things being equal, someone might be inclined to think that Aquinas is here alluding to God as the governor of his creation. But since '*agens naturale*' in this discussion has until now meant some *created* natural agent, that would constitute a very surprising and confusing shift in Aquinas's terminology.[99] Besides, in this case other things are *not* equal, as can be seen from the way Aquinas distinguishes between natural and intellective agents at the and of the argument: "Therefore, a natural agent tends toward what is for the better. And, much more obviously, so does one that acts through intellect." And God, of course, is the paradigmatic, perfect intellective agent.[100]

III. BADNESS

1. The Badness Thesis

'Badness' is not a good word. It sounds faintly infantile, perhaps especially now, at the end of the twentieth century. Still, 'imperfection' and its bland companions are too broad to serve all the purposes of this investigation, while 'evil,' 'wickedness,' 'immorality,' 'sinfulness,' and the like are even more clearly too narrow. '*Malum*' is almost the only word Aquinas uses, adjectivally or as a nominalized adjective, for the central notion in III.4–15, a series of chapters that has sometimes been called a treatise *de malo*.[101] And 'bad' and 'badness' are the only English words that strike me as coming close to playing all the roles Aquinas assigns to '*malum*.' With that semi-satisfactory bit of terminological equipment we can start an investigation of his treatise on badness.

It begins in III.4 with what I'll call the badness thesis: "Now on that basis it is apparent that the badness in things, events, or states of affairs occurs apart from the intention of their agents (*Ex hoc autem apparet quod malum in rebus incidit praeter intentionem agentium*)" (3.1889). I've expanded Aquinas's one word '*rebus*' into the phrase 'things, events, or states of affairs.' It's usually translated most safely as 'things,' but I think that the generality implicit in it needs to be spelled out in that way here, and occasionally elsewhere. Aquinas's reference to "the badness in things, events, or states of affairs" rather than merely badness for the agent appears to generalize and objectify the kinds of badness at issue. The introductory formula 'on that basis,' already familiar from the beginnings of many earlier chapters in SCG I–III, refers in this case to the goodness thesis for which he argued in the preceding chapter. If, as his first formulation of the goodness thesis maintains, "every agent acts for what is good," then no agent acts for what is bad; and so the badness that does undeniably mar many things, events, and states of affairs can't be what their agents act for; it must therefore occur apart from their agents' intention. Viewed in this way, the

badness thesis is a corollary of the goodness thesis.[102] But that observation on the apparent logical status of the badness thesis doesn't explain Aquinas's taking up badness, especially in such detail, at this point in the development of his natural theology, where it might look like a detour on the road toward the conclusion that God is (somehow) creation's single ultimate end.

As we've seen, the notion of badness was introduced in Aquinas's chapters 2 and 3, but not in ways that seemed to call for immediate development.[103] So why does it become his topic here? It's not hard to imagine an explanation. Since the overall aim of III.2–63 is to show that all creation is (somehow) directed toward God, and since III.3's arguing that all created things aim at what is good for them seems to constitute one important step toward achieving that aim, the mere fact that some of the arguments of III.3 involved acknowledging the occurrence of bad results might give Aquinas reason enough to turn and face that apparent difficulty at once. For how *could* a world created and governed by perfectly good God,[104] a world in which every agent, intellective and natural alike, acts for what is good, involve any badness at all?[105]

By now we have some reason to find Aquinas's goodness thesis plausible, understanding it in the form in which he defends it in III.3, as the claim that every agent in acting always intends to bring about what is good for the agent. But the badness thesis seems on the face of it to be outrageously false, even if (or perhaps especially if) we temporarily think only of human beings as the agents at issue. For it seems to mean that none of the badness that occurs so abundantly in the things, events, and states of affairs that make up our world ever comes about as the intended result of any human being's action. There can't have been any time in human history when such a claim is likely to have been taken seriously, and every passing year carries its own burden of what certainly looks like still more overwhelming counter-evidence. So we also have some reason to wonder whether the badness thesis really does mean what it seems to mean.

As a first step in examining and evaluating the badness thesis as it stands, we can consider those not-so-rare occasions on which an agent, A, recognizes as soon as the deed is done that what he apprehended as good for himself turns out, quite apart from his intention, to be bad for himself. For instance, the interesting-looking person A introduces himself to turns out to be boring and offensive.[106] Such disappointed-agent cases—cases of mistaken apprehensions that are immediately recognized as such by the disappointed agent—do appear to confirm the badness thesis.

But suppose that we shift our attention to satisfied-agent cases, cases in which A is perfectly satisfied with the results of his action, convinced that its results are indeed good for himself in just the way he intended. Won't it sometimes happen in satisfied-agent cases that the state of affairs A intended to achieve and does achieve is clearly bad for someone else? A urgently needs money, firmly believes that stealing it is the only way he can

get it, and steals all of B's money. A certainly seems to have intended and acted for something good for himself, to have achieved just what he set out to achieve, and to be perfectly satisfied with the result. The result is bad for B, without a doubt; it counts as a little of the badness that really occurs in things, events, or states of affairs. But that aspect of the outcome—that badness—can also be seen in this example to have been apart from A's intention, which was directed only at something good (for A). If A could have got the money easily without harming B or anyone else, he would have done so. Viewed in that way, a very big sub-class of satisfied-agent cases that might at first appear to provide evidence against the badness thesis can also be understood to confirm it.

But aren't there also satisfied-agent cases in which the resultant badness for someone or something other than the agent must be considered to have been an integral part of what the agent *intended*, cases in which the resultant badness for others is *essential* to the outcome that the agent apprehends as *good for himself*? Revenge provides a handy paradigm. Cases of revenge can't be brought under the badness thesis simply by declaring that the *primary* intention of the vengeful agent is to achieve what's good for the agent—justice, for instance—and that *consequently* the resultant badness for the victim occurs apart from the agent's intention. Agents deliberating about their actions of revenge may, like King Lear, reject various options just because their *intended* outcomes aren't *bad enough* for the targets of the vengeance.

> I will have such revenges on you both
> That all the world shall—I will do such things,—
> What they are, yet I know not; but they shall be
> The terrors of the earth.[107]

If the terrors of the earth don't qualify as part of the badness that might occur in things, events, and states of affairs—real, objective badness—what would? And it seems that no one could with a straight face try to explain that these terrors—whatever they might turn out to be—would be apart from Lear's intention. What's more, although Lear doesn't manage to carry out his threats, his angry, vengeful intentions seem typical of the intentions of ordinary, prosy, often-successful agents of revenge everywhere. So, if we focus just on satisfied-agent cases of revenge as clear counter-instances, how can we agree with Aquinas that the badness in things, events, or states of affairs always occurs apart from the intention of their agents?

Of course, we can't treat that question as merely rhetorical. But since Aquinas presents some apparent counter-instances of his own and tries to explain them away in III.5&6, we can and should postpone trying to answer it. Meanwhile, it's helpful to take account of two of this chapter's four arguments, which provide some important clarifications of the badness thesis they're intended to support.

2. Clarifying the Thesis

In the second argument Aquinas supplies a three-level analysis of badness: in effects, in the actions producing those effects, and in the principles or sources of those actions.

> A defect in an effect and in the action [producing that effect] is a result of some defect in the principles of the action. (For instance, a congenital deformity results from some corruption of the semen, and lameness results from a curvature of the leg bone.[108]) But an agent acts to the extent to which it has an active power, not to the extent to which it suffers a defect in the power; and the way it acts is the way it intends an end. Therefore, it intends an end in a way that corresponds to the power. Therefore, anything that results [from the action] but corresponds to a defect in the power will be apart from the agent's intention. Now this [effect corresponding to a defect in the power] is bad. Therefore, badness [in the effect] happens apart from [the agent's] intention. (4.1891)

The principles or sources of an action are, for instance, the active power that an agent must have in order to engage in that sort of action, and any instrument, natural or artificial, that is required for exercising that power.[109] As Aquinas presents it here, this three-level analysis of badness applies to some disappointed-agent cases, but it also seems to call for the introduction of a third kind of case.

A defect is a shortcoming, a potentiality that isn't appropriately actualized at the appropriate stage of development or that has lost its appropriate actualization—for example, a leg bone that failed to grow properly or that was injured after having developed. And, as we've seen Aquinas claiming, "badness is found only in a potentiality that falls short of [complete] actuality" (3.1883).[110] A defect in the effect is a result of a defect in the action, which is a result of a defect in the principles of the action. Where walking is the effect and limping is the defect in it, an explanatory defect must be found in the action producing that effect—moving one's body in a certain way—and that defect must in turn be explained by a defect in the active powers required for that sort of moving or in the requisite natural instruments—for example, bones and muscles.

Aquinas's example of the lame person isn't a satisfied-agent case, and it's almost as clearly not a disappointed-agent case either, since lameness brought about by a curvature of the leg bone is not the sort of defect that's likely to come as a surprise to an agent who intends to walk normally. Congenitally lame people (and lame people typically) are instances of what might be called the admittedly-defective-agent case. Since very many actions and effects that are objectively recognized as defective in some respect are produced by agents who would readily acknowledge the defects in their relevant principles of action, the admittedly-defective-agent case is an im-

portant supplement to the two cases already identified. The agent impaired by a curvature of her leg bone intends to walk to the best of her ability, knowing very well the defect in her principles of action. She can't seriously intend to walk *without* limping, but it makes good sense to say that she doesn't *intend* the limp in her walk (as an unimpaired actress might intend to limp in playing a part).

Analogously, a piano student might intend to play a Beethoven sonata to the best of her ability. Suppose that she does just that, but it's a bad performance. She didn't *intend* to play the sonata *badly*, but she knew that even if she played it as well as she could, there would be defects in the effect. We can suppose that she played it better than she ever had before, and that she's pleased about that. But it was still a flawed performance, and she knows it. Considered just as the best she could do, her action is precisely what she intended. What's bad about it really is apart from her intention. And so admittedly-defective-agent cases subjected to Aquinas's three-level analysis also confirm the badness thesis.

Defects in an agent's principles of action are very often well known to the agent, as in these examples of admittedly defective agents. But even if the only principles of action at issue are the immediately relevant active powers or instruments (as in these examples), a long-standing defect in them may have gone unnoticed by the agent, or a defect may occur suddenly and unexpectedly. In such circumstances Aquinas's analysis as spelled out in 4.1891 applies to disappointed-agent cases as well. Suppose that A intends to throw the ball to B so that B can easily catch it. A wouldn't form that intention without believing that he has the power to carry it out—that is, A "intends an end in a way that corresponds to the power." But suppose that A is surprised and disappointed to discover that he isn't strong enough to throw the ball that far. Since A "*acts* to the extent to which he *has* an active power, *not* to the extent to which he suffers a *defect* in the power," and since "the way the agent acts is the way he intends an end," the disappointing badness in the effect clearly does occur apart from A's intention. A's acting, strictly so-called, is his throwing the ball; A's failing to throw the ball all the way to B is not his acting but the defect in his acting, which stems from a hitherto-unrecognized defect in A's principles of action. More confirmation for the badness thesis.

But suppose a vengeful A intends to throw the ball at B hard enough to hurt him, and A succeeds. If the badness in this satisfied-agent case is also going to be analyzed as a defect, the principle of action in which the initiating defect is found is going to have to lie beyond the immediately relevant active powers, on a fourth level of which A is now oblivious (and which Aquinas's analysis has so far not revealed).[111] As far as this A is concerned, the three-level analysis of defects introduced in 4.1891 would disclose no defect at all in his act of revenge, the badness in which seems clearly *not* to occur apart from A's intention.

All such apparent counter-instances to the badness thesis could be

turned aside if the thesis were weakened in a way that would make it more precisely a corollary of the goodness thesis Aquinas actually argues for, which, as we've seen, turns out to be a claim only about what is good *for the agent*. We might weaken the badness thesis and align it more closely with the goodness thesis if we revised it to look like this, for instance: Any aspect of things, events, or states of affairs that is perceived by their agents as bad for their agents occurs apart from the intention of their agents. I don't think that this weakened version is *unquestionably* true, but it certainly would be easier to support than the thesis we've been considering. Satisfied-agent cases of revenge wouldn't count against the weakened version in any way, nor would the weakened version suggest any of the misgivings I've been raising against the thesis as Aquinas presents it in 4.1889: "The badness in things, events, or states of affairs occurs apart from the intention of [their] agents." But if he means no more than what the relativized, weakened version expresses, he ought not to have expressed the thesis so generally and objectively. Moreover, while the relativistic character of his goodness thesis was revealed almost at once, in the first argument supporting it (in 3.1879), none of the arguments we've considered for the badness thesis have indicated that it's to be given a relativistic interpretation.[112] Finally, the one supporting argument still to be considered seems to show that it is to be interpreted just as objectively and generally as Aquinas's wording of it suggests, as we'll now see. In that case, it will of course *not* be a corollary of the relativistic goodness thesis, and it will remain vulnerable to the counter-instances and misgivings that have so far been raised against it.

3. The Most Fundamental Application of the Thesis

Aquinas's first, perfunctory supporting argument (4.1890) applies indifferently to intellective and natural agents,[113] the fourth (4.1893) is expressly concerned with intellective agents like us,[114] and the second (4.1891) seems to be appropriately considered in terms of intellective agents, as we've seen. His third argument, however, is expressly and almost exclusively concerned with inanimate natural agents (and patients) in ways that reveal his conception of the manifestation of badness in the most fundamental stratum of created being:

> The movement of what is movable and its mover's moving [of it] tend toward the same [end].[115] Now what is movable tends *per se* toward what is good; it is [only] *per accidens* and apart from intention that it tends toward what is bad. This is especially apparent in connection with generation and corruption. For matter that is under one form is in a state of potentiality to another form and to the privation of the form it now has. (4.1892)

Here, near the beginning of this long argument, it's already apparent that its focus is on the most basic things, events, and states of affairs that make up the physical world. Matter as Aquinas conceives of it is completely passive, the fundamental patient, the paradigm of what is always and essentially movable and never itself a mover of anything.[116] And, as we've seen, his explanation of generation/corruption is in terms of matter's potentialities being actualized in the possession/privation of various forms.[117]

The example Aquinas provides at this point in the argument is drawn from antiquated natural science, but it can easily be recast, retaining much of his language.[118] For instance, since marble is metamorphosed limestone, we can say of one cubic foot of limestone at the beginning of the process of metamorphosis that it is in a state of potentiality both to the privation of the substantial form of limestone and to the possession of the substantial form of marble. And such a transmutation of the matter that now has the form of limestone is terminated in both the privation and the possession at once: in the possession of the form of marble in so far as a certain quantity of marble is generated, of course, but also in the privation of the form of limestone in so far as the cubic foot of limestone is corrupted.[119]

Now, as we've already seen, Aquinas maintains that "all natural agents, to the extent of their power, resist corruption, which is bad for each and every thing" (3.1885).[120] And his argument at this stage seems to have presented matter as disposed equally toward the fundamental goodness of acquiring a substantial form in generation and the fundamental badness of losing a substantial form in corruption. But the argument already includes the claims that "what is movable"—for example, matter—"tends *per se* toward what is good," and that "it is [only] *per accidens* and apart from intention that it tends toward what is bad." And so he has to explain how these claims apply to his analysis of a transmutation such as limestone's metamorphosis into marble.

"However, matter's intention and appetite is not for the privation but for the form. For it doesn't tend toward what is impossible, and it is impossible for there to be mere matter, under a privation of being. On the other hand, matter's being under a form is possible. Therefore, the fact that matter terminates in a privation is apart from [its] intention, although it does terminate in it in so far as it achieves the form it intends, from which the privation of the other form necessarily results. Therefore, the transmutation of matter in generation and corruption is *per se* ordered toward the form, while the [*per accidens*] privation results apart from intention" (4.1892).[121] In creation's lowest metaphysical stratum goodness is manifested as matter's actualization, its possessing some substantial form or other.[122] Consequently, the badness contrary to that goodness is manifested as matter's being deprived of the substantial form it had; and that kind of badness is an inevitable *per accidens* concomitant of absolutely every substantial transformation. No rational being can even disapprove of, much less condemn, most of the badness of corruption and privation that is ubiqui-

tous in that way and is never found apart from the corresponding goodness of generation and possession.[123] Still, even in this substratum, where neither intellective agents nor even living natural agents need be considered, Aquinas applies his badness thesis. For "matter's *intention and appetite* is not for the privation but for the form," and so "the fact that matter terminates in a privation is *apart from its intention*"; in short, "the privation"—the badness to be found even in this substratum—"results *apart from intention.*" If this application of the badness thesis is to make sense, Aquinas needs at least to show us how to make sense of the notion of matter's intention.

Formless matter—"mere matter, under a privation of being"—is *prime* matter, "pure potentiality."[124] As a theoretical element of Aquinas's Aristotelian metaphysics prime matter is indispensable; however, it can't occur just as such in nature because it's logically impossible for unactualized pure potentiality to exist in actuality. But, for every quantity of actually existent (formed) matter, a loss of *any* form, considered just as such, is a change in the direction of the loss of *every* form, which is the status of prime matter, a status that is unattainable in reality. Now it is naturally impossible that matter should have a natural appetite, or intention, or disposition for what is impossible; "and it is impossible for there to *be* mere matter, under a *privation* of being." That's why matter's natural tendency, or intention, has the *opposite* orientation, toward the possible. And so "the transmutation of matter in generation and corruption is *per se* ordered *toward the form.*" Consequently, the kind of badness that consists in the inevitable privation of a form, which accompanies every acquisition of another form, is merely the naturally necessitated concomitant of a kind of goodness and results only *per accidens*, apart from matter's natural intention.[125]

The remainder of this important third argument generalizes and summarizes what has already been argued:

> And it must occur similarly in connection with all [species of] movement or change; and so in any movement or change there is generation and corruption in a certain respect.[126] (For instance, whenever something is altered from white to black, something white is corrupted and something black comes to be.[127]) Now, matter's being perfected through a form and a potentiality's being perfected through its proper actuality (*actum proprium*) is good; but a potentiality's being deprived of the actuality it ought to have (*actu debito*) is bad.[128] Therefore, everything that is moved intends in its movement to achieve what is good; but it [sometimes] achieves what is bad, apart from intention. Therefore, since every agent and mover [also] tends toward what is good [as was argued in III.3], what is bad comes about apart from the agent's intention. (4.1892)

Although the argument's final conclusion again has to do with the intentions of agents, the argument contributes to the universalizing of the good-

ness and badness theses by applying them not just to agents but also to (natural) patients, and especially to matter itself, the fundamental patient in created reality.

Aquinas's unwavering thoroughness in applying his badness thesis all the way down to creation's lowest metaphysical stratum illuminates his conception of badness in a way that will help us understand his applications of it to all the more familiar and more threatening kinds of badness, such as pain and suffering, natural disasters, and moral evil. But this most fundamental application of the thesis may also seem either to debase language or to strain credulity. Can anyone seriously claim to discern *badness* in the geological process that is on the one hand the generation of marble and on the other hand the corruption of limestone? Or in the biological process that is on the one hand the generation of healthy tissue in a newborn baby and on the other hand the digestive corruption of its mother's milk? Matter's loss of the substantial forms of limestone or of milk is entirely as natural as is its acquisition of the substantial forms of marble or of flesh and bone. And since we think of those transmutations as improvements, why shouldn't we evaluate not just the acquisitional but also the privational aspects of those transmutations as *good*? More pointedly, aren't we forced to recognize that the privational aspects, too, are indispensable to natural processes and therefore clearly not in any sense apart from nature's intention?

4. Challenging the Thesis

Those misgivings about Aquinas's badness thesis are only the latest additions to a list that has been growing since we began considering the thesis. So it is altogether appropriate that in the next, conjoint chapter 5&6 he raises three objections that encapsulate all the misgivings I've expressed and more besides, following them immediately with a further analysis of badness on which he bases his rejoinders to the objections. His objections are particularly effective because they grow out of undeniable, ordinary characteristics of badness that seem to be either ignored or expressly contradicted in his thesis.

The first of the objections might be called the argument from the *prevalence* of badness. As we've already seen, it's part of Aquinas's conception of chance that "whatever happens apart from an agent's intention is said to be fortuitous and by chance" (5&6.1896).[129] Therefore, if Aquinas's thesis is correct, at least well-informed, thoughtful people should describe all badness as fortuitous and by chance; but they don't: "the occurrence of badness is *not* said to be fortuitous and by chance" (5&6.1896). Furthermore, as we've also seen, Aquinas's second defining characteristic of a chance event-type is that it happens very seldom;[130] but badness happens either

> always or very often. For in nature corruption is *always* adjoined to generation. And even as regards agents that act through will, wrong-doing (*peccatum*) happens *very often*; for it is as hard to act in accordance with virtue as it is to find the center of a circle (as Aristotle says in *Ethics* II [9, 1109a24–26]).[131] (5&6.1896)

Summing up the prevalence argument: What happens apart from any agent's intention happens by chance, and what happens by chance happens very seldom; but badness doesn't happen very seldom, and so badness doesn't happen apart from any agent's intention; and so the badness thesis must be false.

I'll call the second objection the argument from the *voluntariness* of badness—an argument that comes close to raising the misgiving I found in satisfied-agent cases of revenge.[132]

> In *Ethics* III [7, 1113b14–17; b21–25; 1114a11–12] Aristotle expressly says that malice (*malitia*) is voluntary. And he proves this by the fact that a person voluntarily does unjust things and that it makes no sense [to suppose] that a person voluntarily doing unjust acts does not will to be unjust (or that a person voluntarily engaging in debauchery does not will to be incontinent), and by the fact that lawgivers punish bad people as doing bad things voluntarily. (5&6.1897)

It may seem odd that this voluntariness argument appeals to Aristotelian authority for what would ordinarily be considered commonplace truths, but that feature of it is made appropriate by what seems to be Aquinas's astonishing contradiction of such truths in his badness thesis. Agent's *intention*, the crucial notion in the thesis, isn't mentioned in the body of the voluntariness argument. But the argument plainly relies on the natural assumption that nothing that an agent does voluntarily could be done apart from the agent's intention—an assumption that is brought out in the argument's conclusion: "Therefore, badness is evidently *not* apart from volition or intention" (5&6.1897).

The third and last of the three objections Aquinas raises here against his own thesis is an argument from the *naturalness* of badness, one that grows directly out of the most fundamental application of the thesis, as we've just been seeing.

> Every natural movement or change has an end that is intended by nature. But corruption is a natural change, just like generation. Therefore, its end, which is privation and has the defining characteristic of badness, is intended by nature just as are form and goodness, which are the end of generation. (5&6.1898)

And so, once again, it must be false that the badness in things, events, or states of affairs occurs apart from the intention of their agents—whether the agents at issue are intellective or natural.

5. Elucidating the Thesis

These arguments from prevalence, from voluntariness, and from naturalness strike me as incorporating, explicitly or implicitly, the misgivings and objections that are likely to have occurred to a careful reader of III.4 (and III.3). It also seems to me that Aquinas has not provided an account of badness (or of goodness) from which his solutions to these arguments could be readily inferred—neither in the preceding four chapters of Book III nor in the preceding two books of SCG. As if partially acknowledging this situation, he prefaces his rejoinders to the three objections with a further analysis of badness that constitutes an important supplement to everything he's said so far on these topics: "Now in order that the solution of those arguments may be made clearer, we have to consider that badness can be considered either in connection with some *substance* or in connection with its *action*" (5&6.1899).

Aquinas devotes most of his supplementary analysis to the badness of substances (S-badness), the sort with which his investigation so far has been almost exclusively concerned. The badness of actions (A-badness) is obviously very important, especially in connection with morality, but his treatment of it here is much briefer, as we'll see. His fundamental criterion of S-badness is very simple (and could be even simpler): a substance is bad (imperfect, defective) in some respect and to some extent if and only if "it lacks something that [1] is natural for it and that [2] it ought (*debet*) to have" (5&6.1899).[133] He confirms this criterion by showing that it systematizes ordinary attitudes.[134] Wings are no more [1] natural to a human being than hands are to a bird, and so there's nothing bad about the facts that human beings don't have wings and birds don't have hands. Fair hair *is* [1] natural to a human being, as bright coloration is to a bird; but since fair hair is no more [2] required for every normal human being than bright coloration is for every normal bird, there's nothing *bad* about being a brunette or a peahen. But, of course, "if a person doesn't have hands, which it's [1] natural for a human being to have and which a human being [2] must (*debet*) have if it's complete (*perfectus*)," *that's* bad; although, as we've just been shown, "that's something that is *not* bad for a *bird*" (5&6.1899). As these examples indicate, Aquinas's distinction between [1] and [2] makes good sense. The distinction does no work in his analysis of the badness of substances, however, since it's only a lack of something that a substance [2] must have in order to be a complete, normal specimen that constitutes S-badness, and every type-[2] lack must also be a type-[1] lack (though not vice versa). Consequently, although Aquinas continues to employ both [1] and [2] in this discussion in helpful ways, his criterion of S-badness could in theory be reduced to just a type-[2] lack. But he does offer at least a terminological reduction of his own, when he uses his analysis in terms of [1] and [2] to explain what has already seemed apparent in his treatment of badness: "in *privation* understood properly and strictly there is always the defining characteristic of badness," because "every

privation, if 'privation' is taken properly and strictly, is a privation of something that someone [or something] [1] is naturally suited to have and [2] ought to have" (5&6.1899).[135] On that basis Aquinas can now use just 'privation' to cover both type-[1] and type-[2] lacks.

More importantly, this strict sense of 'privation' enables him to supplement the most fundamental application of the badness thesis in a way that helps to make sense of it. His initial observation that the generation involved in every substantial change is good while its inevitably concomitant corruption is bad is essential to his account of badness. It even has a kind of initial intuitive appeal. But it's so rudimentary that it gives rise to such apparent counter-examples as I raised regarding the "badness" of the corruption of mother's milk—the privation of its substantial form—that is simply a necessary condition of the generation of healthy tissue in the baby. He can now refine the application so as to avoid that sort of absurdity.

> Since matter is in potentiality to all forms, it is of course [1] naturally suited to have them all. However, *none* of them is something that matter [2] *ought* to have, since matter can be perfect in actuality without any one of them you choose. (5&6.1900)

Consequently, matter's lack of any one form at all is not, speaking strictly, a privation *for matter*. When matter was here and there actualized by the form of velociraptor and nowhere by the form of chickadee, it was no better and no worse than it is now, when matter is here and there actualized by the latter form and nowhere by the former.

To evaluate matter in this way is to assign matter a standpoint, to invite the reader to consider the goodness and badness of the case from what might be called matter's point of view. Is the extinction of the dinosaurs *bad for matter*? No. But Aquinas's assigning of standpoints will show just as clearly that the extinction of the dinosaurs is *bad for the dinosaurs*. And, as might be expected by now, he applies this device all the way down, past living things and ordinary non-living things to elemental forms:

> However, each of those forms is something that some one of the things that are constituted out of matter [2] ought to have. For matter cannot be water unless it has the form of water, nor can it be fire without the form of fire. Therefore, the privation of such a form, considered from the standpoint of matter (*comparata ad materiam*), is *not bad for matter*; but considered from the standpoint of the thing of which it is the form, the privation is *bad for it*—as the privation of the form of fire is bad for a fire,

which upon being deprived of that form is promptly extinguished (5&6.1900). Considered from the standpoint of the thing whose substantial form it is, the privation of a thing's substantial form or of anything else that

that thing [2] ought to have "will be bad *unconditionally,*" "because privations as well as possessions and forms are said to *be* only in so far as they are *in a subject*" (5&6.1901*a*).[136]

But, as we've just been seeing, the thing that [2] ought to have that form and all its normal accoutrements is not the *only* subject in which the possession or the privation occurs. When the dinosaurs became extinct, the privation of form occurred not just in the subjects that were the various species of dinosaur, for each of which it was bad unconditionally, but also in the genus *animal*, a subject for which that mass extinction happened not to be bad unconditionally (since many other species of animals happened to survive). And that same privation occurred most fundamentally in matter itself, the subject for which that privation is not bad at all.

> However, if a privation is not bad considered from the standpoint of the subject in which it is, then it will be bad *for something* and *not* unconditionally. . . . Therefore, [considered just as such,] a human being's being deprived of a hand is *unconditionally* bad, but [some] matter's[137] being deprived of the form of air [e.g., by the action of fire[138]] is *not* bad *unconditionally* although bad *for the air.*[139] (5&6.1901*a*)

Viewed against the background of Aquinas's detailed analysis of badness in substances, his analysis of badness in actions (A-badness) looks surprisingly short. In some respects the discrepancy in length is justified. For instance, in his analysis of A-badness he refers simply to a type-[2] lack, a simplification he's entitled to, as we've seen. And we are entitled to expect that much of what he had to say about S-badness will apply, *mutatis mutandis,* to fill out his short account of A-badness. That expectation is in fact justified, but his use of new terminology here may well put it in doubt.

> Now where *action* is concerned a privation of the ordering or well-adaptedness (*ordinis aut commensurationis*) that the action [2] ought to have is bad for the action. And since for each and every action there is an ordering and a well-adaptedness that it ought to have, it's necessary that that sort of privation in action is *unconditionally* bad. (5&6.1901*b*)

We've already seen Aquinas using the notion of ordering in connection with action, but what's meant by 'well-adaptedness' here?[140] The most pertinent explanation of an action's well-adaptedness is the one that Aquinas supplies in the detailed analysis of action he develops in the course of his most systematic investigation of morality, in ST IaIIae:

> Everything that is ordered toward an end must be proportioned to that end, and an action is proportioned to an end on the basis of a kind of

> well-adaptedness that is effected through the *circumstances* that the action ought to have.[141] (7.2c)

As might be expected, where *moral* badness is concerned, the privation of the requisite ordering or well-adaptedness is associated with bad reasoning on the part of the agent's intellect guiding the agent's will:[142] "vices and sins . . . are deprived of the well-adaptedness of reason that they ought to have—[but] deprived in such a way that reason's ordering is not entirely removed from them"[143] (ST IaIIae.73.2c).[144] However, although considerations of ordering and well-adaptedness are important to Aquinas's moral evaluation of actions, they seem to be only tangentially relevant to the ways in which he deals with A-badness in his rejoinders to the three objections. In those rejoinders, as we'll see, he introduces additional bases on which to evaluate actions, morally and otherwise, along with further elucidation of concepts that are essential to his account.

6. Defending and Refining the Thesis

Aquinas's opening move in dealing with the first objection, the prevalence argument, amounts to refining the frequency condition in his account of chance.[145] To qualify as genuinely fortuitous, an outcome must be something that happens "very seldom" in connection with the type of action being performed by a particular agent on a particular occasion, as well as something that happens "apart from the agent's intention" on that occasion—for example, drunkenness as a result of wine-tasting. But if there is a particular agent such that "what is apart from intention [in such an action of his] is something that always or often *results* from what *is* intended, then it will *not* happen fortuitously or by chance" (5&6.1902). This sensible refinement of the frequency condition enables Aquinas to undermine the prevalence argument by amending its first premise: What happens as a result of an agent's action but apart from the agent's intention happens by chance *only if the unintended consequence is not also a regular consequence of the agent's performance of an action of that type.*

This refinement obviously applies most readily, and very usefully, to unintended consequences of *human* actions, as is shown by the example of unintended but predictable drunkenness with which Aquinas introduces it. But the prevalence argument carefully applied its objection not only to volitional action, which goes bad very often, but also to the fundamental natural action of generation or transmutation, which, as Aquinas has explained, *always* involves "the badness of natural corruption" (5&6.1903). His refined frequency condition now provides a way around the absurdity of classifying the inevitable as fortuitous. The corruption that is concomitant with intended generation really is almost always apart from the intention of the generating agent. We, for instance, intend only to feed ourselves,

and not also to corrupt the food we eat. But that sort of natural corruption is necessitated, not fortuitous: it "*always* results, because [the acquisition] of one form is always connected with the privation of another" (5&6.1903). And so, in the light of the refined frequency condition, the first apparent absurdity brought out in the prevalence argument is dispelled. What happens by chance does happen very seldom, in a sense that has now been more fully explained; but, for reasons that have now been brought out, it's not true that whatever happens apart from any agent's intention happens by chance. The badness of natural corruption occurs both apart from the intention of the generating agent and necessarily.

Of course, not all natural badness is of that most fundamental, all-pervasive sort. We also encounter "the sort of privation that deprives what is generated of what it ought to have . . . , as in the case of congenital deformities" (5&6.1903). And since cases of that sort do ordinarily satisfy even the refined conditions of chance occurrences, they typically "*will be* by chance, as well as unconditionally bad" for the children whose deformities they are (5&6.1903).[146] We've already seen that Aquinas ascribes the badness of congenital deformities to a defect in one or more of the principles of reproductive action: "some corruption of the semen," or what we would describe as genetic defects.[147] And so this kind of case leads him from the consideration of S-badness that has concerned him so far in the prevalence argument to a consideration of A-badness in natural action.

He begins by explaining it in the general terms of his three-level analysis: "the badness of action in the case of natural agents occurs as a result of a defect in active power" (5&6.1904).[148] But his refined frequency condition again provides the basis for a significant distinction: "this sort of badness does result apart from [the agent's] intention. However, if such an agent suffers that defect of power either always or often, this sort of badness will not be by chance, because it results necessarily from that sort of agent" (5&6.1904).[149] Even in the thirteenth century, before any detection of genetic defects in prospective parents was possible, a pattern of birth defects in a family would have been enough to alter the perceived status of what would otherwise have been considered chance events, to transform natural into moral badness, to render blameworthy what would otherwise have been only deplorable, even if devastating.

This consideration of A-badness is illuminating, but it does not yet address the prevalence argument's charge that "even as regards agents that act through will, wrong-doing happens very often", and so it cannot plausibly be described as apart from the agent's intention. As a first move toward squaring this sad truth with his goodness thesis—that every agent always acts for something good—Aquinas introduces an important refinement of his account of action and intention.[150] Actions, he observes, must all take place in the realm of particulars. Consequently, when a voluntary agent deliberates about an action, "it's not universals that move [the agent], but rather particulars"; and so, in agents concerned with the particular things,

events, and states of affairs that provide the context for action, "the intention is for some *particular* good" (5&6.1905).

Some action-types are such that "wrong-doing results very seldom from what the agent intends—as when someone shooting at a bird kills a man"; and *that* sort of outcome apart from the agent's intention simply *is* "bad by chance" (5&6.1905). But there are also many action-types such that the particular "good that is intended is either always or often *conceptually* (*secundum rationem*) conjoined with the privation of some good. And then moral badness follows either always or often" (5&6.1905). Aquinas's example is of "someone who wants to use a woman for pleasure." This intended particular good of the agent's pleasure is conceptually conjoined with the privation of other particular goods and of certain universal goods as well, such as justice, chastity, or respect for persons.[151] A *conceptually* conjoined privation of good is conjoined with the action-*type* and not just with some defect in some particular agent's active power, and so no rational agent can be excused for failing to see the badness beyond the particular good he or she intends in such a case.[152] Even if the conceptually conjoined privation of good is quite apart from the agent's intention, this sort of badness, unlike the hunting accident, "does *not* result by chance" (5&6.1905).

Why, then, does such wrong-doing happen "very often"? What explains the fact that an ordinarily rational agent frequently overlooks the badness conceptually conjoined with the particular good he or she intends—especially since, as Aquinas observes, "a privation of some good is a conceptual consequence of *very many* such goods" (5&6.1906)? "The fact that someone may very often intend the sort of [particular] goods of which privations of good are conceptual consequences results from the fact that very many people live by their senses. For the things that we can sense are presented to us plainly and move us more effectively in connection with particulars, with which activity is concerned" (5&6.1906).[153]

Aquinas's thorough, effective rejoinder to the prevalence argument provides a background against which his rejoinder to the second objection, the argument from the voluntariness of badness, may look peculiar. It depends on drawing a sharp distinction between volition and intention, which, as we've seen, were not distinguished in the voluntariness argument itself. "*Intention*," Aquinas now tells us, "has to do with an *ultimate* end, which a person wills for its own sake. *Volition*, on the other hand, has to do also with what a person wills for the sake of something else, even if he wouldn't will it unconditionally" (5&6.1907). And he clarifies the distinction with a familiar Aristotelian example:[154]

> a person who throws a cargo into the sea because of [considerations of] safety doesn't *intend* the jettisoning of the cargo, but rather the safety [of the ship]; and he *wills* the jettisoning of the cargo—not unconditionally, but because of [considerations of] safety.[155] (5&6.1907)

The distinction is clear enough for present purposes and obviously useful.

But how well does this account of intention suit the sorts of things Aquinas has been saying about intention so far, especially in his rejoinder to the prevalence argument? He has, after all, just been alluding to agents whose intended particular goods are "enjoying the sweetness of wine" (5&6.1902), or experiencing sexual pleasure (5&6.1905). It's easy to grant that each of these particular goods is an end "which a person wills *for its own sake*," but it will be only in that weak, relativized sense that either of those ends could count as "*ultimate*" for those agents.[156] And the third example of an intended particular good Aquinas uses in his rejoinder to the prevalence argument seems not to conform to even that accommodating interpretation of this account of intention: cases in which "wrong-doing results very seldom from what the agent intends—as when someone shooting at a bird kills a man" (5&6.1905). This agent's *intention* is the killing of the bird. But since he's a thirteenth-century hunter and not a nineteenth-century aristocrat, the killing of the bird is surely *not* what the hunter wills for its own sake, *not* his ultimate end even in that weak, relativized sense. That Aquinas himself sometimes ignores his precise sense of 'intention' seems likely (and unsurprising).

Still, it is just that precise sense on which his rejoinder to the voluntariness argument rests:

> even though what is bad [in human action] is *apart from intention*, it is nonetheless *voluntary*, as the second argument proposes: not *per se*, however, but voluntary *per accidens*. . . . [F]or the sake of some sensory good to be attained a person *wills* to do a disordered action, not *intending* the disorder or willing it *unconditionally*, but rather [only] for the sake of that good. And so malice and wrong-doing are said to be voluntary in the same sense as throwing the cargo into the sea is said to be voluntary. (5&6.1907)

The emotions of the person jettisoning the cargo must be more like those of a parent disciplining a beloved child than like those of a satisfied agent of revenge, but emotions aren't at issue here. Aquinas's intention/volition distinction dispels the misgiving raised by revenge in the typical case in which the vengeful agent's "ultimate" end is the particular good of retribution, perhaps associated with the universal good of justice, while the badness, the harm to the victim, is what the agent wills only *per accidens*, only conditionally, only for the sake of the intended good. This clinically detached analysis is usefully applicable beyond revenge, even to cases of the most depraved, unprovoked sadism, in which the particular good of the agent's pleasure is really all that's *intended*, all that's willed *for its own sake*.[157]

The third objection, the argument from the naturalness of badness, is as exclusively concerned with non-voluntary agents as the second is with

voluntary agents; but Aquinas begins his rejoinder to the naturalness argument with the claim that its solution "is clear *in the same way*" (5&6.1908). He can't mean that its solution is based on the intention/volition distinction. We are familiar by now with his very wide application of 'intention,' but he never ascribes volition to non-cognitive, inanimate agents. His claim about the sameness of this third solution is justified at a more general level, on the basis of an analogous distinction between absolute and accidental intention, as he shows in his analysis of a natural process that might now be recognized as evaporation:

> The change involved in corruption is never found without the change involved in generation; consequently, neither is the end involved in corruption found without the end involved in generation. Therefore, nature does not intend the end involved in corruption *apart from* the end involved in generation, but rather *both at once*. For nature's *absolute* intention is not that the water *not* exist but rather that the air *exist*—the air whose existence precludes the water's existence. Therefore, it is the air's existing that nature intends *as such*, while it intends the water's not existing only in so far as that is conjoined with the air's existing. In this way, therefore, nature does not intend privations as such but [only] *accidentally*. Forms, however, it does intend as such.[158] (5&6.1908)

This rejoinder's assumption that nature is universally orientated toward being and hence toward goodness rests on Aquinas's account of the transcendental identity of being and goodness, which he develops in detail elsewhere[159] and occasionally alludes to in this context.[160]

7. What Badness Could Not Be

That only God, or God's essence, is "being itself" is one of the cornerstones of Aquinas's natural theology.[161] That only God, or God's essence, is "goodness itself" is that same cornerstone viewed from another angle.[162] And so it's one of the first principles of Aquinas's theistic metaphysics that there is exactly one essence that is good in itself and as such foundational to all created goodness and being.[163] "However," he says, "on the basis of these considerations [of the badness thesis] it's apparent that *no* essence is *bad* in itself" (7.1910).

In chapter 7, he offers eight arguments in support of that new thesis, and six more in the conjoint chapter 8&9. Some of them contribute to an understanding of his theory of badness, as we'll see. But his very first, very short argument in chapter 7 is enough by itself to show just why the new thesis is indeed apparent on the basis of his considerations of the badness thesis.

> For, as was said [in 5&6.1899], badness is nothing other than a privation of that which is [1] natural for someone or something and which it [2] ought to have. . . . A privation, however, is not an essence, but is rather a negation in a substance.[164] (7.1911)

That is, S-badness is the absence from a particular substance of something that a substance of that type must have in order to be normal or complete. A privation is no more an essence than a compound fracture is a bone, but a privation can no more occur without an essence than a compound fracture can occur without a bone. "Therefore, badness is not an essence in things, events, or states of affairs" (7.1911).

The familiarity of that line by this stage is likely to lead a careful reader to think that this new thesis doesn't need all the support Aquinas provides for it—at any rate not these days, when Manicheism no longer worries anyone. But the Manichean cosmic dualism of balanced good and evil principles was still a theological force to be reckoned with when Aquinas was writing SCG, soon after the Albigensian Crusade against the Cathars, who were heavily influenced by Manicheism. The motivation for Aquinas's painstaking refutation of the claim that badness *is* an essence is revealed in the concluding paragraph of his chapter 7: "Now on this basis we rule out the mistake made by the Manichees, who claim that some things are bad in their very natures" or essences (7.1920).[165]

The fifth of chapter 7's eight arguments provides the fullest support for the new thesis, in a way that treats S-badness in terms that are by now familiar but with new thoroughness:

> Every essence is [1] natural to some thing. For if the thing is in the category of *substance*, then its essence *is* the very nature of the thing. On the other hand, if it is in a category of *accident* [—such as quality or quantity—] then it must be *caused by* the principles of some substance, and in *that* way it will be [1] natural to that substance. (It may, however, *not* be natural to some *other* substance—as heat [in the category of quality] is natural to fire although not natural to water.[166]) But whatever is bad in itself cannot be natural to anything, since being a *privation* of that which [1] naturally inheres in something and [2] is [naturally] owed to it belongs to the defining characteristic of badness. Therefore, badness, since it is a privation of [1] what is natural, cannot be natural to anything. For that reason, too, whatever inheres in something naturally is good for it—and bad for it if it is lacking. Therefore, no essence is bad in itself.[167] (7.1915)

In chapter 8&9, Aquinas marshals six objections against his thesis that no essence is bad in itself, followed by his rejoinders to them. The thesis has already been well argued within Aquinas's privation-theory of badness, and these objections themselves seem unthreatening. But some of his rejoinders introduce new and important parts of the theory. The first objection, for

instance, relies on a technicality regarding the formalities of specification in order to try to show that badness itself "is an essence, and [1] natural to some things, events, and states of affairs," basing that conclusion on a view Aquinas shares:

> [that] badness is a specifying differentia in some genera—in *habits*, for instance, and in *actions properly subject to moral evaluation* (*actibus moralibus*).[168] For just as a virtue, considered in respect of its species, is a *good habit*, so is the vice that is contrary to it a *bad habit*, considered in respect of its species. And the same sort of thing holds as regards the *actions* associated with virtues and with vices. (8&9.1922)

It seems open to Aquinas to dismiss this objection merely by pointing out that what makes a vice specifically bad is just its privation of that aspect of the contrasting virtue which makes the virtue specifically good—as in stinginess and liberality, for instance. Instead, he takes the necessity of replying to it as an occasion for widening and deepening his subsidiary account of *moral* badness (and goodness). An action derives its species from the active principle that gives rise to it. So, for instance, a natural action is specified as heating just because its natural principle has the form of heat. But the essential active principle of moral and immoral actions is will, and a will has no specifying form of its own.[169] Instead, the essential active principle of an action properly subject to moral evaluation is a will-with-an-object. But, as we've seen, "a will's object is an end, and something good. For that reason, actions properly subject to moral evaluation derive their species" not from their active principle's unique fixed form, but rather "from an end" (8&9.1928)—where a will's end on one or another particular occasion of action might be thought of as providing that active principle with its specifying form for that occasion.

Since will's object is invariably "an end, and something *good*," these observations so far may seem only to make it harder to understand how Aquinas thinks that some human actions (and the habits that help to govern them) will be correctly specified as *bad*. But it shouldn't come as a surprise to find that the explanation depends on evaluating the end in different respects. A human agent's end will be evaluated as good or bad in an overarching, universal respect depending on the degree to which it contributes to the full actualization of the agent's specifying potentialities as a rational being.

> The primary differentiae as regards actions and habits that are properly subject to moral evaluation must be goodness and badness, because goodness and badness are spoken of in respect of a universal ordering toward an end or in respect of a privation of [that] ordering. Now for each single genus there must be a single primary measure, and *the measure of morality is reason*.

That is, the measure of moral goodness and badness for human beings is rationality, the differentia of the human species and the aspect of humanity that makes human beings and their actions and habits properly subject to moral evaluation. Aquinas continues:

> Therefore, some things are called good or bad in morality on the basis of *reason's* end. Therefore, in morality, whatever gets its species from an end that is in accordance with reason is called *good in respect of its species*, while whatever gets its species from an end contrary to reason's end is called *bad in respect of its species.* (8&9.1928)

Any form of overindulgence, as that designation indicates, "gets its species from an end *contrary* to reason's end" and so is "bad in respect of its species." Nonetheless, any particular overindulgent end, "even though it *annuls* reason's end," is, like *every* end of *every* volition, "something *good*—for example, what gives sensory pleasure, or something else of that sort" (8&9.1928). It would undercut both Aquinas's goodness thesis and his badness thesis if this certifying of a will's particular irrational end as good meant no more than that the agent's reason evaluates it incorrectly. And so he goes on to explain that things, events, and states of affairs that give sensory pleasure

> *are* good for some animals, and even, when they're moderated in accordance with reason, for a human being. And what's bad for one animal or human being can be good for another. So not even *badness considered as a specifying differentia in the genus of morality* implies anything bad in respect of its *essence.* Instead, it implies something that is *good in itself* but *bad for a human being* in so far as it is *a privation of the ordering of reason, which is a human being's goodness.* (8&9.1928)

And so, as Aquinas concludes in another of these rejoinders,

> moral badness is both a genus and a differentia—not in so far as it is a privation of the good of reason (because of which it is called badness), but in virtue of the nature of the action or habit that is ordered toward an end that is opposed to reason's [naturally] appropriate (*debito*) end. (8&9.1930)

But, since "everything that acts is a real thing," as the fourth objection notes, and since Aquinas's privation-theory of badness denies that badness, considered just as such, is something real in its own right, there seems to be a difficulty over this recognition of badness as a genus and differentia of *action.* Aquinas agrees, of course, that

> a privation, considered just as such, is not the principle of any action. That's why Dionysius says quite correctly (in Chapter IV [§31.242] of *De divinis nominibus*) that badness opposes goodness only by the power

> of goodness, while in itself it is powerless and weak—the principle of *no* action, so to speak.[170] (8&9.1931)

Nonetheless, he explains,

> when the privation associated with a contrary form and a contrary end is added to a form and end that have the defining characteristic of goodness, the action that results from such a [composite] form and end is attributed to the privation and the badness—*per accidens*, of course, [since the privational form can be an active principle only in virtue of its parasitic status], only by the power of goodness.[171] (8&9.1931)

8. How Goodness is the Cause of Badness in Nature

Continuing that line of thought, Aquinas is led to argue for a thesis that, taken out of context, has a distinctly counter-intuitive ring to it: "what is bad is caused only by what is good" (10.1934). But at this advanced stage of the development of his privation theory he's within his rights to say that this thesis "can be inferred from things already put forward" (10.1934). For even "if the cause of something bad is badness" at some relatively superficial level, "goodness itself must be the *primary* cause of anything bad" because (as we've just been seeing) "badness acts only by the power of goodness" (10.1935).

Most of the long chapter 10 Aquinas devotes to this thesis is, appropriately, given over to explaining just *how* goodness must be the cause of badness, in nature and in morality. At the outset of the chapter he offers only four arguments in direct support of the thesis, and the one that draws most instructively on things already put forward is the third (10.1937): "Whatever is properly and *per se* the cause of anything tends toward the effect that is proper to it"—as fire tends toward heating, for instance.

> Therefore, if something bad [considered just as such] were *per se* the cause of anything, then it would tend toward *its* proper effect—namely, something bad. But that's false, for it was shown [in III.3] that *every* agent intends something good.[172]

The goodness thesis applies even to an agent that is itself in some respect or other something bad. "Therefore, what is bad [considered just as such] is not *per se* the cause of anything, but only *per accidens*," as we've seen Aquinas explain more than once.[173] Only something that is itself a primary feature of reality, as opposed to a real defect in some primary feature of reality, can be a *per se* cause "But every *per accidens* cause is traced back to a *per se* cause. Therefore, what is bad is caused by what is good." This combination of *per se* and *per accidens* causation is at the center of Aquinas's

explanation of the occurrence of badness, and it needs the detailed analysis he now provides for it.

A *per se* cause is a real agent, a real power, a real instrument, real (proximate) matter, a real form, considered just as such; and all such instances of being, considered just as such, are *good*. But we've just been told that every bad effect has some such good thing as its *per se* cause, in the sense that some such good primary feature of reality must be the positive anchor to which the negative bad effect is traced in a fuller causal explanation.[174] Explaining the badness of limping as the effect of the badness of the bone's curvature is enough for most practical purposes. But a fuller explanation will account not merely for the defect in the walking but also for the walking without which the defect couldn't occur; and that will involve a reference to the lame person's power of walking, something good that is the *per se* cause of the motion that happens to be impaired. Still, the *mode* of causation in which something bad is caused by something good must be *per accidens*. "Bad and good are opposites, but one of a pair of opposites cannot be the cause of the other except *per accidens* . . . ; and so it follows that what is good can be an active cause of what is bad only *per accidens*" (10.1939)—the way an agent's power of walking, altogether unimpaired in itself, can be an active cause of limping *per accidens* in virtue of imparting motion to a defective instrument.[175]

On this basis Aquinas develops an etiology of badness, first in nature and then in morality. The badness that is brought about *per accidens* in nature stems from a defect associated either with the natural agent or with the natural effect.

> It's associated with the *agent*, indeed, as when the agent suffers a defect of *power*, from which it follows that its action is defective and the effect [of its action] is deficient, . . . [or] from a defect in an *instrument* or in anything else that is required for the agent's action. . . . For an agent acts by means of both: both its power and an instrument. (10.1940)

Suppose that A's natural instruments for walking—bones and muscles—are in perfect condition but that A is drunk, suffering a defect of power. The alcohol-induced defect in A's power of walking only partially explains A's staggering: A wouldn't be staggering if A couldn't walk. "An agent acts not in so far as power is *lacking* to it but rather in so far as it *has* any power, since if it lacked power entirely, it wouldn't act at all" (10.1940). The *per se* cause of A's walking *and of his staggering* is his power in so far as it remains intact. But that badness in his walking "results from an agent cause only in so far as it is *deficient in power*, and in that respect it is *not efficient*." "That's why it's said that badness doesn't have an *efficient* but rather a *deficient* cause" (10.1940).[176] And so A's power of walking causes his walking *per se* but his staggering *per accidens*.

Explanations of natural badness associated with *the effect* may be seen

as concerned with the "anything else that is required for the agent's action" mentioned by Aquinas in considering instruments as loci of natural badness associated with the agent.[177] "For if the *matter* [that enters into the effect] is not disposed to receive the agent's impression [of some form], then a defect necessarily results in the effect" (10.1941)—as when a defect in the marble results from a defect in the limestone. While this sort of badness associated with the effect still qualifies as deplorable in varying degrees, the sort "associated with the *form* of the effect" (10.1942) is the familiar, fundamental, inevitable, scarcely recognizable much less deplorable "badness" that "occurs *per accidens* in so far as the privation of another form is necessarily connected with [the acquisition of] any form, as a consequence of which the corruption of some other thing results from the generation of any one thing" (10.1942). Summing up this etiology of natural badness in a way that amends the thesis, "it's clear in these ways that, where natural things are concerned, what is bad is caused by what is good, [but] only *per accidens*" (10.1943*a*).

9. How Goodness is the Cause of Badness in Morality

"However," Aquinas says, "it seems to be otherwise as regards morality" (10.1944*a*). Particular differences between his accounts of natural and moral badness emerge in the synopsis of his moral psychology and ethics which this sentence introduces, as we'll see. But the broadest difference is the one he states at the outset, in what amounts to a thoroughgoing rejection of consequentialism in ethics:

> if moral fault[178] is carefully considered, it is found to be . . . unlike [natural badness] . . . in that moral fault is considered in connection with *action alone*, and *not* in connection with any *effect* brought about [by action] . . . Therefore, moral fault is considered *not* on the basis of the matter or form of *the effect* but results *solely* from *the agent*. (10.1944*b*)

The only basis Aquinas supplies here for this distinction is a comparison of morality with the arts. Like nature itself, "the arts are *factive*," or productive; "that's why flaws (*peccatum*) are said to occur in the arts as they do in nature" (10.1944*b*), because "art imitates nature in respect of its operation" (10.1943*b*). Morality, on the other hand, is "not factive but active" (10.1944*b*).[179] The principal object of evaluation in the arts and crafts is the product or effect. On the basis of that principal evaluation the artisan-agent may well be evaluated, too, as a source of badness (or goodness) in the effect; but *the action* by means of which the artisan brings about the effect in matter is typically not an object of evaluation at all. It's only the outcome of the artisan's action that counts. In morality, on the other hand, the immediately accessible object of evaluation is the external *action* itself,

rather than any of its effects or consequences. But because the *moral* badness or goodness of the action results solely from the *agent*, the principal object of moral evaluation is the agent considered just as such—that is, the agent analyzed into the agent's internal principles of action.

Since some badness in nature and in the arts also stems from agents, moral badness is not unlike those other sorts in stemming from the agent (even though moral badness stems from nothing else). However, before Aquinas begins his account of the principles of actions that are properly subject to moral evaluation, he notes a respect in which the evaluation of a moral agent evidently differs from that of a natural agent, at least as regards the agent's active power. "For *moral* fault," unlike natural badness, "seems *not* to result from a defect of power, since weakness associated with a power either entirely removes or at least diminishes moral fault" (10.1944*a*). This is because a defect in an active power *necessitates* a corresponding defect in the associated action; and, as we've seen, "a moral fault must be voluntary, not necessary." Consequently, "weakness warrants not punishment, which guilt deserves, but rather mercy and forgiveness" (10.1944*a*).[180] As we shall see, this mitigating consideration has a role to play in the development of his etiology of moral badness.

In his occasional allusions to morality earlier in this treatise on badness, Aquinas seems content simply to identify *will* as the active principle of moral and immoral actions.[181] Its role is of course essential, but he's now ready to explain that "in connection with actions properly subject to moral evaluation we find *four* active principles, in an ordered relationship to one another" (10.1945). Their relationship is complex: one of these principles or powers somehow moves or is moved by another in the system, but, as we'll see, a power moved by another power in one way may move that same power in another way. Suppose we consider an overt action—A's raising his hand to cast a vote—and trace the chain of active principles back from the occurrence of that external physical movement. The internal principle immediately connected with the external movement that is the terminus of A's action is what Aquinas calls "the executive power" or "the motive power," the active principle "by which various parts of the body are moved to execute will's command" (10.1945).[182] The motive power appears to be what we would identify as neurophysiological apparatus of various sorts. Since the motive power is whatever makes will's command effective in the agent's body, "this power is moved by will, which is another principle" (10.1945).

The motive power's moving of the body is an instance of efficient causation, and so is will's moving of the motive power. But will itself is an *appetitive* power, which must be moved by *final* causation, as we've seen.[183] And so the internal principle that in turn moves will must do so by providing will with an object that moves it by attracting it as an end. Consequently, what moves will in this hierarchy of principles is not some power itself acting directly on will (as will moves the motive power), but rather "the *judgment* of an apprehending [or cognitive] power, which

judges that this or that," some object apprehended by it, "is good or bad" (10.1945). The goodness or badness of the object represented to will in such judgments are the aspects of the object that move will—"one sort moving it to pursue, the other to avoid" the apprehended object. Finally, in another instance of efficient causation, "the apprehending power itself is moved by the apprehended thing" (10.1945). And, as we've just been seeing, in judging that that apprehended thing is good (or bad) for the agent, the apprehending power makes it an object for will, in that respect involving even the apprehended thing among the internal principles of A's external action.[184]

So in the full explanation of A's raising his hand to cast a vote, the first active principle is (1) the (sound of the reading of the) motion, which is (2) apprehended by A's sensory cognition and understood by his intellect or reason, which judges the motion to be bad and presents it as such to (3) A's will, which responds to that evaluated object by moving (4) A's motive power to move his arm to vote against the motion.[185]

In morally evaluating A's action, it would be a mistake to focus on (4) the external bodily movement, "for external acts of that sort pertain to morality only if they are *voluntary*" (10.1946*a*), as not every external bodily movement is. And if, as in A's case, the external act *is* voluntary, then the moral evaluation of *it*

> already *presupposes* [an evaluation of] moral goodness or badness: . . . if the act of *will* is good, then the external act is also called good; but if the former is bad, the external act is bad. However, if the external act is defective because of a defect that does not pertain to will [—if A misheard the voting instructions—] that defect would have nothing to do with moral badness (*malitiam*). (10.1946*a*)

Mishearing "is a fault not of morality but of nature. Therefore, *that* sort of defect in the executive power" or in the external act it triggers "either totally excuses or diminishes moral fault" (10.1946*a*).

It would be a much more blatant mistake to look for the proper object of moral evaluation at the other end of this process. (1), "the act by which a thing moves an apprehending power, is immune from moral fault, since what is audible moves the sense of hearing (and any object moves any passive power) in accordance with a natural order" (10.1946*b*).[186] Natural order is subject to disruption, as in the possibility of A's mishearing, but the result is only natural badness.

Offhand, (2), the apprehending, interpreting, and evaluating of the external object is a much more likely object of moral evaluation. But, as Aquinas sees it,

> even the act of an apprehending power, considered in itself, lacks moral fault, since a defect in it, like a defect in the executive power,

> excuses or diminishes moral fault. For weakness and ignorance equally excuse or diminish shortcomings (*peccatum*).[187] Therefore, we're left with the conclusion that moral fault is found primarily and principally in [(3)] an act of will alone. And for that reason, too, it is because an [external] act is voluntary that it is reasonably called moral or immoral. Therefore, the root and origin of moral shortcomings is to be sought in an act of will. (10.1946*c–d*)

So it's crucially important to have a precise identification of this act of will. We've already come across a plausible candidate in will's act of commanding the motive power, but I want to postpone trying to decide the issue until we've seen what else Aquinas has to say along these lines.

10. A Difficulty in the Etiology of Moral Badness

Suppose that A's voting against the motion is morally bad—unjust, let's say. Then, as Aquinas points out, "this inquiry seems to give rise to a difficulty" (10.1947*a*). His inquiry so far has located the source of the moral badness of the external act in the agent's will, which must, therefore, be thought of as defective in some respect on this occasion. But in what respect? If the defect in A's will were natural, he says, it would "*always* inhere in the will"; and in that case A's will, in acting, would "*always* fall short (*peccabit*) morally" (10.1947*a*). But, he seems to be saying, no human will is *always* defective: "acts of virtue show this to be false" (10.1947*a*). "Therefore, so that it doesn't follow that a will falls short in *any and every* act, we have to say that the preexisting defect in the will is *not natural*" (10.1947*a*).[188] The only apparent alternative is that the defect is *voluntary*. "However, if the defect *is* voluntary, it's *already* a moral shortcoming"; and in that case, since we're out to identify the source of the moral badness, "*its* cause will again remain to be sought; and so reason will fall into an infinite regress" (10.1947*a*). In that case, then, the inquiry will after all *not* have located the source of the moral badness. If the presence of moral badness is to be accounted for at all, the defect *must* be voluntary. Still, "so that we're not forced into an infinite regress," the voluntary defect in A's will that is the source of the moral badness in A's external action must itself be, "nonetheless, *not* a *moral* shortcoming" (10.1947*b*). In this perplexing situation, Aquinas's next sentence provides a ray of hope: "Of course, we have to consider just *how* that can be the case" (10.1947*c*).

His extension of the inquiry aims at identifying an antecedent defect in the will that is both voluntary and not a moral defect (even though he's just said that "if the defect is voluntary, it's already a moral shortcoming"). He sets the stage with an entirely plausible general account of the appropriateness or defectiveness of activity on the part of any *secondary* agent or active principle, one that

> acts by means of the power of its *primary* agent. When a secondary agent remains ordered under its primary agent, therefore, it acts in a way that is not defective. But it is defective in acting if it happens to be deflected from the primary agent's ordering, as is clear in the case of an instrument when it falls short of the agent's movement. (10.1948)

Take, for example, the badly tuned piano that mars the effect of the pianist's flawless movements. The goodness of a secondary active principle consists in its fulfilling its ordered relationship to the principle or principles to which it is secondary. A's motive power, for instance, would be defective in acting if A's arm did not go up in response to the command of A's will.

But, of course, the secondary active principle at issue here isn't any external instrument, or A's motive power, but A's will. And "in the ordering associated with actions that are properly subject to moral evaluation" will has been depicted as ordered under *two* other principles: "an apprehending power and the apprehended object, which is the end" (10.1948).[189] So Aquinas appears to be identifying two kinds of relevant defect in a moral agent's will: (I) a disruption of its properly ordered relationship to the apprehending power or (II) a disruption of its properly ordered relationship to the apprehended, evaluated object.[190]

In this inquiry so far Aquinas has alluded to apprehending powers only generally, but he now needs to introduce his familiar distinction between two types of them. "Not just any apprehending power is the mover appropriate for any appetite, but this one for this one, and another for that one. Therefore, just as the mover proper for the *sensory* appetite is the sensory apprehending power, so the mover proper for *will*," since will is, as he often remarks, the *rational* appetite,[191] "is reason itself" (10.1948). Consequently, one source of defect I in an agent's will is its being confronted with an object that has been evaluated only by the agent's sensory cognition, the apprehending power to which will is not properly ordered. But mere confrontation isn't yet disruption. "A defect in its ordered relationship to reason," defect I, actually "occurs, of course, when, for instance, will, in response to a sudden *sensation*, tends toward a good that is pleasant in a *sensory* way" (10.1950) without regard to the *reasonableness* of intending that good. In such a case a will introduces disorder into the system of active principles by allowing itself to be moved by the judgment of an inappropriate primary agent. Although Aquinas is not completely explicit about this, it seems clear that a will's tending toward—that is, intending—such a good in such circumstances is always both voluntary and morally bad. And the threatening infinite regress can be avoided in connection with defect I by distinguishing will's morally bad *intending* of such a good from its not yet morally bad *confronting* of an object evaluated by sensory apprehension alone.

Since will is moved by either the sensory or the intellective apprehending power not directly but only by being presented with an object that attracts or repels it, there can be relevant disorder in an agent's system of

active principles even "when will tends toward action moved by an apprehension of *reason*" (10.1949). Of course, if reason's apprehension and judgment result in reason's "representing a good *proper* for will," and will then actually intends that good, "an appropriate action results. But when will breaks out into action either [I] in response to an apprehension of the *sensory* apprehensive power, or [II] in response to an apprehension of *reason itself* representing some *other* good, different from will's proper good, then the result is a moral shortcoming in will's action" (10.1949).[192] For "reason can apprehend many goods and many ends," but "the end and primary mover for will is not just any good but a certain determinate sort of good" (10.1949). Aquinas does not further specify here the determinate sort of good that is proper for will, but for present purposes it's probably enough to recognize that it must at any rate be a good that it's *rational* for the agent to pursue on a given occasion, all things considered. And not even reason itself—ordinary, limited human reason—can be guaranteed to represent that sort of good to will on every occasion.

> A defect in will's ordered relationship to its proper end occurs, however, when, for instance, reason arrives by [faulty] reasoning at some good that is, either at this time or in this respect, not good, and will nonetheless tends toward it as toward its proper good. (10.1950)

So Aquinas's continuation of his inquiry has identified two kinds of defect in will that precede any moral shortcoming in a voluntary external action: "a defect in will's ordered relationship" either "to reason" (defect I) or "to its proper end" (defect II) (10.1950). But if these antecedent defects are to have the sort of explanatory power Aquinas is looking for, each of them must be *voluntary*, as we've seen. To show that they are voluntary, he has to provide more detail about will's powers. In the first place, and most generally, "it is in the power of will itself to will and not to will" (10.1950). So, as regards defect I, a will confronted with "a sudden sensation . . . [of] a good that is pleasant in a sensory way" (10.1950) *can refrain* from intending that good. Consequently, if that will does go on to intend that sensory good without regard to its reasonableness, it does so voluntarily.[193] By the same token, as regards defect II, a will that intends an inappropriate good presented to it by reason does so voluntarily.

But Aquinas ascribes other, more precisely orientated powers to will that apply only in connection with defect II in cases in which will remains properly related to reason: "in the second place, it is in will's power that reason actually consider or stop considering, or [in the third place] that reason consider this, or that" (10.1950). So will's moving of reason is, like its moving of the motive power, an instance of efficient causation. A's will need not intend any positively evaluated object presented to it even by A's reason but can, in theory, always cause reason to stop considering that object (or objects of that sort), or to consider something else. Consequently,

if A's will does go on to intend a good presented to it by A's reason, it does so voluntarily, for more reasons than one.

Both kinds of antecedent defect, then, are *voluntary*, thereby satisfying the first of the two requirements Aquinas laid down. But if the yawning infinite regress is to be avoided, each kind of defect must, at some stage of its development, also be not morally bad. Aquinas's treatment of this crucial requirement here is frustratingly terse:

> Nonetheless, neither is this defect morally bad. For if reason considered *nothing* at all, or considered *any* good at all, there is no [moral] shortcoming until will tends toward an inappropriate end—which is already an act of will.[194] (10.1950)

What's clearest about this passage is its identification of the primordial morally bad act of will. The act of will in which "the root and origin" of moral badness in the external act is to be found is even more fundamental than will's commanding the motive power. As Aquinas has frequently suggested in this extension of his inquiry, it's will's intending—tending toward—an inappropriate good.

And in that light it seems clearer that reason's considering "nothing at all" is meant to characterize the morally neutral internal state of affairs that must precede defect I—will's being confronted by a good evaluated by sensory apprehension alone—while reason's considering "any good at all" characterizes the morally neutral precondition of defect II—will's being confronted by a good that has been evaluated by reason, correctly or incorrectly. The voluntariness of those morally neutral preconditions depends on will's powers to alter them: to cause reason to consider the sensory good with which will is being confronted, to cause reason to stop considering the good it is representing to will, or to reconsider it, or to consider something else.[195] "In this way, therefore, it is clear that, as regards both natural and moral matters, what is bad is caused, only *per accidens*, by what is good" (10.1951).

11. The Rest of the Treatise on Badness

Aquinas's treatise on badness in SCG III occupies chapters 4–15. In my investigation of the treatise, I've focused on the material he develops in chapters 4–10, although I've referred to some relevant passages in the final six chapters. As I see it, the philosophical climax of the treatise is reached in III.10, and most of the developments in the remaining chapters are readily inferable from what's already been established. In the light of Aquinas's arguments in III.4–10, it should already be clear that "badness is based on goodness" (III.11), that "badness cannot entirely demolish goodness" (12), that "badness does have some sort of cause" (13), that "badness

is a cause *per accidens*" (14), and that "there is no consummate badness (*summum malum*)" (15).[196]

Aquinas's reasons for producing this elaborate treatment of natural and moral badness at this very early stage of the development of his account of providence remain to be seen.

IV. GOD AS NATURE'S GOAL

1. Reorientation

At the end of Book III's first, introductory chapter, Aquinas divides his projected investigation of divine providence into three big topics, the first of which he characterizes as having to do with "God himself in so far as he is the end of all things," God's omega-aspect (1.1867*b*).[197] Since III.64 is unmistakably the beginning of Aquinas's investigation of the second big topic, God's universal governance, it looks offhand as if he intends to devote chapters 2–63 to his treatment of God as the universal goal.[198] In the first two of those chapters Aquinas does carry out a general investigation of the nature of agents, actions, and ends that makes an altogether appropriate preamble to a consideration of his thesis that God is (somehow) the unique, universal, ultimate goal of the actions of created agents.[199] However, as we've just seen, Aquinas's chapters 4 through 15 constitute a treatise on badness. God is mentioned only briefly in the twelve chapters that make up the treatise, and it's unclear how, if at all, Aquinas intends his analysis of badness to contribute to his consideration of God as goal.[200] So, setting aside the uncertainly relevant treatise on badness, it seems right to say that Aquinas's investigation of God's omega-aspect occupies not III.2–63 but just III.2–3 and 16–63.[201] Within that latter series of chapters, he devotes III.16–24 to God as the goal of created things generally, the topic of this chapter, and III.25–63 to God as the ultimate goal of human beings specifically.

In chapter 16, Aquinas resumes the line of development that seems to have been interrupted by the treatise on badness, and he does so in a way that apparently acknowledges the interruption. In view of his having argued in chapter 2 that "every agent acts for an end" and in chapter 3 that "every agent acts for something good," it surely looks as if the main reason for arguing in chapter 16 that "something good is the end of each and every being" (16.1985) must be to remind the reader of what has already been established, before the treatise on badness. And, in fact, each of III.16's four paragraphs is closely related to one or more paragraphs in III.2 and 3.[202] Apparently, then, the primary function of III.16 is to reset the stage for a resumption of the account of agents, actions, and ends designed to lead to an explanation and justification of Aquinas's thesis that God is nature's