Aquinas’ response to *ST*, Ia, 5, 1, obj. 3 has to do with the way she understands Aquinas on “the ordinary sense of ‘being’” and “the ordinary sense of ‘goodness’”. On Stump’s reading, if I have not misunderstood it, Aquinas accepts both of these claims:

The ordinary sense of “being” is being considered absolutely (existence *simpliciter*, the mere existence of a thing of some sort).

The ordinary sense of “goodness” has to do with the second actuality (with being a close enough to fully developed specimen of one’s kind, with being sufficiently “operative”).

In which case, it would seem, Aquinas accepts both of these claims:

(In the ordinary sense of “goodness”), goodness is proportional to secondary actualization or “operativity” (the more secondary actuality or “operativity” a substance has, the more goodness it has).

(In the ordinary sense of “being”), being is not proportional to secondary actualization or “operativity”. (Even if one human being or holm oak is more secondarily actualized or operative than another, it will not be the case that the one human being or holm oak has more existence *simpliciter*, or mere existence as a thing of a certain sort, than the other.)

This implies that:

(In the ordinary senses of “goodness” and “being”), goodness and being are really distinct (since the former, but not the latter, is proportional to secondary actualization/operativity).

If, however, this is Aquinas’ view, then *bonum et convertuntur* and *bonum et ens sunt idem secundum rem* seem imperspicuous and potentially misleading ways of expressing it. There is existence *simpliciter*/mere existence as a thing of some sort, and then there are any number of properties that are compatible with (and presuppose) but not guaranteed by existence *simpliciter*/mere existence as a thing of some sort – including operativity. If the ordinary sense of “being” is existence *simpliciter*/existence as a thing of some sort, and the ordinary sense of “goodness” is operativity, why say that goodness and being are really the same? Wouldn’t it be better to say that goodness and being are really different, but goodness and operativity are really the same?

In this context, it is interesting that Stump says both that

for Aquinas, the ordinary sense of ‘being’ is existence *simpliciter*

and that

on Aquinas’ view, there is more to being than just existence.

If, in the ordinary sense of ‘being’, being just is existence *simpliciter*, then, in the ordinary sense of ‘being’, there is nothing more to being than existence. Why introduce an extraordinary sense of ‘being’ according to which there is something more to being than existence? (Compare: if in the ordinary sense of “matter”, angels have no matter, why introduce an extraordinary sense of “matter” (e.g., as “being that is as such in potency with respect to any kind of received form, be it substantial or accidental”), according to which angels have matter?)

As for objection 1 of *ST*, Ia, 5, 1, Stump thinks Aquinas can meet it, inasmuch as

It is true that in accordance with the central [meta-ethical] thesis [of Aquinas], a thing has goodness in a certain respect and to a certain extent simply by virtue of possessing a substantial form and thus existing

as a thing of a certain sort. The *sense* of ‘goodness’, however, is not simply the possession of some substantial form, but in particular, the actualization of the specifying potentiality of the nature conferred by that form. Only to the extent to which a thing has actualized that potentiality is it true to say unqualifiedly that the thing is good. For instance, to call Hitler good (without identifying some special respect, such as demagoguery) is to imply that he was good as a human being, or a moral agent; but this is false in ways that Aquinas’s practical morality could detail by indicating how Hitler failed to actualize the capacity for reason.

(*ibid.*, p. 73)

On Stump’s reading, for Aquinas, if a being is insufficiently secondarily actualized (insufficiently operative), it is not true to say unqualifiedly that that thing is good. Thus, given that Hitler was insufficiently secondarily actualized or operative, it is not true to say unqualifiedly that Hitler was good. On what seems to be a natural way of understanding this last claim, it implies that if someone says, “Hitler was good”, and stops (rather than, e.g., saying “Hitler was good ... at demagoguery”, or “Hitler was good – that is, a good demagogue”), he or she says something that is strictly and literally not true. But this last claim seems straightforwardly incompatible with the claim that *bonum et ens sunt idem secundum rem*. If “Hitler was good” is strictly and literally not true, then “Hitler” is not in the extension of goodness. (What more could be required for it be strictly and literally true that Hitler is good, than that Hitler be in the extension of goodness?) And if Hitler is not in the extension of goodness, then goodness is not really the same as being, since Hitler *is* in the extension of being, and an individual cannot be in the extension of *P* and not in the extension of *P*, if $P = P$.

Here someone might say:

So much the worse for Stump’s understanding of Aquinas’ response to objection 1. If, as Aquinas supposes, every being is good, then, given that Hitler is a being, it follows as the night does the day that Hitler is (or was) good, even if he isn’t (or wasn’t) as good as, say, Dietrich Bonhoeffer. In which case someone who says unqualifiedly that Hitler was good says something strictly and literally true, just as much as someone who says that Dietrich Bonhoeffer was good.

I don’t think this would be fair to Stump. I see why Stump says that, for Aquinas, it would not be true to say unqualifiedly that Hitler is good (and why she says that “on Aquinas’s account ... it can still be true that there are things that are not good” (p. 73)). (Upon being apprised of the relevant facts about Hitler’s character and choices) Aquinas would say that Hitler is not sufficiently secondarily actualized or operative for him to be good *simpliciter*. And, given the way that Aquinas understands (and, indeed, the way we understand) the modifier “*simpliciter*”, this does seem to imply that

someone who said unqualifiedly that Hitler was good would say something that is not strictly and literally true, which in turns seems to imply that there are things – i.e., beings – that are not good (e.g., Hitler). That some beings are not good is something Aquinas explicitly denies (cf. *ST*, Ia, 5, 3); nevertheless it is something that his own account of being *simpliciter* and goodness *simpliciter* apparently commits him to.

Still, someone might object, is it really plausible that Aquinas' account of the relation between being and goodness could be so deeply internally incoherent? Isn't it more plausible that "*simpliciter*", as Aquinas understands it, is not a redundant modifier?

Perhaps. But, as I have tried to make out with reference to various passages in which Aquinas uses the modifiers "*simpliciter*" and "*secundum quid*", it does not seem unmotivated to suppose that "*simpliciter*", as Aquinas understands it, is a redundant modifier. Also, I don't see what sort of alternative account of "*simpliciter*" would enable Aquinas to reconcile the identity and convertibility of goodness and being with the non-identity and "inconvertibility" of goodness *simpliciter* and being *simpliciter*. If "*simpliciter*" is not a redundant modifier, then either it is not subtractible, or it is not addible. But, for reasons already canvassed, it is surely subtractible (nothing can be *F simpliciter* if it's not even *F*). So those who want to leave "logical room" for the non-implication of *a is F simpliciter* by *a is F* will have to say that "*simpliciter*" is a subtractible but non-addible modifier, and thus that *a is F simpliciter* is logically stronger than *a is F*. Those who take this line should, I think, provide something in the way of an explanation of what extra conditions must be satisfied, over and above the ones required for *a is F* to be true, in order for *a is F simpliciter* to be true.

Here is an analogy: those who hold the (widely, but not universally shared view) that *a is inevitably F* is logically stronger than *a is F* ought to be able to provide something in the way of an explanation of what extra conditions need to be satisfied, over and above the ones required for *a is F* to be true, in order for *a is inevitably F* to be true.

Now those who hold that *a is inevitably F* is logically stronger than *a is F* do indeed offer something in the way of an explanation of the marginal logical strength of *a is inevitably F* with respect to *a is F*. They say something like: *a is F* is true just in case *a is F* is true in the actual complete history of the world (the history comprising the actual past, actual present, and actual future). *a is inevitably F* is true just in case *a is F* is not only true in the actual complete history of the world, but also true in every still-possible complete history of the world. The extra condition that needs to be satisfied, in order for *a is inevitably F* and not just *a is F* be true, is that *a is F* be true, not just in the "privileged" still-possible history (that is, the one comprising the actual past, actual present, and actual future), but also in all the "unprivileged" but still-possible histories (that is, the partly non-actual ones comprising the actual past and actual present, and some "alternative" (non-actual but still possible) future). (Readers interested in further details may find them in

my “Openness, Privilege, and Omniscience”, *European Journal for Philosophy Religion*, 4, 1, 2012, pp. 35–64.) Not everyone finds this explanation intelligible, since not everyone can make sense of the idea that a (possible) future that is “already” the one that is going to happen is only one of many futures that genuinely still might happen. But it is an explanation, or at least an attempt at an explanation.

In the case of *a is F* and *a is a F simpliciter*, however, I have no clue about what the alleged extra conditions that must be satisfied, in order for *a is F simpliciter* as well as *a is F* to be true, might be. What is, as it were, the *x* such that the truth of *a's being F + x = the truth of a's being F simpliciter*? What is the difference between *a's* simply being *F*, and *a's* being not just *F* but also *F simpliciter*?

Well, someone might say, just as something might be accidentally or essentially *F*, something might be *F simpliciter* or *secundum quid*. And just as *a is F* if and only if *a* is accidentally *F* or *a* is essentially *F*, *a is F* if and only if *a is F simpliciter* or *F secundum quid*. Moreover, *a* can be *F secundum quid*, without being *F simpliciter* (loss of pallor is corruption *secundum quid*, but not corruption *simpliciter*, the Ethiopian is white *secundum quid*, but not white *simpliciter*, a heap of stones or pair of earrings is one thing *secundum quid*, but not *simpliciter*, and so on). So there is no difficulty about explaining the extra condition that *a* must satisfy, in order for it be true not just that *a is F*, but also that *a is F simpliciter*; that extra condition is *not being F secundum quid*.

I don't think this will work. For if a white-toothed Ethiopian is white *secundum quid*, so too is a white-toothed Dane. A white-toothed Dane is white *simpliciter* and white *secundum quid*. Hence it cannot be that what is required for *a* to be white *simpliciter* as well as white is that *a* not only be white *simpliciter* or white *secundum quid*, but also white *simpliciter* and not white *secundum quid*.

It might be suggested here that what is required for *a* to be, not only *F*, but also *F simpliciter*, is that *a* not only be *F* (i.e., *F simpliciter* or *F secundum quid*), but also not *F* merely *secundum quid*. But presumably, *a is F merely secundum quid* means *a is F secundum quid* and *a is not F simpliciter*. So this last suggestion amounts to saying that *a* is not only *F* but also *F simpliciter* when *a* is not only *F* (which is to say, *F secundum quid* or *F simpliciter*) but also *F simpliciter*—which doesn't count as an explanation of what more is required, in order for it to be true, not just that *a is F*, but also that *a is F simpliciter*.

In any case, for reasons already touched upon, neither (i) *a is F if and only if a is F simpliciter* or *a is F secundum quid* nor (ii) *a is F if and only if a is F simpliciter* or *a is F merely secundum quid* seems to be true. If (i) is true, then it is true that things that undergo accidental change cease to exist (since they cease to exist in a qualified way, and so cease to exist *secundum quid*). Moreover, it is true that things that undergo accidental change (simultaneously) continue to exist and cease to exist (since they continue to exist *simpliciter*, and cease to exist *secundum quid*). So it is true that some things simultaneously continue to exist and cease to exist. But it surely is not true that anything simultaneously continues to exist and ceases to exist,

even if it is true that some things simultaneously continue to exist *simpliciter* and cease to exist *secundum quid*.

If this is so, then (i) is not true. For much the same reasons, neither is (ii). (If *a* undergoes accidental change, it continues to exist *simpliciter*, and ceases to exist merely *secundum quid*, in which case, according to (ii) *a* continues to exist and ceases to exist.)

In short, what we might call the “disjunctivist” explanation of what *a is F simpliciter* adds to *a is F* seems to fail. And, although this may simply be a failure of imagination on my part, I don’t know of any (superior) alternative to the disjunctivist explanation. Moreover, as far as I am aware, Aquinas does not offer an explanation, disjunctivist or otherwise, of what *a is F simpliciter* adds to *a is F*.

Here someone might object that Aquinas certainly does provide an explanation of what *a is good simpliciter* adds to *a is good*: the difference between *a*’s being good, and *a*’s being good *simpliciter*, is *a*’s having sufficient ultimate actuality (as well as first actuality).

The difficulty is that we need to understand, in the context of a general account of the modifier “*simpliciter*”, why a substance’s having first actuality is sufficient for that substance’s being good, and necessary but insufficient for its being good *simpliciter*; and why a substance’s having sufficient ultimate actuality is necessary and sufficient for that substance’s being good *simpliciter*, but unnecessary though sufficient for that substance’s being good. Assume that a substance is (primarily) actual but underoperative. Why should that mean that it is good, but it isn’t good *simpliciter* (rather than good and good *simpliciter*, or neither good nor good *simpliciter*)?

There is another point that may be worth making in this context. For reasons already discussed, it does seem that Aquinas is committed both to the thesis that all beings are good, and to the thesis that not all beings are good *simpliciter*. Nevertheless, in answering objection 1 of *ST*, Ia, 5, 1, Aquinas does not say straight out that substances deficient in ultimate actuality are good, but not good *simpliciter*. Instead, he says that

Although good and being are really the same (*idem secundum rem*), since they differ conceptually (*different secundum rationem*), a thing is not said to be a being *simpliciter* and good *simpliciter* in the same way ... A thing is said to be a being *simpliciter* on account of that by which it is primarily distinguished from what is only in potentiality. But this is the substantial being (*esse substantiale*) of a thing. So any being is said to be *simpliciter* on account of its substantial being (*unde per suum esse substantiale dicitur ens simpliciter*) ... Whatever is ultimately perfect is said to be good *simpliciter*; whatever does not have the ultimate perfection it should have, even though it has some perfection inasmuch as it is an actual being (*ens actu*), is still not said to be perfect *simpliciter* or good *simpliciter*, but only [perfect or good] in a qualified sense (*secundum quid*). So a thing is said to be a being *simpliciter* and good *secundum quid* (that is,

insofar as it is a being) on account of its first *esse* (*secundum primum esse*); but a thing is said to be a being *secundum quid* and good *simpliciter* on account of its last actuality (*secundum ... ultimum actum*) ... A thing is said to be a being *simpliciter* on account of its first actuality (*secundum primum actum*) and good *simpliciter* on account of its last actuality (*secundum ultimum [actum]*) ... Nevertheless a thing is in a way good (*quodammodo bonum*) on account of its first actuality, and is in a way a being (*quodammodo ens*) on account of its last actuality.

(*ST*, Ia, 5, 1, *ad 1um*)

What I find striking in this passage is the way that Aquinas avoids ever saying *chiaro e tondo* (straight out) of substances with an ultimate actuality deficit that they are good, but not good *simpliciter*, and indeed avoids describing substances with an ultimate actuality deficit as good. He says

whatever lacks the ultimate perfection it should have ... is not said to be ... good *simpliciter* but only *secundum quid*.

– rather than saying:

whatever lacks the ultimate perfection it should have ... is not said to be ... good *simpliciter*, but only good.

He says:

a thing is said to be a being *simpliciter* and good *secundum quid* (that is, insofar as it is a being) on account of its first *esse*.

– rather than saying:

a thing is said to be a being *simpliciter*, and good, on account of its first *esse*.

He says:

A thing is said to be ... good *simpliciter* on account of its last actuality (*secundum ultimum [actum]*) ... Nevertheless a thing is in a way good (*quodammodo bonum*) on account of its first actuality.

– rather than saying:

a thing is said to be good *simpliciter* on account of its last actuality ... Nevertheless a thing is good on account of its first actuality.

This is noteworthy, because, in order to meet objection 1, it is not enough for Aquinas to establish that every substance (or even, every being) is good

secundum quid. After all, the gist of objection 1 is that being and goodness are really distinct, and not that being and goodness *secundum quid* are really distinct. (Compare: it's one thing to say that accidental change and corruption are really distinct, and another to say that accidental change and corruption *secundum quid* are distinct.) Given that meeting objection 1 requires saying that even substances with an ultimate actuality deficit are good, and given that, in his reply to objection 1, Aquinas insists that substances with an ultimate actuality deficit are not good *simpliciter*, we might well have expected Aquinas to say in no uncertain terms that objection 1 fails, because in fact ultimate-actuality-deficient substances are good, even though they are not good *simpliciter*. But he says no such thing. (Nor have I found any other passages in which Aquinas says that substances deficient in ultimate actuality are good, but not good *simpliciter*.)

Why might Aquinas be reluctant to describe ultimate-actuality-deficient substances as good, but not good *simpliciter*? Perhaps it's like this: (given his view that ultimate-actuality-deficient substances are not good *simpliciter*) in order to meet objection 1, Aquinas would have to say that ultimate-actuality-deficient substances are good, but not good *simpliciter*. But no one will be comfortable saying this, unless they are comfortable with the idea that "*simpliciter*" is a non-addible modifier. And Aquinas is not comfortable with the idea that "*simpliciter*" is a non-addible modifier, because he thinks that to say that *a is F simpliciter* is to say that you don't need to add anything to "*a is F*" to get it to be strictly and literally true, and he sees that on this understanding of the "*simpliciter*" modifier it is *absque dubio* addible. So, rather than saying something that would meet objection 1, but that he is not comfortable saying, Aquinas says something that he is comfortable saying (to wit, that some substances are good *secundum quid* or *quoddammodo* without being good *simpliciter*), even though it manifestly does not meet the objection.

Let us draw some threads together. Aquinas says that goodness is what we might call an indiscriminating property, inasmuch as every substance is good. (And not just every substance: see *ST*, Ia, 5, 3, *ad 1um*, where Aquinas says that while the categories of substance, quality, and quantity "contract" being, good(ness) does not. ("*Substantia, quantitas, et qualitas ... contrahunt ens ... [B]onum non contrahit ens.*") .) He also says that goodness *simpliciter* is a discriminating property, inasmuch as insufficiently secondarily actual or operative substances are not good *simpliciter*. If "*simpliciter*" is a redundant modifier, then goodness and goodness *simpliciter* "come to the same thing", and either goodness is more discriminating than Aquinas says, or goodness *simpliciter* is less discriminating.

Within the constraints provided by the redundancy of "*simpliciter*", one could defend something like Aquinas' overall account of goodness and being, by holding on to the idea that goodness is indiscriminating, and giving up the idea that goodness *simpliciter* is discriminating, or by holding on to the idea that goodness *simpliciter* is discriminating, and giving up the idea that goodness is indiscriminating.

The first approach would involve saying that the indiscriminating property Aquinas identifies goodness with (viz., being) is indeed goodness, although, *pace* Aquinas, the discriminating property he identifies goodness *simpliciter* with (viz., sufficient ultimate actuality or operativity) is not goodness *simpliciter*, but a property stronger than goodness/goodness *simpliciter* – a property which is “goodness-contractive” as well as “being-contractive”. One might think of this in the following way: as Aquinas says, a substance’s goodness *simpliciter* is proportional to its second actuality/operativity; the more second actuality/operativity the substance has, the better it is. And a substance is good *simpliciter* if it has enough of the ultimate actuality it should have. But *any* ultimate actuality is enough for a substance to be (at least minimally) good. And a substance cannot have *esse substantiale* (*esse simpliciter*) if it’s *entirely* without the ultimate actuality it should have: a substance that is no longer ultimately actual in any respect at all, is no more. So every substance is good, even if some are only minimally good.

The second approach would involve saying that the discriminating property Aquinas identifies goodness *simpliciter* with sufficient ultimate actuality or operativity is indeed goodness *simpliciter* (and thus by the subtractibility of “*simpliciter*”, goodness) although, *pace* Aquinas, the indiscriminating property he identifies goodness with being is not goodness, but something weaker than goodness – which (given the unsubtractibility of the “*secundum quid*” modifier), we might call goodness *secundum quid*.

The second approach would in fact allow us to say what Stump says Aquinas says – to wit,

[I]t is true, strictly speaking, that everything that has being is good, to some extent.

(*Aquinas*, p. 68)

– *provided* we take “to some extent” to be a non-subtractible modifier. In fact, I think that the modifier “to some extent” straddles the subtractibility/unsubtractibility borderline in an interesting way. In some contexts, it seems subtractible.

For example:

Everyone who was asked for a donation was generous to a greater or lesser extent.

seems to imply that everyone who was asked for a donation was generous, even if only some were “seriously generous”. Moreover *everyone who was asked for a donation was generous to a greater or lesser extent* seems logically equivalent to *everyone who was asked for a donation was generous to some extent*; in which case (it seems) *everyone who was asked for a donation was generous to some extent* implies *everyone who was asked for a donation was generous* (if p implies q and q is logically equivalent to r , then p implies r).

On the other hand, we say “to some extent, I agree” in circumstances in which we would not want to say, “I agree”. “I agree to some extent” is naturally understood as meaning something along the lines of “I partly agree” (“I agree in part”). And “partly” and “in part” are unsubtractible modifiers. (Zebras are partly black, but not black; water is partly hydrogen, but water isn’t hydrogen; a theory that’s partly true needn’t be true.)

Similarly, the second approach allows us to say, as Aquinas does, that every being in primarily actuality is *quodammodo bonum* (in a way/in one respect/kind of) good, as long as we understand “*quodammodo*” as an unsubtractible modifier. (Thus understood, it might be translated into English as “in a way” or “kind of”: it seems that if I say something is kind of *F*, I haven’t gone as far as saying that it is *F*.)

There are many interesting questions about which of the two approaches under consideration is more defensible, and about which approach (though not consistent with everything Aquinas says about being and goodness) preserves more of Aquinas’ overall account of being and goodness (and for that matter badness, which I shall soon discuss). In what follows, I shall touch on just some of those issues.

Let us start with the first approach, on which the very same undiscriminating property is both being and goodness.

One difficulty besetting this approach is that it is not clear that it can meet objection 3 of *ST*, Ia, 5, 1. To refresh our memory, that objection was:

Also, good can be more or less (*bonum suscipit magis et minus*). But being (*esse*) can not be ... So good is really different from being (*bonum differt secundum rem ab ente*).

Goodness is clearly subject to degree. But, as we have seen, it seems at best doubtful that being *simpliciter* is subject to degree (*this is more than that, or this is to a higher degree than that*, don’t obviously make sense). Assuming that “*simpliciter*” is a redundant modifier, if Socrates cannot be *simpliciter* to a greater or lesser degree, he cannot be to a greater or lesser degree. If, however, goodness is subject to degree, and being is not, then it cannot be that goodness = being: one and the same attribute cannot both be and not be subject to degree.

In this context, it is interesting that Aquinas answers objection 3 as follows:

Good is said to be more or less on the basis of subsequent actuality (*bonum dicitur secundum magis et minus secundum actum supervenientem*), such as knowledge or virtue.

What Aquinas does *not* say here is that either being or being *simpliciter* is said to be more or less on the basis of subsequent actuality (e.g., knowledge or virtue). And surely, Aquinas does not think that a substance has being *simpliciter* to a greater or lesser degree depending on its subsequent

actualities, such as knowledge or virtue (cf. *ST*, Ia, 5, 1, *ad 1um*). Now, given the redundancy of “*simpliciter*”, it follows that if goodness, but not being *simpliciter*, is subject to degree (depending on subsequent actuality) then goodness, but not being, is subject to degree (depending on subsequent actuality), in which case being and goodness are not *idem secundum rem*.

Another difficulty for the first approach has to do with the applicability or otherwise of the predicate “not good”.

If every being is *F*, we cannot truly say that some being is not *F*. (Since every being is self-identical, we cannot truly say that some beings are not self-identical.) By the same token, if every being is good, we cannot truly say that some beings are not good. But, although it is clear that *some beings are not self-identical* is false, it is far from clear that *some beings are not good* are false.

This difficulty is touched upon (though not, as best I can see, resolved) by Stump, when she says,

[A]lthough on Aquinas’s account, ‘being’ and ‘goodness’ both refer to being, because their senses are different, it can still be true that there are things which are not good.

(*ibid.*, p. 73)

For reasons already adduced, I don’t see how it can be true that there are things (i.e., beings) that are not good, if, as Aquinas says, being and goodness are really identical (at most there could be beings that are not good *secundum quid*). But suppose that (as Stump supposes Aquinas supposes) “only to the extent to which a thing has actualized that potentiality [i.e., the specifying potentiality of the nature conferred by that form] is it true to say unqualifiedly that the thing is good.” Then, assuming Hitler has not gotten very far in actualizing the specifying potentiality of his substantial form, it is not true to say unqualifiedly that Hitler is good. In which case, it would seem, Hitler is not good. But if Hitler is not good, then (since Hitler is a being), not all beings are good.

Of course, on the first approach, it is not assumed that beings are good – or good *simpliciter* – only if they have more secondary actuality/operativity than is guaranteed simply by their being *entia actu*. (That beings are good *simpliciter* only if they have more secondary actuality/operativity than is guaranteed by their being *entia actu* is precisely the bit of Aquinas’ account of being and goodness that the first approach gives up, in order to preserve the others.)

But even if this assumption is not made, there is still nothing obvious about the idea that “not good” is not true of any being. After all, we don’t ever say that this or that being is not self-identical. But we do sometimes say that this or that being is not good (as when we say that Hitler is (or was) not good). So it appears that (“outside the study”, as Hume might say) we ordinarily suppose that goodness, unlike self-identity, applies only to some beings, and accordingly cannot be identified with being.

A defender of the first approach might say here that when (outside the study) we say that this or that being is not good, what we say is true, but what we mean is that this or that being is not good *secundum quid*— which, in light of the non-subtractibility of the “*secundum quid*” modifier, is perfectly compatible with the *omne ens est bonum* principle. We *judge* that all beings are good (good *simpliciter*), even if we often *say* that this or that being is not good (when we judge that they are not good *secundum quid*).

There is a worry, though, about how motivated this view is. For we don’t usually say that something is not *F*, when we judge that it is not *F secundum quid*, but *F simpliciter*: for example, we don’t say that the Ethiopian is not black, just because we judge the Ethiopian is not black *secundum quid* (i.e., *secundum dentes*), though black *simpliciter*.

Alternatively, a defender of the first approach might have an error theory about people’s pre-philosophical judgments to the effect that this or that being is not good. The idea would be that, (typically) when “the folk” say that this or that being is not good, what they mean is not that this or that being is not good *secundum quid*, but rather that this or that being is not good *simpliciter* – and thus, by the subtractibility of “*simpliciter*”, not good. But the folk are wrong: every being is good, even if some beings are not good *secundum quid*. (This view is analogous to the view that, when the folk say that this surface (the surface of this mid-sized material object) is flat, they do not mean is not that this surface is flat *secundum quid* – say, flat to all intents and purposes; they mean instead that this surface is flat *simpliciter*. Nevertheless, the folk are mistaken: the surfaces of mid-sized material objects are never flat *simpliciter* (never really flat), even if they are flat *secundum quid* (flat to all intents and purposes).)

But why suppose the folk have got it wrong about being and goodness? Here a defender of the first approach might answer:

As Aquinas argues in *ST*, Ia, 5, 1, *responsio* (drawing on Aristotle) goodness = appetibility (*ratio ... boni in hoc consistit quod aliquid sit appetibile*). But it is manifest that a thing is appetible insofar as it is perfect (*manifestum est ... quod unumquodque est appetibile secundum quod est perfectum.*) And a thing is perfect inasmuch as it is in actuality (*actu*). Whence it is manifest that something is good to the extent it is a being ... (*unde manifestum est quod intantum est aliquid bonum inquantum est ens*). So, as Aquinas argues, a thing is good inasmuch it is appetible, which is to say actual, which is to say an actual being, or being. And, since every substance as such is a being and an actual being (is an *ens* and an *ens actu*), simply in virtue of its primary actuality/substantial *esse*, every substance is good (good *simpliciter*). That’s why the folk get it wrong when they say (and judge) that some beings are not good.

But suppose – as the error theorist does – that the folk are wrong about the applicability of “not good” (i.e., about whether goodness “contracts” being) if

and only if the argument just sketched is sound. Why suppose that the argument is sound, and the folk are mistaken, rather than the other way round?

A third difficulty for the first approach concerns the extension of badness, and the relation between goodness and badness. Consider again the second objection of *ST*, Ia, 5, 3. The gist of that objection was:

Nothing is both good and bad (even if some things are good *secundum quid* and bad *secundum quid*, or good (full stop) and bad *secundum quid*, or good *secundum quid* and bad (full stop)).

Some beings are bad.

—

So not all beings are good.

For reasons already rehearsed, we can easily transform this into the following argument for the distinctness of being from goodness:

Nothing is both good and bad (even if some things are good *secundum quid* and bad *secundum quid*, or good (*simpliciter*) and bad *secundum quid*, or good *secundum quid* and bad (*simpliciter*)).

Some beings are bad.

So not all beings are good.

—

So being ≠ goodness.

Champions of the first approach can concede the first premise (i.e., the contrariety of goodness and badness), as long as they deny the second premise (as long as they take “bad” to be as inapplicable as “not good”). Alternatively, they can concede the second premise, as long as they deny the first premises. But, for reasons I shall try to make clear, neither of these options seems especially promising.

The first option involves supposing that just as goodness is an exceptionally indiscriminating attribute (so indiscriminating that necessarily, every being has it), badness is an exceptionally demanding one (so demanding that necessarily, no being has it). Just as one could never say truly of any being that it is self-distinct, one could never say truly of any being that it is bad. Again, this is at least surprising: although we don’t ever apply the term “self-distinct” to beings, it seems that we do sometimes apply the term “bad” to beings.

Aquinas would agree. At *De Malo* 1, 1, Aquinas addresses the question of whether badness is something (*an malum sit aliquid*). His answer is: in one sense, yes, and in another sense, no. In explaining the distinction he has in mind, he introduces an interesting analogy. The term “white”, he says, can refer either to that which is the subject of whiteness (*id quod est albedini subiectum*), or to the accident of whiteness in that subject (the accident itself (*ipsum accidens*)). (This sounds odd in English, but natural in Aquinas’ Latin, given that Latin doesn’t have either indefinite or definite articles in the way English does, and “album” can either mean “(the color) white” or “(the thing that is) white”.) Now, Aquinas says, what goes for “white” (“album”) goes for “bad” – which in this context (for grammatical reasons) it will be better to translate as “evil” (despite the fact that (as we have already noted in [chapter 4](#)), the term “evil”, as it is usually used in contemporary English, is not a very good translation of the Latin term “malum”, because it applies to only some of the things to which “malum” applies). That is, the term “evil” can either refer to that which is the subject of evil, or to the evil itself in that subject. If “evil” is construed as referring to the thing that is the subject of (is subject to) the evil (as equivalent to “(the thing that is) evil”), then what “evil” refers to is something. If on the other hand, “evil” is construed as referring to the evil itself (as equivalent to “(the property of being) evil”, then “what “evil” refers to is not something. Why not? Aquinas’ idea appears to be that whatever is something is a being (in a less than maximally lax sense of “being”), and badness itself, inasmuch as it is a privation, is not a being (except in the maximally lax sense of “being”), and thus is not a something. (See *De Malo*, 1, 1, *responsio*: “the evil itself (*ipsum malum*) is not something, but is itself the privation of some particular good (*privatio alicuius particularis boni*). (Note the disanalogy between “white” and “evil”: while “white” can refer to either something that is a subject, or to something that is a non-subject (that is, an accident), “evil” cannot refer to a something that is a non-subject, since the non-subject that “evil” refers to, being a privation, isn’t a something (except, of course, in the maximally lax sense of a something).)

For our purposes, the crucial point is that in this passage, Aquinas seems to say that, just as there are subjects (and so, presumably, beings) that are white, there are also subjects (and so, presumably beings) that are evil/bad. So Aquinas seems to hold that, just as there are beings that are white (white *simpliciter*, and not just white *secundum quid* like the white-toothed Ethiopian), there are beings that are bad (bad *simpliciter*, and not just bad *secundum quid* (like paying taxes or doing penance).

This means that proponents of the first approach (according to which being = goodness, and sufficient ultimate actualization/operativity is a stronger property than goodness) – at least, proponents of the first approach who want to (commonsensically and Thomistically) allow that “bad” can be true of a being – will have to plump for the second approach, on which all beings are good, and some beings are bad, and goodness and badness are accordingly not contraries.

Aquinas' response to *ST*, Ia, 5, 3, obj. 2 doesn't imply the non-contrariety of goodness and badness, but it seems compatible with it:

No being is said to be bad (*dicitur malum*) inasmuch as it is a being (*inquantum est ens*), but rather inasmuch as it lacks some being (*inquantum caret quodam esse*). So a man is said to be bad inasmuch as he lacks the being of virtue (*esse virtutis*), and an eye is said to be bad inasmuch as it lacks the action of sight.

Here Aquinas does not explicitly deny the “nothing good is bad” premise of the argument of objection 2: he does not say outright that the very same man (and thus, the very same being) is good, because he is an *ens*, and bad, because he is lacking in the (second) *esse* of virtue. But what he does say explicitly does not rule out that the very same man and being is good (on account of his *esse substantiale*) and bad (on account of his *esse virtutis* deficit). (On the other hand, there are passages (e.g., *ST*, Ia, 48, 1, *responsio*, in which Aquinas seems to say that good and bad are contraries (*opposita*).)

The thesis that “badness” and “goodness” are not contraries might be deemed an entirely plausible view. But I have my doubts. To be sure, in the right context, we might naturally say of something, “it’s good and it’s bad.” But then, in the right context, we might also say, “it’s fair and it’s unfair”, or “it’s hard and it’s easy” – or, for that matter, “it’s good and it isn’t.” Presumably, if someone says, “it’s fair and it’s unfair”, what she means is that it’s fair in one respect, and unfair in another. Analogously if someone says that something is good and bad (or good and not good) it seems at least initially plausible to suppose that she means that it is good in one respect (*secundum* (this) *quid*), and bad in another respect (*secundum* (that) *quid*). And it seems at least initially plausible that she doesn’t mean that one and the same thing is good *simpliciter* and bad *simpliciter*, or good and bad.

Here someone might say:

I don’t see this. Surely something can be good, without being good in every respect: it’s sufficient for a thing to be good, that it be good in some respect. In the same way, something can be bad, without being bad in every respect: it’s sufficient for a thing to be bad, that it be bad in some respect. But a thing can obviously be good in one respect and bad in another; so a thing can be good and bad.

This doesn’t sound right to me. To my mind, on the most natural reading of the “in a certain respect” modifier, if I say that something is good in a certain respect, I make a weaker claim than if I say that that thing is good. (Compare: suppose I have a colleague who is brilliant and great to talk philosophy with, but terminally irresponsible. I would say that he is a good colleague in certain respects, but I wouldn’t go so far as to say he is a good

colleague.) Analogously, if I say that something is bad in a certain respect, I make a weaker claim than if I say that thing is bad.

Because I don't see goodness in some respect as sufficient for goodness, to my ear there is nothing odd about either

I'm not just saying that that thing is good in a certain respect; I'm also saying that it's good.

or

I'm not just saying that that thing is bad in a certain respect; I'm also saying that it's bad.

But to my ear there *is* something very odd about

I'm not just saying that that thing is good in a certain respect, and bad in a certain respect; I'm also saying that it's good and bad.

To my mind, this last statement is weird to the same extent, and for the same reasons as

I'm not just saying that's hard in a certain respect and easy in a certain respect; I'm also saying it's easy and hard.

or

I'm not just saying that I agree to an extent, and I disagree to an extent; I'm also saying I agree and disagree.

Someone who has already said that something is good in a certain respect, and bad in a certain respect (or hard in a certain respect, and easy in a certain respect), and goes on to say that it is good and bad (or easy and hard), makes a further claim. But – I'm inclined to say – the further claim is one she should not make, because although things can be good in one respect, and bad in another, or easy in one respect, and bad in another, they cannot be good and bad, or easy and hard.

When someone says that something is good in a certain respect, and bad in a certain respect, she means that that thing has a good side and a bad side. But to say that a thing has a good side and a bad side is not to say that the thing itself has goodness and badness; it is instead to say that it has a side that has goodness, and a side that has badness. (Compare: to say that Maui has a dry side and a wet side is not to say that Maui itself has dryness and wetness. Maui itself is not wet, or dry: it's partly wet and partly dry.) It might be objected that just as a thing may be said to be good and bad, a side of a thing may be said to be good and bad. True: but (I want to say), when we

say that something is good and bad, we mean, not that the thing itself has both goodness and badness, but rather that it has a side that has goodness, and a side that has badness. Likewise, when we say that a side of a thing is good and bad, we mean not that the side itself has goodness and badness, but that it has a side (a “metaside”, as it were) that has goodness, and a side or “metaside” that has badness. A thing that we might naturally describe as good and bad might have a side that we might naturally describe as good and bad, and that side might in turn have a side that we might describe as good and bad, and so on, “quasi-fractally”. But, I’m inclined to think, at no point in the quasi-fractalization will we arrive at something which has both goodness and badness; at no point will we arrive at something which could be strictly, literally, and non-elliptically said to be both good and bad.

Here is another way to put more or less the same point: saying that something is good in one respect, and bad in one respect – or good to some extent, and bad to some extent – seems to be another way of saying that thing is partly good and partly bad. But, as we have already seen, “partly” is an unsubtractible modifier (*this theory is partly true and partly false* does not imply *this theory is true and false*). So the fact that we can truly say of something that is good (in one respect) and bad (in one respect) does not support the idea that goodness and badness are compatible, rather than being contraries. If we could truly say of something that it is *wholly* good and *wholly* bad, that would show that goodness and badness are compatible (given the subtractibility of ‘wholly’). But I take it we can’t in fact truly say of anything that it is wholly good and wholly bad.

(If, as I have suggested, *being good in some respect(s)* is not sufficient for *being good* (but *being good in some respect(s)* is necessary for *being good*) we might wonder what a being has to be, in addition to good in some respect(s), in order to be good. A natural suggestion would be that, in order for a being to be good, the goodness of its good side(s) must so to speak (in Chisholmian terms) either “outweigh” or “defeat” the badness of its bad side(s), if it has bad sides. But it may that, in different contexts, we have looser or stricter standards for goodness (*tout court*). Perhaps, on a very strict understanding of goodness, nothing can be truly good unless it has good sides, and no bad sides (cf. Mark 10: 18: “Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone”).)

Notice also that the defender of the first approach who plumps for the first option (goodness is “terminally undiscriminating”, inasmuch as all beings are good, but badness is not “terminally demanding”, inasmuch as goodness and badness are not contraries) will have to say that (independently of who this man is) *this man is bad* is not only compatible with, but logically stronger than, *this man is good*. (That is, *this man is bad* is not only compatible with, but implies and is not implied by *this man is good*.) After all, *this man is bad* implies *this man is a being*, which (we are supposing) in turn implies *this man is good*; so, by the transitivity of implication, *this man is bad* implies *this man is good*. But *this man is good* does not imply *this man is bad*, lest *this man [Jesus] is good* imply

this man [Jesus] is bad. Second, *this man is a man who is not bad* is logically stronger than *this man is good.* (If this is not immediately clear, remember that (assuming first actuality/substantial *esse* implies goodness) *this man is a man who is not bad* implies not just *this man is a man* and so *this man is a being* but also *this man is good.* But (assuming that deficiency with respect to ultimate actuality implies badness) *this man is good* is compatible not just with *this man is deficient with respect to ultimate actuality* but also with *this man is bad*; and if *this man is good* is compatible with *this man is bad*, then *this man is good* does not imply *this man is a man who is not bad.* So *this man is a man who is not bad* (just like *this man is bad*) implies but is not implied by *this man is good.*)

Both these consequences are (to my mind, at any rate) problematic.

To my ear, at least, *this man is bad, a fortiori this man is good* and *this man is a man who is not bad, a fortiori this man is good* both sound desperately strange. To say the same thing a different way (to my mind at least), there is something very strange about the idea that there is more to being a man who is bad, and more to being a man who is not bad, than there is to being a man who is good, in the same way that there is more to being a being that is round, and more to being a being that is not round, than there is to being a being. *Being a being that is round* and *being a being that is not round* obviously both “go beyond” *being a being.* But (on the face of it) *being a man who is bad* and *being a man who is not bad* do not both “go beyond” *being a man who is good.* For the reasons adduced above, I am inclined to think that necessarily, bad men are not good men. But whether or not this is so, it seems perfectly possible for a man who is bad, or a man who is not bad, to fall short of goodness (even if the standards for goodness are not as strict as those suggested by Mark 10: 18). Naturally, assuming that being *simpliciter* suffices to make a being good, and that some beings are bad, we can deduce that both “this man is not bad, *a fortiori* he is good”, and “this man is bad, *a fortiori* he is good” are perfectly acceptable. But, as I see it, this doesn’t tell in favor of the acceptability of the last two statements; rather, it tells against the acceptability of the pair of assumptions that jointly imply the acceptability of those two statements.

So much for the first approach to defending something like Aquinas’ account of being and goodness. What about the second approach – the approach which identifies goodness with a (secondary-actualization-involving property) more discriminating than being?

As far as I can see, none of the problems that beset the first approach arise for the second. Even if being (first actuality, substantial *esse*) is not subject to degree – that is, even if things cannot be *simpliciter* to a greater or lesser degree – it seems that secondary actualization or operativity is subject to degree (that things can be secondarily actualized or operative to a greater or lesser degree). Even if “not a being” is *ex vi terminorum* inapplicable to any being, this allows that “not good”, understood as “not close enough to fully secondarily actual”, can be applicable to some beings. Finally, if we identify goodness with a secondary-actualization-involving property, we can say both

that some beings are bad (inasmuch as they fall too far short of full secondary actualization) and that goodness and badness are contraries (inasmuch as nothing can be far away enough from full secondary actualization to be bad, and close enough to full secondary actualization to be good).

Another advantage of the second approach, as we have already touched upon, is that it allows us to say (as seems plausible enough) that the meanings of the terms *good* and *bad* – like the meanings of the terms *hard* and *easy*, or *smooth* and *rough*, or *full* and *empty* – allow us to construe those terms more or less strictly in a given context. We can say: good beings are ones that are close enough to full secondary actualization, and bad beings are ones that are too far from full secondary actualization, but we can be stricter or less strict about what counts as close enough or too far. So (we can say) in virtue of what David Lewis calls “the rule of accommodation”, Jesus spoke truly when we said, “No one is good except God alone”, even though we can speak truly if we say “Albert Schweizer” was good”. (For reasons that I hope needn’t be made explicit, the first approach cannot make room for the idea that standards for goodness and badness can vary from context to context in this way.)

It is very natural to say (as Stump does, and as commentators on Aquinas generally do) that, for Aquinas, being and goodness are one and the same thing conceived in two different ways. This last claim is indeed strictly and literally true. Nevertheless it’s a very partial truth – one which, if asserted baldly, is very apt to mislead.

True, Aquinas does in many places more or less explicitly say (the Latin equivalent of) “being and goodness are one and the same thing.” But he also appears deeply committed to the view that it is one thing for a substance to be *simpliciter*, and another thing for it to be good *simpliciter*. And, at least as long as I’m right about how “*simpliciter*” works, this commits him to the view that being and goodness are two really distinct things. In some ways, I think it would be *less* misleading to say that, for Aquinas, goodness is *not* (the indiscriminating property of) being, but rather the (discriminating) property of being close enough to full actualization (to say that, for Aquinas, goodness, unlike being, is not a transcendental).

According to Stump, Aquinas’ “central meta-ethical thesis” is that “‘being’ and ‘goodness’ are the same in reference ... but differ only in sense.” But, for reasons I hope to have brought to light, even on Stump’s interpretation, it might be no more misleading, or even less misleading, to say that Aquinas’ central meta-ethical thesis is that “being” and “goodness” differ in their reference, and not just in their sense. As we have seen, Stump herself says that “on Aquinas’ account ... it can still be true that there are things which are not good” (p. 73), and says that on Aquinas account, if this substance is underoperative, it is not true unqualifiedly to say, “this substance is good” (*ibid.*). Moreover, on Stump’s interpretation, *for Aquinas*, “the ordinary sense of ‘being’ is being considered absolutely, that is, a thing’s mere existence as the instantiation of a thing with a substantial form conferring a

nature that includes a specifying potentiality” (p. 67-68), and, *for Aquinas*, “the ordinary sense of ‘being’ is existence *simpliciter*” (p. 73). But, on Stump’s interpretation, for Aquinas, the ordinary sense of “goodness” is not being considered absolutely/existence *simpliciter*. So again, on Stump’s reading of Aquinas, *for Aquinas himself*, on the most straightforward construal of “being and goodness are really identical” – the construal of that statement on which “being” and “goodness” have their ordinary senses – that statement is false. So it’s not as though if we start from some things that Aquinas believes, and make some additional assumptions that Aquinas does not make and might well make oppose, then and only then can we deduce the non-identity of being and goodness. Rather, if we start from something that – on Stump’s reading, as on mine – Aquinas believes (to wit, that the ordinary sense of ‘being’, but not the ordinary sense of ‘goodness’, is being considered absolutely/existence *simpliciter*), we can immediately deduce the non-identity of being and goodness.

I have argued that the second approach to defending (something like) Aquinas’ account of being and goodness (that is, the approach on which goodness is distinguished from being, and identified with sufficient proximity to full actualization) is much more promising than the first. This is not, however, to say that the only worries one might have about Aquinas’ account of being and goodness concern the alleged identity of being with goodness. There are other worries that come up, independently of whether we favor the first approach or the second approach; here I shall sketch just one.

Among the potentialities a (primarily actual) substance has, we may distinguish potentialities to be from potentialities to not be. Any corruptible substance will have the potentiality to not be *simpliciter*, and no substance, corruptible or otherwise, will have the potentiality to be *simpliciter* (since only what is not (actually) *F* is potentially *F*, and every substance is (actually) a being *simpliciter*). Similarly, a substance may have the potentiality to not be a certain way – e.g., an actually hot stone may have the potentiality not to be hot, and an actually sighted diabetic may have a potentiality to be blind which will (sadly) be reduced to act, absent medical intervention or life-style change. Equally, a substance may have the potentiality to be a certain way – e.g., a normal human being in the womb who does not yet have functioning eyes is potentially sighted. We may call a potentiality to be a certain way a *positive potentiality*, and a potentiality to not be *simpliciter* or a certain way a *negative potentiality*. (Corruptibility and “blindability” are negative potentialities, and “sightedability” is a positive potentiality. Potentiality to be a certain way is potentiality to with respect to an accident; potentiality to not be a certain way is potentiality with respect to a negation or privation (of which more later).)

Now if we understand potentiality broadly enough to cover both positive and negative potentialities, it is certainly not Aquinas’ view that whenever the potentiality of a substance to be a certain way is actualized, that substance is thereby made good in a certain respect: a human being whose potentiality

to be literally blind, or spiritually blind, or hard-hearted is actualized is not thereby made good in a certain respect, any more than he or she is thereby made good *simpliciter*.

On the other hand, if I have not misunderstood Aquinas, it is Aquinas' view that whenever a positive potentiality of a substance to be a certain way is actualized, that substance is thereby made good in a certain respect. To forestall a possible misunderstanding: the actualization of a positive potentiality of a substance need not make that substance good *simpliciter*: it won't do that if, say, the substance was already good *simpliciter*, even before its positive potentiality was actualized. But it does seem that for Aquinas, the actualization of a positive potentiality of a substance will always in and of itself make a substance good *in a certain respect* (and better *in a certain respect* than it was previously). After all, as Aquinas says at *ST*, Ia, 48, 5, *responsio*, goodness consists *principaliter et per se* in actuality, and the actualization of a positive potentiality of that substance (unlike the actualization of a negative potentiality of that substance) will always make that substance actual in a certain way, and thus good in a certain respect (and better in a certain respect than it was previously). So even if the actualization of a positive potentiality by a substance – which is to say, the acquisition of a particular kind of accidental *esse* by that substance – doesn't make the substance that acquires it good *simpliciter*, it will still make that substance good *quodammodo* (in a way, in a certain respect), and better *quodammodo* than it was previously.

If this is what Aquinas thinks, it seems to me not at all clear that he is right. For there is nothing evidently wrong with the idea that the actualization of a positive potentiality of a substance might not make that substance good in any respect (might not make that substance better in any respect than it was previously). A normal human being has a potentiality to feel pain. This potentiality might well be thought a positive potentiality. (Aren't all potentialities to feel a certain way positive potentialities?) But the actualization of a human being's potentiality to feel pain surely does not, as such, make a human being good in a certain respect (make a human being better in a certain respect than he or she had been previously).

We might put things this way: call the actualization of a substance's potentiality *pro tanto axiologically positive* if the actualization of that substance's potentiality as such makes the substance good in a certain respect (better in a certain respect than it was previously). It appears to be an implication of Aquinas' account of being and goodness that the potentialities of a substance that are metaphysically positive (in the sense described above) are all *pro tanto* axiologically positive; and I do not see why we should think this claim is true.

Given that pain is bad, and badness is by Aquinas' lights privative, there seem to be connections between the issues just raised and issues concerning the nature and adequacy of Aquinas' privative theory of badness. I shall accordingly round off this section by saying a bit more about the implications and defensibility of the view that evil (in the broad sense of "evil") is (a

certain kind of) privation. (In the remainder of this section, I shall always be using the term “evil” in the (no longer much used) broad sense of the term.)

At *ST*, Ia, 48, 1, *responsio*, Aquinas argues that since nature, form, and *esse* are all as such good, and good and bad are opposites, the term “evil” cannot signify any kind of *esse*, nature, or form. Instead, the term “evil” must signify “a certain (kind of) absence of good” (*nomine mali significetur quaedam absentia boni*).

Here we might wonder why Aquinas says that evil is a certain kind of absence of good, rather than simply saying that evil is the absence of good. The answer is found at *ST*, Ia, 48, 3, *responsio*. There Aquinas notes that although evil involves the absence of goodness (*malum importat remotionem boni*), not every kind of absence of a good is bad. For we can construe absence of good “privatively” (*privative*) or “negatively” (*negative*). If we are thinking of absence as “negative absence”, then absence (so construed) is not bad as such (*remotio igitur boni negative accepta mali rationem non habet*). For one thing, non-existence *simpliciter* is a negative absence, but non-existence *simpliciter* is not an evil: things that “simply aren’t” (*nullo modo sunt*) aren’t bad, any more than they are good. For another, the swiftness of a deer and the strength of a lion are (negatively) absent from human beings, but a man isn’t bad insofar as he lacks the swiftness of a deer or the strength of a lion.

Since the negative absence of good is not as such bad, but evil is as such bad, we cannot say that the negative absence of good = evil. But we can say that the privative absence of good = evil:

The absence of a good, taken privatively is said to be evil (*remotio boni privative accepta malum dicitur*).

(*ST*, Ia, 48, 3, *responsio*)

Privative absence or privation (strictly or properly understood) is absence satisfying the following conditions:

- (1) It is not merely the absence *of* some being (e.g., the absence of a chimera), but the absence *of* some being *from* or *in* a subject. (See *ST*, Ia 48, 3, *ad 2um*: “privation is negation in a subject”.) More precisely, it is the absence of some being (in a stricter sense of “being” than the laxest sense) from a subject that is itself a being (in a stricter sense of “being” than the laxest sense). (Hence the absence of imperfection from God is not an instance of privation, and the absence of substantial being from a chimera is not an instance of privation.)
- (2) Because privation is the absence of some being (in a less than maximally lax sense of “being”), and everything that is a being (in a less than maximally lax sense of “being”) is good to some extent or in some respect, privation is the absence of some goodness from a subject. (Some goodness, but not all goodness, because privation is privation of

a subject that has being in a less than maximally lax sense of “being”, and any subject that is a being in a less than maximally lax sense of “being” has some goodness (or at least, has goodness to some extent/ in some respect – which may not be quite the same thing, given that “in a certain respect” and “to a certain extent” can be understood as unsubtractible modifiers.)

- (3) Privation is the absence from a subject of some goodness which that subject (not just: some subject or other) could have. (So, inasmuch as no stone could see, the absence of sight from a stone is not an instance of privation. Also, inasmuch as nothing can be blind without being in privation with respect to sight, a stone, though sightless, is not blind.)
- (4) Indeed, privation is not just the absence from a subject of some goodness which that subject could have. It is also the absence from a subject of some goodness which that subject is “fit to” have and ought to have:

Every privation, in the strict and proper meaning of the term, is of that which something is fit to and should have (*omnis autem privatio, si proprie et stricte accipitur, est eius quod quis natus est habere et debet habere*).
(*Summa Contra Gentiles*, III, 6)

So, just as the absence of the ability to fly from a human being is not an instance of privation, neither is the absence of blondness in a raven-haired human being, or the absence of the ability to speak to Polish in a human being who speaks only Croatian. Although human beings can be blond, or speakers of Polish, they are not as it were supposed to be blond, or speakers of Polish (see again *Summa Contra Gentiles*, III, 6). By contrast, because human beings are supposed to see, and walk without difficulty, and enjoy things, and care about others, the absence from a human being of the ability to see, or walk without difficulty, or enjoy things, or care about others, is an instance of privation. (Privation with respect to the ability to see = blindness; privation with respect to the ability to walk without difficulty = lameness; privation with respect to the ability to enjoy things = anhedonia; privation with respect to the ability to care about others = invincible self-centeredness.) Because privation (in the strict and proper meaning of the term) is the absence from a subject of some goodness that subject ought to have, privation makes its subject deficient or defective in some respect; for this reason, “deprivation” is in some ways a better translation of *privatio* than “privation”.

Summing up: suppose that by “privation” or “privative absence” we mean “absence from (or in: I’m not sure which preposition is more felicitous) a subject of some due goodness or perfection”. Then, Aquinas would say, even though we obviously cannot truly say that absence = evil, and we (not

quite so obviously) cannot truly say that absence of good = evil, we can truly say that privative absence of good aka privation = evil. But Aquinas doesn't usually say flatly that privation = evil, or that privative absence = evil. He more often says things like:

Evil ... is nothing but the privation of that which something is fit to and should have (*malum ... nihil est aliud quam privatio eius quod quid natus est et debet habere*).

(*Summa Contra Gentiles*, III, 7)

Evil ... is nothing but the privation of a due perfection (*malum ... nihil aliud [est] quam privatio debitae perfectionis*).

(*De Malo*, 2, 1, *responsio*)

As we might put it, evil = the absence from (in) a subject of some goodness or perfection due to it, just as blindness = the absence from (in) a subject of the sight due to it.

Someone might think that, when Aquinas says that blindness is the absence of sight in something that is fit to and should see, his intent is to offer us a reductive account of blindness – an account that enables us to see why we need not (and should not) think that blindness is anything *in rerum natura* (in the way that sight is something *in rerum natura*). And someone might think that when Aquinas says that evil is the absence from (in) a subject of some due goodness/perfection, his intent is to give us a reductive account of evil – an account that enables us to see why we need not (and should not) think evil is anything *in rerum natura* (in the way that goodness is something *in rerum natura*).

If Aquinas is in fact attempting to offer a kind of “reductive definition” of evil, as well as a “reductive definition” of blindness, I am not sure he succeeds. For if we say that blindness =_{df} the absence of sight in something that is fit to and should see, it seems clear enough that “blindness” is not covertly present in the *definiens* (thus making the definition non-reductive). On the other hand, for reasons I shall try to elucidate, if we say that evil =_{df} the absence from (or in) a subject of some due goodness, it is not so clear that “evil” is not covertly present in the *definiens* (thus making the definition non-reductive).

If a pair of human eyes do not give the human being possessing them 20/20 vision, then those eyes are not as they should be. (I am assuming the eyes do not give their possessor 20/20 vision because of how they are intrinsically, and not, say, because the possessor's visual cortex is damaged.) If those eyes are not as they should be, then *a fortiori* those eyes are not as good as they could be, or would be if they gave their possessor 20/20 vision. Similarly, suppose that (on account of how they are intrinsically), a pair of human eyes do not give their possessor 20/10 vision. Again, those eyes are not as good as they could be, or would be if they gave their possessor 20/10 vision. But this does not imply that those eyes are not as they should be.

Human (as opposed to avian) eyes that give their possessor 20/20 vision rather than 20/10 or 20/5 vision might be determined by an optometrist to be just as they should be, even if they are not as good as they could be.

Why might it be that something's not being as it should be implies its not being as good as it could be, but something's not being as good as it could be does not imply its not being as it should be? Perhaps it's because *this is not as good as it could be (in some way)* does not imply *this is bad (in some way)*, but *this is not as it should be (in some way)* does imply *this is bad (in some way)*. This seems to fit the case at hand rather well. Suppose that your eyes actually give you 20/20 vision, and that if you did certain eye exercises, they could give you 20/15 vision. Then your eyes are "improvable", but they aren't bad. On the other hand, if your eyes are not as they should be (because they don't give you 20/20 vision), then you have (at least slightly) bad eyes. If someone's eyes are not quite as they should be (say, they give that person 20/25 vision), then those eyes are a bit bad; if someone's eyes are very much not as they should be (say, they give that person 20/200 vision) then those eyes are very bad. Think of it this way: eyes that are not as good as they could be, needn't be deficient or defective in any way, but eyes that are not as they should be must be deficient or defective in some way (and thus bad (to some extent, in some respect)).

Suppose that what it means to say that an eye should be a certain way is that if it is that way, then it is good (in some way, and to some extent), and if it exists and is not that way, then it is bad (in some way, to some extent). And suppose more generally that what it means to say that a thing should have a certain perfection, is to say that if it has that perfection, then (trivially) it is good (in some way, to some extent), and if it exists and does not have that perfection, then (non-trivially) it is bad (in some way, to some extent). In other words, suppose that what it means to say that something is a due perfection of a subject is to say that if that subject has that perfection, then it is good (in some way, to some extent), and if that subject exists and does not have that perfection, then it is bad (in some way to some extent). Then there is a crucial disanalogy between

blindness =_{df} the absence of sight in something that is fit to and should see

and

evil =_{df} the absence of a due perfection from a subject.

The definition of blindness is (as best I can see) reductive, in that we can understand each of the elements of the *definiens* without already understanding the *definiendum*. But – assuming that a due perfection of a subject is a perfection that subject should have, and "should have" needs to be unpacked in the evil-involving way just suggested – the definition of evil will not be reductive, because we won't be able to understand a crucial element of the *definiens* ("due"), unless we already understand the *definiendum*.

Moreover, if the Thomistic definition of evil as privation is non-reductive, then there is no obvious way to get from the premise that that definition is adequate, to the conclusion that evil (unlike goodness) is nothing *in rerum natura*. If the Thomistic definition of evil as privation is reductive (and adequate), then one could argue as follows:

You might think that, when we say true things about the blindness of an eye, or the evil of a man, we say true things about an accidental form whose inherence in that eye or that man makes it blind or him bad (to some extent/in some respect). But this is a mistake. When we talk about the blindness in someone's eye, we are not talking about the presence of an undue imperfection (blindness) in that eye; rather, we are talking about the absence of a due perfection (sight) from that eye. In exactly the same way, when we talk about the evil of a man (or for that matter the badness of an eye), we are not talking about the presence of an undue imperfection in that man (or that eye); rather, we are talking about the absence of some due perfection in that man (or that eye).

If it turns out that what we mean by "a due perfection of an eye" is just "a perfection a thing cannot exist and lack without being bad (in some way, to some extent)", then this argument against badness *in rerum natura* does not go through. If Aquinas' definition of evil is non-reductive, that definition does not provide a reason to suppose that we can offer a reductive definition of evil in terms of goodness (and ancillary notions). In the absence of such a reason, it's not clear why we should think that evil, unlike goodness, is nothing *in rerum natura*.

Setting worries about the "reductivity" or otherwise of Aquinas' definition of badness to one side, there are also worries about its extensional and intensional adequacy – that is, about whether applying the definition gives the right results in actual or possible instances. I shall limit myself to two.

As we have seen in the last chapter, Aquinas thinks death is a bad thing. (Thus Aquinas offers the deaths of animals as an example of the kinds of evil God allows for the sake of a greater good.) Now if death is a bad thing, and all bad things are privations, then death is a privation. In fact, death, like blindness, is one of Aquinas' more standard examples of a privation. For example, at *ST*, Ia IIae, 18, 8, *ad Ium* draws a distinction between two kinds of privation. One kind – call it an incomplete privation – leaves its subject with some of, though less of, what it originally had. For example, sickness leaves its subject with some health, since no one can be sick without being alive, and no one who is still alive can be completely bereft of health. Another kind of privation – call it complete privation – entirely takes away what its subject originally had. For example, Aquinas says, blindness is the complete privation of sight, and darkness is the complete privation of light.

(Twilight, we might add, is an incomplete privation of light.) Similarly, death is the complete privation of life. (For a parallel discussion, see *De Malo*, 1, 1, *ad 2um*.)

But, given Aquinas' views about the nature of death, and the nature of privation, it is hard to see how he can count death as a privation. As we have seen in earlier chapters, for Aquinas death is corruption *simpliciter*, rather than corruption *secundum quid*: it involves the loss of substantial *esse*, rather than the loss of accidental *esse*. When a man is going blind, there is a subject (the man) from whom sight is partly absent. When a man has gone blind, there is a subject (the man) from whom sight is completely absent. But (on Aquinas' account) when a man is dead, there isn't a subject from whom life is completely absent: the human subject is no more. And, as we have seen, for Aquinas, every privation is a negation in a subject (see again *ST*, Ia, 48, 3, *ad 2um*). Indeed, at *ST*, Ia, 48, 3, Aquinas argues for the claim that every evil is in a good subject (and thus in a subject). So, even leaving privations out of it, Aquinas seems to be committed to (i) death is not in a subject, (ii) death is evil, and (iii) all evils are in some subject.

These considerations at most show that Aquinas cannot consistently maintain both that death is an evil, and that all evils are privations (as he understands privations). An Epicurean might say that there's nothing wrong with Aquinas' supposition that every evil is a privation; the problem is with Aquinas' supposition that death is an evil. And someone who thinks that we go on existing as dead persons in the afterlife might say that there's nothing wrong with either the supposition that our death is an evil, or the supposition that every evil is a privation; the problem is with the supposition that our death doesn't leave behind a subject.

But I take it that even if our death leaves behind (an existing but no longer living) subject, some deaths do, or at any rate might, leave behind no subject at all (might involve corruption *simpliciter*, rather than corruption *secundum quid*). And I take it that, *pace* Epicurus, a death that left behind no subject could still be an evil. If these things are so, then there are or at any rate might be evils that are not privations (as Aquinas understands privations), which would make the definition of evil as the absence of a due perfection in a subject extensionally or at least intensionally inadequate.

(To forestall a possible misunderstanding: there is no difficulty for Aquinas about saying that death is a bad thing *to have in one's future* – i.e., that it's bad for a mortal being to be going to die. For mortality (that is, being such that one is going to die) is not an evil without a subject. The difficulty is that, Aquinas says that death (not just mortality) is an evil, and evils are privations, but death is not a privation (because it is a special case of non-existence, and non-existence is not a privation, because it is "subjectless").

There is a broader and more basic worry about the idea that evil = privation (strictly and properly construed) – i.e., that evil = the absence in a subject of a perfection due to that subject – which I shall raise and discuss in what remains of this section.

Suppose that

- (1) Evil = privation.

This implies that

- (2) Being subject to evil = being subject to privation.

– which in turn implies that

- (3) Being subject to a particular kind of evil = being subject to a particular kind of privation.

(Compare: if arthritis = inflammation of the joints, then being subject to arthritis = being subject to inflammation of the joints, and being subject to a particular kind of arthritis (say, rheumatoid arthritis) = being subject to a particular kind of inflammation of the joints.)

Now a particular kind of privation is the particular kind of privation it is because it is the complete or incomplete privation of the particular kind of perfection it is the privation of. (Sickness is the particular kind of privation it is because it is the incomplete privation of health; blindness is the particular kind of privation it is because it is the complete privation of sight.) So (3) implies

- (4) Being subject to a particular kind of evil = existing and being completely or incompletely deprived of a particular kind of perfection.

– which in turn implies

- (5) A human's being subject to a particular kind of evil = a human being's existing and being deprived of a particular kind of perfection due to humans.

(5) implies that, for every particular kind of evil E to which human beings are subject, there is a due-to-humans perfection P such that necessarily, human beings are subject to E if and only if they exist and are deprived of P .

Now many of the kinds of evils to which human beings are subject clearly satisfy the condition that (5) implies all the evils human beings are subject to satisfy. Blindness is an evil to which human beings are subject, and there is a due-to-humans perfection that necessarily human beings exist and are deprived of if and only if they are subject to blindness (viz., sight). Lameness is an evil to which human beings are subject, and there is a due-to-humans perfection that necessarily human beings exist and are deprived of if and only if they are subject to lameness (the ability to walk without difficulty). Anhedonia is an evil to which human beings are subject, and there is a due-to-humans perfection – to wit, enjoyment – that (necessarily) human beings (exist and) are deprived of if and only if they are subject to anhedonia. And so on.

On the other hand, it is by no means clear that all the kinds of evils human beings are subject to satisfy this condition. Consider, say, anguish. Is there a due-to-humans perfection that necessarily human beings exist and are deprived of if and only if they are subject to anguish? There is certainly a due-to-humans perfection that necessarily human beings exist and are deprived of *if* they are subject to anguish – happiness. (I assume one cannot be simultaneously happy and anguished.) But it seems not to be the case that necessarily human beings exist and are deprived of happiness *only if* they are subject to anguish: an unhappy person might be anguished, but might instead be anhedonic, or indeed comatose. So happiness is not a due-to-humans perfection that necessarily human beings exist and are deprived of if and only if they are subject to anguish. This of course allows that some other due-to-humans perfection *P* is a perfection that necessarily humans exist and are deprived of if and only if they are subject to anguish. But I don't see what such a *P* might be, and I don't see why we must suppose that there is such a *P*.

Suppose that God creates a human being endowed with every perfection due to humankind. In order for God to make that human being anhedonic, all He would have to do is deprive him or her of the perfection of enjoyment. But is it likewise true that, in order for God to make that human being anguished, all He would have to do is to subtract the right due-to-humans perfection from him or her? Why must there be some perfection due to human beings such that God's depriving a human being of that perfection (but leaving him or her in existence) is necessary and sufficient for His inflicting anguish on that human being, in the way that God's depriving a human being of enjoyment (but leaving him or her in existence) is necessary and sufficient for His inflicting anhedonia on that human being?

To vary the example, let us say that a human being who is neither excessively optimistic nor excessively pessimistic is endowed with healthy realism. Excessive optimism is a kind of evil to which human beings are subject. What due-to-humans perfection is such that necessarily humans are deprived of it if and only if they are subject to excessive optimism? Not healthy realism. True, healthy realism is a perfection due to human beings. But even though healthy realism is a due-to-humans perfection that necessarily human beings are deprived of *if* they are subject to excessive optimism, it is not a due-to-humans perfection that necessarily human beings are deprived of *only if* they are subject to excessive optimism. A human being deprived of healthy realism might be excessively optimistic, but might instead be excessively pessimistic.

Someone might suggest that the due-to-humans perfection which human beings are necessarily deprived of if and only they are subject to excessive optimism is the disjunctive property of being either excessively pessimistic or healthily realistic. In fact, though, it is not true that necessarily, human beings are subject to excessive optimism if and only if they are deprived of the disjunctive property of being either excessively pessimistic or healthily

realistic. A just-conceived human being is deprived of – or at any rate, lacks – the disjunctive property of being either excessively pessimistic or healthily realistic, but is not subject to excessive optimism.

Let us say that someone who is (appropriately or inappropriately) optimistic or pessimistic is “somewhere on the optimism/pessimism continuum”. Excessive optimism is the lack in a subject of the (not doubly, but triply) disjunctive property of being nowhere on the optimism/pessimism continuum or excessively pessimistic or healthily realistic. After all, necessarily whoever is excessively optimistic lacks the triply disjunctive property, since no one can be excessively optimistic and nowhere on the optimism/pessimism continuum, or excessively optimistic and excessively pessimistic, or excessively optimistic and healthily realistic. (Someone can of course be excessively optimistic in one area, and healthily realistic or excessively optimistic in another, but I am understanding excessive pessimism, healthy realism, and excessive optimism as general tendencies to be excessively pessimistic or realistic or excessively optimistic across the board.) Equally, necessarily whoever exists and lacks the triply disjunctive property is excessively optimistic, since you can’t be somewhere on the optimism/pessimism continuum, and not excessively pessimistic, and not healthily realistic, without being excessively optimistic. Since being excessively optimistic both implies and is implied by existing and lacking the triply disjunctive property, we might say that being excessively optimistic just is existing and lacking the triply disjunctive property.

So we can say that excessive optimism is the absence in a subject of the triply disjunctive property just described (and that excessive pessimism is the absence in a subject of the different triply disjunctive property of being nowhere on the optimism/pessimism continuum or healthily realistic or excessively optimistic). But that does not imply that the triply disjunctive property is the due-to-humans perfection that necessarily human beings are deprived of if and only if they are subject to excessive optimism. Indeed, it seems that the triply disjunctive property is not the due-to-humans perfection that necessarily human beings are deprived of if and only if they are excessively optimistic.

Why not? Well, I take it that if *P* is a perfection due to human beings, then having *P* as such or necessarily makes a human being good in some respect, and acquiring *P* as such or necessarily makes that a human being better in some respect than it was previously. If, say, charity is a perfection due to human beings, no human being can have charity without being good in some respect, and no human being can acquire charity without thereby becoming better in some respect than he or she was previously. But a human being can acquire the triply disjunctive property of being nowhere on the optimism/pessimism continuum or excessively pessimistic or healthily realistic without thereby becoming better in any respect than he or she was previously. Suppose that Stephanie is initially excessively optimistic, but as a result of some trauma, instantaneously “flips”, exchanging

her excessive optimism for excessive pessimism. When she acquires excessive pessimism, she thereby acquires the triply disjunctive property of being either nowhere on the optimism/pessimism continuum or excessively pessimistic or healthily realistic (whatever was not *F*, or *G*, or *H*, and becomes *G*, thereby becomes *F*, or *G*, or *H*). Now when Stephanie exchanges excessive optimism for excessive pessimism, she does thereby become less bad in some respect than she was previously. But she doesn't thereby become *better* in any respect than she was previously (you don't get to be better simply by trading one evil for another). Alternatively, suppose that Daniel, like Stephanie, is initially excessively optimistic. At some point, as a result of a brain injury, he exchanges excessive optimism for being nowhere on the optimism/pessimism continuum. Then Daniel acquires the triply disjunctive property of being nowhere on the optimism/pessimism continuum or excessively pessimistic or healthily realistic. But although the brain injury makes Daniel less bad in one respect (since it makes him stop being excessively optimistic), it needn't make him better in any respect. It is perfectly possible that the injury as it were subtracts a negative, but doesn't add any positives.

So we can say that the triply disjunctive property is the absence in a subject of the triply disjunctive property, but we cannot say that the triply disjunctive property is the due-to-humans perfection that necessarily humans exist and are deprived of if and only if they are subject to excessive optimism.

Is there a due-to-humans perfection *P* different from both of the disjunctive properties just considered, that necessarily human beings are deprived of if and only if they are subject to excessive optimism? It is hard to see how there could be.

Let us call properties *equivalent* if and only if they imply each other. As we have seen, *being excessively optimistic* and *existing and lacking the triply disjunctive property* are equivalent. (Necessarily, individuals are excessively optimistic if and only they exist, and are neither nowhere on the optimism/pessimism index, nor overly pessimistic, nor healthily realistic.) Now for any property *P*, *P* will be either equivalent or non-equivalent to the triply disjunctive property (*TDP*, for short). If *P* is not equivalent to *TDP*, then *lacking P* is not equivalent to *lacking TDP*, and *existing and lacking P* is not equivalent to *existing and lacking TDP*. If, however, *being excessively optimistic* is equivalent to *existing and lacking TDP*, and *existing and lacking TDP* is not equivalent to *existing and lacking P*, then *being excessively optimistic* is not equivalent to *existing and lacking P*. (If a first property is equivalent to a second property, and the second property is not equivalent to the third, then the first property is not equivalent to the third.) And if *being excessively optimistic* is not equivalent to *existing and lacking P*, then *P* cannot be the due-to-humans perfection that necessarily humans exist and are deprived of if and only if they are subject to excessive optimism. So *P* cannot be the due-to-humans perfection that necessarily human beings exist and are deprived of if and only if they are subject to excessive optimism, on the assumption that *P* is non-equivalent to *TDP*. But,

it would seem, it is equally true P cannot be the due-to-humans perfection that necessarily human beings exist and are deprived of if and only if they are subject to excessive optimism, on the assumption that P is equivalent to TDP . If P is equivalent to TDP , then (since, as we have seen, a human being can acquire TDP without becoming better in any respect) a human being can also acquire P without becoming better in any respect. But if a human being can acquire P without becoming better in any respect, then P cannot after all be a perfection due to human beings, and thus cannot be a due-to-human perfection that necessarily humans are deprived of if and only if they are subject to optimism.

So (for arbitrary P), whether or not P is equivalent to TDP , P is not the due-to-humans perfection that necessarily human beings are deprived of if and only if they are subject to excessive optimism. It seems impossible to find a property that is both a perfection due to humans, and a property that necessarily human beings exist and are deprived of if and only if they are subject to excessive optimism.

The same point seems to apply in equal measure to other vices involving shortage or excess, of which there are not a few: rigidity is excessive attachment to doing (or not doing) things in a certain way, fussiness is excessive concern that things be this way, and not that way, and so on. It also seems to apply to evils (in the broad sense) – e.g., myopia and hyperopia – that have nothing to do with moral psychology. If this is right, it seems to follow that many evils are not privations, and thus that evil (in general) cannot be identified with the privation of due perfection in a subject.

I have tried to make my worry about the thesis that evil is absence of due perfection in a subject as clear as I could, by attempting to construct a rather explicit argument against that thesis. Because explicit arguments are typically rather elaborate, they risk making readers lose sight of the forest for the trees. So it may be helpful to reformulate the argument in a more compact and surveyable way.

Aquinas says that evil is nothing but the privation of due perfection. This appears to imply that every particular kind of evil is nothing but a particular kind of privation of due perfection (i.e., a privation of a particular kind of due perfection). If every particular kind of evil is nothing but a privation of a particular kind of due perfection, then, for any particular way in which a human being can be bad (deficient, defective), there is a particular kind of perfection such that that human's being bad in that way consists in that perfection's being due to but absent from that human (even though he or she exists). Hence for any particular way in which a human being can be bad (deficient, defective), there is a particular kind of perfection such that necessarily, that human being is bad in that way if and only if that perfection is due to but absent from that human (even though he or she exists). The problem is that there seem to be counterexamples to this last claim. For some particular ways in which a human being can be bad (deficient, defective) – e.g., being blind – there is a particular kind of perfection (in the

case of blindness, sight) such that necessarily, that human being is bad in that way if and only if that perfection is due to but absent from that human being (even though he or she exists). For other particular ways in which a human being can be bad (deficient, defective) – e.g., being nearsighted – there seems not to be any particular kind of perfection such that necessarily, that human being is bad in that way if and only that perfection is due to but absent from that human being (even though he or she exists).

Someone might defend the idea that evil = privation of due perfection in the face of the argument just summarized as follows:

The argument under discussion does show that there is no perfection due to human beings that necessarily human beings exist and lack if and only they are excessively optimistic (or nearsighted, or anguished). But this does not show that there is anything wrong with the Thomistic thesis that evil is just the privation of due perfection. For (unlike blindness, or sickness, or uncharitability) excessive optimism, nearsightedness, and anguish are not evils, any more than they are privations of perfections due to human beings. (Or else, if they are evils, they are evils in an improper sense of “evil”, or at least a sense of evil more extended than the one in play when Aquinas says that evil is just the privation of due perfection. Being excessively optimistic, or nearsighted, or anguished, is not a bad (deficient, defective) way for a human being to be (except perhaps in an improper or at least extended sense of “bad”).)

I take it that this is not a promising way of defending the thesis that evil is the privation of due perfection, inasmuch as it is hard to believe that blindness makes a human being bad (deficient), but nearsightedness does not.

Alternatively, someone might defend the Thomistic thesis that evil is just the privation of due perfection in the face of the argument summarized above as follows:

The argument under discussion does show that there is no perfection due to human beings that necessarily human beings exist and lack if and only if they are excessively optimistic (or nearsighted, or anguished). But this does not show that there is anything wrong with the Thomistic thesis that evil is just the privation of due perfection. When Aquinas says at *De Malo* 2, 1, *responsio* that evil is nothing but the privation of due perfection (*malum ... nihil aliud [est] quam privatio debitae perfectionis*), what he means is that being bad – which is to say, being bad in some way or other – just is (consists in, implies and is implied by) existing and being deprived of some due perfection or other. “Evil is just the privation of due perfection” simply means that being bad (i.e., being bad *in some way*) just is (consists in, implies and is implied by) existing and being deprived of due perfection (i.e., being deprived of due perfection *in*

some way, i.e., being deprived of *some due perfection or other*). *Malum nihil aliud [est] quam privatio debita perfectionis* does not mean or imply that for every *particular way* of being bad, there is a *particular perfection* such that being bad in that particular way = existing and being deprived of that particular perfection. As the argument under discussion shows, this last claim is not true: being nearsighted is a particular way of being bad (deficient, defective) that cannot be identified with any particular way of existing and being deprived of due perfection (i.e., cannot be identified with existing and being deprived of any particular due perfection). But although Aquinas is committed to the weak thesis

(WT) Being bad (in some way or other) = existing and being deprived in some way or other of due perfection (i.e., existing and being deprived of some due perfection or other).

he is not committed to the strong thesis

(ST) Being bad (in some way or other) = existing and being deprived (in some way or other) of due perfection (i.e., existing and being deprived of some due perfection or other), *and* being bad in a particular way = existing and being deprived in a particular way of due perfection (i.e., being deprived of a particular due perfection).

The argument turning on anguish, excessive optimism, *vel similia* makes trouble for (ST), but not for (WT). (Nothing in that argument raises difficulties for the idea that necessarily, a human being who is bad (deficient, defective) in some way or other (whether blind or nearsighted) will exist and be deprived of some due perfection or other (whether sight, or perfect vision), and conversely, necessarily, a human being who exists and is deprived of some due perfection or other, is bad (deficient, defective) in some way or other.) Hence the argument under discussion doesn't refute the Thomistic thesis that evil is privation, because it doesn't so much as engage it.

The thesis that evil is the privation of due perfection, as construed just above, is certainly defensible. If anything, as I shall try to explain, my worry is that it is almost *too* defensible.

Suppose that, when Aquinas says that evil is the privation of due perfection, what he means is just that being bad (in some way or other) just is (consists in, implies and is implied by) being deprived of some due perfection or other. This thesis is not devoid of content. Suppose that (oddly enough) you were axiologically pessimistic enough to think that human beings could never be good (in any way), but axiologically optimistic enough to think that human beings could be unbad (in many ways), even though humans were in fact typically bad (in most ways). Suppose too that (unoddly) you thought that a

property could not be due to a human being (could not be a property a human being ought to have) without also being a property that that human being could have. In that case, you would deny the weak thesis (WT) as well as the strong thesis (ST). For you would hold that human beings are often bad in some way (they are bad whenever they spurn or at any rate miss the opportunity to be unbad) and human beings are never deprived of due perfections, since there are no due perfections. (If there were due perfections, then there would be ways in which human beings should be good; but you would think there are no ways in which human beings should be good, because you would think there are no ways in which human beings could be good (and ‘should’ implies ‘could’)). (You would think that there are ways in which human beings could and should be unbad, which is why you would think that human beings can be bad.)

So (WT) is not content-free. But neither is it metaphysically exciting. Unless you hold some very distinctive views about goodness and badness, you’ll think it’s pretty obvious that

- (i) Necessarily, if a substance is bad (deficient, defective) in some way or other, then there is some way or other for that substance to be about which we could truly say: it would be good for the substance to be that way, and the substance should be that way, but the substance isn’t that way, even though it exists.

and conversely

- (ii) Necessarily, if there is some way or other for a substance to be about which we could truly say: it would be good for the substance to be that way, and the substance should be that way, but the substance isn’t that way, even though it exists, then that substance is bad (deficient, defective) in some way or other.

I think it is often supposed (by defenders and opponents of Aquinas alike) that *evil is the privation of due perfection* is a metaphysically exciting thesis (and not, say, an uncontroversial consequence of some other metaphysically exciting and controversial thesis – such as the identity of goodness and being). *Evil is the privation of due perfection*, it is often supposed, has important consequences for what we might call the ontology of good and evil, and important links with philosophical theology, and important implications for theodicy. I can see how these suppositions would or at any rate might be true, if the thesis that evil is the privation of due perfection is understood as (ST). But I do not see how they could be true, if that thesis is understood as (WT). So far as I can tell, (WT) implies neither that evil is some way “less real” than good, nor that evil is less fundamental than good. So far as I can tell, (WT) has no implications for the identity or otherwise of being and goodness. So far as I can tell, even an outright Manichean hypostatizer of evil (i.e., someone whose view of evil is usually thought of as π radians from

the view that evil is the privation of due perfection) could accept (WT) (at least as long as he either (a) holds that the ur-bad “principle of darkness” is not essentially bad, or (b) denies that the only properties a being should have are properties that it could have). (WT) seems like a thoroughly plausible thesis, whatever you think about the relation of being to goodness, or the reality of evil, or the priority of good to evil. It seems to be a consequence of the (uncontentious and metaphysically unexciting) idea that goodness and evil are opposed to each other, together with some weak ancillary assumptions (such as the assumption that there are such things as due perfections, and the assumption that only a perfection that a substance could have can be due to it).

(Similarly, suppose that someone suggested that when Aquinas says that evil is the privation of due perfection, what he means is that whenever a substance is bad in some particular way, that is only because it exists and is deprived of some particular perfection due to it. This last claim is plausible enough: if a human being is nearsighted, or excessively optimistic, or troubled, that is only because he or she exists and is not “rightsighted”, or healthily realistic, or serene (just as, if a human being is blind, or lame, or anhedonic, that is only because he or she exists and lacks sight, or the ability to walk without difficulty, or the ability to enjoy things). But the last claim is tantamount to the claim that for any particular way in which a substance can be bad, there is a particular perfection such that that substance’s being deprived of that perfection is a necessary condition of that substance’s being bad in that way—which claim is no more metaphysically exciting than it is contentious. The metaphysically exciting thesis is the thesis that, for any particular way in which a substance can be bad, there is a particular perfection such that that substance’s existing and being deprived of that perfection is a sufficient condition of that substance’s being bad in that way. This last thesis is metaphysically exciting, inasmuch as it comes to the thesis that a substance’s being bad in a particular way is nothing over and above its existing and being deprived of a particular perfection. But (as we have seen), the last thesis appears to be not only exciting, but also subject to counterexamples.)

If all this is right, we have found a construal of *evil is the privation of due perfection* on which it is eminently defensible, and a different construal of *evil is the privation of due perfection* on which it is metaphysically exciting, but apparently subject to counterexamples. What we (or at least I) have not found is a construal on which *evil is the privation of due perfection* is both eminently defensible and metaphysically exciting.

Goodness, will, and choice

Goodness and perceived goodness play a central role in Aquinas’ account of deliberation and action. For Aquinas, goodness is what will, choice, and action aim at, and perceived goodness is what will, choice, and action are

driven by. (A perceived or apparent good may also be a real good, and when it is, a real as well as apparent good drives will, choice, and action; but even in this case, the real as well as perceived or apparent good drives will, choice, and action *qua* perceived good, and not *qua* real good.) In what follows, I shall try to unpack these claims, and then raise some worries about whether Aquinas' account is compatible with the possibility of some of the things we actually choose to do, or at any rate could choose to do.

At *ST*, Ia IIae, 8, 1, Aquinas asks whether the will is only of the good. He answers that it is, inasmuch as

The will is a rational appetite, and every appetite is only of the good (*omnis ... appetitus non est nisi boni*).

(*ST*, Ia IIae, *responsio*)

In a similar vein, Aquinas says at *SGC*, III, 3 that:

It is part of the concept of *good* to be the term of appetite, for good is the object of every appetite (*hoc autem est de ratione boni, ut terminet appetitum: nam bonum est quod omnia appetunt*).

Whatever these passages, taken out of context, might suggest, Aquinas is not saying here that we only will good things (as opposed to indifferent or bad things). For one thing, it is clear that for Aquinas, although God and the blessed in heaven will (and want) only good things, those on earth (or under it) do not. For another, in *ST*, Ia IIae, 8, 1 *responsio*, Aquinas explicitly says that the will can "tend to" something which is not in fact a good thing:

[S]ince every inclination results from a form, natural appetite results from a form existing in the nature of things, while the sensitive appetite, like the rational appetite, i.e., the will, follows from an apprehended form.

Thus, just as natural appetite tends to a good existing in a thing, voluntary appetite tends to an apprehended good. So, in order that the will tend to anything, it is required not that it be good in fact, but rather that it be apprehended as good (*non requiritur quod sit bonum in rei veritate, sed quod apprehendatur in ratione boni*).

For Aquinas, willing (and wanting) do not always tend to (are not always of) actually good things, but they do always tend to (are always of) things that the willer or wanter takes to be good. When Aquinas says that will and appetite are always of the good, he expresses his view in a way that is potentially misleading, but not unnatural. Compare: we might not unnaturally say that hope is always for good things, and fear is always of bad things. By this we would not mean everything we hope for is in fact good, or that everything we fear is in fact bad: it is clear that we can and do ascertain

ex post that what we were hoping for *ex ante* was not a good thing, or that what we were fearing *ex ante* was not a bad thing. When we say (as we might, in explaining to someone the meaning of *hope* and *fear*) that hope is for good things, and fear is of bad things, that is a potentially misleading shorthand for: we hope for what we take to be good, and we fear what we take to be bad.

There is a complication here. Although Aquinas does not hold that willing, *qua* appetitive state, is always of something that is in fact a good thing absolutely, he does seem to hold that willing, *qua* appetitive state, is always of something that in fact has something of the nature of goodness. Thus at *ST*, Ia IIae, 19, ad 1um Aquinas says:

The will is not always of a true good (*non semper est veri boni*), but is sometimes of an apparent good (*quandoque est apparentis boni*); and this indeed has something of the nature of the good (*habet aliquam rationem boni*), though not of a good which is suitable to desire *simpliciter*.

I take it that when Aquinas says here that what is willed and merely apparently good indeed has *aliquam rationem* of the good, this doesn't mean that something that is willed and merely apparently good has something of the appearance of a good thing (or something of a good thing – to wit, its appearance): that wouldn't be a point worth making. Rather, he means that what is willed and merely apparently good really does have something of the nature or character of a good thing, in spite of not in fact being a good thing (in virtue of its unsuitability as an object of desire).

So, by Aquinas' lights, there are two kinds of necessarily true conditionals whose antecedents concern what a subject wills, and whose consequents concern the goodness or perceived goodness of that thing. Conditionals of the form, *if S wills something, that thing has something of the nature of the good (habet aliquam rationem boni)* are always true. Moreover, conditionals of the form, *if S wills something, then S sees that thing as good (takes that thing to be good)* are always true. I take it that, for Aquinas, this claim is a necessary rather than a contingent truth: as Aquinas thinks of it, willing essentially is a movement toward perceived goodness, just as "nilling" essentially is a movement away from perceived badness (cf. *ST*, Ia IIae, 8, 1, ad 1um).

On the other hand, Aquinas does not suppose that either conditionals of the form, *if this thing has something of the nature of the good, then a subject wills it*, or conditionals of the form, *if this thing is good, then a subject wills it*, are always (necessarily, or even contingently) true. What about conditionals of the form, *if (a subject) S sees something as good (takes something to be good), then S wills that thing?* Here there is another complication. There is a sense in which I can see something as a good thing (take something to be a good thing), even when that thing is not before my mind. (Someone might truly say, "I've always seen non-conformity as a good thing", even if she has not

always had non-conformity before her mind.) Now, as Aquinas thinks of it, a subject only actually wills what is actually “before her mind”:

The will is moved in two ways: in one way, with respect to the exercise of its act, and in another way, with respect to the specification of its act, which is from the object of that act. In the first way, no object moves the will necessarily: someone can always not think of a given object, and accordingly not actually will it.

(*ST*, Ia IIae, 10, 2, *responsio*)

So, on one construal of “seeing a thing as good”, Aquinas thinks that one can see a thing as good (on a natural way of understanding “seeing a thing as good”), without willing it, simply because it is not before one’s mind.

But suppose we construe “seeing a thing as good” as “occurrently seeing a thing as good”, where “occurrently seeing this thing as good” means “having a thing before one’s mind, and having before one’s mind and accepting the judgment, *this thing is good*”. Aquinas appears to think that, on that construal of “seeing a thing as good”, necessarily, if someone sees something as good, she wills it.

At least, so it seems from Aquinas’ discussion at *ST*, Ia, IIae, 10, 2, *responsio* of whether the will is moved by its object contingently or necessarily (and from the parallel discussion at *De Malo*, 6, *un.*, *responsio*). At *ST*, Ia IIae, 10, 2, after noting that no one wills anything necessarily, inasmuch as she can always not think of that thing, Aquinas goes on to draw an analogy between two kinds of colored things, and two kinds of good things. (I shall slightly modify Aquinas’ analogy, in a way that (I hope) will make his point a bit clearer.)

Suppose one object appeared green in normal light, and orange in a certain kind of non-normal light, while another object could only appear green, whatever the light. For each object, we would have the possibility of seeing it as green, and the possibility of not seeing it as green, because for each object, we would have the possibility of not looking at it, and hence not seeing it, and *a fortiori* not seeing it as green. In the case of the first object, though, we would have the possibility of seeing it as green (in normal light), and the possibility of seeing it as not-green (in the non-normal light). In the case of the second object, we would have the first possibility, but not the second (since seeing the object implies seeing the object in some light, and (we are supposing) there is no light in which the object could be seen as anything but green).

Now in our example some things can both appear green and appear orange, and thus non-green (depending on whether the light is normal or non-normal). And some things cannot appear non-green. Analogously, Aquinas thinks, some things can both appear good and appear bad, and thus non-good (as we might say, some things can be put in a good light, and can also be put in a bad (and hence a non-good) light). Other things cannot be put in a bad light: they can as it were only be put in a good light, or left in the dark. Whether or not something can be put in a bad light, Aquinas

thinks, (as long as it can be put in a good light) we have the possibility of willing it, and the possibility of not willing it, since we have the possibility of bringing it to light, and the possibility of leaving in the dark. But if (and only if) a thing can be put in a bad light, as well as in a good light, we have not just the possibility of willing it, and the possibility of not willing it, but also the possibility of willing it, and the possibility of “nilling” it (of using our will to repudiate it, rather than to embrace it – of willing, not it, but its opposite).

In both the *Prima Secundae* passage, and the corresponding *De Malo* passage, Aquinas says we needn't will things that cannot be put in a bad light, and are accordingly “unnillable”, any more than we need to will things that can be put in a bad light, and are accordingly “nillable”. In both passages, he motivates the non-necessity of willing a thing that can't appear bad, and is accordingly unnillable, by appeal to the non-necessity of thinking of that thing. Why the appeal? Why doesn't Aquinas simply say that although there isn't always the possibility of using our will to repudiate a thing (since we can use our will to repudiate a thing only if we can put it in a bad light, and there are some things we cannot put in a bad light), there is always the possibility of not using our will to embrace it? Why does Aquinas invoke the possibility of not thinking of an unnillable thing, rather than leaving thought-about-ness out of it, and simply saying that while there are some things our will cannot repudiate, there aren't any things that our will cannot refrain from embracing?

I think it's because Aquinas thinks that necessarily, if we occurrently see something as good (if we have it before our minds, and we have before our minds and accept the judgment, *this thing is good*), then we will that thing – that is, we will it *then*. We need not go on willing it, because something may distract us, with the result that the thing we are currently willing ceases to be before our mind, and thus ceases to be occurrently seen as good, and willed. Also, we may be able to choose to stop having that thing before our mind, and thus stop willing it – using our “mind's eye” to look away from the thing we are currently willing (so that we no longer see it as good, or will it), in the same way that we can use our eyes to look away from the thing we are currently seeing as green (so we no longer see it, or see it as green). Still, if I have not got Aquinas' view wrong, he thinks that necessarily, for as long as the real or merely apparent goodness of a thing is as it were right before our mind, we will that thing; we can't as it were “take in” a thing's real or merely apparent goodness without then willing that thing.

In this context it is interesting that at *ST*, Ia IIae, 9, 2, *responsio*, Aquinas says:

That which is apprehended under the nature of the good and the befitting moves the will ... (*id quod apprehenditur sub ratione boni et convenientis, movet voluntatem ...*)

I take it that here apprehending a thing *sub ratione boni* is occurrently seeing it as good (i.e., having it before one's mind, and having before one's mind and accepting the judgment, *this thing is good*), and that in this passage

Aquinas is asserting (without qualifiers such as “most of the time”, or “typically”, or “as a matter of contingent fact”) that if we occurrently see something as good (and befitting), then we will it.

So it appears that, for Aquinas, occurrently seeing a thing as good is sufficient as well as necessary for willing it.

For brevity, let us say that someone who occurrently sees something as good in the sense discussed above *sees*_o that thing as good. And let us say that someone who has a thing (i.e., a judgment) before her mind, and accepts it occurrently, believes that thing (for brevity, *believes*_o that thing). On the view I take Aquinas to hold, the links between seeing_o-as, goodness, and will are in one way analogous to the links between seeing_o-as, truth, and belief_o.

Think of it this way: it is not a necessary truth that:

- (i) If something is true, then a subject believes_o that thing.

(Obviously, something (some judgment) can be true, even though I don't have it before my mind and accept it.)

On the other hand, it is a necessary truth that

- (ii) If a subject sees_o something as true, then that subject believes_o that thing.

(If I have a judgment before my mind, and I have before my mind and accept *that judgment is true*, then I must also have before my mind and accept that judgment.)

Analogously, on the view Aquinas seems to hold, it is not a necessary truth that:

- (i') If something is good, then a subject wills that thing.

(Something may be good without my willing it (either because it is not before my mind, or because although it is before my mind, I take it to be a bad thing rather than a good thing).)

But (on the view Aquinas seems to hold) it is a necessary truth that:

- (ii') If a subject sees_o something as good, then she wills it.

(Similarly, on the view I take Aquinas to hold, the links between seeing_o-as, badness, and “nilling” are analogous to the links between seeing_o-as, falsity, and (occurrent) disbelief. Something can be false without your disbelieving_o it, but you can't see_o something as false without disbelieving_o it. Analogously, something can be bad without your nilling it, but you can't see_o something as bad, without nilling it.)

On the other hand, on the view I think Aquinas has, the link between seeing_o as, goodness, and will is in an important respect disanalogous to the

link between seeing_o as, truth, and belief_o. Your seeing_o something as true implies (and, as it were, “virtually contains”) your believing_o it, but it doesn’t explain it: it’s not as though you have before your mind and accept a judgment *because* you have that judgment before your mind and you have before your mind and accept *this judgment is true*. By contrast, Aquinas holds that your seeing_o something as good does explain why you will it; you will something because you see_o it as good. To bring out the disanalogy in a slightly different way, believing_o something is not a response to seeing_o it as true; but (for Aquinas) willing something *is* a response to seeing_o it as good.

Assuming at least provisionally that Aquinas accepts the thesis that seeing_o something as good is sufficient as well as necessary for willing it, there remains the question of what that thesis comes to. After all, although we naturally enough talk about wanting something, or about choosing or doing something of our own free will, or against our will, outside philosophy, we don’t usually talk about willing (much less nilling) things. (In other words, although we constantly use “want”, “choose”, and “do” as transitive verbs, outside philosophy, we hardly ever use “will” as a non-auxiliary verb (transitive or otherwise).) To get clearer on what Aquinas means by the Latin verb I have translated as “to will”, it will be useful to say a bit about Aquinas’ account of action, and in particular about the various acts of judgment and of will typically involved in the process that starts with deliberation and ends in action. (For a detailed presentation of that account, see *ST*, Ia IIae, 8–17).)

According to Aquinas, the “backstory” of an action – say, your going for a postprandial walk by the Thames – might look something like this: you start with the judgment that health is a good thing – a judgment Aquinas sometimes calls an *intellectus finis* (an understanding of an end as good (see *De Veritate*, 5, 1, *responsio*)). This judgment engenders an act of will that Aquinas calls a “simple volition” (*simplex voluntas* or *volitio simplex*: see *ST*, Ia IIae, 15, 3, *responsio*, and 8, 3, *responsio*). Aquinas does not say a great deal about simple volition, but “simply willing” a good seems not a million miles away from wanting_o it (where wanting_o is understood as at-least-*pro-tanto*-wanting_o). (In *Aquinas: Moral, Political, and Legal Theory*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, John Finnis helpfully speaks of simple volition as a kind of “an openness to” and “interest in” a certain end (p. 69).)

It is possible to judge that *x* is good, without judging that acting with the aim of attaining (or holding on to) *x* is good. For example, one may judge that it would *ex vi terminorum* be a good thing to be lucky, without judging that it would be a good thing to act with the aim of becoming (or remaining) lucky (since good luck is (again, *ex vi terminorum*) not the sort of thing one can sensibly try to acquire or hold on to). Often, though, the judgment that *x* is good will be accompanied by (and figure in the explanation of) the judgment that acting with the aim of attaining or holding on to *x* is good: in the case under discussion, say, your judgment that health is good is accompanied by (and figures in the explanation of) your judgment that acting with the aim of

acquiring or holding on to health is good. This last judgment in turn engenders a second act of will, which Aquinas calls *intentio*, and which consists in intending to act with the aim of attaining (or holding on to) health (equivalently, intending to attain (or hold on to) health via some means or other).

Intending to attain (or hold on to) health in some way or other doesn't imply intending to attain (or hold on to) health in this particular way, or intending to attain (or hold on to) health in that particular way. It might be immediately evident to you that taking a walk by the Thames is the best way of (trying to) attain (or hold on to) health, but it might not be. If it is not, your intellect will get to work again, considering possible means of attaining or holding on to health, and sorting them into those that are "eligible" or "suitable", and those that are not. This activity is counsel (*consilium*), and it results in verdicts (*sententiae, iudicia*) concerning the eligibility or otherwise of means of attaining or holding on to health (cf. *ST*, Ia IIae, 14). If your intellect had been unable to find any eligible means of attaining or holding on to health, you would have given up on the idea of acting with the aim of becoming or remaining healthy. But your intellect was in fact able to come up with a "short list" of eligible means of attaining or holding on to health (which list included *taking a postprandial walk by the Thames*). When presented with this short list of eligible options, your will comes back into play, with the result that you now have an intention to attain or hold on to health, not just via some means or other, but also via some one of those means your intellect has deemed eligible or suitable. (Aquinas calls this activity of the will consent (*consensus*): cf. *ST*, Ia IIae, 15.)

At this point, your intellect gets to work on the relative merits of the items on the short list, and selects *taking a postprandial walk by the Thames* as the best way of attaining the end of acquiring or holding on to health. This last judgment concerning which finalist should be the winner – which Aquinas sometimes calls a *iudicium electionis* – is accompanied by an act of will which Aquinas calls *electio* – one which consists in the intention to attain this end (acquiring or retaining health) via these means (a postprandial walk by the Thames). After *electio*, you will not just the end (health) but also the means to the end (the walk). (For more on *electio*, see *ST*, Ia IIae, 13.)

We might think that this completes the backstory of how you came to walk by the Thames, but Aquinas does not. As he sees it, after the will has "elected" (selected) an action, the intellect "commands" it, and the will then carries out the command (in this case, moving the relevant parts of your body in such a way that you walk by the Thames). There is on the face of it something odd about thinking of command as an act of the intellect, but in what follows I won't say more about *imperium* (the post-*electio* command of the intellect), or *usus* (the compliance of the will with that command). (Nor will I say anything about the pair of acts of intellect and will that for Aquinas (ideally) follow upon the performance of an action (knowledge that the action performed has attained its end (*cognitio finis in actu*), and the satisfaction or enjoyment that follows upon such knowledge (*fruitio*).)

So for Aquinas, there are various kinds of acts of will, occurring at various stages of the transition from deliberation to action: simple volition, intention, consent, election, and use. How does Aquinas think of the relation between willing and performing some act of will?

In some places, Aquinas seems to say that (properly speaking) willing = performing an act of “simple willing” (*volitio simplex*) = embracing some end, so that we do not will the means we choose except perhaps *per accidens*, inasmuch as those means are also proximate or non-ultimate ends:

If we speak of will insofar as it is properly the name of an act [as opposed to a power], then properly speaking, it is only of the end (*proprie loquendo est finis tantum*).

(*ST*, Ia IIae, 8, 2, *responsio*)

(Symmetrically, Aquinas sometimes seems to say, choosing is always of means; one cannot choose ends, except inasmuch as those ends are also means (cf. *ST*, Ia IIae, 13, 2).)

Elsewhere, Aquinas seems to allow that both the simple willing of an end and the choosing of some means to an end count as willing: when we will an end, we will something for its own sake, and when we will some means, we will something, not for its own sake, but for the sake of something else:

[T]he end is willed for its own sake (*secundum se volitus*), but the means, as such, are not willed except on account of the end (*id autem quod est ad finem, inquantum huiusmodi, non sit volitum nisi propter finem*).

So, depending on whether willing is understood more narrowly or more broadly, the claim that necessarily, we will all and only those things we see_o as good might be understood as the (weaker) claim that

- (a) Necessarily, we simply will all and only those ends we see_o as good (in themselves).

or the (stronger) claim that

- (b) Necessarily, we simply will all and only those ends we see_o as good (in themselves), and necessarily, we will all and only those means we see_o as good means of pursuing some end we see_o as good (in itself), and accordingly simply will.

Assuming that one can will as well as choose some means, it is presumably impossible to choose some means to a simply willed end, without also willing those means. If the converse is also true – if it is impossible to will some means to a simply willed end, without choosing them (say, because willing some means = choosing those means, just as willing an end = simply willing

that end), then necessarily we will some means if and only if we choose those means. In which case we can move from (b) to

- (c) Necessarily, we simply will all and only those ends we see_o as good (in themselves), and necessarily, we choose all and only those means we see_o as good means of pursuing some end we see_o as good (in itself), and accordingly simply will.

It seems, though, as if (the second part of) (c) is neither true nor Thomistic. Seeing_o some means as good means of pursuing a simply willed end can't imply choosing those means, because, it seems, one could see_o some means as good means of pursuing a simply willed end even before choosing those means. So seeing_o some means of pursuing a simply willed end doesn't imply choosing those means *then*. And if it doesn't imply choosing those means then, neither does it imply choosing them later, since the deliberative process might be derailed (e.g., by untimely death), with the result that what were seen_o as good means of pursuing a simply willed end were never actually chosen. Since Aquinas would surely grant these points, we may conclude that (c) is no more Thomistic than it is defensible.

This, however, does not preclude that

- (d) Necessarily, we simply will all and only those ends we see_o as good in themselves, and necessarily, when we choose some means or other of pursuing a simply willed end, we then choose these means of pursuing that end if and only if we then see_o these means of pursuing that end as good means of pursuing that end.

But (d) again seems neither obviously true nor obviously Thomistic. Couldn't it be that – and wouldn't Aquinas grant that – we can (and sometimes do) choose *these* means of pursuing a simply willed end, even though (at the time we choose) we see_o *those* different means of pursuing that end as good means of pursuing that end, because (at the time we choose) we see_o these means of pursuing that end as better means of pursuing that end than those (good, but less good) means of pursuing it? Doesn't this show that, even if seeing_o an end as good is sufficient for then simply willing that end, seeing_o a means of pursuing a simply willed end as good is insufficient for then choosing that means of pursuing an end, even on the assumption that some means of pursuing that end is being chosen then?

Here someone might say:

For Aquinas, it is crucial to distinguish what would be good means to a simply willed end in some hypothetical “elective circumstances” from what are in fact good means to that end in the actual circumstances of election. Suppose that, in the elective circumstances the agent actually finds herself in, pursuing (a simply willed end) *E* via means *M*' is better

than and precludes pursuing *E* via means *M*. Then, in those circumstances, those means *M* are not good means of pursuing *E* (in virtue of their sub-optimality and “opportunity-costly-ness”), even if they would be good means to pursue *E*, in hypothetical circumstances in which the means *M'* were absent, and the means *M* were the optimal and non-opportunity-costly way of pursuing *E*. In light of this, we can see that the worry about (d) just raised is misplaced. If, in a given set of elective circumstances, an agent sees the pursuit of a simply willed end via means *M* as sub-optimal (as precluding a better way of pursuing that end), she won't (she can't) see *M* as good means to that end (as actually good means to that end, as good means to that end *rebus sic stantibus* (things being as they are)). So it's not the case that in those elective circumstances, she will or at any rate might fail to choose those means of pursuing that end, despite then seeing_o them as good means of pursuing that end, in contravention of (d). It's not that someone's seeing_o some means of pursuing a simply willed end as good means of pursuing that end is insufficient for her choosing those means, inasmuch as it is compatible with her seeing_o those means of pursuing that good as sub-optimal means of pursuing it. It is instead that someone's seeing_o some means of pursuing a simply willed end as actually good (here and now, in the actual circumstances) is incompatible with her seeing_o those means of pursuing that good as sub-optimal.

But suppose we say that some means of pursuing a simply willed end are not actually good means of pursuing that end, if some alternative means of pursuing that end are better means of pursuing that end. As best I can see, that will not help us defend (d). For there seem to be possible circumstances in which someone chooses some means of pursuing an end, even though she thinks some alternative means of pursuing that end are a better means of pursuing it.

Suppose you are unhappily chewing over (the Buddhist sage) Milarepa's remark that life is short and the time of death is uncertain, and thinking to yourself that, whatever Bernard Williams said about the tedium of immortality, the best thing would surely be never to die at all. At this point a genie appears, and says:

I know what you want – it's never to die. I could guarantee that you'll never die, but I won't. What I will do is to guarantee whatever finite extension of your life you ask for. You choose a positive integer *n*, and I'll guarantee that you will live for *n* more days from now. If, say, you want me to guarantee that you'll live for one more day, choose the number 1. (You don't even need to tell me that you've chosen it; as you have probably gathered, I can read your mind.) If you want me to guarantee that you'll live for two more days, choose the number 2. And so on ... I'll also guarantee that your remaining *n* days will be anything

but tedious: the first one will be absolutely wonderful, and after that each day will be even better than the one before.

Let us suppose that you take the genie at his word, and set about deliberating as to what to do – starting with a simply willed end, and trying to get from there to a choice of means. Suppose also (in Aristotelian fashion) that the simply willed end you start from in your deliberation is your happiness. (Your happiness is what you see as good in itself, what you want (for its own sake, and not simply for the sake of something else), what (in Finnis’s words) you are “open to” and “interested in” attaining.)

Now it seems that if happiness is your end, then you will regard even an arbitrarily small “amount” of happiness as good (in itself), and want even an arbitrarily small “amount” of happiness (for its own sake). Suppose, say, you regarded being hugely happy for a very long time as good (in itself), and wanted to be hugely happy for a very long time (for its own sake), but you were indifferent between being moderately happy for a good while and not being happy at all, and indifferent between being slightly happy for a brief time and not being happy at all. Then your end would be your huge and prolonged happiness, rather than your happiness. (Imagine that you wanted to be hugely happy for a very long time, but you were indifferent between being slightly happy for a brief time, and not being happy at all. *Ceteris paribus*, if you were given a choice between an option that you saw as affording you an arbitrarily small chance of attaining huge and prolonged happiness, and an option that you saw as precluding huge and prolonged happiness, but guaranteeing slight and brief happiness, you would go for the first option (since you have an interest in what you think the first option gives you some chance of getting, and the second option precludes your getting, but you have no interest in what you think the second option guarantees you getting). But it’s not true of an agent aiming at happiness that, *ceteris paribus*, she will choose an option that (she sees as) affording her an arbitrarily small chance of huge and prolonged happiness over an option (she sees as) precluding huge and prolonged happiness, and guaranteeing slight and brief happiness. If an agent’s aim is happiness, then, *ceteris paribus*, she will choose an option that she thinks rules out a lavish “eudaimonistic return” but guarantees a very modest one over an option which she thinks does not rule out a lavish eudaimonistic return, but makes any eudaimonistic return sufficiently unlikely. She may, say, buy a cappuccino, rather than a lottery ticket.)

Similarly, it seems that if happiness is your end, then your attitude toward happiness will be “the more, the better” (whether “more” is understood qualitatively or quantitatively). (Suppose you thought that past a certain point, being more intensely happy for a given period of time was not as good as or at any rate no better than being less happy for that same period of time (say, because you thought that too much happiness engendered smugness). Or suppose you thought that past a certain point, having a given level of happiness for a longer period of time was not as good as or at any

rate no better than having that same level of happiness for a shorter period of time. Then your end wouldn't be happiness *inquantum huiusmodi* (as such): it would be happiness-for-a-suitable-period-of-time, or a-suitable-level-of-happiness, or a-suitable-level-of-happiness-for-a-suitable-period-of-time. (Again, if your attitude toward happiness was not, "the (qualitatively or quantitatively) more, the better", then *ceteris paribus* you would make choices in actual or hypothetical circumstances that *ceteris paribus* agents whose aim was happiness would not make.)

So again, suppose you've just heard what the genie had to say, and you take him at his word, and your simply willed end is your happiness, and you're deliberating about which means of pursuing happiness to choose. Since you take the genie at his word, you believe that you have at your disposal various means of pursuing happiness – choosing the number 1, choosing the number 2, and so on. But you don't believe that you have at your disposal any optimal means of pursuing happiness, since you judge that (given the non-existence of a largest integer), for whatever means you have of pursuing that end, you have a better alternative means of pursuing it – an alternative means of pursuing happiness that will afford you both a greater "quantity" of happiness, and a higher (average) "level" of happiness.

So what will you do? Well, you'll choose some integer or other (presumably, one that strikes you as impressively large). So you'll choose a means of pursuing your simply willed end, despite then knowing that that you are not choosing an optimal means of pursuing that end.

Now the strategy for defending (d) set out above turns on supposing that someone sees_o some means of pursuing a simply willed end as actually good means of pursuing that end only if she sees_o those means of pursuing that end as optimal means of pursuing that end. On that supposition, in the genie case, you won't see *any* of the means of pursuing the simply willed end (to wit, your happiness) at your disposal as good means of pursuing that end (since you won't see any of the means of pursuing that end at your disposal as optimal means of pursuing that end). In which case – however you choose – you'll choose some means of pursuing a simply willed end, even though you don't see those means of pursuing that end as good; in which case (d) is false.

Notice that if this is right, we cannot move to an unproblematic principle by trading in (d) for

- (e) Necessarily, we simply will all and only those ends we see_o as good in themselves, and necessarily, when we choose some means or other of pursuing a simply willed end, we then choose these means of pursuing that end if and only if we then see_o these means of pursuing that end as optimal means of pursuing that end.

(The second part of) (e) basically says that choosing is attempting to optimize (that is, that choosing some means to a simply willed end is

attempting to choose optimal means of pursuing that end). But the moral of the genie story is that choice is not the attempt to optimize, since one cannot attempt to do what one takes to be impossible, and (in possible scenarios such as the one involving the genie) one can choose a means to pursue a simply willed end, even when one judges that choosing an optimal means of pursuing that end is impossible.

The genie story is of course quite fantastical, and someone might hold that it accordingly does not show that it is genuinely possible to choose a means of pursuing a simply willed end, without attempting to choose an optimal means of pursuing that end. But it's not clear to me that this strategy for defending (e) is either motivated, or a promising one for Aquinas, given his other beliefs.

On the latter point, it is interesting to consider the views Aquinas expresses at *ST*, Ia, 25, 6, *ad* 3um about whether God could have made the universe better than He actually made it. He says that holding fixed the assumption that there are these very things [the ones there actually are] (*suppositis istis rebus*) the universe couldn't have been better than it actually is: it is as it were an optimal ordering of the things there actually are. Nevertheless, God could have made different things from the ones He actually made, or could have added different things to the ones He actually made, and in that case there would have been a better universe than there actually is (*Posset tamen Deus alias res facere, vel alias addere istis rebus factis, et sic esset illud universum melius*).

Here Aquinas seems to be supposing that the result of adding something (good) to an already good universe would be a better universe. If that is so, then it seems that there will be no such thing as an optimal universe: no matter how good a universe God creates, He could have ended up with an even better universe, by creating all the things He actually created, and another good thing besides.

Now in our genie example your end was happiness (rather than a-suitable-level-of-happiness, or a-suitable-level-of-happiness-for-a-suitable-period-of-time). Analogously, it seems that in creating a universe, God's end could be (ending up with) a good universe (rather than, say, ending-up-with-a-universe-with-this-level-of-goodness). Just as (in the genie example) you regard even arbitrarily small amounts of happiness as good, and your attitude toward happiness is "the more, the better", it could be that God regarded even arbitrarily small amounts of goodness in the universe as good, and that His attitude toward goodness in the universe was "the more, the better". In which case, it seems, God would find Himself in the situation you find yourself in in the (admittedly fantastical) genie scenario. He would have at His disposal infinitely many means of pursuing His end ((ending up with) a good universe), and He would choose some, knowing full well that the ones He actually chooses are (like any of the others He might have chosen) sub-optimal means of pursuing that end. At least some of God's choices would not be attempts to optimize.

The theological analogue of the genie scenario is interesting for the following reason: someone who thinks that choice just is the attempt to optimize might say that, in the genie scenario, if you do manage to choose a number n , it's only by dint of (somehow) making yourself believe (however fleetingly) "in the front of your mind" that n is the best number you could choose (even though you know "in the back of your mind" that it isn't the best number you could choose). But, given that God is perfect, we could not give this sort of account of how a God whose end is to create a good universe (the more good, the better) could choose to create a good but sub-optimal world.

Here someone might say:

True, the reasons advanced show that the second part of (e) (and thus (e) itself) is indefensible. But it's worth underscoring that elective circumstances in which an agent sees herself as having no optimal means of pursuing her simply willed end are weird – and cruel.

In such circumstances, an agent is condemned to make a choice that she regards as regrettable at the very time she makes it (and even before). Suppose that you respond to the genie's offer to guarantee you as finitely many days of future happiness as you ask for by choosing the integer n . Even as you choose n , you know that, when your n days guaranteed happiness have run out, you'll kick yourself for having asked for n days of guaranteed happiness, rather than n^n (or more) days. Moreover, your circumstances are very different from those of Odysseus, when he asks the sailors to bind him to the mast. *Odysseus-before-he-is-in-earshot-of-the-sirens* and *Odysseus-while-he-is-in-earshot-of-the-sirens* have opposed views about the relative merits of being bound and being unbound. So at the time Odysseus chooses to be bound to the mast, he doesn't see that choice as (all things considered) regrettable, even though he knows that at a certain time in the future, he will regret it. By contrast, your current views about the relative merits of n and n^n days of guaranteed happiness are no different from the ones you know you'll have n days from now. So, although Odysseus (in choosing to be bound) doesn't make a choice that he then regards as regrettable, you (in choosing the number n) do.

Suppose we construe the claim that we always simply will and always choose *sub specie boni* (under the guise of the good) as the claim that we simply will only those ends we see as good ends, and we make only those choices we see as good choices. So construed, the claim is false, if there are elective circumstances in which we deem that we have no optimal means of pursuing our simply willed end. For in such circumstances, whatever choice we make we will see as (all things considered) regrettable (at the very time we make it). And if we see a choice as regrettable, we don't see it as good *absolute* or *simpliciter* (as good absolutely or in an unqualified sense), even if we see it as good *secundum quid* (good in a qualified sense, good in a certain respect). Circumstances in which we see ourselves as having no optimal

means of pursuing our simply willed end are circumstances in which we don't make what we see as a good choice, because we don't see any of the choices available to us as good.

Here is a different way to say (more or less) the same thing. Aquinas has a picture on which the intellect (in making its determinations of value) guides will and choice, and will and choice cooperate with the intellect and its determinations of value. But in circumstances in which an agent sees herself as having no optimal means of pursuing her simply willed end, the guidance of choice by intellect and the cooperation of choice with intellect necessarily break down. Suppose God's end is not getting a universe that is *this* good, and is instead getting a universe that is good (the more good, the better). Suppose also that God judges that He can always improve the universe by adding some new good thing to it. Whether or not God creates anything, and whichever things He creates, if He creates, the guidance of divine choice by divine intellect will break down. Far from being guided by His determinations of relative value, His choice will fly in the face of them. If He creates just *these* things, He will do that despite, at the very time He chooses to create just these things, seeing it as better to create these things, and more besides. If on the other hand, He doesn't create any things, He does so, despite, at the very time He chooses not to create anything, seeing it as better to create some things than to create no things. Given His end and the means at His disposal, whatever God does, He ends up, as it were, seeing the better, and doing the worse. In other words, given His end and the means at His disposal, He ends up choosing what He knows is less good over what He knows is more good. (In light of this, one can see why Leibniz did not want to countenance the possibility that God could ever find Himself in elective circumstances in which He saw Himself as not having any optimal means of pursuing a simply willed end, or didn't in fact have any optimal means of pursuing a simply willed end.)

Aquinas may well not have been aware that, in circumstances in which an agent sees herself as having no optimal means of pursuing her end, the guidance of choice by intellect necessarily breaks down. For at *ST*, Ia IIae 13, 2, *responsio*, he says quite generally and without any qualifications that choice is the taking of one thing in preference to another (*electio sit praeacceptio unius respectu alterius*), and at *ST*, Ia IIae, 12, 3, *responsio*, he says quite generally and without any qualifications that it is evident that a man chooses one thing over another because it is the better of the two (*patet ... quod homo unum alteri praeeligit, quia melius est altero*) (where Aquinas must mean, not that the thing the man chooses is in fact better than the thing the man does not choose, but rather that the man who chooses (at the time he chooses) deems the thing he chooses better than the thing he does not choose).

Be that as it may, if it weren't for the fact there could be "extreme choice environments", in which all the available choices are (all things considered) regrettable, and none are good *absolute*-choice environments in which even

God is constrained to embrace the regrettable, and choose what He knows has less going for it over what He knows has more going for it, (e) would get things right. So we can arrive at something which is defensible and (more or less) Thomistic by reformulating (e) in such a way that it no longer has any implications for how someone chooses (her means) when she thinks she has no optimal means of pursuing her end – say:

- (f) Necessarily, we simply will all and only those ends we see_o as good in themselves, and necessarily, when we choose some means or other of pursuing a simply willed end, and we see ourselves as having some optimal means of pursuing that end, we then choose these means of pursuing that end if and only if we then see_o these means of pursuing that end as optimal means of pursuing that end.

In fact, though, whether or not agents could choose sub-optimal means of pursuing a simply willed end when and because they deemed that all the means of pursuing that end at their disposal are sub-optimal, there is a different worry about (e), which also applies to (f).

If an agent could find herself in a situation in which she saw herself as having no optimal means of pursuing a simply willed end, an agent could equally find herself in a situation in which she had two alternative means of pursuing a simply willed end, each of which she saw as an optimal means of pursuing that end. But if such situations are possible, then the second part of (f) is false (and with it, (f) itself). For in such situations, rather than undergoing “decisional paralysis”, an agent will (typically) plump for one of the apparently optimal alternative means at her disposal. If *M* and *M'* are the (two and only) alternative and apparently equi-optimal means of pursuing her simply willed end, the agent will go for *M*, or go for *M'*. So the agent will either (choose and) fail to choose *M'*, despite seeing *M'* as an optimal means of pursuing her simply willed end, or the agent will (choose and) fail to choose *M*, despite seeing *M* as an optimal means of pursuing her simply willed end – and either way, there will be a counterexample to (f).

This suggests that we should reformulate (f) as

- (g) Necessarily, we simply will all and only those ends we see_o as good in themselves, and necessarily, when we choose some means or other of pursuing a simply willed end, and we see ourselves as having a uniquely optimal means of pursuing that end, we then choose these means of pursuing that end if and only if we then see_o these means of pursuing that end as optimal means of pursuing that end.

Would Aquinas see (g) as an improvement on (f)? To ask more or less the same question in a different way, does (g) come closer than (f) to capturing how Aquinas thinks of the links between seeing_o-as-good, simply willing, and choosing?

On the one hand, the idea that an agent might have at her disposal a surplus of apparently optimal alternative means of pursuing a simply willed end is on the face of it much less subversive of the picture of will and choice as necessarily guided by intellect than the idea that an agent might have at her disposal not even one apparently optimal means of pursuing a simply willed end. If an agent can have at her disposal a surplus of apparently optimal alternative means of pursuing a simply willed end, this implies that in certain (possible) elective circumstances, intellect can only go so far in guiding the will in its choosing, after which point the will must make an arbitrary *electio* between alternative means to resolve the “electoral deadlock” the intellect has left it with. So, in cases involving surplus, the will, in choosing, in one sense has to go beyond the guidance of the intellect. But it doesn’t have to fly in the face of the guidance of the intellect, in the way that (we saw) it appears to have to, in cases in which an agent has at her disposal no apparently optimal means of pursuing a simply willed end.

Let us call choice between apparently equi-optimal means of pursuing a simply willed end *electio inter optima apparentia*. (What better place for Latin neologisms than a book on Aquinas?) As we have already seen one chapter back, Aquinas certainly discusses cases that might be naturally thought of as cases of *electio inter optima apparentia*, for example in his discussion of predestination and reprobation at *ST*, Ia, 23, 5, *ad 3um*:

The reason for the predestination of some and the reprobation of others is found (*potest sumi*) in the goodness of God. Thus God is said to have made all things on account of His goodness, so that His goodness might be represented in things. But divine goodness, which in itself is one and simple, must be represented in things in many different ways (*multiformiter*), since created things cannot attain the simplicity of God. ... So in order that the multiformity of grades [of representation of divine goodness] in things be preserved, God allows some evils, lest many good things be impeded ... Let us therefore consider the whole human race as we consider the whole universe. God has willed to represent His goodness in human beings – with respect to some, whom He predestines, by way of His mercy, in sparing them, and with respect to others, whom He condemns (*reprobat*), by way of His justice, in punishing them. And this is the reason that God chooses some and condemns some (*Et haec est ratio quare Deus quosdam eligit, et quosdam reprobat*). But why God chooses these [human beings] for glory, and has condemned those [human beings] has no reason except the divine will (*sed quare hos eligit in gloriam, et illos reprobat non habet rationem nisi divinam voluntatem*). ... It’s the same way in natural things. A reason can be given for why, although prime matter is in itself wholly uniform, in the beginning God made one part of it under the form of fire, and another under the form of earth – to wit, so that there might a diversity of kinds in natural things. But why this part of matter is under this form, and that part under another one, depends

on the simple will of God (*dependent ex simpliciter divina voluntate*), just as it depends on the simple will of the artificer (*ex simpliciter voluntate artificis dependet*) that this stone is in that part of a wall, and that [stone] is in another, although the blueprint (*ratio artis*) requires that some stone be in this part, and some stone be in that part.

It is natural to suppose that when the “artificer” chooses putting this stone in this part of the wall and that (duplicate) stone in that part of the wall over doing it the other way round, he makes a choice between apparently equi-optimal alternatives, and that when God chooses creating this bit of sgc-matter under the form of fire and that bit under the form of air over doing it the other way around, He makes a choice between apparently equi-optimal alternatives.

Now it’s one thing to say that, in the passage above, Aquinas discusses what *we* regard as cases of *electio inter optima apparentia*, and another to say that, in that passage, he discusses what *he* regards as cases of *electio inter omnia apparentia*. But one might think that both claims are true.

In the passage under consideration, Aquinas seems to be saying something along these lines:

We can find a reason why (*ratio quare*) (i) God predestines some human beings, and condemns some human beings, (ii) God creates some sgc-matter under the substantial form of fire, and some under the substantial form of earth, and (iii) an artificer puts one stone in this part of the wall, and one stone in that part of the wall. God predestines some human beings, and condemns some human beings, so that both His mercy and His justice might be represented by the ultimate destinies of human beings. God creates some sgc-matter under the substantial form of fire, and some under the substantial form of earth, so that there might be diversity of kinds in natural things. The artificer puts one stone in this part of the wall, and one stone in that part of the wall, so that there might be a [solid, stone] wall of certain dimensions. But there is no reason why – or at least, there isn’t the same sort of reason why – (iv) God predestines these human beings, and condemns those ones, or (v) God creates this bit of matter under the substantial form of fire, and that bit of matter under the substantial form of earth, or (vi) the artificer puts this stone in this part of the wall, and that stone in that part of the wall. There is no reason that God predestines these human beings, and condemns those ones, or makes this bit of matter fireformed, and that bit earthformed, except the divine will, and there is no reason that the artificer puts this stone in this part of the wall, and that stone in that part of the wall, except the artificer’s will.

Now in one way we might find the contrast Aquinas is drawing here puzzling. God’s predestining some human beings and condemning some human

beings depends on His having as an end that both His mercy and His justice be represented by the ultimate destinies of human beings (if He hadn't had that end, He wouldn't have predestined some human beings, and condemned some human beings). God's making some sgc-matter originally fireformed and some sgc-matter originally earthformed depends on His having as an end that there be a diversity of kinds of natural things (if He hadn't had that end, He wouldn't have made some sgc-matter originally fireformed, and some sgc-matter originally earthformed). The artificer's putting some stone in this part of the wall, and some stone in that part of the wall, depends on his having as an end that there be a wall of certain dimensions (if he hadn't had that end, he wouldn't have put some stone in this part of the wall, and some stone in that part of the wall).

So far, so good. But isn't it equally true that God's predestining these humans and condemning those human beings depends on His having as an end that both His mercy and His justice be represented by the ultimate destinies of human beings? (Isn't it true that if God hadn't had that end, He wouldn't have predestined these human beings, and condemned those?) Isn't it likewise true that God's making this bit of sgc-matter originally fireformed and that bit of sgc-matter originally earthformed depends on God's having as an end that there be a diversity of kinds of natural things (so that if God hadn't had that end, He wouldn't have made this bit of sgc-matter originally fireformed, and that bit of sgc-matter originally earthformed)? Isn't it likewise true that the artificer's putting this stone in this part of the wall, and that stone in that part of the wall, depends on his having as an end that there be a wall of certain dimensions (so that if he hadn't that end, he wouldn't have put this stone in this part of the wall, and that stone in that part of the wall)? In both the case in which, say, the artificer chooses to put some stone in this part of the wall, and some stone in that part of the wall, and the case in which the artificer chooses to put this stone in this part of the wall, and that stone in that part of the wall, it seems that the choice depends on the artificer's willing a certain end (and seeing_o that end as good).

So it seems that, in both the "some ... some" cases, and the "these ... those/this ... that" cases, we have dependence of a choice of means upon the simple willing of an end (and upon the seeing_o of that end as good). How, then, does Aquinas end up contrasting the "some ... some" cases with the "these... those/this ... that" cases, on the grounds that, in the "some ... some" cases, we have a reason why or *ratio quare* the agent chooses as he does (one involving the end the chooser is pursuing), whereas in the "these ... those/this ... that" cases, we should say that there is no reason the agent chooses as he does, except for the chooser's will?

Well, as various philosophers of science have noticed, when we ask, "why p ?" we often are interested in knowing why p rather than q , for some (contextually salient) q . (Stress often makes the relevant q salient: compare "but why on earth did you *marry* him?" (rather than simply continuing to go out with, or at most moving in with him) with "but why on earth did you marry *him*?" (rather

than some other more promising suitor.) Now if the explanatory question at issue is contrastive – “why p [rather than q]?” then it seems that r is a good answer only if q is not every bit as likely as p on the supposition that r . If, say, the question is, “why did you order chocolate ice-cream (rather than vanilla)?”, “because it was hot, and I wanted a cool dessert” isn’t a good answer.

Now it may be that in the passage from *ST*, Ia, 23, 5 cited above, Aquinas is thinking of why-questions contrastively, and thinking of a reason why (*ratio quare*) as an answer to a contrastive why-question. That is, he may be thinking of the question,

(Q₁) Why does God predestine some and condemn some?

as tantamount to the question

(Q₁’) Why does God predestine some and condemn some (rather than predestining all and condemning none, or predestining none and condemning all)?

And he may be thinking of the question,

(Q₂) Why does God predestine these human beings and condemn those human beings?

as tantamount to the question

(Q₂’) Why does God predestine *these* human beings and condemn *those* human beings (rather than predestining *those* human beings and condemning *these* human beings)?

If this is how Aquinas is construing (Q₁) and (Q₂), that might enable us to see why Aquinas answers (Q₁) by saying, “there is a reason why God predestines, and condemns some: it’s that God has as His end that both His mercy and His justice be represented by the ultimate destinies of human beings”, and answers (Q₂) by saying, “there is no reason why God predestines these human beings, and condemns those human beings, except the divine will.” The reason Aquinas gives these (contrasting) answers to (Q₁) and (Q₂) might be that he is thinking along the following lines:

God’s predestining some and condemning some is “more likely” than God’s predestining all and condemning none, or God’s predestining none and condemning all, on the assumption that God has it as His end that both His mercy and His justice be represented by the ultimate destinies of human beings, but God’s predestining *these* human and condemning *those* human beings is no more likely than His predestining *those* human beings and condemning *these* human beings, on the

assumption that God has it as His end that both His mercy and His justice be represented by the ultimate destinies of human beings. So we cannot explain God's predestining these human beings and condemning those human beings (rather than the other way round), by appeal to God's having as an end that both His mercy and His justice be represented by the ultimate destinies of human beings. Moreover there isn't an analogous explanation of why God predestines these human beings and condemns those human beings (rather than the other way round) turning on a different divine end. For example (*pace* Pelagius), it's not the case that God predestines these human beings and condemns those human beings because He has it as an end that human beings more blatantly deserving of condemnation be condemned, and human beings less blatantly deserving of condemnation be spared (and predestined) (and He judges that these human beings are less blatantly deserving of condemnation, and those human beings are more blatantly deserving of condemnation).

There is a divine end that God (judges He) could not pursue, or at any rate could not pursue as well, if He predestined all and condemned none or predestined none and condemned all, as He could if He predestined some and condemned some, and we know what that end is. So, if we are asked why God predestines some and condemns some [rather than predestining all and condemning none, or predestining none and condemning all] we can say something more than, "because it is God's will (to predestine some and condemn some)". (Likewise, there is a human end that the artificer (judges he) could not pursue, or at any rate could not pursue as well, if he put two stones in this part of the wall (and none in that part), or two stones in that part of the wall (and none in this part), as he could if he put one stone in this part of the wall, and one stone in that part of the wall, and we know what that end is. So if we are asked why the artificer put one stone in this part of the wall, and one stone in that part of the wall, we can say something more than, "because it was the artificer's will (to put one stone in this part of the wall, and one stone in that part)".) But (we know) there is no divine end that God (judges He) could not pursue just as well, if He predestined those human beings and condemned these human beings, as He could if He predestined these human beings and condemned those human beings. So, if we are asked why God predestines these human beings and condemns those [rather than the other way round], we cannot say anything more than "it is God's will." (Likewise, (we know) there is no human end that the artificer (judges he) could not pursue just as well if He put that stone in this part of the wall, and this stone in that part, as he could if he put this stone in this part of the wall, and that stone in that part. So, if we are asked why the artificer put this stone in this part of the wall, and that stone in that part [rather than the other way round], we cannot say anything more than "it was the artificer's will.")

If these are the lines along which Aquinas is thinking, then it's not just true that in the *ST*, Ia, 23, 5 passage under discussion, Aquinas discusses cases that are naturally thought of as involving choice between apparently equi-optimal means to an end. It's also true that in that passage, he discusses cases that *he* thinks of in those terms. This suggests that Aquinas is both cognizant of and happy with the idea that there is such a thing as *electio inter optima apparentia*, and would accordingly regard (g) as an improvement upon (f).

On the other hand, Aquinas sometimes says things that one would not expect someone who is both cognizant of and happy with the idea of *electio inter optima apparentia* to say. Equally, Aquinas sometimes doesn't say things that one would expect someone who is both cognizant of and happy with the idea of *electio inter optima apparentia* to say.

To start with, as we have already seen, at *ST*, Ia IIae, 13, 2, *responsio*, Aquinas says that choice is the taking of one thing in preference to another, and at *ST*, Ia IIae, 12, 3, *responsio*, he says it is evident that we choose one thing over another because we think it is the better of the two. (Or rather, he says it is evident that we prefer one thing to another because it *is* the better of the two, but that cannot be what he means.) But these claims imply, not just that we choose apparently optimal means to pursue our ends, but also that we choose uniquely optimal means to pursue our ends.

Also, at *ST* Ia IIae, 13, 6, Aquinas considers a number of arguments for the claim that whatever we choose, we choose necessarily. The argument sketched in objection 3 is obscure (to me, anyway). But it clearly depends on the idea that choices necessarily align with preferences, in such a way that it is impossible to choose *x* over *y* if one thinks that *y* is better than *x*, or even if one thinks that *y* is just as good as *x*:

If two things are completely equal (*penitus aequalia*), a man is not moved to one more than to the other. Thus, as Plato says, if a hungry man finds himself between two equidistant and equally appetizing portions of food, he will not be moved toward one more than toward the other. But if it is not possible to choose something that is equal [to something else], it is even less possible to choose something that is taken to be inferior to something else (*Sed multo minus potest eligi quod accipitur ut minus, quam quod accipitur ut aequale*).

If Aquinas were cognizant of and happy with the idea that we can choose what we deem to be sub-optimal means to an end (when we deem that we have no optimal means to that end), we would expect him to say that (surprisingly enough) we can choose what we take *ut minus* (as inferior) over what we take *ut maius* (as superior). If Aquinas were cognizant of and happy with the idea that we can choose what we deem to be non-uniquely optimal means to an end, we would expect him to say that (less surprisingly, perhaps) one can indeed choose *x* over *y*, despite seeing *x* and *y* as completely equal (*penitus aequalia*).

In fact, in his reply to objection 3, Aquinas says neither of these things. He says instead that if two things are proposed as equal in one respect, we can always consider a respect in which one is superior to the other, so that our will is turned toward that one rather than toward the other (*Ad tertium dicendum quod nihil prohibet, si aliqua duo aequalia proponantur secundum unam considerationem, quin circa alterum consideretur aliqua conditio per quam emineat, et magis flectatur voluntas in ipsum quam in aliud.*)

For various reasons, this is a surprising and not obviously promising way of meeting objection 3. Why couldn't it be that, no matter how hard and long someone looks at two alternative means of pursuing an end, she will never find a respect in which either is superior to the other? Couldn't (wouldn't?) God find Himself in exactly this situation, when choosing between creating this bit of sgc-matter under the form of fire, and that bit under the form of air, and creating that bit of sgc-matter under the form of fire, and this bit under the form of air? Also, suppose that an agent judges that means *M* are better means of pursuing a simply willed end than means *M'* in this particular respect. That will not necessarily overcome an antecedent "electoral deadlock", and turn the will toward *M* rather than toward *M'*: an agent can perfectly well not choose to pursue a simply willed end via means *M*, even though she sees *M* as better means of pursuing that end than all the alternatives in this particular respect. What we would expect to overcome electoral deadlock is the judgment that *M* is an all-things-considered better means of pursuing the relevant simply willed end than *M'*. But again, even supposing that the agent does not take *M* and *M'* to be *penitus aequalia* in the sense of being equally good in every respect, as well as equally good overall, why suppose that deliberation on the relative goodness of *M* and *M'* will necessarily bring the agent round to a judgment that one of the two is all-things-considered better than the other?

In short, the reply to objection 3 of *ST*, Ia IIae, 13, 6 seems to me an obscure response to an obscure argument. Perhaps I simply have not grasped where Aquinas is going here. But it's hard (for me, at least) to avoid the impression that Aquinas' reply to objection 3 is not the sort of reply someone would give, if he thought that with our will, we can choose one thing over another, even if our intellect does not recommend either thing over the other, and even if our intellect cannot find any respect in which either thing is (even *pro tanto*) better than the other. We would expect someone who held this last view to say flatly that an agent is perfectly capable of choosing *x* over *y*, even if he or she deems *x* and *y* *penitus aequalia* with respect to overall goodness, or even *penitus aequalia* with respect to goodness in each and every respect.

Setting an admittedly compressed and obscure passage to one side, there is a worry about whether the Thomistic account of deliberation, choice, and action sketched above is in tension with the possibility of *electio inter optima apparentia*. As we have seen, Aquinas appears to think that the act of the will he calls *electio* (choice) is paired with an act of the intellect he sometimes

calls a *iudicium electionis*, in the same way that, at an earlier stage of deliberation, the act of will Aquinas calls *consensus* (consent) is paired with an act of intellect he calls *consilium* (counsel). The *iudicium electionis* is (by definition) a judgment on the part of the intellect, and the *electio* or choice is a response on the part of the will to that judgment. This implies that the *iudicium electionis* or “judgment of choice” cannot be of the form, *I am now choosing this thing*, or *I am about to choose this thing*. For choosing this thing is not a response to the judgment that one is now or is about to be choosing it. If, however, the “judgment of choice” is not a judgment concerning what one is in fact choosing now, or will be choosing in the future, what is it?

John Finnis suggests that that it is of the form, *this is the thing for me to do* (see his *Aquinas: Moral, Political, and Legal Theory*, p. 71), while Eleonore Stump suggests that it is of the form, *this is the means [of pursuing my simply willed end that is best [at this time, in these circumstances]* (see her *Aquinas*, p. 290). It is evident that, if we construe the *iudicium electionis* in the way Stump does, then an *electio* that goes along with a *iudicium electionis* will always be an *electio* or choice of a means that is perceived, not merely as optimal, but also as uniquely optimal. But I think the same holds, if we construe the *iudicium electionis* in the way Finnis does. Compare “this is the thing for me to do; of course, I could just as well do something else” with “this is the thing for me to do; on second thought, I could just as well do something else.” The latter sounds perfectly acceptable, and the former sounds deviant (to my ears, at least). This is presumably because if one says that this is *the* thing for me to do, that implies that nothing else is something I could just as well do, so that, if I first say that this is the thing for me to do, and go on to say that I could equally well do something else, then I should acknowledge that I’ve changed my mind (“on second thought”).

So – assuming the sort of construal Finnis and Stump offer of the content of a *iudicium electionis* is along the right lines – if an *electio* is always paired with a *iudicium electionis*, then there is no such thing as choice between apparent optima. And there are certainly some passages that suggest that Aquinas thinks that an act of choice (*electio*) is always paired with a judgment of choice (*iudicium electionis*). We have already noted *ST*, Ia IIae, 12, 3 *responsio* + *ST*, Ia IIae, 13, 2 in this regard. Also, in Aquinas’ discussion at *ST*, Ia IIae, 1 of whether *electio* is an act of the will or of reason/intellect, he seems to suggest that although choice is *substantialiter* an act of the will, rather than of reason, it nevertheless essentially has to do with both reason or intellect and will, inasmuch as a choice is essentially a movement toward a chosen good on the basis of or as a response to a certain judgment of choice. So according to objection 1 of 13, 2,

It seems that choice (*electio*) is an act, not of the will, but of reason. For choice involves (*importat*) a certain comparison, whereby one thing is preferred to another. But comparing is (an act) of reason (*sed conferre est rationis*). So choice is (an act) of reason (*ergo electio est rationis*).

Aquinas' succinct reply is that

Choice involves (*importat*) a previous comparison, but it isn't the comparison itself.

I take it that Aquinas is saying here that choosing *x* implies, but is distinct from (and posterior to) making a comparative judgment to the effect that *x* is better than any of the alternatives (i.e., is the best thing). To make essentially the same point in a slightly expanded way, remembering that for Aquinas, properly speaking, choice is always of means to an end (cf. *ST*, Ia, 83, 4, *responsio*), I take it that Aquinas is saying here that choosing these means of pursuing an end implies, but is distinct from (and posterior to) making a comparative judgment to the effect that these means are better means of pursuing that end than any of the alternative means of pursuing it (i.e., that these means are the best means of pursuing it/are the means via which that end is to be pursued). In other words, Aquinas is saying that choice implies a previous judgment of choice that identifies an *eligibile* as uniquely optimal.

There is also the fact that Aquinas' multi-stage account of deliberation and choice is not presented by him in a way that one would expect it to be presented by someone who had in mind that the choice of *x* might or might not be paired with a judgment of choice to the effect that *x* was the best thing to do/the best means to choose. Someone who thought that the choice of *x* needn't be paired with a judgment of choice to the effect that *x* was uniquely optimal, would have to hold that either (a) the choice of *x* had to be paired with a judgment of choice, but the judgment of choice might or might not identify *x* (or any alternative thereto) as uniquely optimal, or (b) the choice of *x* might or might not be paired with a judgment of choice. (a) is on the face of it an odd view, in that it's not clear what a judgment of choice would consist in, if it didn't take us from the stage of *consilium* (when we have a plurality of *eligibilia*) to a subsequent stage in which only one *eligibile* remains. On (b), a judgment of choice can "drop out of" (not figure in) the transition from deliberation to action (and presumably does drop out, whenever none of the "short-listed" *eligibilia* appear better than any of the others to the deliberator). But, so far as I know, Aquinas never says that a judgment of choice needn't figure in the transition from deliberation to action, in the way he does explicitly say that counsel and consent needn't figure in that transition, inasmuch as it is sometimes obvious right from the start that there is a uniquely optimal means of pursuing a simply willed end (as happens when there is only one remotely feasible way of pursuing that end (cf. *ST*, Ia IIae, 14, 4, *ad 1um*)).

In short, despite what Aquinas' discussion of predestination and reprobation at *ST*, Ia, 23, 5 suggests, it is not clear to me that Aquinas really would think that (f) needs to be improved, in order to avoid counterexamples involving apparently equi-optimal options, by being turned into (g). Be that

as it may, Aquinas would surely agree that (g) is true if (f) is (since (g) is just a weakened version of (f)). Is (f) weak enough to be uncontroversial (in contradistinction to each of (c)–(f))?

I don't think so. In this context, it will be useful to draw a distinction between the most efficient means of pursuing an end, and the best way of pursuing it. Suppose that your end is being rid of the headache you now have (as completely and as quickly as possible). Suppose also that you (take yourself to) have at your disposal just two means of pursuing that end. As you see it, you could take tablet *A*, with the result that your headache will gradually ease, and disappear altogether within two hours, or you could take tablet *B*, with the result that your headache will more or less instantly completely disappear. However, (you also believe that) there are contraindications to taking tablet *B* (it significantly increases the probability of liver failure a year later), while there are no contraindications to taking tablet *A*. In these circumstances (unless you take a very dim view of your life expectancy, or have very little interest in your health) you'll choose taking tablet *A* over taking tablet *B*, because you'll deem taking tablet *A* the best means at your disposal of pursuing your end (being rid of the headache you now have). And this is so, even though you deem taking tablet *B* is the most efficient or effective means of pursuing your end (the means of pursuing that end which is best at *attaining it*, as opposed to the means of pursuing that end which is best overall or all-things-considered).

In this example, the considerations that induce you to see a less efficient means of pursuing a simply willed end as better overall than a more efficient one have to do with prudence, and your own long-term welfare. We could vary the example, so the considerations that induce you to see the less efficient means of pursuing the relevant end as the better one overall were ones having to do with morality, and the welfare of others. Suppose you know that taking tablet *B* will make your headache go away faster than taking tablet *A*, and there are no more contraindications to taking tablet *B* than there are to taking tablet *A*. But you also know that your spouse is (reasonably enough, given her total evidence) convinced that it would be much more dangerous for you to take tablet *B* than for you to take tablet *A*. Your spouse was so worried about the contraindications to taking tablet *B* that she induced you to promise that you would not try to get rid of your headaches by taking tablet *B*. In these circumstances (at least assuming the headache is not a desperately bad one), a good spouse would choose taking tablet *A* over tablet *B*, because he or she would see doing so as a better, albeit less efficient, way of pursuing the end of headache relief than taking tablet *B*.

Suppose, now, that John has just had an interview for a job he really wants and really needs, and he is waiting to hear whether or not he will be offered the job. John is hugely stressed, and has as an end reducing the stress experienced during the wait (the more and the quicker the stress is reduced, the better). He takes himself to have at his disposal just two means of

pursuing that end. He could read a passage enjoining him not to worry (something from Milarepa or Marcus Aurelius, say, or Matthew 6: 25–34), and meditate on that passage until he takes it to heart and puts it into practice. In that case (he supposes) his stress will be gradually though not dramatically reduced. Alternatively, he could go back on his recent decision to give up smoking, buy some cigarettes, and start smoking like a chimney. In that case, John supposes, the massive dose of nicotine will do its anxiolytic stuff, and his stress will be quickly and dramatically reduced.

Suppose that faced with this choice, John chooses tobacco over Matthew. As he takes his first puff, his friend Mary walks into the room, and the following dialogue takes place:

MARY: I thought you'd been trying to kick the habit.

JOHN: I had.

MARY: So why did you light up?

JOHN: To reduce my stress.

MARY: Stress is awful. But was lighting up the only means or the best means of pursuing the end of stress reduction at your disposal?

JOHN: It certainly wasn't: it surely would have been better for me to choose a non-carcinogenic means of pursuing the end of stress reduction.

MARY: So you see now what you didn't see at the time you lit up – namely, that smoking was not the best (or the only) means of pursuing stress reduction at your disposal?

JOHN: Not at all. Even as I lit up, I was fully aware that smoking was neither the only nor the best means of pursuing stress reduction at my disposal.

MARY: But, when you lit up, you thought that smoking was as good a means of pursuing stress reduction as any alternative means at your disposal?

JOHN: No. When I lit up, I was fully aware that meditating on Matthew 6: 25–34 was a better way of pursuing stress reduction than lighting up – indeed, that it was the best way of pursuing stress reduction at my disposal.

MARY: I don't understand. If you really knew that you had better means of pursuing stress reduction than lighting up, why ever did you choose to light up?

JOHN: Because I was (as I still am) desperately stressed! When I'm desperately stressed, what I'm after is not the *best* way of reducing stress; it's the most *immediately effective* way of reducing stress.

If (g) is true, then John either is insincere in what he says to Mary, or is mistaken about his own recent judgments concerning the relative preferability of the means then at his disposal of pursuing the end of stress reduction. After all, John is saying that he chose to pursue *this* means of pursuing the simply willed end of stress reduction (smoking), despite then seeing _o *that* alternative means of pursuing that end (meditating on Matthew 6: 25–34) as a uniquely optimal means of pursuing that end. Unless John is insincere or mistaken, in pursuing an end, an agent can choose means he

or she regards as sub-optimal over means he or she regards as uniquely optimal, in contravention of (g).

Of course, if Mary resonates to (g), she may think that John must be either insincere or mistaken, and the conversation may continue:

MARY: I still don't understand. How could you choose *this* means of pursuing stress reduction, at the very time you saw *that* means of pursuing stress as the best one for you to pursue (the best one there and then, in the actual circumstances, as opposed to the best one all things being equal, or the one that is typically best, or something of the sort)?

JOHN: What don't you understand? I have some "standing" desires, such as the (*pro tanto*) desire for my overall welfare (long-term as well as short-term). I have other desires that come and go, and are triggered by various factors: for example, if my nose starts to itch, I'll start to (*pro tanto*) want to scratch it. When I undergo stress, that triggers a (*pro tanto*) desire for stress reduction. The strength of my (*pro tanto*) desire for stress reduction is proportional to the intensity of the stress I am undergoing (the worse the stress, the stronger the (*pro tanto*) desire). If the stress gets bad enough, and the desire for stress reduction accordingly gets strong enough, I can make what I know are bad choices (e.g., choose means of pursuing a simply willed end that I know are different from the uniquely optimal means of pursuing that end, inasmuch as the means of pursuing that end I am actually choosing will attain a less important good (stress reduction in the short term) to the detriment of a more important good (long-term welfare)). When I chose to light up, I didn't make that choice because my intense desire for stress reduction (asap) had induced me to temporarily lose sight of which means of pursuing stress reduction was optimal, or uniquely optimal. Instead, I made that choice because the strength of my intense desire for stress reduction (asap) had induced me to choose what I knew full well was sub-optimal over what I knew full well was uniquely optimal.

MARY: Can you really, honestly tell me that, when you chose to light up, you chose what you knew then was sub-optimal over what you knew then was uniquely optimal?

JOHN: Are you questioning my sincerity? Are you suggesting that I'm offering you an account of my recent desires and beliefs that I don't actually believe?

MARY: I'm not saying you're insincere. Perhaps you're just confused about the optimality judgments you actually made when you were choosing to light up ...

JOHN: But you weren't there, and I was! Since I was there, I know that, at the very moment I chose to light up, I knew I was choosing a sub-optimal means of pursuing stress reduction over a uniquely optimal means of pursuing stress reduction.

MARY: You can keep saying that, but it doesn't make it any more intelligible to me.

JOHN: I don't understand your worries about intelligibility. Suppose we "rewind the tape" to a time when I'm already in the grip of post-interview stress, but I haven't yet chosen to light up. Suppose also that at that time, I know that a friend (Emma) is oddly enough right now in a situation very similar to mine: she's undergoing severe stress, and she sees herself as having only two means of pursuing stress reduction, one of which is lighting up, and the other of which is a less immediately effective but non-carcinogenic alternative. At this point (that is, before I've chosen to light up), there's no question that I believe Emma's uniquely optimal means of pursuing stress reduction are the non-carcinogenic ones (those are the means I would sincerely advise her to pursue). Surely, though, I can choose to light up, without giving up my belief that Emma's uniquely optimal means of pursuing stress reduction are the non-carcinogenic ones: my choosing to light up is not necessarily – or even actually – concomitant with my coming to believe that *Emma's* lighting up is advisable. (Even after choosing to light up), I would continue to be disposed to sincerely advise Emma to choose the non-carcinogenic means of pursuing stress reduction. Indeed, if, after having chosen to light up, I were to say to Emma, "I think that your best means of pursuing stress reduction is smoking", *that* would be insincere advice. If Emma called me while I was taking my first drag, and asked me whether I thought that in her circumstances, the best means of pursuing stress reduction at her disposal were the non-carcinogenic alternative to smoking, sincere full disclosure on my part would involve my saying "I do, even though that's not what *I'm* doing (the flesh is weak ...)", and not, "I used to think that, but I don't any more". Now suppose I know we live in a weird kind of symmetrical universe, in which everything that happens in our half of the universe is replicated in the other half – not simultaneously, but with a five-minute delay, so that I have a "twin" – call him Twinjohn – who will be in exactly the same situation five minutes from now that I am in now. When I am undergoing stress, but have not yet chosen to light up, I certainly think that Twinjohn's uniquely optimal means of pursuing stress reduction are non-carcinogenic ones. And, as in the case of Emma, my choosing to light up won't be concomitant with my regarding Twinjohn's choosing to light up as advisable. Even when (and after) I choose to light up, I will continue to think that Twinjohn's best means of pursuing stress reduction are non-carcinogenic ones, and it will continue to be true that I couldn't say to Twinjohn, "I think that your best means of pursuing stress reduction are smoking", without offering him insincere advice. So, even when (and after) I choose to light up, I continue to see Twinjohn's non-carcinogenic means of pursuing stress reduction as the best means at his disposal of pursuing stress reduction. Surely, though

(even as I light up), I cannot fail to see that if the best means at Twinjohn's disposal of pursuing stress reduction are non-carcinogenic, then the best means at *my* disposal of pursuing stress reduction are non-carcinogenic (How could I not see that, given that I know full well that Twinjohn will be in exactly the same elective circumstances (five minutes from now) as I am in now?) So even at the instant I choose to light up I go on believing (a) that the best means at Twinjohn's disposal of pursuing stress reduction are non-carcinogenic ones, (b) that if the best means at Twinjohn's disposal of pursuing stress reduction are non-carcinogenic, then the best means at my disposal of pursuing stress reduction are non-carcinogenic, and thus (c) that the best means at my disposal of pursuing stress reduction are non-carcinogenic. So when I choose to light up, I choose (carcinogenic) means I see as sub-optimal over (non-carcinogenic) means I see as uniquely optimal.

Because my sympathies here are more with John than with Mary, I think that, even if it is Thomistic, (g) is problematic.

Let us try to draw some threads together. We saw that Aquinas appears to think we necessarily see_o as good all and only those ends we simply will. Given that (for Aquinas) at the first (or perhaps the zeroth) stage of deliberation, it is necessary that we see_o an end as good if and only if we simply will that end, it is natural to wonder whether analogously (for Aquinas) at the terminus of deliberation it is necessary that (when we choose) we choose some means of pursuing an end if and only if we see_o those means as good (that is, as good means of pursuing that end).

There was, however, a reason to doubt that Aquinas could hold this last view: surely Aquinas would grant that when we choose, we can refrain from choosing a means of pursuing a simply willed end that we see_o as good, because we see_o some alternative means of pursuing that end as better.

We considered the possibility that, for Aquinas, by the time we reach the stage of *electio*, apparently good means cannot be apparently sub-optimal. But this interpretative move did not seem promising, if the aim was to arrive at a view that was Thomistic and defensible. For, whether or not Aquinas is aware of it, there seem to be possible elective circumstances in which none of the means of pursuing a simply willed end at our disposal appear optimal. In such cases we could (and we would) choose some non-apparently-optimal means of pursuing our simply willed end: in which case it won't after all be necessary that when we choose some means of pursuing a simply willed end, we choose these means only if we then see_o these means as optimal. In which case – always on the assumption that, when we have gotten as far as *electio*, we see means as good only if we also see them as optimal – it won't be necessary that when we choose some means of pursuing a simply willed end, we choose these means if and only if we then see_o these means as good.

Suppose someone had never thought about cases in which an agent has no apparently optimal means of pursuing an end. She still might think that

a principle of the sort, *necessarily, when an agent chooses some means of pursuing a simply willed end, she chooses these means if and only if she sees_o these means as good means of pursuing that end* could not be either true or Thomistic. For, she might say, although simply willing an end doesn't involve willing that end *over* "alternative ends", choosing a means does essentially involve choosing that means *over* alternative means (cf. Aquinas' remark at *ST*, Ia IIae, 13, 2 that choice is the taking of one thing in preference to another). From this point of view, it seems not unnatural to suppose that, for Aquinas, simply willing an end will be necessarily bi-directionally linked with seeing_o that end as good, but choosing some means of pursuing a simply willed end will at most be necessarily bi-directionally linked with seeing_o those means of pursuing that end as optimal.

In fact, though, it doesn't look as though we can move from a problematic principle to an unproblematic one by moving from

Necessarily, when an agent chooses some means of pursuing an end, she chooses these means of pursuing that end if and only if she sees_o these means as good means of pursuing that end.

to

Necessarily, when an agent chooses some means of pursuing an end, she chooses these means of pursuing that end if and only if she sees_o these means as optimal means of pursuing that end.

– not simply because the latter principle gives the wrong results in cases in which an agent has at her disposal no apparently optimal means of pursuing her simply willed end, but also because the latter principle gives the wrong results in cases in which an agent has at her disposal a plurality of apparently optimal means of pursuing her simply willed ends. (When an agent has at her disposal a plurality of alternative optimal means of pursuing her simply willed end, she can (and indeed necessarily will) see_o some means of pursuing her end as optimal, without choosing them.)

Nor will it help us get to an unproblematic principle by replacing "optimal" in our last attempt by "uniquely optimal", so that we end up with

Necessarily, when an agent chooses some means of pursuing an end, she chooses these means of pursuing that end if and only if she sees_o these means as uniquely optimal means of pursuing that end.

– unless it is assumed that agents necessarily have exactly one apparently optimal means of pursuing whatever end they are pursuing. As we saw, there are some reasons to think Aquinas makes this assumption (at least judging from what he says in response to objection 3 of *ST*, Ia IIae, he is not unfazed by the idea of agents choosing between means they regard as

penitus aequalia, and his account of the role of a *iudicium electionis* or judgment of choice in deliberation does not seem to assort with the idea that agents can have (and choose between) apparently equi-optimal means of pursuing an end). Still, for reasons Aquinas himself brings out in his discussion of predestination and reprobation, it is difficult to deny that agents sometimes do, or at any rate could, make choices between apparently optimal means of pursuing a given end. This suggests that if we are looking for an unproblematic and Thomistic principle that offers something like a bi-directionally necessary link between choosing a means to an end and seeing_o that means to that end as good or something like good (optimal, or uniquely optimal, or whatever), then – of the options canvassed – (g) is our best shot.

Certainly (g) seems less problematic than any of (c)–(f), in virtue of being more hedged than any of them. But there are also at least some indications that (g) is Thomistic. As we have just noted, at least some things Aquinas says suggest that, by his lights, we necessarily choose these means of pursuing an end if and only if we choose these means of pursuing that end over the alternative means of pursuing that end, and we necessarily choose these means of pursuing that end over the alternative means of pursuing that end only if we make a *iudicium electionis* or judgment of choice to the effect that these means are better means of pursuing that end than any of the alternatives (i.e., are uniquely optimal means of pursuing that end). But this last claim is at least as strong as half (the “only if” half) of the second part of (g), since it implies that

Necessarily, when we choose some means or other of pursuing a simply willed end, and we see ourselves as having a uniquely optimal means of pursuing that end, we then choose these means of pursuing that end only if we then see_o these means of pursuing that end as optimal means of pursuing that end.

Moreover, it seems that if Aquinas accepts the “only if” half of (the second part of) (g), he also accepts the “if” half of the second part of (g). If the “only if” half is true, and the “if” half false, then it could happen that when someone chose some means or other of pursuing a simply willed end, she chose *these* means of pursuing that end, despite making a judgment of choice that identified *those* alternative means of pursuing that end as uniquely optimal – a judgment of choice that so to speak was overruled or disregarded by her will. Also, if the “only if” half of (the second part) of (g) is true, the choice of these means of pursuing an end is always the implementation of a judgment of choice to the effect that these means are uniquely optimal means of pursuing that end. So on the assumption that the “only if” half of (the second part of) (g) is true, but the “if” half is false, it follows that someone choosing to pursue an end can make two different (and incompatible) judgments of choice, one of which identifies these

means of pursuing that end as uniquely optimal, and is implemented, and one of which identifies those alternative means of pursuing that end as good, and is not implemented. Surely, though, Aquinas would be unhappy with the idea that when we choose, we can simply disregard our own judgment of choice, or the idea that when we choose, we can choose which one of a pair of incompatible judgments of choice to implement. So there are indications that if Aquinas accepts the “only if” half of (the second part of) (g), he also accepts the “if” half.

Summing up, there are at least some reasons to think that, if (g) is unproblematic, it is both Thomistic and unproblematic. If, however, John is right about his judgments and his choices, (g) is far from unproblematic, even if it is Thomistic, inasmuch as it is possible to choose what looks to you like a sub-optimal means of pursuing a given end over what you see as a uniquely optimal means of pursuing that same end.

Our first thought was that, for Aquinas, the relation between seeing_o a means of pursuing a simply willed end as good and choosing that means might be just like the relation between seeing_o an end as good and simply willing that end (in that, in both cases, we had a bi-directionally necessary link). But – given the “comparitivity” of choice and the “non-comparitivity” of simple willing, it wasn’t clear that Aquinas did think that seeing_o a means of pursuing a simply willed end was linked to choosing that means in the way that seeing_o an end as good was linked to simply willing it. This left open the possibility that Aquinas might think that the link between seeing_o a means of pursuing a simply willed end as something more than good (e.g., as optimal, or as uniquely optimal) and choosing that means was very like the link between seeing_o an end as good and simply willing that end. And for the reasons just summarized, there is at least some reason to suppose that Aquinas does think of things this way. But there is also a question about whether he should think of things this way. That is, there is a question about whether (even on the assumption that some means or other of pursuing an end is being chosen, and that some means of pursuing that end is apparently uniquely optimal) there is a bi-directionally necessary link between choosing a particular means of pursuing an end and seeing_o that means of pursuing that end as a uniquely optimal means of pursuing that end.

So if the aim is to find a principle linking seeing_o a means as good (or something like good) with choosing that means that is both Thomistic and unproblematic, we could go in a different direction. That is, we could look for a principle that links seeing_o a means as good with choosing that means, but not in a bi-directionally necessary way. One such would be the pleasingly simple:

- (h) Necessarily, we simply will all and only those ends we see_o as good in themselves, and necessarily, we choose only those means of pursuing a simply willed end that we see_o (at the time we choose) as good means of pursuing that end.

(h) says, roughly, that (i) we necessarily simply will all and only those ends we see_o as good, and (ii) we necessarily choose only those means we see_o as good.

Is (h) (or at any rate (ii)) Thomistic and unproblematic? Here it will be useful to distinguish two ways of construing the claim that some means of pursuing a simply willed end are good means of pursuing that end. One might construe this last claim as the weaker claim that some means of pursuing a simply willed end are good *in some respect* – that is, as the claim that there is something good about pursuing that end via those means (that pursuing that end via those means has a good side). Alternatively, one might construe the claim that some means of pursuing a simply willed end are good means of pursuing that end as the (stronger) claim that some means of pursuing a simply willed end are good overall or all things considered. However, for reasons discussed in the previous section, if we construe “good” in (h) as “good in some respect”, we will be able to regard

(h') Necessarily, we simply will all and only those ends we see_o as good in themselves, and necessarily, we choose only those means of pursuing a simply willed end that we see_o (at the time we choose) as good [in some respect] means of pursuing that end.

as a construal of (h) (*proprie loquendo*), only if we understand “in some respect” as a subtractible modifier. Corresponding to these two ways of construing the claim that some means of pursuing a simply willed end is good, there will be two construals of (ii).

For Aquinas, just as “simple volition” is essentially a response to the perceived intrinsic goodness of an end, choice is essentially a response to the perceived instrumental goodness of a means. So I take it that Aquinas accepts (ii) as well as (i). Moreover, given that optimality implies overall or all things considered goodness, and given that for Aquinas choice essentially aims at optimality, I take it that Aquinas accepts (ii) on its stronger construal, and not just on its weaker construal.

At least as long as we assume (i), (ii) seems undeniable, on its weaker construal. If I choose a means of pursuing a simply willed end, then I must think choosing that means will or at least might enable me to attain my end. And if (by (i)) I see that end as good, then I must think there is *something* good about the means I choose – if nothing else, that they will or at least might enable me to attain a good end.

On the other hand, if John is right about his judgments and choices, it seems that (ii) is false on its stronger construal. As John sees it, at the very moment he chose to light up, he knew that he was choosing a non-optimal means of stress reduction. But more than that, he knew he was choosing a bad means of pursuing stress reduction. And not just a means of pursuing stress reduction that was bad in a certain respect, but a means of pursuing stress reduction that was bad overall or all things considered (despite being good in a certain respect – to wit, in respect of being an efficient and

immediately effective way of pursuing stress reduction). If, however, John saw the means of pursuing stress reduction he chose as bad overall or all things considered (at the time he chose it), then John did not see the means of pursuing stress reduction he chose as good overall or all things considered (at the time he chose it). (After all, although it's easy to see a means of pursuing an end as simultaneously good-in-some-respect-or-other and bad-in-some-respect-or-other, it's difficult or impossible to see a means of pursuing an end as simultaneously good all things considered and bad all things considered. And if John is right about his judgments and choices, then at the very time he chose to pursue stress reduction via smoking, he made a choice he regarded as a bad choice all things considered, and not just bad in some respect.) So, if John is right about his judgments and choices, then (ii) is false, on its stronger construal. And if we identify what is good overall or good all things considered with what is good *absolute* or *simpliciter*, and identify what is good in a certain respect with what is good *secundum quid*, then we don't necessarily choose *sub specie boni absolute* or *simpliciter*, even if we necessarily choose *sub specie boni secundum quid*.

I have said a good bit about the merits of Aquinas' views on the links between seeing_o a means as good and choosing it, but I have said nothing so far about the merits of his views on the links between seeing_o an end as good and simply willing it. To go into this issue in as much detail as it deserves would make an already long section much longer, but I shall very briefly indicate one worry that we might well have about Aquinas' views on seeing_o as good and simply willing.

The following claims seem to me at least not initially implausible:

- (1) Psychological states are one and the same state if (and only if) they have the same "causal-explanatory profile." That is, psychological states are one and the same state if (and only if) they cause and are caused by, explain and are explained by, exactly the same things. (So, for example if *nilling x* and *willing the opposite of x* cause and are caused by, explain and are explained by, exactly the same things, then *nilling x* and *willing the opposite of x* are one and the same state (described in two different ways).)
- (2) Mutually inseparable psychological states have the same causal-explanatory profile.

But (1) and (2) are jointly incompatible with (what I take to be) Aquinas' account of the relations between seeing_o an end as good and simply willing it. Remember, for reasons adumbrated in the first part of this section, Aquinas seems to think that *seeing_o this end as good* and *simply willing this end* are mutually inseparable psychological states. If they are, then, assuming (2), they have the same causal-explanatory profile, and hence, assuming (1), are one and the same psychological state, described in two different ways. But Aquinas is committed to denying that *seeing_o this end as good* and *simply willing*

this end are one and the same psychological state, since he thinks the latter is a response to the former, and no state is a response to itself. Also, Aquinas is committed to denying that *simply willing this end* and *seeing_o this end as good* are one and the same psychological state, since he thinks the latter explains the former, and not vice versa. (In a number of places, Aquinas approvingly cites the Aristotelian dictum that we desire things because they seem good to us, and not the other way round, and he surely would hold that the same asymmetry holds for simply willing things and seeing_o them as good.)

A defender of (what I take to be) Aquinas' account might say that there is nothing here to worry Aquinas: although he cannot consistently accept (1), (2), and the mutual inseparability of *seeing_o this end as good* and *simply willing this end*, he can perfectly well maintain that, rather than holding on to (1) and (2), and giving up mutual inseparability, we should hold on to (1) and mutual inseparability, and give up (2).

Aquinas could indeed take this line. But (for what it's worth) it doesn't seem to me a comfortable one to take.

Myself, I see nothing obviously implausible in the idea that *seeing_o this end as good* is causally or explanatorily prior to, and hence distinct from, *simply willing this end*. But then, I see nothing obviously implausible in the idea that *seeing_o this end as good* is separable from (independent of) *simply willing this end*, inasmuch as simply willing an end implies wanting or desiring it, and one can see_o an end as good without wanting or desiring it. For example, someone in the grip of severe depression might know that what she once simply willed (when it and its goodness were before her mind), before the onset of her depression, was just as good as it was back when she simply willed it (*it* was just the same (axiologically) as it was back when she simply willed it), even though *she* is currently too depressed to be able to simply will it (to be "open to or interested in" it), even when she has it, and its goodness, before her mind.

What I have trouble doing is putting together the idea that *seeing_o this end as good* and *simply willing this end* are mutually inseparable with the idea that the former is causally/explanatorily prior to the latter. That's because, so far as I can see, causal/explanatory priority goes hand in hand with a certain kind of counterfactual asymmetry that precludes mutual inseparability.

Take, for example, net force and acceleration. A body undergoes acceleration when and only when it is subject to a net force. But force is causally/explanatorily prior to acceleration: a body accelerates because it is subject to a net force, and not the other way round. Now inasmuch as I make this judgment of causal/explanatory priority, I am happy with subjunctive conditionals such as

If this body had not been subject to a net force, it wouldn't have accelerated.

and unhappy with subjunctive conditionals such as

If this body hadn't accelerated, it wouldn't have been subject to a net force.

(The latter subjunctive conditional, I want to say, “gets things backward” (gets the direction of counterfactual dependence wrong).)

Now in the logic of conditionals, it is standard to distinguish what we may call *maximally strict conditionals* from subjunctive conditionals. A maximally strict conditional is a conditional of the form *necessarily, if p, then q*, where this last conditional is understood as equivalent to *in (absolutely) every possible world in which p, q*. It is also standard to suppose that maximally strict conditionals are “logically stronger” than subjunctive conditionals. For example, the truth of the maximally strict conditional, *necessarily, if something is a unicorn, then it is an animal* implies the truth of the subjunctive conditional, *if something were a unicorn, it would be an animal*. But the truth of the subjunctive conditional, *if you won the lottery, you would be very happy* does not imply the truth of the maximally strict conditional, *necessarily, if you win the lottery, you are very happy*. (Even on the assumption that if you won the lottery, you would be very happy, there are still possible worlds in which you win the lottery but aren’t very happy – say, possible worlds in which you win the lottery right after having learned that for many years, your spouse has been cheating on you with your best friend, or possible worlds in which you are convinced that all those who win lotteries come to an especially bad end.)

Now suppose that states *S* and *S'* are mutually inseparable. Then in (absolutely) every possible world in which *x* is in *S*, *x* is in *S'*; and vice versa. So the maximally strict conditionals, *necessarily, if x is in S, then x is in S'* and *necessarily, if x is in S', then x is in S* are both true. So (given that maximally strict conditionals are stronger than subjunctive conditionals), the subjunctive conditionals, *if x were in S, then x would be in S'* and *if x were in S', then x would be in S* are both true.

Now suppose I thought that *accelerating* and *being subject to a net force* were mutually inseparable states. In that case, I would think the complementary pair of states, *not accelerating* and *not being subject to a net force*, were also mutually inseparable. So I would accept both of the following maximally conditionals:

Necessarily, if this body is not subject to a net force, it does not accelerate.

and

Necessarily, if this body does not accelerate, it is not subject to a net force.

So (given that maximally strict conditionals are stronger than subjunctive conditionals), I would accept both of the following subjunctive conditionals:

If this body had not been subject to a net force, it wouldn’t have accelerated.

and

If this body had not accelerated, it wouldn’t have been subject to a net force.

In which case, I would *not* be happy with the first subjunctive conditional, but unhappy with the second: I would not believe that the first subjunctive conditional gets things right, and the second one gets things backwards (gets the direction of counterfactual dependence wrong).

Now I am in fact happy to accept the claim that *being subject to a net force* is causally/explanatorily prior to *accelerating*. But my happiness in accepting this priority claim is wrapped up with my belief that pairs of counterfactuals such as *if this body had not been subject to a net force, it wouldn't have accelerated* and *if this body had not accelerated, it wouldn't have been subject to a net force* do not stand or fall together. And I believe that such pairs of counterfactuals do not stand or fall together only because I believe that *accelerating* and *being subject to a net force* are not in fact mutually inseparable states. So I am happy to accept that *being subject to a net force* is causally/explanatorily prior to *accelerating*, but only because I do not regard *being subject to a net force* and *accelerating* as mutually inseparable.

Analogously, I am happy to accept that *seeing_o this thing as good* is causally/explanatorily prior to *simply willing this thing*. But my happiness in accepting this priority claim is wrapped up with my belief that pairs of counterfactuals such as *if I hadn't seen_o this thing as good, I wouldn't have simply willed it* and *If I hadn't simply willed this thing, I wouldn't have seen_o it as good* do not stand or fall together. And I believe that such pairs of counterfactuals do not stand or fall together, only because I believe that *seeing_o this thing as good* and *simply willing this thing* are not in fact mutually inseparable. So I am happy to accept that *seeing_o this thing as good* is causally/explanatorily prior to *simply willing this thing*, but only because (*pace* Aquinas) I do not regard *seeing_o this thing as good* and *simply willing this thing* as mutually inseparable.

In sum: Aquinas could respond to the argument set out above against his account of the relations between *seeing_o this thing as good* and *simply willing this thing* by saying that, since *seeing_o this thing as good* and *simply willing this thing* are mutually inseparable, but the former is causally/explanatorily prior to the latter, (2) is false. But this reply is problematic, because it is by no means obvious that we can make sense of the idea that states are mutually inseparable, even though one is causally/explanatorily prior to the other.

This section has been all about Aquinas' account of the relations between goodness, judgment, will, and choice. So, in a way, it's been about Aquinas' account of goodness. But, in a way, it's hardly been about goodness at all. That is, (in a sense that I shall try to elucidate) goodness seems to play a surprisingly marginal role in Aquinas' account of deliberation and choice (which, in what follows, I shall construe (narrowly) as Aquinas' description of the path that starts with the apprehension of the goodness of and simple willing of an end, and ends with a judgment of choice and its implementation (*electio*)).

Suppose that some things were in fact good, but nothing appeared good to anyone. Aquinas would say that what I have just asked us to suppose is impossible, since necessarily, whatever is in fact good also appears good to

God. But suppose, *per possibile* or *per impossibile*, that some things were good, but nothing was apparently good to anyone. If Aquinas' account of deliberation and choice is right, it follows simply from the supposition that there are no apparent goods that there is no such thing as deliberation or choice. For (on Aquinas' account) deliberation and choice essentially involve apprehended and thus apparent goods: if there were no apparent goods, there could not be any simply willed ends or chosen means (and thus any deliberation or choice). So, assuming Aquinas' account of deliberation and choice, even supposing there are possible worlds in which some things are good, but nothing appears good to anyone, there are no such worlds in which deliberation or choice takes place.

Suppose now that some things appeared good to someone, but nothing was in fact good. Aquinas would say that (for various reasons) what I have just asked us to suppose is impossible. For one thing, there can only be such a thing as appearing or seeming, if there is such a thing as being, and there can only be such a thing as being, if some things are good (since *bonum et ens convertuntur*). Again, though, let us suppose, *per possibile* or *per impossibile*, that some things appear good to someone, though nothing is in fact good. Even if Aquinas' account of deliberation and choice is right, it does not follow simply from the supposition that there are no real goods that there is no such thing as deliberation or choice. Assuming Aquinas' account of deliberation and choice, and assuming that there are possible worlds in which something is apparently good to someone, but nothing is in fact good, there are also possible worlds of that sort in which deliberation and choice take place (possible worlds in which agents simply will certain ends because they see_o them as good (although they in fact aren't), and choose certain means because they see_o them as good (although they in fact aren't)).

We could put the point this way: Aquinas' account of deliberation and choice – as such and by itself – commits us to the truth of the conditional, *if there is such a thing as deliberation or choice, then there are apparent goods*. But Aquinas' account of deliberation and choice – as such and by itself – does not seem to commit us to the truth of the conditional, *if there is such a thing as deliberation or choice, there are actual goods* (even though Aquinas' account of deliberation and choice, together with other Thomistic premises, do jointly commit us to the truth of this last conditional).

This asymmetry reflects the fact that, in Aquinas' account of deliberation and choice, it is apparent goodness, rather than goodness, that does the explanatory work. The real goodness of an end or a means cannot, as it were, make any direct impact on an agent; it can only make a difference to her simple willing of ends or choice of means insofar as it intimates itself to her, i.e., makes itself apparent. A real good can't make a difference to an agent's simple willings or choosings, unless it is also an apparent good, but an apparent good can make all the difference to an agent's simple willings or choosings, even if it's a merely apparent rather than a real good.

The idea that, in a certain sense, real goodness is not a working part of Aquinas' account of deliberation and choice – that his account of deliberation and choice could perfectly well be true, even if nothing were really good (as long as some things were apparently good) – may seem surprising. Doesn't Aquinas hold that will, deliberation, and choice (and the rational agents who will, deliberate, and choose) essentially tend to the good? Isn't his account of deliberation and choice all about just how rational agents tend to the good?

Yes. But although for Aquinas there is a sense in which rational agents, in simply willing and deliberating and choosing, essentially tend to the good, this does not mean that, for Aquinas, rational agents tend to the good in the ordinary and straightforward sense – in the sense that massive objects tend to fall to the earth, and magnetized compass needles tend to magnetic north. Compass needles tend to point to magnetic north (not to “perceived magnetic north”, whether or not perceived magnetic north = actual magnetic north). But rational agents tend to simply will and choose perceived goods, whether or not those perceived goods are actual goods. In other words, to say that rational agents tend to the good is not to say that agents tend to the good in the straightforward sense that massive bodies tend to fall to the earth, or magnetized compass needles tend to point to magnetic north; it is to say that rational agents *aim at* the good, where aiming at the good is tending toward the perceived or apparent good, in the straightforward sense of ‘tending’.

Aquinas' account of deliberation and choice does nevertheless have an interesting implication regarding “error theories of axiological beliefs” of the sort associated with John Mackie (see his *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*, London: Penguin Books, 1977). An error theorist of axiological beliefs (that is, someone who regards the belief that some things are good as (natural and prevalent but) erroneous) can coherently accept both the Thomistic account of deliberation and choice, and the claim that other agents deliberate or choose (or that she herself has deliberated or chosen at past times, or will deliberate or choose at future times). She can say that other people really do deliberate and choose, even though their deliberation and choosing involve their having erroneous beliefs (to the effect that certain ends are good (in themselves), and certain means are good means of pursuing those (intrinsically good) ends). But it seems that an error theorist of axiological beliefs cannot coherently accept both the Thomistic account of deliberation, and the claim that she herself is deliberating or choosing right now. If she tries, she'll end up in something like this position:

I am now simply willing this end (or choosing these means). On the Thomistic account of deliberation, if I am simply willing this end (or choosing these means), I see_o this end (or these means) as good, and I accordingly believe that this end is good (or that these means are good). Since I accept the Thomistic account of deliberation, I accept

that I now believe that this end is good (or now believe that these means are good): I really do currently believe that this end is good (or that these means are good). Of course, since I'm an error theorist, I regard all axiological beliefs as erroneous, and I cannot make exceptions for my own. So this is where I end up: I do in fact currently believe that this end is good (or that these are means are good), but my belief is mistaken. I really believe what I really believe is false.

But this sounds crazy: how can anyone really believe what she really believes is false?

The moral seems to be that even if the Thomistic account of deliberation and choice does not by itself imply the falsity of the error theory of axiological beliefs, this by no means implies that a champion of the error theory can blithely accept that account. If the error theorist does accept that account, she has (as best I can see) three options. She can deny that she ever deliberates or chooses. (This is what's sometimes called a *reductio ad absurdum*.) Alternatively, she can say that although the error theory is true, and she believes it most of the time, she stops believing it whenever she engages in deliberation or choice: when she does her simple willing and choosing, she accepts that certain ends and means are really good, and that the error theory is accordingly false. In other words, the error theorist can say that her beliefs about the error theory are diachronically inconsistent; she thinks one thing when she's not deliberating or choosing, and another when she is. Alternatively, the error theorist can say that she believes the error theory all the time, even when she is deliberating or choosing. But when she is deliberating or choosing, she inevitably falls prey to synchronic inconsistency. *Qua* error theorist, she believes that no ends or means are in fact good. *Qua* deliberator or chooser, she believes that this end is good, or that these means are good. That's why she ends up really believing something she really believes is false: *qua* deliberator or chooser, she really believes something that *qua* error theorist she really believes is false. (The first option involves being in denial about one's own deliberations and choices; the second and third options involve being "alienated from" one's deliberations and choices.)

None of these options strike me as attractive, but this is not the venue to pursue them. Instead I want to leave things here: it is at least arguable that the Thomistic account of deliberation and choice is at bottom a theory about apparent goods, which is logically compatible with both the existence and non-existence of real goods (with both "axiological realism" and the error theory). But even if this is right, the question of what we make of the Thomistic account of choice and deliberation is highly relevant to the question of what we say about the existence or otherwise of real goods (and conversely the question of what we say about the existence or otherwise of real goods is highly relevant to the question of what we make of the Thomistic account of choice and deliberation). Even if the Thomistic

account of deliberation and choice is logically compatible with both the existence and the non-existence of real goods, it may turn out that we cannot reasonably accept the Thomistic account, and reject the existence of real goods, or vice versa.

For this reason, it might turn out, oddly enough, that even though

- (A) The Thomistic account of deliberation and choice is, at bottom, a theory that explains deliberation and choice in terms of apparent goods, and has no logical implications for the existence or otherwise of real goods

still

- (B) The exposition and defense of the Thomist account of deliberation is a crucial part of a case for the existence of real goods – a case built around the idea that, once we understand the nature of deliberation, the only way we can avoid being as it were unacceptably alienated from our own deliberation and choices (and actions) is to suppose that there are real as well as apparent goods. The idea would be: deliberation, choice, and action as such aim at some good. But no one can aim at what she simply and solely thinks is not there (even if perhaps someone can aim at something she incoherently both thinks is there and simultaneously thinks is not there). So anyone who thinks there are no goods is unacceptably alienated from her own agency. To put it another way: if (as the Thomistic account of deliberation and choice implies) action is always for the sake of some good, then whenever we choose or do something, we see the goodness of something as a reason for our choice or action. But for the sorts of reasons brought out by Maria Alvarez and others (see her *Kinds of Reasons: An Essay in the Philosophy of Action*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) reasons are “factive” in such a way that *the goodness of x is my reason for choosing/doing x* cannot be true, unless there is such a thing as the goodness of *x* (unless *x* is in fact good). So, if the Thomistic account of deliberation and choice is right, then the error theory of axiological beliefs implies what we might call “the error theory of agency”: acting, like valuing, involves getting things wrong. And this last view might naturally enough be regarded as a *reductio*. If it is, then we cannot accept both the Thomistic account of deliberation and choice and the error theory of axiological beliefs: if we accept the former, we must reject the latter.

Goodness and happiness

For Aquinas, appetite as such is aimed at goodness, and goodness as such is what appetite aims at. So goodness is what all agents want, and will, and “are after”, or act for the sake of:

That to which an agent tends ... must befit that agent ... But what befits an agent is good for it. Hence every agent acts for a good.

(*Summa Contra Gentiles*, III, 3)

It is part of the concept of the good that it be the term of appetite (*est de ratione boni, ut terminet appetitum*) ... so all action and movement is for a good.

(*ibid.*)

In one way, Aquinas' conception of agency seems more constraining than a conception on which desire may aim either at goodness or at something else, and an agent may act either for the sake of a good or for the sake of a non-good. For on Aquinas' conception, an agent can only desire, or choose, or pursue what she sees as good, whereas on the alternative conception she has an alternative.

Still, it might be said, the claim that agents can desire, choose, and pursue only what they see as good doesn't place any substantive constraints on agency, any more than the principle that believers believe or sincerely assert only what they see as true places substantive constraints on belief or sincere assertion. If we say (as we should say) that you can believe or sincerely assert only what you see as true, that places no substantive constraints on what you can believe (and see as true); analogously, if we say (as Aquinas wants to say) that you can want, choose, or pursue only what you see as good, that places no substantive constraints on what you can want, choose, or pursue (and see as good).

For reasons discussed in the last section, I think that if we say that agents can choose and pursue only what they see as good overall or all things considered, we do in fact place substantive constraints on agency (constraints that for example rule out the accuracy of John's description of his choice to pursue stress reduction via smoking). But in this section, I will explore a different issue about whether Aquinas' account of agency is constraining – one raised by his account of the role of happiness in human (and non-human) agency.

As we have seen, Aquinas thinks that action is always action for an end that is perceived as a good. Now to say that we always act for some end/good or other is not to say that there is any end/good for which we always act. But Aquinas thinks there is indeed an (ultimate) end (and good) for which human beings always act:

There must be one ultimate end for human beings.

(*Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics*, I, 9)

which Aquinas goes on to say, is *felicitas* (usually translated as happiness) (*ibid.*). And what goes for human beings goes for other beings endowed with intellect and will:

The ultimate end for human beings, or of any intelligent substances whatever is called *felicitas* or *beatitudo*, for this is what every intelligent substance desires as its ultimate end, and for itself alone.

(SCG, III, 25)

It may be worth underscoring that, for Aquinas, *felicitas* or *beatitudo* is not merely *an* ultimate end and good for human or angelic agents, but also *the* ultimate end and good for them. It is in fact, and it is perceived by agents as, “the most perfect of goods” (*perfectissimum bonorum*) and sufficient in itself (*per se sufficiens*) (see again Aquinas’ Commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, I, 9). So (for Aquinas) it is both true, and evident to any agent, that someone is as well off as she could be if and only if her *felicitas* or *beatitudo* is complete (which, Aquinas thinks, is possible only in Heaven (*ST*, Ia IIae, 5, 3)).

So, for Aquinas, just as one cannot pursue *felicitas* without exercising agency, one cannot exercise agency without pursuing *felicitas* (action is always, not just for an end, but also for the ultimate end of *felicitas*; so action is always in the pursuit of *felicitas*). As we might put it, agency just is the pursuit of *felicitas*. As a corollary, agents always pursue *felicitas*.

I have already said that commentators on Aquinas typically translate “*felicitas*” as “happiness” (and likewise “*beatitudo*”, though the latter is sometimes rendered in English as “blessedness” or “beatitude”, especially if the passage in which “*beatitudo*” occurs is distinctly theological). If “happiness” is a good translation of “*felicitas*” and “*beatitudo*”, then it is fair to say that on Aquinas’ view, agents always pursue happiness.

Not a few commentators seem to think of this last claim as unproblematic. For example, Ralph McInerny writes,

Whatever we do, we do in order to be happy. Happiness is the ultimate end of human life. It is of course platitudinous, and true, to say that everyone acts for the sake of happiness, but what does it tell us?

(“Ethics”, in Stump and Kretzmann,
The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas, p. 200)

and Robert Pasnau and Christopher Shields say it’s easy to agree that we all, in the end, want (and thus, presumably, pursue) happiness (see their *The Philosophy of Aquinas*, p. 202).

Myself, I find this puzzling. Happiness is in one way like property: just as all property is someone’s property, all happiness is someone’s happiness. So whose happiness do agents always pursue (always take as their end)? Everyone’s? Someone’s? Their own?

Not everyone’s, surely. It is true that if we love a person, we want what is good for that person (hence the Italian verb that is in many contexts the best translation of the English verb “to love” means literally “to want good for” (*volere bene a*)). It is also true that we think of a person’s happiness as a good for that person. From these two truths, we may infer that we want

those we love to be happy, and thus (typically, at least) have a disposition to pursue the happiness of persons we love. But (God excepted) does anyone love every person? A person may simply hate another person (that is, hate that person, without also loving that person). If we hate a person, if anything, we want what's bad for that person (again, in Italian one can say that one hates someone by saying one "wants bad for" (*vuole male a*) that person). And, just as we think of a person's happiness as good for that person, we think of a person's unhappiness as bad for that person. Thus, if we simply hate a person, rather than having a disposition to pursue his or her happiness (to take his or her happiness as our end), we will (if anything) have a disposition to pursue his or her unhappiness (to take his or her unhappiness as our end). So, special circumstances aside, there is no reason to suppose that we will pursue the happiness of those we hate. Equally, special circumstances aside, there is no reason to suppose that we will pursue the happiness of those to whom we are simply indifferent (those we neither love nor hate, or even like or dislike).

Here someone might say that Aquinas' view clearly is not that we pursue everyone's happiness, or have a disposition to pursue everyone's happiness, or want everyone to be happy: his view is that we want and are disposed to pursue and do pursue our own happiness, i.e., that every agent (as such) wants and pursues his or her own happiness. The idea would be that an agent, *qua* agent, needn't take a positive interest in anyone else's happiness (or good), but must take a positive interest in her own. (This is the reading of Aquinas' view suggested by McInerny's remark that whatever we do, we do in order to be happy (in order that *we* might be happy).)

I don't see this. If I simply hate a person, there is no reason to think I will either want or pursue that person's happiness. But couldn't I simply hate myself? Might I not be so consumed by self-hatred that I simply wanted *not* to be happy, and accordingly did nothing to pursue my own happiness, or even sought out my unhappiness instead? Think of the state of mind expressed by the playground chant, "nobody loves me, everybody hates me; I'm going to go eat worms." Or, on the grimmer side, think of someone who first shoots his wife, and then himself. Mightn't it be that the suicide is an expression of the person's hatred for himself in just the way that the murder is an expression of the person's hatred for his wife? Mightn't it be that he shoots his wife with the aim of ensuring that she is subjected to the very great evil of death, and will never be happy again, and shoots himself with the aim of ensuring that he too is subjected to the very great evil of death, will never be happy again?

Someone might suggest here that the self-hating man who shoots himself after shooting his wife is in fact, in an odd sort of way, pursuing his own happiness. If he is consumed by self-hatred, then he will judge that his continued existence will make his life on the whole less happy than it would have been, if he had shot himself: so he sees ending his life as soon as possible as the "felicitic" (i.e., happiness-conducive) choice. (Compare:

someone with a painful and terminal disease who goes to an assisted suicide clinic in Switzerland might be said to do so in the pursuit of happiness – that is, in the pursuit of a life less blighted by its terminal phase than it would have been had that terminal phase been longer.)

I'm not saying that a man who shoots himself after shooting his wife couldn't possibly do so in the pursuit of his own happiness (overall life happiness, as opposed to future happiness). But I don't see that a man who shoots himself after shooting his wife would *have to* do so in the pursuit of his own happiness. The person who shoots himself might believe that death is the worst thing of all to happen to a person. And he might shoot himself precisely because he believes that death is the worst thing that could ever happen to a person, and (consumed as he is by self-hatred), he wants it to happen to him. This motivation is *toto caelo* different from the motivation of the person with the terminal disease who goes to the assisted suicide clinic.

It could even be that the man who shoots himself believes that, if he doesn't shoot himself, he *won't* hate himself or be unhappy for very long. If a person x is driven by hatred of someone else y , and believes that if he doesn't kill y , y will end up having a long and happy life, x may see the fact that, if x doesn't kill y , y will live a long and happy life, as an incentive to kill y . (x might be minded to refrain from killing y if x thought that, if y weren't killed, y would end up sufficiently miserable: think of family members of a murder victim who hate the murderer, and hope that, rather than getting the death penalty, he "rots in jail" for many, many years.) Analogously, it seems, if x is driven by hatred of x (i.e., himself), and believes that if he doesn't kill himself, he will end up having a long and happy life, he may see the fact that he will end up having a long and happy life if he doesn't kill himself, as an incentive to kill himself. (In other words, he may see the overall "infelicificity" of shooting himself as an attraction, rather than a drawback, of shooting himself.)

Or consider a person in the thrall of *accidie*. Mightn't he neither want to be happy nor pursue his own happiness? Even in non-extreme cases, I don't know that we always want and pursue our own happiness. If memory serves, in a novel by C. S. Lewis one of his characters says something along the lines of "I sometimes wonder: do human beings really want to be happy?" I find this a very natural thought.

In this connection, it is interesting to look at *ST*, Ia IIae, 5, 8 ("do all men desire *beatitudo*?"). There Aquinas considers a number of interesting arguments to the contrary, though none that turn on cases such as the murderer/suicide or the victim of *accidie*. (One is based on the idea that some people don't know what happiness is, and you can only want something if you know what it is, and another is based on the idea that if you want to be happy, you want to have desires that are both good and satisfied, but not everyone wants to have good desires.) What is of particular interest for our purposes is Aquinas' *responsio*, which doubles as a reply to objection 1 (the objection that turns on the idea that those who do not know what *beatitudo* is do not want it):

Beatitudo can be taken in either of two ways. One way is according to the general nature of *beatitudo* (*secundum communem rationem beatitudinis*). Taken this way, it is necessary that every man desires *beatitudo*. For the general nature of *beatitudo* is of a perfect good, as we have said. But since the good is the object of the will, someone's perfect good is what completely satisfies his will (*quod totaliter eius voluntati satisfacit*). For this reason, to desire *beatitudo* is nothing other than to desire that one's will be satisfied (*appetere beatitudinem nihil aliud est quam appetere ut voluntas satietur*). And everyone desires this. In another way we can speak of *beatitudo* according to its special nature (*secundum specialem rationem*), with respect to that in which *beatitudo* consists (*quantum ad id in quo beatitudo consistit*). Taken this way, not everyone knows *beatitudo*, ... So, taken this way, not everyone desires it.

The question, *do all men want to be beati?*, is the question, *do all men desire beatitudo?*. But, Aquinas says above, *beatitudo* can be taken two ways (*dupliciter potest considerari*). It can be taken as *beatitudo*-according-to-its-general-nature (*beatitudo secundum communem rationem*), or it can be taken as *beatitudo*-according-to-its-special-nature (*beatitudo secundum specialem rationem*). Aquinas seems to say here that *beatitudo* taken the first way is just the complete satisfaction of one's own will, and wanting *beatitudo* taken the first way is just wanting one's will to be satisfied. On the other hand, *beatitudo* taken the second way is not just the satisfaction of one's own will, and wanting *beatitudo* taken the second way is not just wanting one's will to be satisfied. *Beatitudo* taken the second way is "what *beatitudo* consists in". In this passage, Aquinas does not say what that is, but on his view it is knowing as one is known (1 Corinthians, 13: 12).

So, if I have understood Aquinas, he thinks the answer to the question, "do all men desire *beatitudo*?" is "yes and no". Taking *beatitudo* the first way, all men necessarily desire *beatitudo*, because all men (and more broadly, all beings endowed with intellect and will) desire that their will be satisfied. Taking *beatitudo* the second way, not all men (and thus, not all beings endowed with intellect desire *beatitudo*), because not all men desire what *beatitudo* consists in. In particular, men who do not know wherein *beatitudo* consists, do not desire what it consists in.

This suggests that, for Aquinas, there is a thinner notion of *beatitudo*, and a thicker notion. The thinner notion is just complete will-satisfaction. If that notion is in play, then every rational agent both knows what *beatitudo* is, and desires (and pursues it). By contrast, the thicker notion leaves room both for a rational agent's not knowing what *beatitudo* is, and for his or her not wanting (and not pursuing) it.

So someone who wants to defend Aquinas' account of (what in English translations of Aquinas goes by the name of) happiness in the face of the objections made earlier could go either of two ways.

On the one hand, she could say something like:

As cases involving self-hatred and *accidie* show, it is (unambiguously) false that rational agents always want and pursue happiness. But it is not (unambiguously) false that rational agents always want and pursue *beatitudo*. For *beatitudo*, unlike happiness, can be understood simply as complete satisfaction of the will – i.e., as having all your preferences or desires satisfied. And even the self-hating murderer/suicide wants to, and is trying to get, as close as possible to the complete satisfaction of his desires. So the fact that it is (unambiguously) false that rational agents always want and pursue happiness doesn't show that there is anything wrong with Aquinas' account of *beatitudo*; it just shows that there is something wrong with translating Aquinas' term *beatitudo* as happiness.

This sort of defense of Aquinas does not seem promising. When Aquinas says that *beatitudo* can be taken two ways, he is clearly not stipulating that he will (henceforth) use the term “*beatitudo*” in such a way that *beatitudo* can be understood simply as complete will-satisfaction. He is instead saying that given what the term “*beatitudo*” already means (in Latin), *beatitudo* can be understood either as complete will-satisfaction, or as something else. And, he would say, the same goes for the term “*felicitas*”. If, however, *rational agents always want and pursue happiness* is (unambiguously) false, that is presumably because, given what “happiness” means (in English), happiness cannot be understood simply as complete will-satisfaction. And there seems to be no good reason to suppose that “*beatitudo*” and “*felicitas*” on the one hand differ from “happiness” on the other, in that *beatitudo* and *felicitas* can, but happiness cannot, be understood simply as complete will-satisfaction. Hence if it is (unambiguously) false that rational agents always want and pursue happiness, there seems to be no good reason to suppose it's not also (unambiguously) false that rational agents always want and pursue *beatitudo*.

Alternatively, a defender of Aquinas could say:

Because *beatitudo* (and *felicitas*) can be taken in either of two ways, it is neither unambiguously true, nor unambiguously false that rational agents always want and pursue *beatitudo* (or *felicitas*). Because “*beatitudo*” and “*felicitas*” mean what “happiness” means (or at least, come close enough to meaning what “happiness” means), it is likewise neither unambiguously true nor unambiguously false that rational agents always want and pursue happiness. The murderer/suicide wants and is pursuing happiness (taken one way); he does not want and is not pursuing happiness (taken another way). If someone says that the murderer/suicide does not want and is not pursuing happiness, what she says is true (taken the right way, and taken as she means it), but it is perfectly compatible with what Aquinas means, when he says that rational agents always want and pursue happiness (*beatitudo*, *felicitas*).

This second way of defending Aquinas' account of *beatitudo* from the objection under discussion seems to me clearly preferable to the first one considered above.

Our original worry about Aquinas' view that rational agents necessarily want and pursue happiness was that it "overconstrained" rational agency, inasmuch as rational agency doesn't require wanting to pursuing happiness, as the case of the aspiring worms-eater (or the grimmer case of the self-hating murderer/suicide) seemed to show. According to the defense of Aquinas just sketched, this worry is misplaced. For (as we can see from *ST*, Ia IIae, 5, 8, *responsio*) when Aquinas says that rational agents necessarily want (and pursue) *beatitudo* or happiness, what he means by this is that rational agents necessarily want (and pursue) *beatitudo* or happiness *secundum communem rationem* – i.e., that rational agents necessarily want and pursue the complete satisfaction of their will, which is to say, the complete satisfaction of their preferences or desires. And this last principle places no substantive constraints of rational agency, since it is already built into the idea of rational agency that rational agents want and pursue the complete satisfaction of their desires. Since the dictum that rational agents necessarily pursue happiness puts no substantive constraints on rational agency, it puts no constraints on rational agency that are not satisfied by a hypothetical self-hating murderer/suicide. (Again, the murderer/suicide, just like any other rational agent, wants and pursues the satisfaction of his desires).

One might have two sorts of concern about this defense of Aquinas: is it in fact truistic that rational agents want and pursue the complete satisfaction of their desires? And is it true that, when Aquinas says that rational agents necessarily want and pursue happiness, all he means is that rational agents want and pursue the complete satisfaction of their desires?

On the first point, it seems that, even if we believe of *each* thing we believe, that it is true, we don't believe that *all* our beliefs are true (we're sure that some of our beliefs are mistaken). It similarly seems that, even if, for *each* of our desires, we want that desire to be satisfied, we do not (or at any rate might not) want *all* of our desires to be satisfied: we do (or at any rate might) desire that our lives include at least some of the rough of unsatisfied desires along with the smooth of satisfied desires (cf. our discussion in [Chapter 4](#) on whether we really would want a life in which we always get everything we want). This suggests that, if we construe *beatitudo* or happiness *secundum communem rationem* as complete desire satisfaction – it is or at any rate could perfectly well be true that we don't want it, but rather something sufficiently close to it.

Setting this problem to one side, is it in fact true that, when Aquinas says that rational agents necessarily want and pursue happiness, all he means is that rational agents necessarily want and pursue the satisfaction of their desires? Granted, one might attribute this view to him on the basis of *ST*, Ia IIae, 5, 8, *responsio*. Still, I have doubts about whether Aquinas really has such a "deflationary" understanding of the principle that all rational agents want and pursue happiness.

Leaving *ST*, Ia IIae, 5, 8 out of it, I should have thought Aquinas held the following view:

There is something – *beatitudo* or happiness – that is a perfect good, and sufficient in itself (*Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics*, I, 1, 9) and is the only possible ultimate end of rational beings, and is accordingly what all rational beings do (and must) want and pursue.

For Aquinas, I should have thought, it is no accident that *beatitudo* or happiness is both the perfect and in-itself-sufficient good, and what rational beings do and must pursue. By his lights, *beatitudo* or happiness is what all rational beings want and pursue, because it is known by all rational beings to be the ultimate and in-itself-sufficient good for that being. (In other words, rational beings necessarily want and pursue happiness, because rational beings necessarily know that happiness is the perfect and in-itself-sufficient good for them. Even if they don't know what happiness consists in, they know that whatever it in fact consists in, it is the perfect good for them, sufficient in itself.)

Also, I should have thought that, for Aquinas, all want and pursue happiness, but only the wise want and pursue what happiness consists in: the unwise want and pursue but do not attain happiness, because they are under a misapprehension about what it consists in (e.g., they think it consists in riches, or honor, or the delights of the flesh, or ...), and so “mispursue” happiness, by pursuing things which won't in fact, if attained, bring them happiness (although the mispursuers of happiness think they will).

Now on the reading of *ST*, Ia IIae, 5, 8, *responsio* on which the defense of Aquinas under consideration is based, it is a mistake to think Aquinas' views on happiness overconstrain rational agency, because Aquinas in effect holds that there isn't any one thing deserving of the name “happiness”. There is one thing – happiness *secundum communem rationem* – that all rational beings necessarily pursue, and that is nothing other than the complete satisfaction of one's will, understood as the complete satisfaction of one's preferences or desires. And there is a different thing – happiness *secundum specialem rationem* – that not all rational beings necessarily pursue. We can call either of these things “happiness” – though not at the same time, since “happiness” is a singular term.

Which of these two different things (if either) is the perfect and in-itself-sufficient good? It seems that it cannot be happiness *secundum communem rationem*. For (on the reading of *ST*, Ia IIae that goes along with the defense of Aquinas under consideration) happiness *secundum communem rationem* is just having the world perfectly aligned with your desires. But Aquinas recognizes that the perfect alignment of the world with my desires is not sufficient for my having the most perfect and in-itself-sufficient of goods. If the world is in perfect alignment with my desires, then I may well *deem* that I have every good thing, and am as well off as I could possibly be. But for

Aquinas, it surely does not follow that I in fact have every good thing, and am in fact as well off as I could be: if my desires are defective – if I have desires for all manner of things that appear good to me, but are not good *in veritate rei* (i.e., in fact: cf. *ST*, Ia IIae, 1, *responsio*), I may be very far from being as well off as I could possibly be. There is nothing particularly good (for me) about the world being aligned with my desires, if my desires are misaligned with what is good (for me). So, assuming that either *beatitudo secundum communem rationem* or *beatitudo secundum specialem rationem* is the perfect good, it must be the latter, and not the former.

So if *beatitudo secundum communem rationem* is both the thing that all rational beings desire and pursue, and the property of having the world perfectly aligned to one's desires, then Aquinas cannot say all the things I suggested he seems to want to say. He cannot say there is something – *beatitudo* or happiness – that is the perfect good, and is the thing all rational beings necessarily pursue, because there is one thing (perfect alignment of the world with one's desires) that all rational beings necessarily want and pursue, and there's a different thing (*beatitudo secundum specialem considerationem*, presumably) that is the perfect good for any rational being. He cannot say that that *beatitudo* or happiness is what is necessarily desired and pursued by all rational beings, because it is necessarily known by all rational beings to be the perfect and in-itself-sufficient good for them, since again it is one thing that is necessarily desired and pursued by all rational beings (to wit, perfect alignment of the world with one's desires), and another thing that is the perfect and in-itself-sufficient good for any rational being. Nor can he say that the wise and unwise alike desire and pursue happiness, but only the wise know wherein happiness consists. For the thing that the wise and unwise alike desire and pursue is the alignment of the world with their will/desires, and the unwise just as much as the wise know wherein the alignment of the world with one's desires consists.

Returning to *ST*, Ia IIae, 5, 8, *responsio*, it is not clear that in that passage Aquinas really does want to identify happiness *secundum communem considerationem* with world–desire alignment, and something else (presumably, happiness *secundum specialem considerationem*) with the perfect good. For he says there:

[S]ince the good is the object of the will, someone's perfect good is what completely satisfies his will (*cum ... bonum sit obiectum voluntatis, perfectum bonum est alicuius, quod totaliter eius voluntati satisfacit*).

This makes it sound as though someone's perfect good – aka someone's happiness – is whatever completely satisfies his will. But if someone's perfect good or happiness is whatever completely satisfies his will, then complete satisfaction of the will is sufficient for having the perfect good of happiness. Assuming that what satisfies one's will is the world's aligning with one's desires, having the world perfectly aligned with one's desires is sufficient for

having the perfect good of happiness. In which case it is not after all the case that happiness *secundum communem rationem* is one thing (viz., world-desire alignment), and the perfect good of happiness is something else.

Given that Aquinas thinks that created wills can be defective, it is admittedly puzzling that Aquinas would want to say that whatever (completely) satisfies a rational being's will is that being's perfect good: why should the satisfaction of a *defective* will be good for (and not just appear good to) the possessor of that will)? Nevertheless, Aquinas does seem to say, without qualification, that a rational being's perfect good is whatever satisfies that being's will.

In order to explain why he says that, it might be supposed that what Aquinas means by "satisfaction of the will" is not the alignment of the world with one's preferences or desires. That is, it might be supposed that, inasmuch as Aquinas thinks that will as such aims at the good, one's will is satisfied if (to the extent that) what one has is what the will as such aims at – which is to say, good. On this understanding of will-satisfaction, what satisfies my will satisfies my preferences or desires, if the latter are aligned with what is actually (as opposed to apparently) good. If (to the extent that) my preferences are misaligned with the good, my will is satisfied if my preferences are unsatisfied, and vice versa.

This reading has the virtue of making sense of Aquinas' apparent identification of complete will-satisfaction with the perfect good of happiness. But it attributes to Aquinas a rather peculiar – or at least, surprising – understanding of will-satisfaction – an understanding on which having one's will satisfied is very far removed from getting what one wants in the ordinary sense (in that will-satisfaction is a matter of something like welfare or well-being or eudaimonia, rather than a matter of getting what one wants in the ordinary sense). Could Aquinas really have thought that, when we desire something that is only apparently good over something that is genuinely good, and we get what we desire, we get the only apparently good thing as it were *against* our will? Could he really have thought that, when we desire something that is only apparently good over something that is genuinely good, and we get the genuinely good thing instead, we don't end up with the genuinely good thing against our will?

On the other hand, if we think that Aquinas understands will-satisfaction as world-desire alignment, there is a mystery about why Aquinas says that one's perfect good is the complete satisfaction of one's will, given that he believes in defective as well as non-defective desires. For this reason, I don't think we can say that *ST*, Ia IIae, 5, 8, *responsio* clearly and unproblematically supports a reading of Aquinas on which there's something (namely, happiness *secundum communem rationem*) that all rational beings want and pursue, and that can be identified with world-desire alignment, and there's something else that can be identified with happiness, conceived as the perfect and in-itself-sufficient good of every rational being.

Also, on what appears a natural and straightforward reading of *ST*, Ia IIae, 5, 8, *responsio*, in that passage Aquinas identifies *beatitudo secundum speciale*

rationem (happiness taken the second way) with what happiness *secundum communem rationem* (happiness taken the first way) consists in. And Aquinas says explicitly that although all desire happiness *secundum communem rationem*, some do not desire happiness *secundum specialem rationem*, because they don't know what it is. Suppose, though, that (i) all desire happiness *secundum communem rationem*, but not all desire happiness *secundum specialem rationem*, because not all know what happiness *secundum specialem rationem* is, and (ii) happiness *secundum specialem rationem* is what happiness *secundum communem rationem* consists in. It seems to follow that (iii) some desire happiness *secundum communem rationem*, without knowing what it consists in. But, as we have already said, on the reading of *ST*, Ia IIae, 5, 8, *responsio* according to which happiness *secundum communem rationem* = world–desire alignment, no one desires happiness *secundum communem rationem* without knowing what it is (since everyone who desires world–desire alignment knows what the alignment of the world with one's desires consists in: everyone who desires world–desire alignment knows what it is for the world to align with one's desires). So we come back, via a different route, to the idea that *ST*, Ia IIae 8, 5, *responsio* does not clearly and unequivocally identify happiness *secundum communem rationem* with world–desire alignment, and happiness conceived as the perfect and itself-sufficient-good with something else.

At this point, I want to move away from the (vexed) question of just what Aquinas is saying at *ST*, Ia IIae, 8, 5 *responsio*, and argue that, whatever the best interpretation of *ST*, Ia IIae, 8, 5 might be, there are good reasons to suppose that Aquinas' account of happiness, does in fact put substantive constraints on rational agency – constraints that the possibility of self-hatred, *accidie*, and so on make problematic.

For Aquinas, we may think of *beatitudo* or happiness as composed of other goods. And, for Aquinas, some of the goods that (partly) compose *beatitudo* are such that someone can desire *beatitudo* without desiring them, even though they are necessarily part of *beatitudo*. For example, *beatitudo* necessarily involves adherence to God, and the things of God; yet someone can desire *beatitudo* without desiring to adhere to God or the things of God. (see *ST*, Ia, 82, 2, *responsio*). On the other hand, Aquinas thinks, some of the goods that (partly) compose *beatitudo* are such that no one can desire *beatitudo* without desiring them as well: one cannot desire (one's own) *beatitudo* without also desiring (one's own) existence, life, and understanding. (See *ST*, Ia IIae, 10, 2, *ad 3um*, where Aquinas avers that just as the ultimate end and perfect good (*beatitudo*) moves the will necessarily, so too do existence, life, *et huiusmodi* (and things of that sort), and *De Malo* 6, *un.*, *responsio*, where Aquinas says that all men desire by natural necessity, not just to be happy, but also to be, and to live, and to understand.)

Because desiring *beatitudo* or happiness (*secundum communem rationem*) does not imply desiring God and the things of God, a rational being can desire happiness (*secundum communem rationem*) without also desiring God. Because desiring happiness (*secundum communem rationem*) implies desiring

existence, life, understanding, *et huiusmodi*, a rational being cannot desire happiness (*secundum communem rationem*) without also desiring existence, life, understanding, *et huiusmodi*. But, as we have seen, any rational being does and must desire happiness (*secundum communem rationem*). Whence it follows that any rational being does and must desire, not just happiness (*secundum communem rationem*), but also existence, life, understanding, and so on. This last claim implies that happiness *secundum communem rationem*, as Aquinas understands it, cannot be identified with world–desire alignment. (Desiring happiness *secundum communem rationem*, as Aquinas understands happiness *secundum communem rationem*, partly consists in desiring existence, life, and understanding; but desiring world–will alignment does not partly consist in desiring existence, life, or understanding.) Moreover, the claim that any rational being does and must desire existence, life, and understanding (unlike the claim that any rational being must desire the satisfaction of his or her own desires) is one that the possibility of self-hatred and *accidie* calls into question.

Despite its length, this chapter has been a very partial exploration of Aquinas' many-sided theory of goodness. It's the usual story: Aquinas' theory of goodness, like his account of material objects, or his account of human beings, or his arguments for God's existence, or his conception of divine simplicity, or his explanation of why God causes or allows certain kinds of evil, is way too rich to say anything like enough about in anything shorter than a monograph.

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