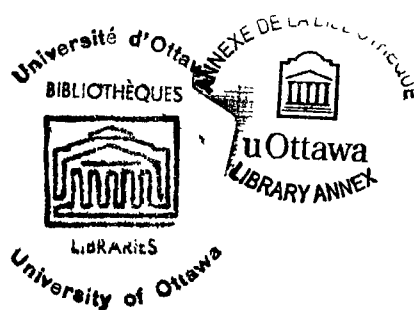


THOMAS AQUINAS AND DENIS THE AREOPAGITE
ON THE BEING OF CREATURES

by

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Thesis submitted to the Faculty
of Philosophy of the University
of Ottawa in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
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Thomas Aquinas and Denis the Areopagite
on the Being of Creatures

CORRIGENDA

- p. iii - - Title Page: Change date (tentative).
- p. 12 - - last line: Capitalize 'creator'.
- p. 13 - - line 8: 'Close quotation ' ...worship."¹⁶.
- p. 16 - - note 22: Underline title so:
 J. OWENS, A History of Ancient Western Philosophy,
 p. 197-198.
- p. 21 - - line 6: Read 'oppositional' for 'ippositional'.
- - line 22: Capitalize initial letters 'existence,
 identity and otherness", so: 'Existence, Identity
 and Otherness.'
- p. 22 - - line 12: Capitalize initial letters of 'identity
 and otherness', so: 'Identity and Otherness'.
- p. 23 - - lines 5 and 6: Capitalize 'identity' and 'otherness'.
 so: '...Identity implies Otherness.'
- p. 24 - - line 7: 'isit' should read: 'is it'.
 line 20: change 'Logos' to 'logos'.
- p. 25 - - line 11: Read 'man' for 'many'.
- p. 28 - - note 32: Read 'To be is...' for 'to be...'
- p. 29 - - note 34: underline 'esse'.
- p. 41 - - line 8: 'as a creature-Creator opposition.' should
 read: 'as creature-to-Creator oppositions.'
- - lines 10 and 11: Read '...speaking of the creature-to-
 Creator oppositions,' for '...speaking of the creature-
 Creator oppositions,'
- - line 15: Read 'combining' for 'combing'.
- p. 43 - - note 2: Read 'gives' for 'give'.

- p. 45 - - note 6: Spell 'prop.' without capital, so: 'prop.'
Make same change on pp.46 and 47 (notes 7, 8 and 9).
- p. 61 - - note 31: Read 'veruntamen' for 'verutamen'.
- p. 62 - - note 33: Read '...universalem naturam entis.' for
 '...universalem natura entis.'
- p. 63 - - note 35: Read 'longinquiores' for 'longiquiores'.
- p. 75 - - note 55: Read:
 ⁵⁵Here Denis clearly states that (1) God is
 the cause of the existents and (2) He is
 nothing (i.e. no part) of them: "...omnium,
 etc.'
- p. 78 - - line 13: Underline 'in causa'.
- p. 83 - - note 66: Read 'The Neo-Platonism here is easily
 recognized as that of Proclus. See PROCLUS, prop.
 22, p.27.
- p. 91 - - note 4: Read 'et produxit' for 'etproduxit'.
- p. 105 - - Read 'synaesthesia' for 'syaesthesia'.
- p. 106 - - line 15: Underline: creationem.
- p. 113 - - line 1: Read 'things' for 'Things'.
- p. 114 - - Note 39: Underline 'ibid'.
- P. 115 - - lines 20-21: Read 'linguistic' for 'linquistic'.
- p. 139 - - line 10: Read '"recipient"' for '"receipient"'.
 line 16: Read 'recipient' for 'receipient'.
- p. 140 - - line 6: Read 'recipient' for 'receipient'.
- p. 144 - - note 14: Read 'des choses' for 'des chose'.
- p. 151 - - note 27: Capitalize '"the--' at the beginning of
 the quotation, so: '"The---'.

p. 180 - - line 8: Read 'treatise' for 'Treatise'.

p. 194 - - line 24: Read 'reality' for 'relaity'.

p. 205 - - line 25: Read '"recipient"' for '"receipient"'.

Addenda p. 37 - - line 4: Read 'indispensable' fpr 'indispensible'.

p. 49 - - note 10: ¹³² Read 'E.R. DODDS, The Elements..., p.132'
for 'E.R. DODDS, The Elements..., p.56'.

p.88 - - note 2: Read 'considerare' for 'considersre'.

p. 90 - - note 3: Read 'DIONYSIUS, XII, 2;' for 'DIONYSIUS,
XII, 1;'

p. 97 - - line 9: Read 'need' for 'beed'.

p. 100 - - line 18: Read 'Second' for 'Third'.

p. 105 - - line 8: Read 'synaesthesia' for 'syaesthesia'.

p. 106 - - lines 14 and 15: Underline 'generationem' and
'creationem'.

p. 115 - - lines 20 and 21: Read 'linguistic' for 'linquistic'.

p. 201 - - line 19: Read 'absolutely' for 'absolutel'.

p. 211 - - Read 'French' for 'France' in the ELIADE, Mircea
entry.

FOREWARD

The presence of Neo-Platonic elements in the Thomistic synthesis has never been ignored. But it is one thing to acknowledge the incontrovertible fact that St. Thomas makes extensive use of the Neo-Platonists in elaborating his theological doctrine, and another thing to recognize their influence on his metaphysical doctrine. Until recently it has been almost taken for granted that Aristotle's philosophy supplied practically all Thomas needed to work out a metaphysics which would be an acceptable instrument for articulating his theology. The special role that Aristotelianism would play was subordinated to larger task of defending the Christian faith. It would provide St. Thomas with an arsenal of rationes which would be particularly effective against the Arabian philosophers who were willing to agree that, if any philosopher could come up with reasons for supporting almost anything, it would be the peerless Aristotle. All this made it simple to categorize the Neo-Platonists as theologians whose position as auctoritates exempted them from giving reasons for their pronouncements. For this reason they have been regarded as unlikely sources upon which St. Thomas might rely to work out his metaphysics. Denis the Areopagite has been so regarded. He has been widely accepted as an authority on mysticism and on the theology of the angels. He has not, however, gained any appreciable reputation among students of Aquinas as a

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possible source for some of the metaphysical ideas in the Thomistic synthesis.

The present work exploits the possibility of discovering a real influence which the Areopagite could have on Aquinas' metaphysics of the being of the creature. This tentative has been encouraged by the success of recent scholars who have been interested in the Neo-Platonic elements in St. Thomas. The work of Geiger, Fabro and Henle may be cited as examples. As a result of their careful investigations, it is no longer possible to overlook the contributory and formative influence that Neo-Platonism had on St. Thomas. It is our contention that, in the study of creationism as it is found in the work of Aquinas, it is indispensable to consult the writings of Denis the Areopagite, whether one's purpose is to report accurately what Aquinas said and meant or to work out a viable metaphysics of creationism acceptable to contemporary philosophy.

Patrick F. Flood,
Ottawa, 1968.

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CHAPTER I

THE CLASSICAL GREEK BACKGROUND

1. Preliminary Remarks

The purpose of this chapter is introductory. As its title suggests, it traces certain philosophical themes from their Pre-Socratic origins through to Aristotle. The themes are selected for the relevance they have for the main task of this work which may be generally described as a study of some aspects of Thomas Aquinas' interpretative reading of Denis the Areopagite's texts, particularly those in the De Divinis Nominibus where the relation of creature to Creator is discussed. No attempt is made in this chapter to present a detailed reconstruction of the Greek tradition that antecedes the complex formation of the Areopagite's thought. It is our intention, rather, simply to indicate thematic elements present in Classical Greek philosophy that help in the determination of the metaphysical character of the Areopagite's philosophy and subsequently that of Aquinas.

The specific doctrinal issue that further controls our concern with the Classical Greek period is one raised by a consideration of the being of the creature. We are well aware of the fact that there is no metaphysics of the being of the creature to be found in the cosmologies elaborated by Greek philosophers. There is at least none

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in which things caused or produced are described as totally caused or produced by a Creator. Yet there is a metaphysics of cause and of the subordination of things to an ultimate first principle. There is also a metaphysics of being and a metaphysics of the Good. All this implies that the Classical Greek philosophers were bent upon developing a science in which access to an order beyond the physical is claimed: a science or knowledge--as the word itself conveys--truly meta-physical. Thus though this science remained non-creationist, creationism is the answer to its deepest aspiration.

But it may be objected that, since creationism is a distinctively Christian doctrine, its development and establishment rest ultimately on a theological foundation which the Classical Greek philosophers did not possess. If so, creationism could not be a term for the fundamental aspiration of their metaphysics, however profound that aspiration may have been. This objection has force, however, only if the same sort of argument can be applied to Christian philosophers with respect to the metaphysical resources at their disposal. In other words, creationism is as much of an answer to the metaphysical aspiration of Christian philosophy as it is to Greek philosophy. Accordingly there were Christian philosophers who did not demonstrate the necessity of creationism, though their

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theology would certainly encourage them to do so. Denis, for example, has no strict demonstration for creationism. But it would be absurd to say that it is not operative in his metaphysics.

Finally, we must remember that the importations from Classical Greek philosophy that we find in Denis and Thomas are integrated into a theological synthesis and that, for this reason, when they are abstracted from this matrix, they do not immediately revert to their original setting. This is not to say, however, that the material presence of these metaphysical elements within the theological synthesis precludes the possibility of their being formative influences with respect to the metaphysical articulation of the arguments within the synthesis. When St. Thomas argues, for example, for the necessity of creationism, he is fully aware of the origin of the philosophical procedure he uses. The long and difficult development of these procedures began with the Pre-Socratics.

2. The Pre-Socratics

Each of the first thinkers among the Greeks, for reasons of his own, declared some substance or element to be the arché or the principle of all things and, in each case, affirmed that this principle was one. The fact that the universe commonly experienced as many, diversified and

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changing was precisely the same one in which they found a single principle did not seem to disturb these first philosophers, for they apparently saw nothing inconsistent in saying that a first (arché) which is one can change and, by changing, give rise to many and different kinds of things. Having failed to perceive any such inconsistency in their reasoning, none of them denied the reality of change. Nor did any of them feel compelled to assign a cause or explanation for change. Their handling of change, therefore, could not be termed philosophic. Rather they drew upon a tradition shaped by theologizing poets as well as by their own ingenuity to explain how the visible universe could come from and return to the one element from which it is made.¹

The terminal point of this primitive philosophical monism is to be found in the immobilism of Parmenides. That a principle, said to be perfectly one, cannot be more than one seemed reasonable enough. However, if one acknowledged the reality of the change or mobility by which the many and the diverse emanated from their single principle,

¹ For an account of these cosmogonies and their relevance to early Greek philosophy, see G. S. KIRK and J. E. RAVEN, The Presocratic philosophers, p. 8-72, and M. ELIADE, The Myth of the Eternal Return, p. 3-48. The latter title presents a rather specialized treatment of the cosmogonic myths, but underlines the importance of "archaic ontology" for an understanding of the early Greek thinkers.

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it seemed that one had to deny the principle's unicity. For Parmenides this denial was unthinkable. Once a philosopher had committed himself to a single principle, he would necessarily end up an immobilist and declare the many, the diverse, the mobile and the caducous unworthy of speculation.

Having discredited sensation as a source of knowledge as far as true reality was concerned, the philosopher would account Reason (logos) as the only trustworthy source for knowledge. "It is the same thing to think and to be", Parmenides said.² In other words being, that which is first and most important in things, is precisely equivalent to that which alone can be thought of as real in them. It was on the ground of this equation that the great Eleatic established a position which, in relation to his predecessors was terminal but one which for his successors presented a formidable challenge. The single-element systems of the first philosophers would have to be discarded. Those who came after Parmenides would have to find a way, if possible, to release being from the fetters that immobilized it.

Whoever would accept the posing of the problem of being as Parmenides posed it, would first be confronted with

2 K. FREEMAN, Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers, p. 42.

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a disconcerting question framed in the form of a strict disjunctive: Is it or is it not? There is but one answer: It is. This, in effect, is the single authentic utterance which the Parmenidean philosopher was permitted, for whatever else could be said would have to be said of Not-Being: "One should both say and think that Being Is; for To Be is possible, and Nothingness is not possible."³ No professional counsel was ever more rigorous in the limitations it placed on what a philosopher must do in order to philosophize.⁴ The philosopher is permitted, both verbally and mentally, but one utterance. One does not philosophize, one does not become a philosopher, unless one thinks and says: "Being". The being in question is being-as-thought or being-as-cogitated. To designate the vocation of the philosopher so is to make what is first in thought to be first in reality. Such is Parmenides' "Way of Truth".

3 K. FREEMAN, *Ancilla...*, p. 43. There is little to warrant the translator's use of "Nothingness" rather than "Nothing". Nothing or non-being has meaning in Parmenides only as the contradictory of Being and is not, therefore, the "Nothing" of creationism. "Non-being" would seem to be the best translation.

4 This counsel is for the "initiates". But in Parmenides' case it seems that he was the only initiate. After him, however, no philosopher could ignore his advice. "Because Parmenides has based his whole doctrine upon the evident assumption that being is, he still remains for us what he already was for Plato, a man to be respected; but because he has unreservedly equated existence with being, he still inspires us with as much fear as reverence." E. GILSON, *Being and Some Philosophers*, p. 8.

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The allegation that the "Way of Seeming", in opposition to the "Way of Truth", describes an "illusory" world whose existence Parmenides denied developed no doubt as a result of the disproportionate vogue enjoyed by the "Way of Truth" among the Pre-Socratics.⁵ Moreover, there is little reason to think that the kind of cognition that Parmenides deplored in the "Way of Seeming" had any less objective reality than the changing world described by Heraclitus.⁶ Thus, though there are disparities between the two ways, the "Way of Truth" does not rule out the existence of the world upon which the "Way of Seeming" bears. The point is the impossibility of philosophizing about this world or the impossibility of reducing this world to the Parmenidean first principle.

G. S. Kirk has aptly compared the first principle of Parmenides' philosophy of being, the esti ("It is"), to

⁵ See G. S. KIRK and J. E. RAVEN, The Presocratic Philosophers, p. 266.

⁶ There is no reason, for instance, why Plato could not have used the "Way of Seeming" rather than Cratylus as a source for describing the sensible world. Parmenides' "Way of Seeming" is a philosophic account of what ordinary mortals apprehend. As such it contrasts with what the goddess shows him. The two "Ways", therefore, are two equally authentic points of view one of which is consistent with that adopted by the philosopher and the other with that adopted by the ordinary mortal. See J. OWENS, A History of Ancient Western Philosophy, p. 67-69.

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the Cartesian cogito.⁷ Given the esti, the entire philosophy of being can be deduced. The basis for a comparison with Descartes is chiefly the use to which reason is put in deducing a system of thought without the aid of the senses. As Cartesianism became a typical way of philosophizing among the modern idealists so Eleaticism became typical among the Greeks. Doctrinally the sheer incompatibility or impossibility of being and nothing is thus established, as is the point of departure for any thought-system in which being is regarded as a conceivable.⁸

One can also designate being-as-thought as being-as-nature or being-as-essence. Being so designated is determined by thought, that is, by the human logos and it is determined as to one. So considered it cannot be many. It is immobile, it is indestructible, without beginning or end, etc.⁹ Nothing, of course, can proceed from it. Not

7 G. S. KIRK and J. E. RAVEN, The Presocratic Philosophers, p. 266.

8 If abstracted from its associations with contemporary existentialism, the term "essentialism" is sufficiently generic to designate any such system.

9 These "attributes" are sign-posts by which the initiates will be able to recognize Being when they see it. "To this way there are many sign-posts: that Being has no coming-into-being and no destruction, for it is whole of limb, without motion, and without end. And it never Was, nor Will Be, because it Is now, a whole all together, One continuous; for what creation of it will you look for?" K. FREEMAN, Ancilla..., p. 43.

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only is creationism out of the question for Eleatic philosophy, but also any sort of emanation or process.

It is quite reasonable to expect that, despite the strictures imposed by Parmenides, further efforts would be made to philosophize about the reality of change. But in order to do so, the nothing that change implies would have to be given some status in the universe of becoming. This meant that it, too, must be thought of as a nature. Thus in Democritus it was conceived as the void and in Plato as an existing yet unreal matter. In each case, since being had to be identified with itself in order to be conceived and counted as real, the attempt to conceive nothing (demanded in a world of change) as real was never successful. That which is self-identical Is and that which is not self-identical Is Not. "Is" and "Is Not" -- these are the terms of Greek philosophy's grand problem, the problem of the One and the Many. How is it possible to pass from the One to the Many? How is it possible to pass from the Many to the One?

3. Plato

When Plato set his mind to the task of answering these questions, one of the things he did was to arrange in a truly admirable hierarchy the different levels of reality. At the summit he placed the Good and at the bottom the

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enigmatic matter historians of philosophy call "Platonic Matter".¹⁰ The Good was beyond conception, for to conceive it implied a dualism alien to its perfect unicity.

The most explicit description of the Idea of the Good is given by Plato in the VIth Book of the Republic. In the words of F. M. Cornford's translation it reads so:

This, then, which gives to the objects of knowledge their truth to him who knows them his power of knowing is the Form or essential nature of Goodness. It is the cause of knowledge and truth; and so, while you may think of it as an object of knowledge, you will do well to regard it as something beyond truth and knowledge and, precious as these both are, of still higher worth. And, just as in our analogy of light and vision were to be

¹⁰ Traditionally matter in Plato's cosmos has been thought of as a principle on the side of non-being as opposed to the Ideas on the side of being. Though the following passage is expressed in idealist terminology, it is sufficient to indicate what is generally understood by "Platonic Matter": "This imperfection of the Phenomenon cannot spring from the Idea: it rather proves that necessity as well as Reason is the cause of the world, and that this irrational cause cannot entirely be overcome by Reason. Consequently to explain Sense as such, a special principle must be assumed, and this principle must be the direct contrary of the Idea, for it is precisely the contradiction between the Phenomenon and the Idea which has to be derived from it. It must contain the cause of the Non-being, the divisibility, the mutability of the Phenomenon, and only this; for whatever is real, one, and permanent, originates exclusively with the Idea. Therefore if the Idea be the purely Existent, this principle will be the purely Non-existent; if the one be uniform and invariable Essence, the other must be absolute division and absolute change. This principle is what is usually, though not in Platonic phraseology, termed by us Platonic Matter." E. ZELLER, Plato and the Older Academy, p. 295-296.

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thought of as like the Sun, but not identical with it, so here both knowledge and truth are to be regarded as like the Good, but to identify either with the Good is wrong. The Good must hold a yet higher place of honour.¹¹

It is this same conception of the Good that is found among Neo-Platonist philosophers, Christian and pagan alike.

What we should be careful to look for here and in subsequent allusions to Platonic Good are the consequences of considering it both as the cause of knowledge and the cause of being. As we have just read, Plato is unequivocal when he posits the Good as the cause of knowledge, though it is itself beyond knowledge. The analogy of the Sun is used to bring this out.¹²

Plato also makes it clear here that the Good is neither the same as being nor the same as essence (or reality), though it is the cause of being and essence. But

11 PLATO, Republic VI, 508E.

12 "And of all those divinities in the skies is there one whose light, above all the rest, is responsible for making our eyes see perfectly and making objects perfectly visible?"

"There can be no two opinions: of course you mean the sun."

"And how is sight related to this deity? Neither sight nor the eye which contains it is the Sun, but of all the sense-organs it is the most sun-like; and further, the power it possesses is dispensed by the Sun, like a stream flooding the eye. And again, the Sun is not vision, but is the cause of vision and also is seen by the vision of its causes." PLATO, Republic VI, 508A.

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in the Platonic meaning of causality ascribed to the Good, there is no suggestion of efficient causality, nor of final causality. The most we can say about the causality exercised by the Good is that it is some sort of formal cause. Since it is not an efficient cause, it is not responsible for motion and change. As a formal cause, however, it can account for the immobility of intellectual knowledge.¹³

Being (ousia), coincident with the world of Ideas (or Forms), was self-identical and possessed the attributes of Parmenidean being. Whatever reality anything else possessed depended on its ability to share in the reality of the Ideas. The diffusion of reality in the realm of becoming, which in itself cannot be real, is described by Plato in his Timaëus.

In this anthropomorphic account of how the many derives from the One, the Demiurge was assigned the task of imposing order on the world. We say "anthropomorphic" simply to indicate the analogy between the Demiurge and the human craftsman. In this respect the god cannot be considered as a creator, for he has nothing to do with the

13 See R. HENLE, St. Thomas and Platonism, p. 90-91.

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production of the materials upon which he works.¹⁴

A. E. Taylor's insistence that the Demiurge whom he calls "God" is a maker in the same sense as the Christian God is, therefore, totally unwarranted.¹⁵ F. M. Cornford, writing in opposition to Taylor's commentary, points out that the Demiurge cannot be equated with the "One God of the Bible, who created the world out of nothing and is also the supreme object of worship."¹⁶

Unlike some of the other gods that were currently revered by the Greeks, the Demiurge was not jealous of the felicity he enjoyed and so desired that all things should be good to the extent this is possible.¹⁷ Plato's phrase "good as possible" must be interpreted once more in a

¹⁴ "... Plato's Demiurge, like the human craftsman in whose image he is conceived, operates upon materials which he does not create, and whose inherent nature sets a limit to his desire for perfection in his work. He has been pictured as confronted with 'all that is visible' in a chaos of disorderly motion. For this disorder he is not responsible, but only for those features of order and intelligible design which he proceeds to introduce, 'so far as he can'... Nor does the Demiurge create that Receptacle of Becoming in which the images of the Forms are mirrored." F. CORNFORD, Plato's Cosmology, p. 37.

¹⁵ See A. E. TAYLOR, A Commentary on Plato's Timaeus, p. 78-80.

¹⁶ F. CORNFORD, Plato's Cosmology, p. 35.

¹⁷ Plato had in mind here the punishments administered to Prometheus by the Olympeans because of the god's solicitude for mankind. See F. CORNFORD, Plato's Cosmology, p. 34

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non-Christian sense and in an anthropomorphic sense. The Demiurge, despite the loftiness of his motive and the grandeur of his enterprise, was subject to a higher deity (Anangke).¹⁸ As a suppliant before this god of necessity, he did not altogether have his own way. As an agent of Reason it was necessary for him to "persuade" the god of necessity in order to spread intelligibility and order in an otherwise chaotic realm.¹⁹ Though Plato pictures the Demiurge as a world-maker, the conditions under which the god must work are not unlike those that frustrate the philosopher who tries while living in this visible world to

18 "For the generation of this universe was a mixed result of the combination of Necessity and Reason. Reason overruled Necessity by persuading her to guide the greatest part of things that become towards what is best; in that way and on that principle this universe was fashioned in the beginning by the victory of reasonable persuasion over Necessity." PLATO, Timaeus, 48A.

19 There does not seem to be any reason to suppose that chaos ever existed by itself. "It is now generally agreed that this disorderly condition can never have existed by itself at a time before order was introduced." F. CORNFORD Plato's Cosmology, p. 203. This also makes Plato more consistent; a chaos which could co-exist with the eternal ideas is too obvious an anomaly in the Platonic universe.

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reduce all to one principle.²⁰

The desire that all things should be as good as possible runs counter, then, to the whimsical deity of necessity. Desire and whimsy here seem to be in the conative order. Cornford rejects the notion, again opposing Taylor, that this desire supplies the reason why there is a world.²¹ This desire is described as a generous reason or motive (aitia).

Besides a motive for producing the world, the Demiurge needed a plan. This, like the matter upon which he would work, was ready-made in the patterns supplied by the

20 The prevalence of the image of the perfect philosopher as one in whom reality and reason become one should be noted here. Plato's picture is, of course, a portrait of Socrates. The Republic recounts the tragedy that befell him. It records the perennial failure of the philosopher to achieve a perfectly unified system. See W. JAEGER, Paideia, p. 19-20.

21 See F. CORNFORD, Plato's Cosmology, p. 34.

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Ideas or Forms.²² Now to carry this out intelligences are necessary and intelligences can not be found unless they are in souls:

Now it was not, nor can it ever be, permitted that the work of the supremely good should be anything but that which is best. Taking thought, therefore, he (the Demiurge) found that, among things that are by nature visible, no work that is without intelligence will ever be better than one that has intelligence, when each is taken as a whole, and moreover that intelligence cannot be present in anything apart from soul.²³

Obviously from this text the importance in Plato's mind of intelligibility (or conceivability) is easily seen. Notice the function assigned to soul. For Plato the soul

22 It is not strictly necessary to designate any one of the several terms used by Plato for Idea or Form as preferable to the rest. "The all-embracing theme that has been associated historically with Plato's name is the doctrine of the Ideas. The Greek term 'Idea' is derived from the verb *idein*, which means 'to see'. The notion conveyed is that of 'something seen'. The word 'Idea', accordingly, seems to have meant originally a visible form or character. In Plato's immediate background it had been used to denote the outward form or shape and also the inner structure or nature of a thing... The term *eidos* (Form), also derived from the same Greek verb 'to see', and carrying the same meanings as 'Idea', occurs continually in Plato as a synonym for 'Idea'. The terms being (*ousia*), 'kind' (*genos*), 'monad', 'unit' (*henas*), or the 'nature' (*physis*) of the thing, are also employed more or less indifferently to express the same object." J. OWENS, *A History...*, p. 197-198.

23 PLATO, *Timaeus*, 30B.

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is an essence which moves itself.²⁴ As a self-mover it cannot be moved by something else. The very notion of it is enough to explain it.

The necessity of positing souls in the universe is, moreover, quite in keeping with the sort of work the Demiurge set out to do. Souls ostensibly are principles which make the visible or sensible world intelligible and, hence, real. This meant, too, that since there was no part of the universe exempt from the Demiurge's plan, the whole universe was a besouled or living thing.²⁵

Though the universe has a living unity, there are many Ideas. Taken individually an Idea in Plato's cosmos

²⁴ Plato's statement that the soul is a self-mover occurs in his argument for its immortality: "Soul, wherever found, is immortal; for the ever-moving is immortal. But that which lends its motion to another thing, or receives its motion from another, when the motion ceases ends its life. Only the self-moving, since it never leaves itself, never ceases from its motion, and this is also the source and origin of movement for all other things that are in motion. But the beginning is unbegotten; for everything that is begotten must arise from a beginning, while this beginning cannot proceed from something... Thus the origin of motion is the self-moved, and this can neither be destroyed nor begotten, else all the heavens and the whole creation must collapse... But we have seen the self-moved to be immortal; then if one argues that the essence of the soul, the very concept, lies in this, one will not be put to shame; for each and every body that derives its motion from without is soulless, but that which has its motion in and from itself, that has a soul, since this is the very nature of the soul." PLATO, Phaedrus, 245C.

²⁵ "And in the centre he set a soul and caused it to extend throughout the whole..." PLATO, Timaeus, 34B.

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is not produced by any intellect. It is always in act. Nothing beyond it has to be posited in order to account for its intelligibility. It is at once the object and the cause of scientific knowledge. But, since the Idea is the correlate of an intelligible species, it is the object and cause of scientific knowledge quoad nos. Now taken as a correlate to an intelligible species in our intellects, an Idea is many. This pluralization of the Ideas, though it explained the plurality of immobile species, did not explain how any individual could come into being or go out of being within each species. The Eleatic problem remained as yet unsolved. However, some of the rigour of the Parmenidean doctrine gave way to certain Platonic innovations, especially as regards the "Principle of non-contradiction".

Recall that Plato's universe is a hierarchy in which there is no place where there is not at least some reality or being. Non-being has no real meaning for Plato. It is in no sense a principle or co-principle in his scheme, whether one looks at it ontologically or epistemologically.²⁶

26 The ontological and the epistemological aspects of Plato's universe are scarcely distinguishable inasmuch as to be real and to be intelligible are the same thing. The tendency to divide Plato's problems into these two categories is, no doubt, the result of trying to force the problems into a modern setting.

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Thus to speak of "pure chaos" in connection with the Platonic cosmos, to speak, that is, of an existing yet completely unreal state in which matter is found has no foundation in Plato's writings. Nor is there anything there analogous to Aristotle's "pure potency" even in the lowest reaches of his universe. Thus where for Parmenides non-being was utterly excluded from the only possible realm of reality, that of being, for Plato the exclusion of non-being by being was relative. Are we not admitting now, in contradiction to what we said, that non-being does have a place in Plato's plan? How are we to explain how one being can be more or less than another without allotting non-being some status?

The answers to these questions depend on what Plato thought being was. Possibly, then, the non-being that Plato excluded from the universe was non-being as Parmenides interpreted it. To clarify, let us make a distinction using Aristotle's language. To be, for Parmenides, was to be actually. Actual being cannot be hierarchized. It cannot be more or less. Either it is or it is not. Platonic being was more or less according to the place it occupied in the hierarchy. As Gilson tells us, there are "degrees of

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reality".²⁷ Thus while Parmenidean being is found in each Idea in as much as each Idea is identical with itself, there are different degrees of identity. In this respect Eleaticism and Platonism do not coincide. Plato, however, should not be excused of immobilism for this reason. But this remains to be seen.

Pondering this further we become conscious of a temptation to attribute being to the Ideas and oppose the entire realm of becoming to them as though the latter were non-being: Ideas are; things that become are not. But before giving in to this temptation we should remember that Plato reserved the expression "really real" for the Ideas and "real" (though in a mitigated sense) for things that become. Once Plato admitted that there were some things more or less real than others, despite his filial devotion to Parmenides, he was no longer his complete disciple. The "Way of Seeming" in Plato did not end in the dead end of non-being as it had in Parmenides.

27 "The presence of Platonism can be detected, throughout the whole of Western thought, by means of these two signs: first, being and non-being are variable quantities, between which innumerable degrees of reality can be found; next, all relations of being to non-being can and must be transposed into relations of sameness and otherness." E. GILSON, Being and Some Philosophers, p. 17.

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Granted then that Parmenidean non-being did not penetrate the Platonic universe, the relation between being and non-being (here at first we need only assume the verbal existence of the terms) as it appeared in Parmenides is not duplicated by Plato. The admission of degrees of being injects a note of relativism in this ippositional relation which is understood only by alluding to Plato's doctrine of existence, identity and otherness as it is found in the Sophist.

Significantly the ontological aspect of his discussion of these three Ideas merges with its dialectical aspect. As in Parmenides it is once more a question of what can be thought or said about being and non-being. Concerning non-being, as we indicated a moment ago, there is nothing to be said or thought. This leaves being open for discussion. Now, although non-being is left out and, hence, not opposed to being after the Eleatic manner; nevertheless, and opposition is made between affirmative and negative statements. Affirmative statements join and negative statements separate.²⁸ What is joined and separated is one Idea with another and, in this instance, existence, identity and otherness are the Ideas. We should

28 See PLATO, Sophist, 259D.

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point out here that, generally speaking, all valid statements are true statements and all true statements are about the Ideas. To make any statement about non-being is clearly impossible, for this would be tantamount to saying that some Idea does not exist. Yet one can assign meaning to and say something about the negative form of the copula "is not" as well as the affirmative form "is". But since "is" has two meanings, so does "is not". "Is" means either "exists" or "is the same as" (or "is identical with"). "Is not" means either "does not exist" or "is other than" (or "is different from"). What remain, then, are the three Ideas: Existence, identity and otherness. What can be said and thought of any Idea whatsoever ("any Idea whatsoever", because no Idea in the entire realm of being is exempt from combining with any other) is that it exists, that it is identical with itself and that it is other than any other Idea. It is at this point that the Platonic universe begins to freeze, for no Idea can be derived from another.²⁹ Yet if we return to the Timaeus we find that the Demiurge

29 The philosopher aims to duplicate, as best he can, the universe of Forms in discourse. Discourse is necessary for philosophy. "To rob us of discourse would be to rob us of philosophy." PLATO, Sophist, 260A. But discourse eventually aims at a "frozen" system in which everything is accounted for under some Form, if not under this or that one, under the pervasive Forms of Existence, Identity and Difference.

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mixed these three Ideas and blended them into a unity. The dialectical procedure becomes one with the business of producing the universe.

It should be clear enough now that Platonic identity implies otherness. To be identical with itself, in other words, is to be other than everything else. Now the final substitution of Platonic terms can be made in the Parmenidean formula. When this substitution is made the formula is no longer a disjunctive: Either something is being or non-being. It is now the copulative: Something is at once itself and is not something else. As Gilson puts it, "Nothing can be that which it is, without, at the same time, not being that which it is not."³⁰ Reduced to the algebra that logicians love to use, A is A (being is identical with itself) only once and A is not non-A (being is other than everything else) as many times as there are non-A's.

Each Idea, then, has two aspects, the one intrinsic, the other extrinsic. The intrinsic aspect of self-identity has nothing to do with the existence of the Idea but only with what it is. The extrinsic aspect is correlative and emphasizes the self-identity of each Idea. The Ideas,

30 E. GILSON, Being and Some..., p. 19.

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therefore, do not exist in anything else upon which they depend for the existence. The fact of their existence or that they are is, for Plato, a pure given. What bothers Plato here is how each Idea can be self-identical, unmixed or really real without some higher principle. The deficiency of being self-identical lies simply in this, that if each Idea is precisely what it is it cannot be others and so lacks the being of other things. The next step is to account for the being of the Ideas and this cannot be in terms of being as Plato conceived. Thus it must be accounted for in terms of a principle beyond being, beyond the really real, beyond intelligibility.³¹ This principle is the Good which, as we said, stands at the summit of Plato's universe.

Let us return once more now to Parmenides for sake of comparison. Being and intelligibility (or conceivability) were one and the same. The "principle of non-contradiction", moreover, is the first, last and only law which the Eleatic philosopher need utter. In the philosophy of Plato this is changed. Being, though still convertible with intelligibility, is no longer supreme. The Logos which dominated Parmenides' thought gives way to the ineffable, nameless, super-intelligible Good. However, the old equation of

³¹ Thus Plato was the first philosopher to become a "mystic". After him many other philosophers can be so called. But as with the "poetic mystic", the name does not describe the Christian mystic.

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being and intelligibility is still operative in Plato's thinking. How so? Although being is not supreme in Plato's universe; nevertheless, that which accounts for being, though it is itself above being, is precisely that which accounts for intelligibility, though it is itself above intelligibility.

In the Timaeus, Plato described how intelligibility or reality was diffused in the realm of sensible being. In his various disquisitions on the nature of the Ideas, he has given us his philosophy of being. In relation to the old problem of the one and the many, no solution to the problem of how the many derives from the one or how one thing can come from another is to be found by examining either the Timaeus or the other sources that deal with the Ideas.

This is where the Good, which is also the One, enters the Platonic scheme. It is here, too, that philosophizing ceases (for it remains true, as it was before, that to philosophize was to philosophize in the old Eleatic manner by keeping reality and intelligibility one and the same), and it becomes evident that whatever philosophizing is done must be done on this side of the Good where at least something can be said and thought about being. But what is able to be thought and said reflects a dialectical process that is characteristic of finite, human knowing. This

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means that the Platonic metaphysics is indifferent to existence. This indifference to, or, better still negation of existence finds its highest manifestation in the Good which in order to be the highest principle must not be. If creatures are, then the Good is not.

Concerning the Platonic doctrine of participation which has so many interpreters among contemporaries, we need only say here and for the purpose of the present work: First, that it is possible to assign meanings to Plato's words which he himself did not intend and make them vehicles for truth; second, that this practice, providing it is not abused, must be indulged in, as it has been by the giants like St. Augustine and St. Thomas, in order that Plato's philosophy continue to make its contribution to the present as it has in the past; and, third, that the "dangers" from accepting Plato here, in particular his doctrine of participation, can be mitigated by discovering the "locus naturalis" of his metaphysics which may be so described: Plato's system is the magnification of the processes of human reason and analogously it aspires to an immobilism characteristic of all such systems. This is not intended to epitomize all of Plato. Rather it suggests a typical orientation which is found in philosophies which can be described as Platonic, for once the principle of participation is accepted, things that participate in the Good become moments

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in a dialectic of ideas. Thus things and the relationship of things to the Good comprise, not a universe of creatures which the Good causes to exist, but rather a conceptual universe caused by the mind of the philosopher. Once more let us stress that this is not all that Plato's philosophy is. It is, nevertheless, suggestive of a very likely resolution that follows upon principles that he has established and have reappeared in the tradition associated with his name.

4. Aristotle

It is simply a matter of history that Aristotle solved many of the difficulties raised by Plato and his predecessors. Nothing as philosophically satisfactory as Aristotle's explanation of generation and change can be found in Plato. The Aristotelian notions of act and potency, substance and accident, matter and form, do not serve simply to explain what Plato did not explain, but they also proved to be permanent contributions to subsequent philosophical speculation. And what is perhaps most important, they can be transmuted into efficient intellectual instruments for

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probing metaphysical nature of being.³² On this count Aristotle was not platonizing. We do not hereby suggest that there is much less of Plato that could not be put to good metaphysical use, but only that the Stagirite evinces an unquestionable superiority in his philosophy of nature.

Does this mean that an adequate philosophy of the being of creatures could be grounded on the Aristotelian philosophy of nature? This question would make little sense were it not for the fact that serious attempts have been made to elaborate a proof for the existence of God by using the principles of the Aristotelian physics.³³ But if even this were so, the metaphysical problem of showing that the unmoved Mover (to whose existence the "physical" proof concludes) is also the Creator of things that move is not

32 Notably the act-potency principle. Though not in the mind of Aristotle to use this principle so, it can be readily invoked to explain the existential character of Thomistic metaphysics. "to be is evidently different from not to be, and that difference is evidently the difference of a perfection from a lack of such perfection. The Aristotelian notions of act or perfection (energeia, entelecheia) were at hand." J. OWENS, "A Note on the Approach to Thomistic Metaphysics", p. 468. Thus the act-potency principle is used to solve questions concerning the relation of essence and existence in finite being. Maritain speaks of this use as "the extension of the Aristotelian doctrine of potency and act to the relation of essence to existence." J. MARITAIN, The Degrees of Knowledge, p. 430.

33 For an example of this, see V. SMITH, "The Prime Mover in Philosophy of Nature and in Metaphysics", p. 78-94.

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thereby solved. Could this problem be solved any more readily by using Aristotle's rather than Plato's metaphysical principles? If it could, there might be some hope of distilling a philosophy of the being of creatures from these principles. But if Aristotle's metaphysics evinces the typically "Greek" cast found in his predecessors and notably in Plato, no such tentative could succeed.

The typically Greek orientation of Aristotle's philosophy is found in his deep concern with Form (eidos). Even when we consider Aristotle in terms of his most fundamental objection to Plato's doctrine of Form, this orientation is unmistakably clear. What Aristotle objected to most strenuously in his teacher's philosophy was the separation of nature and the really real (ontos on).³⁴ This reaction was as much a part of Aristotle's doctrine as his positive and original teaching. But it does not represent a complete break with Plato. It is, rather, a prolongation of the discussion of Form. Whether it is Form (eidos) or entity

³⁴ "Aristote est demeuré fidèle à l'être pris au sens fort de ousia, bien plus, il en a été le théoricien par excellence: sa divergence radicale d'avec Platon se situe dans la disjonction de l'ontos on en deux sphères, le monde de la nature et celui des formes subsistantes ou l'intelligences, et non pas dans le concept métaphysique de ousia et eidos comme porteur de l'être." C. FABRO, "Actualité et Originalité de l' 'esse'", p. 257.

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(ousia), Form maintains its priority and sustains being.³⁵
Being does not sustain Form.

The object or subject of Aristotle's metaphysics is being insofar as it is being. The perfect instance of being is substance or entity (ousia).³⁶ For this reason, the Aristotelian metaphysics has been called a "substantialism".³⁷ It is here that we must look for a protraction of the Platonic preoccupation with Form, for it is here that Aristotle's science of metaphysics exhibits its true character. Does the first importance he accords to substance in this science preclude a possible philosophy of the being of creatures? This is the first question we must answer.

The science of First Philosophy or metaphysics, as does the science of physics, proposes to discover the ultimate causes of reality.³⁸ These causes are four. Aristotle arrived at this figure by a strictly empirical

³⁵ These same terms were used by Plato to designate Form or Idea. See above, p. 16.

³⁶ "While 'being' has all these senses, obviously that which 'is' primarily is the 'what' which indicates the substance of the thing." ARISTOTLE, Metaphysics, 1028a14.

³⁷ See E. GILSON, Being and Some Philosophers, p. 41-73.

³⁸ See ARISTOTLE, Metaphysics, 981a28.

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study of his predecessors.³⁹ The causes are not deduced, therefore, in any a priori fashion. They are not abstractions in the sense that they provide "reasons" or "explanations". Of these four causes, the material, the formal, the efficient and the final, is there any that seems to possess the character of cause more than the others? If this could be determined, it seems that this should provide a good criterion for judging the nature of the Aristotelian metaphysics. After Aristotle's own analysis of the history of his predecessors in terms of the four causes, we should be interested in knowing which cause is given the highest award. In the Physics he made reference to the formal cause as an archetype.⁴⁰ This seems to suggest that the other three causes deserve to be so called only insofar as they participate in the nature of formal cause. But Aristotle does not use the language of participation. Technically he should say that the formal cause exhibits the very nature of cause. In the Metaphysics, however, the formal cause is

³⁹ See ARISTOTLE, Metaphysics, 983a26. For meaning that should be to the Aristotelian notion of cause, see J. OWENS, The Doctrine of Being..., p. 80-81.

⁴⁰ "...the form or the archetype, i.e., the statement of the essence and its genera, are called 'causes'." ARISTOTLE, Physics, 194b26.

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patently equated with substance or entity (ousia).⁴¹ There could be some confusion if the reference in the Physics to formal cause as archetype were taken by itself. It could be objected that the instance is not typically Aristotelian. But there can be no mistaking the Aristotelianism of his doctrine of substance in the Metaphysics where it occurs along with his devastating criticism of the Platonic separate Forms. It is true that in the Physics, despite the use of the Platonic term "archetype", the Forms had already been ensconced in sensible things and established there as causes. But the "metaphysical" concern with substance is absent. We have to go to the Metaphysics for the more complete account. In Book A, after he has dealt with the Pythagoreans, the Philosopher begins his critical exposition of the Platonists:

. . . to each thing there answers an entity which has the same name and exists apart from the substances, and so also in the case of all other groups there is a one over many, whether the many are in this world or are eternal.⁴²

Here we should observe that Aristotle makes no distinction between the two possible denominations of one over many in the sensible world and one over many in the world of

⁴¹ "By form I mean the essence of each thing and its primary substance." ARISTOTLE, Metaphysics, 1032b1.

⁴² See ARISTOTLE, Metaphysics, 990b7.

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separate Forms. Now one proof for the existence of the Forms is taken from the existence of the sciences. Other "more accurate arguments" lead to the Forms of relations. Still others employ the "third man" argument.⁴³ But no matter which of these arguments is used the existence of the Forms remains without demonstration. In the careful analysis that Aristotle makes of these arguments he always comes back to the same thing. This is the impossibility of any reconciliation between the Platonic separated Forms and the Aristotelian Forms located in sensible things. The strongest argument that a "such" to which the Platonic Form cannot be tolerated in the same philosophy employs the act-potency principle:

A substance cannot consist of substances present in it in complete reality; for things that are thus in complete reality two are never in complete reality one, though if they are potentially two, they can be one ...⁴⁴

There is no question of the validity of the act-potency principle. But the argument does present a difficulty for Aristotle:

If no substance can consist of universals because a universal indicates a "such", not a "this", and if no substance can be composed

⁴³ Plato's celebrated "third man" argument is found in his Parmenides, 132A.

⁴⁴ See ARISTOTLE, Metaphysics, 1039a4.

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of substances existing in complete reality, every substance would be incomposite, so that there would not even be a formula of any substance.⁴⁵

However, the difficulty vanishes if it can be shown that it is contradictory to say that a Form exists separately and, at the same time, to make a Form consist of genus and difference. "Animal", for instance, has the same definition or formula in "man" and in "horse". But if, as the Platonists aver, there is a "man-in-himself" who is a "this" existing separately, his parts must also be "thises" and also capable of existing separately. Thus "animal" would exist separately along with the other parts necessary to make up the "man-in-himself", which is contradictory.⁴⁶

Once Aristotle repudiated the Platonic theory of separated Forms, he turned his attention to matter. Plato had provided no philosophy of material things. Aristotle could exploit the whole realm of corporeal substances without opposition. Once the Forms are safely placed in their new and multitudinous abodes, the Aristotelian universe takes shape.

⁴⁵ See ARISTOTLE, Metaphysics, 1039a15.

⁴⁶ See ARISTOTLE, Metaphysics, 1039a25; J. OWENS, The Doctrine of Being..., p. 205-206.

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At the bottom of the Aristotelian cosmos there is prime matter or the matter before which there is any other matter. Comparable to the bronze out of which a statue is made (since the bronze is not itself determined with respect to the statue) prime matter is wholly indeterminate.⁴⁷ It has no entity of its own any more than the bronze statue has entity, as statue, by being bronze. There is nothing in the matter which determines it. In this sense it is infinite. This is why prime matter can be called "pure potency".⁴⁸ In itself it can be anything. In itself it is no kind of thing. There is no reality, therefore, that corresponds to this name.

Once potency is introduced into the Aristotelian cosmos, it is possible to arrange things into a hierarchy. The relative potency found in individual things determines, not how high, but how low each thing is in the hierarchy. How high each thing can be located is determined by form.

47 See ARISTOTLE, Metaphysics, 1034b34; 1035a5.

48 The doctrine of "pure potency" continues the tradition begun by Parmenides that regards non-being in any form as unintelligible. "If all that is, by its nature, being, then all that is is but one nature; being is one, immutable and undiversified. Non-being in any form -- the void, the idea of non-being or otherness, pure potency, the 'beyond being' -- remains unintelligible to men and can find no place in what is. What is is intelligible; to be unintelligible is not to be." G. PHELAN, "The Being of Creatures", p. 118-119.

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Though a thing need not realize the full capacity that form permits it, it can strive for this realization.⁴⁹ But it will never exceed the limits its form places upon it.

Everything except the Intelligences is composed of potency and act. This is the practical equivalent of saying that everything is composed of matter and form. In the realm of sensible being, there is always the possibility of one thing becoming another. The heavenly bodies, however, seem to be an exception.⁵⁰ They must remain what they are.

The instance of the heavenly bodies which presents an apparent anomaly in the Aristotelian universe is, nevertheless, instructive. The heavenly spheres are sensible, yet they do not change except as regards place. They do not have, therefore, any capacity to be or not to be. The potency they have is restricted to movement. If this is so, whatever causal influence operates on them does so with respect to their movement. No proof is needed to say that

⁴⁹ "All individual things in the world may be graded according to the extent that they are infected with potentiality." W. ROSS, Aristotle, p. 178.

⁵⁰ "Now all things that change have matter, but different matter; and of eternal things those things which are not generable but are movable in space have matter -- not matter for generation, however, but for motion from one place to another." ARISTOTLE, Metaphysics, 1069b24.

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this causal influence is that of efficient causality.⁵¹ This means that the efficient cause (or causes) of movement in the heavenly bodies is given but one task. With respect to all other sensible things it plays its indispensable role in the unending process of generation, for it is through movement that one thing comes from another. But in neither case is there any explanation proffered for the existence of that which is moved. In the instance of sub-lunar sensible things whatever comes to be is other than that from which it came. In the instance of the heavenly bodies there is no "other" which they can become. They have, so to speak, arrived at the peak of their perfection and have no desire to be anything other than they are. What we must realize here is that it is only necessary to immobilize becoming (in which each generated thing terminates with the reception of a form) in order to obtain

⁵¹ Usage has condoned the use of the term "efficient" to designate what Aristotle thought of as the cause of movement or the moving cause though he did not name it so. "The true philosophy is that of Aristotle, who distinguished four kinds of causes (moving, formal, material, and final), of which none is called the 'efficient cause'... The enumeration of the four kinds of Aristotelian causes did not include the efficient cause, but it did include what we call the moving cause. In fact, even this expression has no literal equivalent in the terminology of Aristotle. What we call 'moving cause' Aristotle simply designated as 'that from which movement begins'." E. GILSON, Elements of Christian Philosophy, p. 187.

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Aristotle's philosophy of the heavenly bodies. This is instructive, for no new use need be made of the act-potency principle in order to do this.

Everything in the Aristotelian universe, insofar as it is accessible to philosophic analysis, is either a form or something that owes its reality to a form. This is equivalent to saying that everything in the Aristotelian universe is a substance. But substance is that which alone has reality. Reality is to be understood here as an intelligible. Confront this with Aristotle's contention that the individual and the individual alone exists and it becomes apparent that the individual escapes the purview of philosophical analysis, simply because the matter which makes the individual to be an individual has no reality of its own. What we have, then, are two universes. The one is the universe of substances about which we philosophize and to which reality is ascribed. The other is the universe of individuals in which we exist and act.

When we consider now that substance (ousia) is the first concern of Aristotle's metaphysics, the science of being as being, we understand the meaning of the term "substantialism" as it is applicable to his philosophy. Of the four causes which this same science investigates it is equally understandable that it is the formal cause that is of highest importance.

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A number of observations concerning the relevance of the foregoing to the problem of the being of creatures can now be made. What would qualify as "creatures" in Aristotle's universe are the heavenly bodies and those things that come to be and perish in the sublunar world. It might appear that the omission of souls from our discussion is an oversight. But once we know that soul in its primary instance, the soul that animates the heavens, is simply the imperishable self-mover responsible for the eternal movement of the heavenly bodies and once we know that soul in those instances where it functions as a perishable mover in the realm of generation and corruption, there is no need to explain it in any other terms than those of efficient cause in the limited sense of the cause of movement and of formal cause as the act determining matter. Much the same sort of treatment can be accorded the Intelligences which add no creative dimension to the Aristotelian universe since their sole causal influence with respect to "creatures" is in the line of final causality where they provide perfect models which other things more or less successfully imitate.⁵²

⁵² "Imperishable things are imitated by those that are involved in change, e.g. earth and fire." ARISTOTLE, Metaphysics, 1050b28. "For it is the most natural function in all living things, if perfect and not spontaneously generated, to reproduce their species; animal producing animal, plant plant, in order that they may, so far as they can, share in the eternal and the divine." ARISTOTLE, De Anima, 415b25.

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What remains to be pondered, then, is that part of the universe which Aristotle's philosophy adequately handles. This is nothing else than the world of nature in which one thing constantly replaces another. It is here that the typically Aristotelian philosophical analysis is found. As such it gives us a good basis for a philosophy of nature. The perspective here, however, is horizontal. The matter is always there and new forms are in infinite supply. The vertical perspective in Aristotle's philosophy is deficient. It is true that there are different levels of being, but one level is cut off from the other and the renewal of substances takes place within each level. But the vertical continuity which would cut across these levels and which is necessary for an adequate philosophy of the being of creatures is simply not to be discovered in the Stagirite's philosophy. This does not mean, however, that no further use can be made of his philosophy in the work of effecting a metaphysics which would be adequate.

5. Summary

If Classical Greek Philosophy displays no direct concern with the problem of creation, at least it brings to light various oppositions between the universe and its principle and/or principles. The most obvious of these oppositions is between the many and the One. The derivation of the many from the One, particularly since Parmenides,

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became the principal concern of all the philosophers down to Aristotle. The Platonic exaltation of the Good over all else was a magnificent enterprise. But the Good as the source of knowledge, virtue and beauty was not a Creator. It was not a Creator, because whatever dependence the many had on the One or the Good was not total. The same can be said of other oppositions which might possibly be conceived as a creature-Creator opposition. Aristotle's elaborate system of cause-effect oppositions, however fruitful it might be in suggesting a way of speaking of the creature-Creator opposition, merely accounted for the production of new substances. The final result, as it always must be, was that a Platonist or an Aristotelian can never call himself a creationist without radically transforming the philosophy of his chosen master. Is the same true for the Neo-Platonists?

CHAPTER II

ST. THOMAS AND THE NEO-PLATONISM OF PROCLUS AND DENIS

1. The Proclean Influence

In the Neo-Platonic tradition that leads up to Denis' speculations, Plotinus is no doubt the great originator. He is original, not because much of what he said was without precedent, but rather because he stands at the beginning of the Neo-Platonic tradition. Plotinus also stands at the end of the authentically Greek philosophical tradition. For this reason Leon Robin sees him as the greatest philosopher among the Neo-Platonists: "Of all the attempted revivals of the first century of our era, only one is of real interest for the history of Greek thought, and this is Neo-Platonism, and, indeed, that of Plotinus alone."¹ To single out Plotinus for this accolade instead of Proclus or Denis makes sense only if he is looked upon as a revivalist who did as much as any one could to resolve the difficulties and inconsistencies in the Classical Greek tradition. If, for example, there were any "mystical" tendencies in Plato's thought, they came to full flower in Plotinus. Given Robin's point of view, Plotinus appears as the man who sums up, at least philosophically, the grand

¹ L. ROBIN, Greek Thought and the Origins of the Scientific Spirit, p. 367.

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Greek effort and, in so doing, brings the Classical period officially to a close. However, the purpose of the present work is not served by relating the Dionysian and Thomistic texts directly to Plotinus. This is not to deny the incontrovertible influence of Plotinus on subsequent thinkers, notably on St. Augustine. Nor does it ignore the influence of Plotinus on Proclus and Denis. But as far as the study of St. Thomas is concerned, it is the immediate source material that requires scrutiny. Whatever use St. Thomas made of Plotinus was transmitted mostly through Proclus and Denis.²

It is our plan in this chapter to begin our study of St. Thomas' exposition of the De Divinis Nominibus by

2 In one of the rare instances where St. Thomas makes mention of Plotinus, there is even some doubt concerning his identity. Lescoe in his edition of St. Thomas' Tractatus de Substantiis Separatis give several variants for the name "Plotinus", including "Protimus", "Proclus" and "Plato". In the passage where these discrepancies are noted, the doctrine expressed could be generally ascribed to the Platonici or more particularly to Proclus. There is little to indicate here that St. Thomas would have had to read Plotinus in order to say what he said. See F. J. LESCOE, Sancti Thomae Aquinatis Tractatus de Substantiis Separatis, XIX, 110, p. 157. Further references to this work of St. Thomas will be given as: S. THOMAS, De Substantiis..., followed by the numbers of the chapter and the paragraph and the page number of the Lescoe edition. Lescoe's commentaries will be cited so: F. J. LESCOE, De substantiis..., followed by the editor's pagination. All references are made to the latin edition.

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first examining certain doctrinal themes in Proclus' cosmology. The obvious presence of structural similarities in the systems of Proclus and Denis facilitates this procedure. Always there is the general scheme of emanation and return. Always there is the problem of the accessibility of One or the Good from which emanation begins and to which whatever emanates returns. There are many ways in which these similarities can be treated. However, it is our intention here to move from these more general considerations into the more specific concerns of St. Thomas in the first part of his exposition of the De Divinis Nominibus. Thus this chapter includes the first part of our examination of the exposition. We will now begin with Proclus.

Proclus' cosmology can be cited as the typically pagan Neo-Platonic thought-system. It is an emanationist, non-creationist construct in which reality is logically derived from the One. The literary expression of the system is best exhibited in the Elements of Theology.³ E. R. Dodds has called this work "The one systematic exposition of

³ All references made to this work of Proclus will be to E. R. Dodds' second edition which bears the title: Proclus the Elements of Theology. Direct citations to Proclus will be identified simply as PROCLUS, The Elements ..., followed by the number of the Proposition and Dodds' pagination. References made to Dodds' commentaries will be given as E. R. DODDS, The Elements..., followed by the page number.

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Neo-Platonic metaphysics which has come down to us" and he judges it to be "nothing if not systematic."⁴ More philosophical than its title might first convey, the Elements give expression to a metaphysics in the Platonic sense of "theology" or Aristotle's "first philosophy".⁵ As such it is a philosophical manifestation of an aspiration for intellectual unification which demands that all the propositions and laws pertaining to true reality follow from a single first and ultimate principle.

"All that exists proceeds from a single first cause", one of the more important propositions of the Elements reads.⁶ The proposition stands on one side of a disjunctive whose other member contains an exhaustive enumeration of destructible alternatives. To affirm, then, that everything emanates from a single first cause, one must destroy the alternatives which allege respectively that

⁴ E. R. DODDS, The Elements..., p. x.

⁵ "For it is lawful for the soul to ascend, until she terminates her flight in the principle of things; but arriving thither, beholding the place which is there, descending thence, and directing her course through beings... then we may consider her as possessing the most perfect science of divine natures, perceiving in a uniform manner the progressions of the Gods. Such according to Plato's decision is our theologian." PROCLUS, On the Theology of Plato II, ch. VII, p. 123. For Proclus' understanding of the Aristotelian meaning of "theology", see E. R. DODDS, The Elements ..., p. 187.

⁶ PROCLUS, The Elements..., Prop. 11, p. 13.

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everything is uncaused, that there is a limited sum of existence within which sum there is a circuit of causation and that there is an infinite regress of causes no one of which is first. The destruction of these alternative propositions is effected in the same strictly logical fashion. The law of contradiction is supreme.

That it is false to affirm that all things are uncaused can be seen if the proposition does not satisfy the essential condition of scientific knowledge which is cognition of causes. If all things are uncaused, there would be no scientific knowledge. The second proposition is ruled out by invoking a previously established proposition which states the superiority of a productive cause over its effects.⁷ The destruction of the third alternative is effected in a similar fashion. This procedure ultimately aims at enthroning the One as that upon which all depends, without however making any distinction between the real and the logical universes. In other words the Proclean system is aligned with the science of deriving the many from the One.

Thus the argument in the Elements is moved by Proclus from the simple to the complex by first opposing, as

⁷ See PROCLUS, The Elements..., Prop. 7, p. 9.

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did his Greek predecessors, the One and the Many. The One, unlike anything else, is purely one. Other unities or monads exist, but only if they participate in the primal unity of the One.⁸ Higher unities comprise groups of indivisible monads. Lower unities are composed of groupings or orders which in their turn are composed of indivisibles. The subordination of lower unities to the higher and ultimately the subordination of all unities to the One are explained in the language of participation.

The subordination of one relative unity to another is expressed in a triad comprising the unparticipated (to amethekton), the participated (to metechomenon) and the participant (to metechon). Literally these terms mean respectively: "the not had-with" or "the unshared", "the had-with" or "the shared" and "the haver-with" or "the sharer".⁹ This grammatical play on the verb "to have" (echein) is used

8 "All that becomes one does so by participation of unity." PROCLUS, The Elements..., Prop. 3, p. 5.

9 The articulation of this triad is found in the arguments in support of these two propositions:

"All that is unparticipated produces out of itself the participated; and all participated substances are linked by upward tension to existences not participated."

"All that participates is inferior to the participated, and this latter to the unparticipated."

PROCLUS, The Elements..., Prop. 23, p. 27; Prop. 24, p. 29.

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to show various oppositions between the lower and the higher. The lower is to the higher as the incomplete is to the complete, as the imperfect is to the perfect or, most ostensibly as the many is the One. Thus the unparticipated "has" its completeness, perfection and unity independently of any principle or cause beyond it.

The relative independence of all entities below the One is achieved principally through the unification effected by the One. The One itself enjoys absolute independence because it does not have to be unified, completed or perfected by anything beyond it. But this independence is with respect to its being purely and uniquely one. The One is in no way unified (made one). It unifies all else. Nothing else shares this supreme unicity as the term "unparticipated" conveys. Nevertheless, relative unities (the participated" and the "participants") do stand independently of the One in one most important respect. This is with respect to their existence.

Existing things stand on this side of the One. It would appear at first that, since existence can be predicated universally of all things except matter, nothing escapes the causal influx of the One. Even matter which by itself has no existence could be said to depend on the One. However, there is no reason to say that to be unified by the One is

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to be caused to exist by it. A consideration of the systematic structure of the Proclean universe makes this evident.¹⁰

The One (to en) which is, of course, at the summit of the universe is uncaused and has maximal unity. Immediately below the One there is existence (to on) which is the first caused. Life (zoé), intelligence (nous) and soul (psyché) follow next.¹¹ Life, coming under the influence of the One and existence has unity and being. Intelligence, coming under the influence of the One, has existence and life has unity, being and life. Similarly soul, coming under the influence of the realities above it, has unity, being, life, intelligence and reason. In each of these moments the distinctive characteristic can be described as maximal. Thus existence is maximal being; life is maximal life; intelligence is maximal intelligence. But soul, since it is the last term of the higher realities (onta) in the system, is not, as consistency would otherwise require,

10 We are indebted to Dodds for drawing up a systematic table of the terms in the Proclean system. See E. R. DODDS, The Elements..., p. 56. Though Dodds has used other sources in Proclus' writings to devise his schema, it is possible to construct his table from the arguments delineated in The Elements.

11 "All things which participate intelligence are preceded by the unparticipated Intelligence, those that participate life by Life, and those which participate being by Being (to on); and of these three unparticipated principles Being is prior to Life and Life to Intelligence...". PROCLUS, The Elements..., prop. 101, p. 91.

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maximal soul. The ambiguity that arises from soul being at once life-principle and the seat of knowledge is relieved by the distinction between intelligence and discursive reason (dianoia).¹² Thus soul is characterized as discursive reason.

Corporeal or generated things (ginomena), comprising the lower part of universe, range from animals down to matter. The distinctive quality of each grade of entity among generated things unlike the higher realities, is minimal.¹³ Thus animals have minimal intelligence; plants have minimal life; inanimate things have minimal being;

¹² "That into which soul enters necessarily lives." PROCLUS, The Elements..., prop. 188, p. 165. "Every soul is a vital and cognitive substance, a substantial and cognitive principle of life, and a principle of knowledge as being a substance and a life-principle." ibid., prop. 197, p. 173. The distinction between intelligence and reason in soul is based upon the fact that soul can always at least reason, but is capable of intellection only intermittently. See ibid., prop. 184, p. 161.

¹³ "Minimal" because the immediate cause determining the distinctive quality in each of the grades of generated things operates after the higher causes (to en, to on, zoé) and so exerts its influence to a lesser degree: "For if the more determinative causes operate before the secondary, being present through their superfluity of power even to things which have less perfect capacity of reception, and irradiating even these, whereas causes subordinate in rank confer their gifts later, then it is plain that the irradiations of the superior causes, being the first to occupy the common participant, serve as a support to the bestowals of their subordinates, which use these irradiations as a foundation and act upon a participant prepared for them by the more general principles." PROCLUS, The Elements..., prop. 71, p. 69.

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matter has minimal unity. Correlatively there is no vestige of the influence of existence in matter, of life in inanimate things, of intelligence in plants, nor of discursive reason in animals.

It is clear, then, that the entire system is articulated between the maximal unity of the One and the minimal unity of matter. These extremes have no being. Matter has no being, because the causal influence of existence is dissipated in inanimate things.¹⁴ The sole causal influence exerted on matter is one of unification exerted by the One. This, of course, assures the universality of the One's causal influence. If the One is the highest cause, it extends to the greatest number of effects. The proliferation of other terms in the system is subject to the same principle. Existence is more universal than life. Life is more universal than intelligence. Thus the causal influence of existence extends to a greater number of effects than that of life. But the being that things have from existence is less fundamental than the unity that pervades the entire Proclean system. Though it is true that existence is the

¹⁴ "Matter, taking its origin from the One, is in itself devoid of Form; ...body, even though it participates Being, is in itself without participation in soul." PROCLUS, The Elements..., prop. 72, p. 69.

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first caused and that it produces being in those things ranged below it, the being it produces is simply a characteristic or quality added to whatever unity each thing possesses. It is impossible, therefore, to relate or oppose existence as cause and being as effect in such a way that the terms in the Proclean universe below the One or below existence could be called "creatures" and the act by which they have their being "creation."

The term "creation", if it is applicable at all in the Proclean metaphysics, is perhaps best used to designate the contemplative act by which intelligence exists: "Every intelligence gives rise to its consequents by the act of intellection: its creative activity is thinking, and its thought is creation."¹⁵ Thought (noesis) is equivalent to creating or making (to poiein). Creation in this sense is, as Dodds puts it, "a by-product of contemplation."¹⁶

Procession from the One is balanced against reversion to the Good or Goodness. Goodness is another name for

¹⁵ PROCLUS, The Elements..., prop. 174, p. 153.

¹⁶ E. R. DODDS, The Elements..., p. 290.

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the One. It is identical with the One.¹⁷ This identification with the One eliminates any trace of dualism. All that proceeds from the One also proceeds from Goodness. All that proceeds from the One is attracted to Goodness. All that is attracted by Goodness proceeds from the One. Goodness, like the One, is the supreme, uncaused cause:

Of all beings... and of the Gods that produce beings, one exempt and imparticible causes pre-exists, --a cause ineffable indeed by all language, and unknown by all knowledge and incomprehensible, unfolding all things into light from itself, subsisting ineffably prior to, and converting all things to itself, but existing as the best end of all things. This cause which is truly exempt from all causes, and which gives subsistence unically to all the unities of divine natures, and to all the genera of beings and their progressions, Socrates in the Republic calls the good.¹⁸

Though the very name Goodness adds another dimension to the causal effacacy of the One, the supremely desirable, Goodness is, as the One is, before all else the source of unification for things below it. To be less than Goodness, it remains, is to be less than the One. To be less than the One, is to be many. From the point of view of desire to be many is to be a particular good. This means that a particular good can

17 "Every good tends to unify what participates it; and all unification is a good; and the Good is identical with the One." PROCLUS, The Elements..., prop. 13, p. 15.

18 PROCLUS, On the Theology of Plato, III, ch. 3, p. 165.

coexist (synousia) with other particular goods. But Goodness is the sole unqualified good. It is nothing else but Goodness. Anything added to Goodness, therefore, would be some particular good.¹⁹

The transcendent unicity and purity of Goodness cannot be in anyway affected or infected by the universe of particulars and individuals it causes. At the same time a complete separation of the universe from Goodness (or the One) would destroy the effect-to-cause relation between the two. Proclus is faced, therefore, with the problem of preserving the transcendence of unqualified Goodness without denying the causal dependence of the manifold on it. In his attempt to solve this most formidable problem, he looks first to the declension of causally related terms below Goodness. Within this system he finds that the lower is in

¹⁹ "The primal Good... is nothing else but good. Add to it some other character and by the addition you have diminished its Goodness, changing it from the Good unqualified to a particular good. For that added character, which is not the Good but some lesser thing, by its coexistence has diminished the Good." PROCLUS, The Elements..., prop. 8, p. 11.

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the higher, yet is not part of the higher.²⁰ Soul, for example, is in intelligence and body is in soul.²¹ But body is not in intelligence. Body, nevertheless, proceeds from both intelligence and soul. Procession, therefore, is continuous. However, within the triad of intelligence, soul and body, the intermediate term divides the third off from the first. Each term being so detached enjoys independent existence. Being in the higher does not make a term part of it, though as an effect it is related not only to the immediate term above it but also to more remote causes up to the highest. No hypostasis, therefore, is cut off from Goodness or the One. Procession and reversion are continuous. Yet this continuity does not affect the individual reality of any hypostasis, since none of them is part of another. In all this, however, it is extremely difficult to say what precise metaphysical meaning can be attached to the term "in".

20 "All that is immediately produced by any principle both remains in the producing cause and proceeds from it.... For it is a new thing, it is distinct and separate; and if it is separate and the cause remains steadfast, to render this possible it must have proceeded from the cause. In so far, then, as it has an element of identity with the producer, the product remains in it; in so far as it differs it proceeds from it." PROCLUS, The Elements..., prop. 30, p. 35.

21 See E. R. DODDS, The Elements..., p. 218.

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Reversion and procession constitute a single movement.²² This is as it must be if Goodness and the One are identical. From this it follows that the number of terms through which procession passes is exactly the same as that through which reversion moves.²³ It follows also that the well-being of any entity, striving for a greater share of good, is derived through the same number of terms that determine its entity. But well-being seems more appropriately related to Goodness than to the One. It would seem, then, that well-being demands an ameliorative cause whose effect is greater than that produced by the processive causality of the One. Does this argue for a greater number of terms in reversion than in procession? It should not, if One and Goodness are identical and if well-being is achieved without a new hypostasis. Nevertheless, Proclus allows for reversion in which an entity is raised beyond the level of its

22 "All that proceeds from any principle and reverts upon it has a cyclic activity. For if it reverts upon that principle whence it proceeds, it lends its end to its beginning, and the movement is one and continuous.... Thus all things proceed in a circuit, from their causes to their causes again." PROCLUS, The Elements..., prop. 33, p. 37.

23 "All that proceeds from a plurality of causes passes through as many terms in its reversion as in its procession; and all reversion is through the same terms as the corresponding procession." PROCLUS, The Elements..., prop. 38, p. 41.

immediate cause.²⁴ Such an elevation, it seems, requires that the elevated entity pass through the steps of the process by which it was produced. This metamorphosis would involve either a loss of identity in which case it would assume a new hypostasis, or its becoming a part of a higher hypostasis, a possibility already denied. Thus there is no doubt that, given the metaphysics with which Proclus works, there is a basic contradiction in making the term of procession an entity definable in terms of its immediate causes and at the same time providing for amelioration in terms of its more remote causes.

No doubt this is one of the main reasons that Proclus introduces into his system the intermediate term: the self-constituted (to authypostaton on).²⁵ The self-constituted, as the expression itself suggests, is a self-hypostasizing essence (ousia). It is not self-caused in so far as it proceeds from the One. But it is superior or prior to that which proceeds wholly from another cause. The higher realities, the ungenerated (onta), except the One

²⁴ See PROCLUS, ibid.; E. R. DODDS, The Elements ..., p. 219.

²⁵ "All that proceeds from another cause is subordinate to principles which get their substance from themselves and have self-constituted existence." PROCLUS, The Elements..., prop. 40, p. 43.

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(or Goodness) which is not in any manner hypostasized, are self-constituted. The lower realities, the generated (ginomena), since they are generated and dependent for whatever reality (or unity) they have on the higher, need to be completed and perfected by the higher and are, therefore, not self-constituted.

The place that the self-constituted occupies in the movement of reversion is predetermined, as all else in the system, by Goodness. But there is a certain and unmistakable ambiguity in saying this, if in being what it is as a self-constituted entity it has resources of its own that in any way determine its relation to Goodness. We read that the self-constituted is what it is because it can turn back upon itself.²⁶ It reversive movement, in other words, terminates in itself. It finds its perfection, therefore, in achieving its own good and within itself. It is in virtue of the position so attained that it is able to communicate perfection to its inferiors. It is still true, of course,

26 "If, proceeding from itself, it should in proceeding not revert, it could never have appetite of its proper good, a good which it can bestow upon itself. For every cause can bestow on its product, along with the existence which it gives, the well-being which belongs to that existence: hence it can bestow the latter upon itself also, and this is the proper good of the self-constituted." PROCLUS, The Elements..., prop. 42, p. 45.

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that it requires Goodness for its unity. But it does not require the highest principle to establish it as a hypostasis capable of perfecting entities that are not self-constituted.²⁷ Thus the self-constituted is what it is because it is between Goodness and its inferiors, neither of which is self-constituted.

Intelligence is obviously self-constituted. It is capable of turning back on itself, as a whole upon a whole. If anything can be termed "creative" in the Proclean system, it is this act of intelligence.²⁸ Once constituted as self-reversive, intelligence needs nothing more. The only conceivable amelioration that Goodness could effect with respect to it would be to cause it to be a higher hypostasis. But then it would no longer be self-constituted.

Proclus' efforts to balance reversion against procession are aimed at the ultimate unity of efficient and

27 "For if it is by nature (kata physin) reverted upon itself, and is made complete by such reversion, it must derive its existence from itself, since the goal of natural reversion for any term is the source from which its existence proceeds. If, then, it is the source of its own well-being, it will certainly be also the source of its own being and responsible for its own existence as a substance. Thus what is able to revert upon itself is self-constituted." PROCLUS, The Elements..., prop. 43, p. 45.

28 See above: p. 52.

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final causality.²⁹ To accomplish this he interposes intermediary terms in both the causal series of procession and reversion without which terms procession and reversion cannot take place.³⁰ The intermediaries do preserve the unicity and supremacy of the One and Goodness. But if they do this because the One or Goodness could not produce anything subsequent to It without sacrificing Its absolute primacy, then the dependence of what is produced is not absolute. There are really no "creatures" in the Proclean universe.

2. Thomas Aquinas and Proclus

When Thomas Aquinas read and commented upon the texts of Proclus, he was very careful to accord him the usual respect due to the mediaeval auctoritas. His interpretative reading, like that of Denis or Augustine, even in those instances where no reconciliation with his own doctrine was possible, was "reverent". It is not surprising, for

29 "All that exists has the Good as its principium (arche) and first cause (aitia protiste)."
PROCLUS, The Elements..., prop. 12, p. 15. "The reversion of the end (telos) upon the beginning (arche) makes the whole order one and determinate." ibid., prop. 146, p. 129.

30 "In a complete causal series the first term is 'imparticipable' (amethekton). This means that in no way do the things it produces share it among them. The cause, thus imparticipable or transcendent, remains by itself in detachment from every succeeding stage. In drawing out the consequences of this position, Proclus introduces the intermediate terms which are held to be characteristic of his system." T. WHITTAKER, The Neo-Platonists, p. 171.

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example, to find a forthright rejection of a doctrine he attributes to the Platonici in the same pages that give approval to a Proclean doctrine scarcely different from the one rejected. St. Thomas' handling of the Liber de Causis exhibits this practice.

In the tenth proposition of the Liber de Causis, where Proclus deals with the various degrees of universality of forms or intelligible species within the intelligences, there is nothing that is not typical of his general philosophy.³¹ In St. Thomas' exposition of this proposition, one finds the doctrine of the Platonici contrasted with his own and presumably that of Proclus. In support of his own position, Thomas invokes the authority of Aristotle, Augustine and Denis. Among the criteria that highlight the contrast, and no doubt the most important in Thomas' mind, is consonance with the tenets of the Christian faith. The teaching of the Platonici that comes in for the strongest criticism would be, then, that which agrees least with

³¹ "Omnis intelligentia est plena formis; verutamen ex intelligentiis sunt quae continent formas plus universales, et ex eis sunt quae continent formas minus universales." PROCLUS, De Causis, prop. 10, p. 66. Pagination is to H. D. Saffrey's edition which contains St. Thomas' exposition. References to St. Thomas will be given simply as, In de Causis, followed by the number of the proposition and the page of this edition.

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Christian doctrine.³² Basically this is concerned with the derivation of perfections found in creatures and the role of the intelligences in the derivative process.

The Platonici, according to St. Thomas, err by delegating the causal influence of Goodness or God to the intelligences. They do this by limiting the knowledge of particulars and individuals the responsibility of separated intelligences.³³ This means that, since any perfection conferred by intelligence is coextensive with the knowledge it has of the recipient of the perfection, the divine intelligence does not precontain and cause the perfections of all things. This directly contravenes St. Thomas' insistence that God is "ipsa bonitas et ipsum esse, in seipso virtualiter comprehendens omnium entium perfectiones."³⁴

In the text of Proclus there is little to indicate that he would not be more agreeable to the position of the

32 See In de Causis, prop. 10, p. 67.

33 "Aliqui male intellexerunt existimantes quod Deus non cognosceret nisi universalem naturam entis; cui consequens esset quod in inferioribus intellectibus tanto uniuscuiusque cognitio magis in universali sisteret, quanto essent altior; puta quod unus intellectus cognosceret solam naturam substantiae, inferior vero naturam corporis, et sic usque ad individuas species." In de Causis, prop. 10, p. 70.

34 In de Causis, prop. 10, p. 68.

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Platonici than he would be to the doctrine that St. Thomas defends. Nor is there reason to think that in this particular place he is not consistent in his positing of intermediate terms in the processive and reversionary movements. What is being said here is that the higher intellects, being closer to the One, are more unitary and require fewer principles (forms or species) to exercise their power than the lower.³⁵ St. Thomas agrees to this after recasting the Proclean system so that it will correspond to his own (and the Areopagite's) hierarchy of angelic intelligences.³⁶ However, in the Quaestiones Disputatae he alludes to the same proposition in the Liber de Causis as militating against the thesis which says that the creative power of God cannot be

35 "Et in primis intelligentiis est virtus magna, quoniam sunt vehementioris unitatis quam intelligentiae secundae inferiores; et in intelligentiis secundis sunt virtutes debiles, quoniam sunt minoris unitatis et pluris multiplicatae. Quod est quia intelligentiae propinquae uni vero puro sunt minoris quantitatis et maioris virtutis, et intelligentiae quae sunt longiquiores ab uno puro sunt pluris quantitatis et debilioris virtutis." PROCLUS, De Causis, prop. 10, p. 66.

36 "Et quia natura inferioris intelligentiae non est tantae simplicitatis et unitatis quantae naturae superioris intelligentiae, ideo nec formae intelligibiles recipiuntur in intelligentia inferiori in illa unitate in qua sunt in superioribus; ita quod ea quae intelliguntur a superiori intelligentia per unam speciem intelligibilem, inferior intelligentia intelligit per plures." In de Causis, prop. 10, p. 71.

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communicated to the intelligences.³⁷ The allusion to the tenth proposition occurs in the answer to an objection which is a reformulation of another Proclean thesis in the Liber de Causis.³⁸ The more kindly treatment of Proclus in the exposition of the Liber de Causis can be explained, perhaps, by the fact that a reverent interpretation is not called for in the type of work represented by the Quaestiones Disputatae.

It remains to be seen whether St. Thomas deals with Denis in the same way, especially since many of the Proclean theses reappear in the Areopagite's works. Indeed Denis could be called a Neo-Platonist solely on the strength of what he borrows from Proclus. Common to the two writers are

37 "Error iste expresse in libro de Causis (prop. 10) invenitur, quod creaturae inferiores creatae sunt a Deo superioribus mediantibus: unde in hoc auctoritas illius non recipienda." S. THOMAS, Quaestiones Disput. De Pot., q. 3, art. 4, ad 10.

38 "In lib. de Causis (prop. 19) dicitur quod illa quae est intelligentia secunda, non recipit ex bonitatibus primis, quae procedunt ex causa prima, nisi mediante in intelligentia superiori." ibid., obj. 10. St. Thomas' position is clear enough here, but in his exposition of the nineteenth proposition he deals critically with the Platonici without relating their position to that of Proclus. The Proclean hierarchy of mediating gods and intelligences are exonerated by simply identifying them with Dionysian angels who are created and who do not create.

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doctrines generally associated with Neo-Platonism. The most important of these is the exaltation of Goodness and the One over being or existence. The use of Platonic participation follows next. Less Platonic and more typically Neo-Platonic is the extensive invocation of the principle of diffusion or plenitude which both men make. The overflow of Goodness into things results in a vertical hierarchy of entities related to one another and to their source according to the principle of propinquity. It is possible to go on cataloguing these principles. But their relevance to a discussion of the being of creatures is discovered only in those places where there is a direct application of the principles to the creature-Creator relation. The principle of propinquity, for example, tells us that the highest of the lower touches the lowest of the higher. It may seem at first that so formulated this principle has no bearing on the creature-Creator relation, since any such relation must have as its term the creature, whether lower or higher and the highest, namely, its Creator. However, the relation of lower to higher, of, let us say, soul to intelligence, does have relevance for the creature-Creator relation in that "higher" and "lower", especially within a Neo-Platonic context, have meaning only in relation to the "highest" and, reciprocally, "highest" in terms of the relation of "lower" to "higher". The same may be said for another important Neo-Platonic

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principle, that of receptivity or reception. Whatever is received is received according to the mode, measure or capacity of the recipient. This familiar principle, found in Proclus, Denis and Thomas, is used to describe both a creature to creature relation and a creature-Creator relation.³⁹ Yet the one relation is scarcely understood without the other.

Despite all they share in common, there is a radical difference between the Neo-Platonism of Proclus and that of Denis the Areopagite. Denis is not, as Dodds believes, Proclus' "Christian imitator" and a slavish one at that.⁴⁰ The fundamental difference between Proclus and Denis is that the "Christian imitator" is, at least, a Christian who holds for a doctrine of creation. One should not expect to find in Denis, however, a fully developed and clearly defined theory of creation. It is very difficult for this reason to find an isolated statement in which he declares

39 If one speaks of creation, as St. Thomas does, as a giving of esse, the use of this principle as a correlative assumes great importance for an understanding of the being that the creature receives. The very being of the creature is what it receives by the creative act: "Creare est dare esse." 1. Sent., d. 37, q. 1, art. 1, c. For specific references made by St. Thomas to the Neo-Platonic origin of the principle of receptivity, see R. J. HENLE, St. Thomas and Platonism, p. 331.

40 See E. R. DODDS, The Elements..., p. xii.

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that he is a "creationist". But there is no question that ^{he} does view the universe as totally dependent on God who transcends it in every way: "Primum universorum illud dicere verum quod cum bonitate omni supersubstantialis Thearchia existentium essentias substituens ad esse deduxit."⁴¹

Having said this, he can now go on to establish that there are orders of creatures which can be ranged according to their proximity to their Author. In this task he can draw heavily from Proclus. But never does he fail to repeat the truth of the divine transcendence in such a way that the line between creature and Creator is clearly drawn. This is not the case, as we have just seen, with Proclus.

Admittedly Proclus is much more logical and systematic than Denis. Thus when Denis imports a Proclean argument into the looser structure of his thought, it is brought in more as a material than a formative element and always subject to the authoritative control of Scripture. This must be kept in mind for a proper understanding of the interplay between the texts of Denis and Thomas. But in this confrontation the relationship is much more complex. When Thomas imports a Dionysian argument, he may do so for one

⁴¹ DIONYSIUS, De Coelesti Hierarchia, IV, 1; DIONYSIACA, II, c. IV, sec. 60, pp. 800-801.

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of several reasons. As Durantel has pointed out, the citations that St. Thomas has made to Denis are so numerous and diverse that no general rules can be drawn up.⁴² The rather simplistic effort of Dodds to show that Proclus, like Denis, relied on the authority of Scripture with Plato as the author fails to establish a parallel that could be used to define the use that St. Thomas makes of the Dionysian texts. It is quite true that one of the uses that Thomas makes of Denis is in the elaboration of a "proof from authority". But as any reader of Thomistic writings knows, citations appear in both objections and the answers to them, sometimes in context and sometimes not. In many of these instances, no doctrinal issue is involved. The clarification of Denis' words seems to be sole consideration and the answers to the objections do no more than this. Citations from Denis are also used to exemplify, illustrate or supply a suitable image. Again no doctrinal or authoritative importance need be looked for in citations of this sort. However, St. Thomas does import Dionysian themes into the very centre of many of his most important arguments. This he does as both teacher and expositor. The consummate skill with which he does this can be appreciated if some of the difficulties he has to overcome are taken into account.

⁴²See J. DURANTEL, Saint Thomas et le Pseudo-Denis, pp. 62-68.

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First there is the vagueness and imprecision of Denis' writings which, as Thomas knew them, were for the most part badly translated. Next we must consider that his knowledge of Greek was elementary. But most important is the difficulty of translating the Neo-Platonism of Denis into the philosophical language of his own synthesis whose formation demanded the reconciliation of Aristotelian, Augustinian and other Patristic doctrinal elements, to which we may add other Neo-Platonic traditions with a different orientation. As Saffrey has written, there are two currents of Neo-Platonism that find their way into the middle ages and into the Thomistic synthesis, the one being that of Proclus and Denis and other that of Boethius.⁴³ It is from the latter current that Thomas drew in order to work out his metaphysics of causality to the extent that it employs Neo-Platonic concepts. It is this same metaphysics into which the Proclean and Dionysian doctrines are imported and which transmutes them into elements of his own distinctive teaching.

3. Thomas Aquinas

We now come to the reading of those texts in the De Divinis Nominibus and of St. Thomas' commentaries on them that deal directly with the being of creatures. Our first

⁴³ See H. D. SAFFREY, In de Causis, p. xxxi.

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task will be to consider any objection or doubt (dubitatio) whose resolution sets the tenor of the entire treatise. As its title conveys, the treatise itself purports to deal with the names of God. But if, as Denis insists, God is ineffable how is this possible? How can God, the unnameable, be named?⁴⁴

The answers given by Denis and Thomas reveal the fundamental difference in their respective doctrines. For the author the divine name most properly ascribed to God is Goodness. For the commentator it is Being. Evidence of this metaphysical disparity must be carefully noted throughout the treatise, for it is this disparity that accounts for, not only the differences in their metaphysics of the creature

⁴⁴ DIONYSIUS, De Divinis Nominibus, I, 5; 21, p. 24. In accord with the Marietti policy for editing Thomistic commentaries, Pera divides the Dionysian text into short paragraphs which are numbered continuously through the edition. This simplifies the identification of a precise passage in the commentaries. In our footnotes we will first cite the Dionysian text according to the subdivisions proper to it, i.e., to the chapter number (given in Roman capitals) and to the section number (given in Arabic numbers). This applies to all standard editions of the text. Numbers after the semi-colon refer to Pera's paragraph numbering and to his pagination. All further references to the De Divinis Nominibus will be given simply as DIONYSIUS.

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but also the skillful way in which St. Thomas accommodates the Dionysian texts to suit his own purpose.⁴⁵

In his formulation of the objection, Denis catalogues types of cognition that correspond to the hierarchy of created knowers and declares that none of these affords a grasp of the divine essence. The delineation of this hierarchy is complete, ranging from the lowest kind of sensation to the highest kind of intellection.⁴⁶

Though more carefully elaborated, St. Thomas' presentation of the objection is essentially the same as Denis'. The ground for the objection is the inability of any created knower to comprehend the divine essence.⁴⁷ The

⁴⁵ Though St. Thomas is fully aware of this difference throughout his exposition, he is careful to make Denis appear to agree with his own doctrine: "(Dionysius) ostendit quod hoc nomen ens, vel 'qui est' conventissime de Deo dicitur." S. THOMAS, In Librum De Divinis Nominibus Expositio, V, lect. I; 632, p. 235. All further references to the Expositio will be given simply as S. THOMAS. Italicized words and phrases within quotations taken from St. Thomas' commentaries are quotations of the Dionysian text. Paragraph and pagination numbers are again from the Pera edition.

⁴⁶ DIONYSIUS, ibid.

⁴⁷ "Cum demonstratum sit quod supersubstantialis ~~dictas~~ voce significari non potest, utpote supra omne nomen existens. Ridiculum enim videtur velle tractare de nominibus rei quae nominari non potest." S. THOMAS, I, lect. 3; 77, p. 27.

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importance of this point is stressed by underscoring Denis' statement to the effect that God's knowledge is at once circumscriptive, comprehensive and preapprehensive.⁴⁸

Nothing like this can be claimed for the knowledge of any created knower. God's knowledge is circumscriptive in that it knows the properties and the circumstances of all things. It is comprehensive in that it knows perfectly the quiddities or essences of all things. And it is preapprehensive in that it knows or precontains things not yet created. Not only is such knowledge superior to human modes of cognition. It is also superior to every created mode of knowing. It is thus that a sharp contrast between uncreated knowledge and created knowledge is effected. This contrast excludes the possibility of any sort of divine, yet inferior or subordinate, mediation between Creator and creature.⁴⁹

If there is any knowledge that could qualify as comprehensive of the divine essence, this should be the knowledge that the angels have of God. But this knowledge, properly called mystical, is shown to be deficient. This

⁴⁸ For Denis' indebtedness to Proclus for this formulation, see PROCLUS, Elements, prop. 121, p. 107.

⁴⁹ This consideration, a theological one, excludes subordinationism in which the Son is regarded as the shadow of divine Goodness. The exclusion of this error facilitates the philosophical discussion of the knowledge that any creature can have of God. Thus the Neo-Platonic NOUS has no part in the discussion.

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becomes clear when its conditions are set forth. The language used to describe such knowledge suggests that it attains to, but does not grasp, the divine essence.⁵⁰ This attainment, moreover, is something received according to the capacity of the knower to receive. Though the capacity itself is natural, the knowledge received in it is not determined through any natural operation. Rather one of the conditions for its reception is the cessation of natural operation.⁵¹ Lastly, such knowledge requires a withdrawal from the whole domain of existents. The mode of this knowledge is designated by St. Thomas as per remotionem.

This knowledge is attributed to the angels. But certain men can also possess it. These mystics are said to have intellectual as opposed to rational knowledge. Since the intellectual is more perfect than the merely rational

⁵⁰ "Et licet Angeli videant essentiam, tamen etiam sunt nobis ineffabiles et ignotae sanctarum virtutum unioniones quae conveniunt Angelis, quibus scilicet uniuntur per cognitionem ad divinam essentiam, ipsam aliquammodo attingendo, sed non comprehendendo." S. THOMAS, I, lect. 3; 82, p. 27.

⁵¹ "... in quo quiescit omnis eorum intellectualis operationis." S. THOMAS, I, lect. 3; 83, p. 28.

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mode of knowledge it is described as imitative of the angelic mode.⁵²

Comprehensive knowledge, then belongs to God alone. It is, in St. Thomas' words, "visio...Dei per essentiam", and beyond the power of any created intellect to achieve: "...super naturam cuiuslibet intellectus creati, non solum humani, sed etiam angelici."⁵³ Thus the division effected under the mode per remotionem includes all created knowers. A further division makes a distinction between mystical and non-mystical knowledge.

Both mystical and non-mystical knowledge is received according to the mode natural to the receiver. They are distinguished on the ground that the former is effected without operation. Accessible to the human knower through natural operation is a knowledge of entity or substance. If the mystical mode of knowledge is powerless to comprehend the divine essence, then so much less is this mode able to grasp the divine Hyper-Entity. Hyper-Entity, however, can be equated with Goodness (essentia bonitatis). It is at

⁵² Though each being receives according to its own mode, what it can receive is not limited to its natural capacity. By withdrawal from existence certain men (the Prophets and the Apostles), are elevated to angel-like level: "...secundum imitationem Angelorum, non quidem aequaliter Angelis." S. THOMAS, ibid.

⁵³ S. THOMAS, ibid.

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this point that causality becomes important to the discussion.⁵⁴ In the Dionysian metaphysics Goodness enjoys primacy. But Goodness is also assigned a causal role. God, Denis writes, is omnium existentium causa. This is perfectly acceptable to St. Thomas. The segregation of God and the existent also obtains between God as cause and the effects produced by Him. As the cause of the existent, God cannot be denominated as existent.⁵⁵ In agreeing to this St. Thomas is not subscribing to the Neo-Platonic doctrine that God is non-being.⁵⁶ The existent here is a simple synonym for created substance or entity. Given the context of the via remotionis, there is little else to say. But when it becomes more than simply a question of knowing and

54 "Quoniam autem, sicut bonitatis essentia, per ipsum esse, omnium est existentium causa, boni principem Thearchiae providentiam, ex omnibus causatis laudare convenit." DIONYSIUS, I, 5; 24, p. 25.

55 Here Denis clearly states that (1) God is the cause of the existents and (2) He is nothing or non-being: "...omnium...existentium est causa, Ipsum autem nihil." DIONYSIUS, ibid.

56 St. Thomas' commentary on this point bears upon a statement in which Denis uses only the via negativa. The divine transcendence is, in effect, stressed by the use of negation. To avoid the implication that God is non-being St. Thomas quickly qualifies his exposition of Denis' text by pointing out that no deficiency of being is found in God and by using the way of supereminence: "...cum sit omnium existentium causa, ipse nihil est existentium, non quasi deficiens ab essendo, sed supereminenter segregatus ab omnibus." S. THOMAS, ibid.

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naming, a hierarchy of substances rather than of knowers becomes the focal point in the discussion. This is exactly what happens when the consideration of cause and effect is introduced as a possible basis for justifying a treatise that deals with the divine names.

Some indication of this is already present in the distinction made between mystical and non-mystical knowledge. If it is by a cessation of operation that the mystic has a more perfect (though non-comprehensive) knowledge of God, it is because this knowledge does not depend on the resources of substance or entity. This means that the mystic has a greater share in the divine causality. Thus the determination of substance through its own operation is clearly distinguished from its determination by Hyper-Entity. This is best expressed in terms of causality, and it is in this way that the ontological gradation implied in the hierarchy of knowers becomes more discernible.

When St. Thomas begins his discussion of causality, he raises three questions. The first has to do with the way in which the names of God are derived from a consideration of the ratio of this mode of naming, the second with the names themselves and the third with the refutation of an error.

The ratio of the causal mode of naming is determined by a consideration of the likeness, assimilation or

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similitude through which the effect proceeds from the cause.⁵⁷ To illustrate his meaning St. Thomas distinguishes different ways in which this is true. The first way is exemplified by the instance of one man generating another, in which case the likeness of the effect to the cause is secundum speciem vel naturam. His second example is that of a builder who is said to be the cause of a house. The similitude or likeness here is obviously not per naturam, for the house has a different nature from that of its builder. The likeness of the house is found, then, in the builder's art which is not a perfection given by nature but, rather, one added to nature. No exact counterpart of this is found in Denis' text, though his words could prompt St. Thomas' commentary. But he sees this primarily as a basis for repeating what he has already said about the inability of finite modes of knowledge to comprehend the divine essence. In contrast St. Thomas is more concerned with the causal significance of the Denis' formulas, particularly with the principle of assimilation. A carefully worded explanation of how Goodness can be causal makes this evident.

That which all things desire is properly termed Goodness. Desire is the movement of the one desiring toward

57 "...considerandum est quod cum effectus procedant per quamdam assimilationem a suis causis, secundum modum quo aliquid est causa, prae habet in se similitudinem sui effectus." S. THOMAS, *ibid.*

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the desired. Insofar as the Good is the end of this movement, it is a cause.⁵⁸ That which has the ratio of end is, therefore, a cause. Since God is the unqualified end by which all things are moved He is the first cause. Being first, He has absolutely no causal dependence on any creature.⁵⁹

It follows also that God and creature do not have the same nature or essence (ratio). This would be the case if God produced an effect in the same way one man generates another. This is made clear by an allusion to the illustration of the builder and the house where cause and effect are denominated not secundum eandem rationem but supereminetius in causa.⁶⁰ The supereminence of the cause excludes a

⁵⁸ "Ulterius autem considerandum est, quod cum bonum habeat rationem finis, quia bonum est quod omnia appetunt, finis autem est prima causarum, bonum est cui primo competit ratio causandi. Secundum hoc igitur quod aliquid se habet ad bonum, secundum hoc se habet quod sit causa." S. THOMAS, I, lect. 3; 87, p. 28.

⁵⁹ "Non autem Deus est propter creaturas, sed e converso." S. THOMAS, I, lect. 3; 91, p. 29.

⁶⁰ "Omnis autem causa intantum potest nominari ex nomine sui effectus, inquantum habet in se similitudinem eius. Si enim sit similitudo secundum identitatem rationis, nomen illud conveniet causae et causato, sicut nomen hominis, generanti et generato. Si vero non sit similitudo secundum eandem rationem, sed sit supereminetius in causa, non dicetur nomen de utroque secundum unam rationem, sed supereminetius de causa, sicut calor de sole et igne." S. THOMAS I, lect. 3; 89, p. 29.

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community of nature or essence, but at the same time allows for a convenientia between creature and Creator. The likeness that exists in the divine mind, it should be added, is in no way less than God's esse. Does this imply that the uncreated esse that things have in the divine mind prevent their having an esse of their own? This remains to be seen.

This exposition, apparently based solely on a consideration of final causality, might possibly give the impression that efficient causality is not involved in the relation of effect and cause. Does St. Thomas concede anything to Platonism here inasmuch as the Platonists assume the primacy of Goodness? We must answer negatively, for both Denis and Thomas successfully avoid giving any such impression. Though Denis does not develop the doctrine of creationism as Thomas does, he leaves no doubt concerning the causal dependence of the universe on the Creator and that God in creating is an efficient cause. St. Thomas' rendering of the Areopagite's text, however, emphasizes the creationist doctrine in terms of efficient causality:

Et ne aliquis credat esse Deum causam rerum per modum finis, ut quidam posuerunt et non per modum factionis et conservationis, subiungit: et esse hanc, scilicet Deitatem vel Providentiam divinam, est tutorum, idest omnium vel perfectorum, deductio, idest, productio, et substantia; ac si dicat: Ipsa

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Deitas per suum esse est causa productionis
et existentiae rerum.⁶¹

We should see also in this text the overt substitution of one technical term for another which in each case appears to be more than a merely transliteration. For example St. Thomas' "productio" in lieu of Denis' "deductio" provides a decidedly ontological accentuation, thus leaving little doubt of the causal rather than the logical character of the emanation of creatures from the Creator.

That God is both the final and efficient cause of the universe is now definitely established. This makes it possible to use the names of creatures in referring to the Creator, provided that the causal relation is the basis for the convenientia between creature and Creator. Two movements are now discerned. The one is the emanation from cause to effect and the other from effect to cause. This consideration St. Thomas acknowledges to be Platonic.⁶² This return is effected by a desire on the part of the effect for its own good. Thus since God is the first cause from which all

61 S. THOMAS, I, lect. 3; 93, p. 29.

62 "Est autem ulterius considerandum quod omnis effectus convertitur ad causam a qua procedit, ut Platonici dicunt. Cuius ratio est quia unaquaeque res convertitur ad suum bonum, appetendo illud; bonum autem effectus est ex sua causa, unde omnis effectus convertitur ad suam causam, appetendo ipsam." S. THOMAS, I, lect. 3; 94, p. 29.

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things proceed, the return to Him is to be found in the desire of all things for Him. It should be observed that the return is not restricted to cognition or a purely contemplative movement. Accordingly a wider meaning is given to the term desiderium by the Angelic Doctor than the connotation it has as being consequent on knowledge. Desire in the wider sense is manifested on every level of existence, ranging from the intellectual desire of angelic natures to the world of generation and corruption in which the aptitude for substantial being is a blind desire and in which qualitative and quantitative dispositions and even local motions exhibit a "desire" for God. Thus all being is tendential. Tendency is construed, therefore, as the universal movement of return or reversion of all things back to their cause. Since, moreover, each particular good manifests Goodness, the tendency of each thing is, in effect, a desire for God.⁶³

Thus by distinguishing two ways in which an effect may manifest its cause, two truths are placed side by side. The first is that God transcends all things and the second is that He is the cause of all things. But in causing the

⁶³ "Omnia enim huiusmodi licet non cognoscant Deum tamen dicuntur Ipsum desiderare, inquantum tendunt ad quoddam bonum particulare. In omni autem bono particulari refulget Primum Bonum, ex quo habet quodlibet bonum quod sit appetibile." S. THOMAS, I, lect. 3; 95, p. 29.

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universe God does not generate it, for if He did the first cause and its effect would have the same nature. God creates. For this reason He can be denominated "Goodness" even as His creatures are denominated "good".⁶⁴ This mode of naming gives creatures a certain community (convenientia) with their Creator. This community must be admitted if the assimilation of effect and cause is affirmed.

The development of the second question of the three St. Thomas promised to discuss takes the form of a catalogue of names gleaned from Scripture and, in line with Denis' avowed intention at the beginning of his treatise, the possibility of saying something about the first Cause of all things ex multis causatis is realized.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ The word 'Bonitas' is abstract in form, but it should be taken as a superlative to distinguish it from 'bonum' which when used as a substantive designates a good thing. Thus 'Bonitas' does not imply composition. This can be carried over to other similar forms such as 'Unitas' and 'unum', 'Pulchritudo' and 'pulchrum'. Thus 'Bonitas' can be equated to the Divine Essence: "Ipsa divina Essentia est ipsa bonitas". S. THOMAS, IV, lect. 1; 269, p. 87.

⁶⁵ This exemplifies the easy transition from a theological discussion of the divine names to a metaphysical treatment of causality: "Ita igitur Deo, qui est omnium causa et tamen super omnia existens, convenit et esse innominabile, inquantum super omnia existens, et tamen conveniunt Ei omnia nomina existentium, sicut omnium Causae; et rationem subiungit." ST. THOMAS, I, lect. 3; 98, p. 30.

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The third question is polemic in nature. It concerns the error of certain persons to whom St. Thomas alludes as the Platonici.⁶⁶ It consists, as St. Thomas' account of it reads, in positing diverse principles for the processions of diverse perfections. Thus for all living things a single principle, which they named prima vita, is posited. A similar reduction is effected for knowledge and for existence. St. Thomas interprets Denis' principalis substantia omnium as excluding this error. From God alone, then, each of these perfections comes. St. Thomas does not leave Denis' words here without this qualification: inquantum est principium existendi omnibus.

Having thus recognized God as the single source from which every perfection emanates, the possibility of arriving at such a doctrine from a consideration of this or that instance among creatures is denied. From what follows it is quite evident that St. Thomas agrees with Denis on the necessity of looking to the whole of creation for evidence of a single cause. The characterization of the relation of one being to another is, therefore, as important as the way each being is in itself. Thus God creates and conserves things in being not simply by taking care of each thing

⁶⁶ The Neo-Platonism here is easily recognized as that of Proclus. See: PROCLUS, *ibid.*, Prop. 22. (Dodds, p. 27).

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singly, as would be the case if the nature of each thing were enough to supply all its needs.⁶⁷ There are three ways in which this is manifested in creatures. Thus according to these three ways God is called respectively causa contentiva, custodia and cibus.

God is causa contentiva with respect to the heavenly bodies that need to be conserved only in their principles because they are impervious to corruption from without:

Quaedam...sunt quae indigent nisi ut in suis principiis conserventur, quae ab exteriori corrumpi non posunt, ut corpora coelestia; et quantum ad hoc dicit quod est causa contentiva, quia haec continet in esse.⁶⁸

Next there are those creatures which, though they are not deficient from their principles, can be corrupted from without as water can be destroyed by fire. God protects these creatures from destruction from outside forces and is, accordingly, named their defender, custodia.

Finally we come to animals and men whose needs are designated as supplementa. These are supplied by God and the clearest instance here is food. In this way the appropriateness of Denis' use of cibus is expounded by St. Thomas.

⁶⁷ Thus not only is God named from those perfections that He communicates universally to things, such as their being and their goodness, but also from particular perfections such as wisdom and justice. See S. THOMAS, ibid.

⁶⁸ S. THOMAS, ibid.

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Because all things receive from God whatever they require, they turn to Him. Therefore, to the three titles designated contentiva, custodia and cibus, a fourth, and more embracing name may be added, causa conversiva. God is so named because all things desire him as their end.

All these things God does simply. He is called cause in these different ways, but He is a single power:

Et haec omnia conveniunt Deo unitive, id est non secundum diversas virtutes, sed secundum unam simplicem virtutem; et communicabiliter segregate, quia ita communicat aliis causalitates praedictas, quod tamen quidam singularis modus causandi separatim remanet apud Eum.⁶⁹

The third mode of naming God, as St. Thomas describes it, is per sensibiles similitudines. Denis sees the variegated objects of sensation that are spoken of in Scripture as symbols of the divine. Each sensible thing, however insignificant it may seem, is in some way contemplable as Godlike. A systematic treatment of this way of naming was promised by Denis, but was not available to St. Thomas. For this reason the commentary does little more than categorize it as a third way of naming.

There are, then, essentially three ways of naming God: per remotionem which is based on the divine transcendence; per intelligibiles processiones which is based on

69 S. THOMAS, ibid.

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causality; and per sensibiles similitudines which is based on the likeness of all things to God. These three ways are not mutually exclusive. For our purpose they suggest respectively a metaphysics of analogy, a metaphysics of causality and a metaphysics of sensible nature.

Thus no dramatic resolution of the objection raised at the beginning of the lectio appears. There is simply a patient analysis of the way God receives His names. Yet the Thomistic doctrine of the being of creatures is clearly distinguishable from the Dionysian. While both authors stress the transcendence of the Creator and the correlative dependence of the creature, there is a basic discrepancy in the metaphysical emphasis each author displays. For Denis God transcends the universe of creatures, because He is Goodness. For Thomas God is Being.

CHAPTER III

GOODNESS, BEING AND THE CREATURE

1. Goodness

The fourth chapter of the De Divinis Nominibus presents no special problems concerning what is to be treated. In short it is concerned with the Good or Goodness and Its circulation among things below It. Given the Platonic and Neo-Platonic background of the tradition of Goodness (or the One) as characteristic of all philosophies in which It is named first and highest, we already have some idea of its meaning.

Denis opens the chapter by alluding to the superlative form of the word "good" as it has been customarily used by the sacred writers when they speak about God. This has the double effect of expressing the transcendence of the Creator and the dependence of the Creature on Him. An analogy supplies a suitable image and introduces a principle often used in the treatise: As those things receiving light from the sun are illumined in the measure they are able to receive its rays, so whatever the creature receives from

God is received according to its own measure or mode to receive.¹

When St. Thomas comments on this, he displays his typical reverence for the Dionysian text. To the divine name Goodness he accords the deepest respect. This name is the source for naming God. Aware that this has been said before, he nevertheless considers it worth repeating.² Making capital of the distinction between Bonitas and bonum, he then adds the weight of Scriptural authority to the Dionysian text by quoting from St. Luke: Nemo bonus nisi solus Deus. A formidable question is thus raised: If God alone is Goodness, how can anything else be denominated "good"?

1 "Etenim sicut noster sol, non ratiocinans aut praeeligens, sed per ipsum esse illuminat omnia, participare lumine ipsius secundum propriam rationem valentia, ita quidem et bonum, super solem, sicut super obscuram imaginem segregat archetypum, per ipsam essentiam omnibus existentibus proportionaliter immittit totius bonitatis radios." DIONYSIUS, IV, 1; 96, p. 85.

2 "Et primam, si videtur, perfectam et totarum Dei processionum manifestivam, boni nominationem inspiciemus, boni principem et superbonam invocantes Trinitatem, quae est manifestiva totarum providentiarum, benigne ab ipsa donatarum." DIONYSIUS, III, 1; 78, p. 71. "Dicit ergo primo quod si hoc conveniens videbitur, inter alias divinas nominationes, nunc debemus considerare ipsam nominationem boni, id est secundum quam Deus nominatur bonus." S. THOMAS, III, lect. un; 225, pp. 74-75.

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St. Thomas begins his answer by paraphrasing St. Luke's statement. God alone is Goodness. God alone is Ipsa Bonitas. Nothing else is Goodness, because God alone is good through His own essence. Everything else is good through participation. This asymmetrical relation of creature to Creator can be conveniently designated as the relation of bonum-per-participationem to bonum-per-essentiam. But without further elaboration this designation does not convey too much. Thus the formula is enriched by equating bonum-per-essentiam with suum esse and bonitas. This permits St. Thomas to say of Goodness what he can say about esse, namely: something is good insofar as it is in act. Next, he translates the language of participation into terms of perfection. Thus nothing can be added to the divine esse, for it is complete Goodness. But the creature is good only because something is added to its esse. Finally since Goodness is the ultimate end, it is not ordered to any other good. The converse is true for the created good.

The derivation of all good things from underived Goodness emphasizes the universality of the divine emanation. Providence is universal for the same reason. Thus the name Goodness locates the source of all instances in which

Providence is manifested.³ Denis is always careful to keep the universality of Providence intact. Thus the superlative Goodness is above the created existent and the doctrine of divine transcendence is always preserved. But since this transcendence makes Goodness non-being, there is nothing to prevent Denis from saying that a principle or principles on this side of Goodness can give being to things. The line of demarcation between Goodness and the existent, therefore, is not necessarily the line that divides Creator and creature. This permits Denis to introduce other creative principles in his universe. These principles can be denominated Ideas and Powers.

The Ideas are, first of all, models or paradigms for things, determining them and defining them and even

3 Though Providence for Denis seems to be a mere extension of the principle of diffusion by which God is manifested, there is besides the speculative a practical mode according to which things are governed as is made clear in another part of the work:

"Deitas autem, quae omnia videt providentia et bonitate perfecta omnia circumspiciens et continens et seipsa implens et excedens omnia, providentia ipsa utentia." DIONYSIUS, XII, 1; 431, p. 353.

"In nomine autem providentiae intelligitur cognitio non per modum speculationis tantum, sed secundum quod est directiva et inclinativa ad rerum gubernationem." S. THOMAS, XII, lect. 12; 948; p. 355.

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producing them.⁴ They are, in the true Platonic spirit, definitely ante rem. In this sense they are predeterminations. They express the purpose that God has in mind for things and are, so to speak, "wills". The adjectives "good" and "divine" are applicable to them. They appear to have influence in the two orders of knowledge and reality. Thus ontologically they are causes and noetically they are principles. Correlatively they have the aspect of final cause in the sense that they represent what things should be. Their effects are related to them through participation.

Among the effects we encounter the Powers (Virtutes) as comprising a triad of the perfections: per-se-esse, per-se-vita and per-se-sapientia. St. Thomas makes it clear that these are not creative principles in any sense separable from God. If they are inseparable from God they cannot be creatures. No creature can create. They must be then one with the single supersubstantial principle and cause of all creatures. There is however a second way of speaking of these Powers or perfections. In this sense they represent the perfections of creatures as they pre-exist in God and at

⁴ "Exemplaria autem esse dicimus in Deo existentium rationes substantificas, et singulariter praeexistantes, quas Theologia praediffinitiones vocat et divinas et bonas voluntates, existentium praedeterminativas et effectivas, secundum quas substantialis essentia omnia praediffinivit et produxit." DIONYSIUS, V, 8; 282, p. 248.

the same time as they are received by creatures.⁵ It is not clear at this point in Denis whether the universe begins with the Powers or with the Ideas.⁶ It would seem that for the Aeropagite God is the only super-essential unity and that other unifying principles under which existing and living things can be subsumed cannot be identified with God. For St. Thomas there is no question about the identification of the powers with God. There is no gradation of God, Powers, and Ideas. The only reason, it seems, that he discusses these principles is to emphasize the single source

5 "Alio autem modo, per se esse et per se vita dicuntur virtutes vel perfectiones quaedam secundum providentiam unius Dei imparticipabilis datae creaturis ad participandum. Licet enim Deus, qui est harum virtutum principium, in se imparticipabilis maneat et per consequens non participetur, tamen dona Ipsius dividuntur in creaturis et partialiter recipiuntur, unde et participari dicuntur a creaturis." S. THOMAS, XI, lect. 4; 934, p. 347.

6 This much however is clear. The Powers proceed from God and at the same time are God although they are not identical with his substance. The basis for this is that the powers are not manifested in creatures while the divine substance remains ineffable. "Non enim promittit enarrare per se substantialem bonitatem et Deitatem, et substantiam et vitam et sapientiam per se substantialis Divinitatis quae est super omnem bonitatem et deitatem et substantiam et vitam et sapientiam in absconditis, sicut eloquia dicunt, supercollocatam; sed manifestatam bonitatem et excedenter beneficam Providentiam et omnium bonorum causam laudat et existentem et vitam et sapientiam, quae facit substantiam et vivificat et est sapientia donatrix causa his quae substantia et vita et ratione et sensu participant." DIONYSIUS, V, 2; 257, p. 228.

from which all creatures emanate. As theophanic manifestations of Providence, creatures are many and seem to be so many ways for them to participate in the inexhaustible Goodness.

To understand this we have to take into account the characteristically Dionysian concept of causality in its theophanic aspect. To cause in this special sense is to make the invisible visible, as the sun does by illuminating all things that are able to receive its light. Having received light from the sun they naturally desire or tend toward it.

St. Thomas sees this analogy for what it is.⁷ It merely serves to illustrate the deeper meanings that he reads into Denis' text. As the material sun diffuses its light to things in proportion to their capacity of being illumined and does so without reasoning or choice, so God who is Goodness diffuses good among existing things. Now God is called the archetype, id est principale exemplar vel figura. Things that receive the rays of the divine Goodness participate in the principal exemplar as things illuminated by the sun participate in its light. But the sun is merely an obscure image. Thus while it is true that the sun diffuses light per ipsum esse and that God diffuses good per ipsum esse, it

⁷ See S. THOMAS, IV, lect. 1; 270, 271, p. 88.

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is not true that the divine diffusion is undeliberated. Because ipsum esse, intelligere and velle are exactly one and the same in God, whatever God does per intellectum and per voluntatem He does per ipsum esse.

The identification of ipsum esse with the divine intellect and will does not occur in Denis, for the divine Goodness is above ipsum esse. This is not so for St. Thomas for whom esse can be identified with Goodness. The Thomistic universe begins with created being and nothing divine exists between created being and the first Being. The Ideas or Exemplars, therefore, are not creatures. There is no creature-Creator distinction, then, between the Ideas and the Powers. The rays that are received from the first Being represent the capacity in each creature to be good by the divine Goodness or the first Being. As always, Goodness refers to unreceived or underived Goodness which is not above, but identical with, subsistent Ipsum Esse.

Now the Angelic Doctor is ready to discuss the different ways in which good is received by angelic and rational natures. Prefacing his discussion is an analysis of Denis' remarks on the nature and powers of intellectual beings. It soon becomes evident that if the continuity of the universe is to be maintained, something of a lower order must be elevated to a higher one by adding a non-substantial perfection to its being. We have seen, for example, that it

is possible for certain men to become more than they are in their nature. This hypostasizing of a nonsubstantial perfection allows for the elevation of a being to a level beyond that which the resources of its own nature will take it. This must be kept in mind when St. Thomas discusses the various orders of intellectual natures as they are determined in relation to the good they receive from God. These various orders are designated intelligibiles, intellectuales, substantiae, virtutes and operationes.⁸ Determined and produced by the divine rays which represent the distribution of the divine Goodness among them, they enjoy a life without deficiency, without diminution, without the least shadow of corruption or death, without matter, without birth and without change.

⁸ "Propter ipsos substiterunt intelligibiles et intellectuales omnes et substantiae et virtutes et operationes; Propter istos sunt et vivunt habet indeficientem et imminorabilem, a corruptione universa, morte et materia et generatione mundaе existentes et instabili et fluxa et aliquando aliter ferente variatione elevante." DIONYSIUS, IV, 1; 97-98, pp. 85-86. The triad of substance (ousia), power (dunamis) and operation (energeia) is familiar enough and easily recognized as Aristotelian. But in Aristotle the triad is located within the human composite. Thus he lists the human intellect along with other powers of the soul. See ARISTOTLE, De Anima II, 3; 414a 29-31. St. Thomas reads this triad into each of the subsisting angels, while admitting, however, that the Platonici consider the intelligibilia and the intellectuales: "...Platonici in substantiis separatis (distinguunt) intelligibilia ab intellectualibus." S. THOMAS, IV, lect. 1; 276, p. 88. But it remains questionable whether or not Denis should be included among these Platonici.

The intelligibiles and the intellectuales are distinguished according to the reference they have to nature and operation. An intelligence is an intelligibilis in act, if reference is made to its nature. Thus an intelligence is an intellectualis in act, if reference is made to its understanding. Thus a higher angel (intelligibilis) is given more by nature than a lower angel (intellectualis), because this position does not depend upon its nature, but, rather, upon a perfection added to its nature. A parallel can be drawn here between the heavenly bodies and the higher angels insofar as both need only to be conserved in their nature. The same sort of reasoning can be applied to the other orders.

Thus we see that Denis' universe of intellectual creatures begins with the exemplars and continues on to the lowest of immaterial intellects, human intellects. The higher angels are intelligibiles, the lower intellectuales.

Each immaterial creature has its place or its dwelling (mansio) ex bonitate. Denis repeats the reference to conservation and uses similitudes to corporeal creatures to work out another aspect of his hierarchy. St. Thomas' commentaries on Denis' one sentence are relatively long. For this reason we can suppose that St. Thomas regarded these few words as important:

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Et mansionem ex bonitate habent et collocatio
ipsis inde est et continentia et custodia et
cibus bonorum.⁹

St. Thomas first points out that there are five comparisons that can be made between corporeal things and the immaterial mansiones.¹⁰ The first of these pertains to the location of a body in a place. A body has its place because it is a substance. Similarly incorporeal creatures are located through the operations of their intellects and wills. Second, a corporeal dwelling has need of a foundation on which to stand. For incorporeal creatures this foundation is in the primal intelligible truth in relation to intellect and in the ultimate end in relation to will. Third, lower bodies are contained under a higher order. Thus angels are contained under Providence. Fourth, corruptible bodies, to the extent that they are corruptible, stand in need of protection from being corrupted. Though angels are not substantially corruptible as bodies are, their intellects and wills are mutable and so need to be confirmed by God. Fifth, living corporeal creatures need sustenance in order to survive. Angels are similarly conserved in being by God Who nourishes their intellects and wills.

9 DIONYSIUS, IV, 1; 100, p. 86.

10 See S. THOMAS, IV, lect. 1; 279, p. 89.

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This could well be construed as an argument for grace and there is no reason why it should not be. But it also has a deep metaphysical import. This becomes clear in both Denis' and Thomas' remarks on the desire for Goodness.

It is by desiring Goodness, Denis tells us, that angels possess their being and their happiness. It is by conforming to Goodness that each angel, according to its capacity to receive, is good and is able to communicate those good things it has to other creatures below it. This is divine Law.¹¹

St. Thomas underlines here both the diffusion and the reversion. The Divine Law is a metaphysical law governing the whole universe and balancing it: Communication is precisely proportioned to reversion. There is no giving without receiving. There is no receiving without desire.

¹¹ "Et ipsam desiderantes et esse et bene esse habent et ad ipsam, sicut est possibile, figuratae et boniformes sunt et sequentibus communicant, sicut divina lex inducit dona ad ipsos ex bono venientia." DIONYSIUS, IV, 1; 101, p. 86.

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The esse of the creature and the esse bene of the creature are at once effected by God and terminated in Him.¹²

Once the consideration of esse bene is introduced the relation of one creature to another must be discussed, for esse bene (or happiness) implies that there is an order in which it is possible.

There are three headings under which order can be discussed.¹³ First, distinction with agreement is necessary, for there is no room for a discussion of order without distinction of one being from another and without agreement of those things distinguished. The second consideration is cooperation. The third is end.

12 "Divina enim Bonitas convertit omnia ad seipsam ...et ideo sequitur quod propter divinam Bonitatem, Angeli ipsam desiderant, non tamquam carentes eo quod desiderant, sicut imperfecti, sed sicut habentes esse et bene esse, quantum ad ipsos et configurati divinae Bonitati et deiformes effecti, inquantum inferioribus communicant divina dona, quae ad eos de Summo Bono veniunt et hoc, sicut lex divina inducit. Est enim lege divina sancitum, ut bona quae a Deo accipimus, inferioribus communicemus et sic conformamur Bonitati eius, ex qua omnia bona profluunt." S. THOMAS, IV, lect. 1; 280, p. 89.

13 "Considerandum est autem quod ad ordinem tria concurrunt: primo quidem distinctio cum convenientia; secundo, cooperatio; tertio, finis. Dico autem distinctionem cum convenientia, quia ubi non est distinctio, ordo locum non habet; si autem quae distinguuntur in nullo convenient, unius ordinis non essent." S. THOMAS, IV, lect. 1; 283, p. 89.

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As regards the first consideration, angels belong to one order insofar as they are contained under one order. There is no suggestion here that the angels belong to one species. Denis says they are united to one another and Thomas explains this in terms of continuity. One angel is in contact with another through intellect and will. Through these powers one angel can receive another yet retain its propriety of substance. Agreement, necessary for order, is thus assured through continuity which in turn is assured through knowledge and love. Distinction, also necessary for order, is assured through the discrete otherness that each angel enjoys in virtue of its substantiality.

As regards the second consideration, that of co-operation, St. Thomas says first that three things are required for cooperation among substances each of which has its own proper operation. First there must be an elevation of the inferior to the superior through the powers of the inferior. Third each power must be preserved as it is. This consideration of cooperation is aligned beautifully with the consideration of order. No angel loses its identity, yet its identity can be intensified, elevated and expanded through cooperation.

As regards the third consideration, that of end, St. Thomas has considerably more to say. His discussion is protracted in part by allusions to Denis' remarks on the

different orders of angels and on the different motions to which their operations can be compared. We shall abstract from these explanations in order to concentrate on the more salient points. End can be taken two ways. First it can be taken as the relation between one being and another in the same order. Thus the operation of one being is ordered to another as an end. Second it can be taken as the end that exists above the order. Thus God is the end of all the angels, because even in knowing and loving one another they desire God.

Moving down from the incorporeal creatures to rational and irrational natures, Denis continues to repeat the same doctrine in different ways. He tells us once more that Goodness is above all things, and that, though itself lacking form, forms all things. Entity or the existent (existens) is now opposed to form. In developing this neo-Platonic theme Denis employs the via negativa and via supereminetiae. Since Goodness is above every existent it is non-being (anousia) non-life and non-mind. Being, life and mind have reference to entity or the existent. The negation,

therefore, of the existent is coupled with supereminence.¹⁴

Now St. Thomas sets this in the historical perspective of Greek Philosophy.¹⁵ Plato, we are informed, rectified the error of his predecessors who failed to distinguish matter and form in things that are generated and corrupted. The philosophers that Plato corrected had identified some body in act, like air or fire, with matter. St. Thomas credits Plato with seeing that matter of its very nature is without species. What Plato himself failed to do, however, was distinguish matter and privation. For this reason, Plato and his disciples call matter non-being. Matter, since it is not formed, is non-being. Now St. Thomas points out that Denis uses this vocabulary and subscribes to this doctrine. He also explains that this is opposed by Aristotle who teaches that privation is a principle per accidens.

But, as if to vindicate Denis, St. Thomas alludes to the Platonici in order to turn another facet of the

14 "Si autem et super omnia existentia est, sicut quidem est, bonum et carens forma format et in ipso solo non-existens, substantiae excessus et non-vivens, excedens vita et sive mente existens, excellens sapientia et quaecumque in bono non formatorum sunt excedentis formationis; et si fas est dicere, bonum quod est super omnia existentia et ipsum non existens desiderat et certat aliquo modo in bono et ipsum esse, quod est vere substantiale, secundum ab omnibus ablationem." DIONYSIUS, IV, 3; 111, p. 95.

15 See S. THOMAS, IV, lect. 2; 295, 296, p. 96.

problem to his readers. The higher the cause, he tells us, the greater the number of things to which it extends.

Proclus' Elements of Theology is the source for this:

"Every cause both operates prior to its consequent and gives rise to a greater number of posterior terms."¹⁶ The relevance of this proposition to the present discussion is seen in the extension of the divine causality to prime matter. Important for the understanding of St. Thomas' use of this proposition is the elimination in this instance of any delegation of causality to secondary causes. Thus prime matter is the direct effect of God. The line in which this causality is operative is final causality. The movement is one of reversion:

Omne autem causatum convertitur in suam causam per desiderium, unde materia prima desiderat bonum, secundum quod desiderium nihil aliud esse videtur quam privatio et ordo ipsius ad actum.¹⁷

Privation, now placed in a Neo-Platonist context, fits in with the Aristotelian act-potency principle. But it is not meaningful solely as a physical principle of generation. The uses of the Proclean principle gives it a metaphysical meaning. So Denis is forgiven for not

16 PROCLUS, The Elements, prop. 57; p. 55.

17 S. THOMAS, IV, lect. 2; 296, p. 96.

subscribing to the Aristotelian doctrine of privation and for using the technical terminology of the Platonici.

Now it is possible to explain how informitas can be attributed both to God and to prime matter.¹⁸ God, who is the first Good, is without form non per defectum, sed per excessum. Prime matter is without form per defectum. Prime matter, being without form, desires form. In desiring form, it desires what God can give it. This desire or inclinatio is, moreover, a likeness (similitudo) of the divine Esse.¹⁹ Thus there is a likeness of God in prime matter which is farthest removed from Him.

It is in the light of these commentaries that God is non-ens, for to say that God is ens or Entity is to say that He is form and to say that He is form is to say that He is finite. To say that He is finite is to deny that He is Goodness, for Goodness is beyond the finite creature. Goodness is beyond the finite creature, for the finite creature has other finite beings outside of it which are not identical with it and Goodness does not admit of this distinction.

¹⁸ See S. THOMAS, IV, lect. 2; 297, p. 97.

¹⁹ "Materia prima, inquantum desiderat formam quae est similitudo divini esse et certat aliquo modo in bono, idest ut primo Bono assimiletur, quae quidem communicatio nihil aliud est quam inclinatio ipsius ad formam." S. THOMAS, IV, lect. 2; 298, p. 97.

Closely related to the name of Goodness is the name Light. St. Thomas devotes his third and fourth lectiones to this name, dividing his commentaries respectively into a discussion of sensible light and intelligible light. Once more the Dionysian texts upon which he comments have the same structure as those dealing with Goodness. Again the sun analogy is used.

In an interesting instance of *syaesthesia*, Denis describes light as an "echo of the good."²⁰ What is echoed ultimately is the archetypal Light of Goodness.²¹ St. Thomas judges Denis' use of this figurative language to be metaphorical.²² The sun analogy is easily recognized as a metaphor. Within the general context of the treatise, the problem is to see how the name of solar light can be ascribed to Goodness. The problem is resolved by drawing a metaphorical analogy between solar light and illuminative Goodness.

20 See DIONYSIUS, IV, 4; 117, p. 100. Denis also refers to plant life as an echo: "Plantae, secundum ultimam resonantiam vitae, habent vivere." DIONYSIUS, VI, 1; 288, p. 254.

21 "Ex bono enim est illud lumen et imago bonitatis; propter quod et luminis nominatione laudatur bonum, sicut in imagine archetypum manifestatum." DIONYSIUS, IV, 4; 113, p. 100.

22 See S. THOMAS, IV, lect. 3; 304, p. 102.

Solar light naturally lends itself to this sort of analogy. The pervasive effects it produces are easily compared to those conferred on things by beneficent Goodness. If one can say, therefore, that the sun causes things to be generated, vivified, nourished, increased, renewed and perfected, one can also say that Goodness does all these things in a superlative way.²³ But this analogy, since it is no more than a metaphor, presupposes the transcendence of the divine Light over the merely physical or visible light of the sun. St. Thomas does not miss the opportunity to point this out. Thus he stresses the difference between the generative power of solar light and creative power of the divine Light. Where solar light gives esse to things per generationem, divine Light gives esse to things per creationem.²⁴ This contrast is the most fundamental in the analogy, for it emphasizes the universality of the divine power.

The pervasiveness of solar light is symbolic of the pervasiveness of the creative Light of Goodness. But

²³ See DIONYSIUS, IV, 4; 118, p. 101. S. THOMAS, IV, lect. 3; 309, p. 102.

²⁴ "Dictum est enim quod divina Bonitas dat esse omnibus per creationem, sed in hoc aliquam similitudinem Eius habet sol, qui dat esse per generationem." S. THOMAS, IV, lect. 3; 312, p. 103.

pervasiveness is no guarantee that each thing will receive illumination in equal measure. The measure in which each thing receives light depends upon its aptitude or capacity to receive it. The unreceptiveness exhibited in some creatures is described by Denis as a kind of incivility. St. Thomas apparently approves of this use of the principle of receptivity.²⁵

Another instance of the uneven reception of light is found in the remedial effect of ameliorative illumination. Solar light elevates the merely existing thing to substantial existence and substantial existence to vital existence. But in all such elevations the aptitude to receive is also a limitary principle that results in a sequential order in which things receive as much as they can, yet without being elevated beyond the grade of being immediately above them.²⁶

25 "Sol...illuminat et superextentum habet lumen, ad omnem extendens visibilem mundum et sursum et deorsum, propriorum radiorum splendores et si aliquid ipse non participat, hoc non informitatis aut parvitatis est illuminationis ipsius distributionis, sed non extentorum ad luminis participationem propter luminis accipiendi importunitatem." DIONYSIUS, IV, 4; 117, pp. 100-101. "Hoc non est propter debilitatem vel parvitatem illuminantis virtutis in ipso." S. THOMAS, IV, lect. 3; 311, p. 103.

26 "Et quod desiderant omnia, intellectualia quidem et rationalia cognitive; sensibilia autem sensibiliter; expertia vero sensus, naturali motu vivifici desiderii; carentia autem vita et tantum existentia, aptitudine ad solam substantiae participationem." DIONYSIUS, IV, 4, 122, p. 101.

The general impression given is that things in themselves ought to be more than they are and can become so if they are receptive to illumination. It would seem also that things ought to be more "one" than they are. Solar light can be looked upon as a source of unification in Denis' visible universe.²⁷ It can effect greater unities by bringing together otherwise disparate elements, as in the instance of generating life from non-living matter.

The discussion of solar light lays the groundwork for the discussion of intelligible light. Archetypal intelligible light is identified with Goodness. The first creatures to receive its rays are the supercelestial (angelic) minds. This accounts for the denomination, "intelligible".²⁸

Light like Goodness is diffusive. Thus Denis invokes the principle of plenitude to describe intelligible light as overflowing its source and filling all minds, including human minds.²⁹ For human minds intelligible light

27 As the title "Princeps congregatrix" conveys. See DIONYSIUS, IV, 4, 120, p. 101; 123, p. 101.

28 "Et dicendum quod lumen intelligibile Bonus dicitur, propter hoc quod omnem quidem supercoelestem mentem implet intelligibili lumine." DIONYSIUS, IV, 5, 126, p. 106.

29 "Lumen intelligibile dicitur quod est super omne lumen bonum, sicut radius fontanus et supermanens luminis effusio, omnem supermundanam mentem, et circumundanam et mundanam mentem, ex plenitudine ipsius illuminans." DIONYSIUS, IV, 6, 130, p. 107.

is a source of unification. The darkness and ignorance of unenlightened men can result only in disunity. Their eyes are turned toward the manifold and they are capable of mere conjecture and opinion.³⁰

In language much more precise than Denis' poetic idiom, St. Thomas comments by stressing the purgative power of intelligible light. He draws parallels between the deprivations suffered by creatures without solar light and by those immobilized by spiritual darkness.³¹ Noteworthy here is the attention St. Thomas gives to the affective reaction of the recipient to illumination. The ameliorative and purgative power of illumination extends to the will as well as to the intellect.³² The recipient is, in effect, a total recipient.

Wherever a recipient is involved--whether what is being received is being, good, perfection or light--there

30 "Sicut ignorantia divisiva est eorum qui in errorem inducti sunt, ita intelligibilis luminis praesentia congregativa et unitiva est eorum qui illuminantur et perfectiva et adhuc conversiva ad vere existens." DIONYSIUS, IV, 5, 131, p. 107. "Et illi qui cognoscunt veritatem, conveniunt in una sententia, sed illi qui ignorant, dividuntur per diversos errores." S. THOMAS, IV, lect 4; 331, p. 109.

31 See S. THOMAS, IV, lect 4; 329, p. 108.

32 "Effectus...divinae gratiae multiplicantur, secundum multiplicationem desiderii et delectionis." S. THOMAS, IV, lect. 4; 330, p. 108.

is always the question of what determines the amount or the intensity of what is being received. Given the broad perspective of plenitude adopted by Denis, the recipient is given at first a measured ray of light. This appears to be purely gratuitous. But once having tasted this first gift, the recipient desires more of the same. This desire is not left unsatisfied and a greater measure is forthcoming. Thus those who desire more receive more. And so the process is continued. There is no doubt that the recipient must correspond in some way to the source of illumination and that the closer the correspondence becomes, the greater the degree of light becomes. The measure in which more light is received, Denis writes, is according to a proportion or analogy (kata analogian).³³ This analogy relates the recipient to intelligible light as contemplator to illuminator. This relation is affective as well as cognitive.

33 "Et tradit prius quidem mensuratam claritatem, postea illis sicut gustantibus lumen et magis desiderantibus, magis seipsum immittit et abundanter superfulget, quoniam dilexerunt multum et semper extendit ipsas ad anteriora, secundum ipsarum ad respectum proportionem." DIONYSIUS, IV, 5, 129, pp. 106-107. Lossky rightly interprets Denis' notion of correspondence as a deification or apotheosis of the contemplator. See V. LOSSKY, "La Notion des 'Analogies'." pp. 299-300.

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St. Thomas' comments add little to the doctrinal content of Denis' text.³⁴ For the most part his remarks reinforce and paraphrase the Areopagite's words. Nothing is made of Denis' reference to analogy. Nor is there any attempt to relate the discussion to the Aristotelian doctrine of the agent intellect as one might expect. St. Thomas does, however, add appropriate Scriptural texts to give greater weight to Denis' authority. The affective movement of the creature toward intelligible light, it seems, depends simply on the saporific effect of the light itself. Just what role, if any, the recipient has in determining the measure of light it receives is left unexplained at this point. Given the metaphysical tenor of the discussion, no explanation is demanded. However, what is said about light provides a suitable complement for what is said about love.

If the Dionysian theory of light describes procession, his theory of love describes reversion. Light emanates from Goodness. Generation among creatures continues the

³⁴ Fr. Doherty's analysis of Dionysian and Thomistic doctrines of light stresses the theological aspect of illumination: "From this analysis of the Dionysian text it seems that St. Thomas regarded the Dionysian intelligible lumen as something of the supernatural order...The entire emphasis of Dionysian light focuses on the free cooperation of the human will with the grace of God." K. DOHERTY, "St. Thomas and the Pseudo-Dionysian Symbol of Light", p. 179. This interpretation is warranted by the Scriptural allusions in St. Thomas' commentary.

emanation. The movement effected by light is on the side of procession. But the full advantages conferred by illumination are not realized without love. It is with love that reversion begins. The causality of love, moreover, exceeds the productivity of generation.³⁵ The inclination or tendency motivated by light is not sufficient to assure the perfection and expansion completed through love. Creatures, therefore, insofar as they proceed from Goodness, can be more than they are in themselves, but do not become so unless they are drawn out of themselves by love. Literally love is ecstatic.³⁶

Goodness is supremely lovable and for this reason can be said to be beautiful. St. Thomas, like Denis, assigns a causal role to God as Good and Beautiful which is other than productive, though admittedly God remains the efficient

35 "Ipse omnium causa, propter bonitatis excessum cuncta amat, cuncta facit, cuncta perficit, cuncta continet, cuncta convertit et est divinus amor bonus boni propter bonum...Movit autem ipsum ad operandum, secundum omnium generativum excessum." DIONYSIUS, IV, 10, 159, p. 131.

36 "Ipse omnium causa...per abundantiam amativae bonitatis extra seipsum fit...ad id quod est in omnibus deponitur secundum extasim facientem." DIONYSIUS, IV, 13, 171, p. 141. "Ipse qui est omnium causa per suum pulchrum et bonum amorem quo omnia amat, secundum abundantiam suae bonitatis qua amat res fit extra seipsum, inquantum providet omnibus existentibus per suam bonitatem et amorem vel dilectionem et quodammodo a sua excellentia." S. THOMAS, IV, lect. 10, 437, p. 143.

Cause of Things.³⁷ But as the Object of all desire, God's generosity is manifested in quite a different way. God is not merely the initiating Cause of creatures. Thus creatures are not simply something produced having this or that finite nature, for their natures are not strictly definable nor are their operations strictly typical as following upon their natures.³⁸ Thus the whole movement of reversion is as important as that of procession, if some meaning other than that of a being (a thing without the dynamism that the re- versive movement brings to it) is to be given to the

37 The Beautiful is an efficient cause, a final cause and an exemplar cause: "Et (pulchrum) est principium omnium pulchrorum, sicut effectiva causa et movens tota et continens amore propriae pulchritudinis; et finis omnium sicut finalis causa, etenim pulchri causa cuncta fiunt; et exemplaris, quoniam secundum ipsum cuncta determinatur." DIONYSIUS, IV, 7; 140, p. 112. "Dicit ergo primo quod pulchrum quidem est principium omnium sicut causa effectiva dans esse; et sicut causa movens et sicut causa continens, idest conservans omnia...Secundo ait quod pulchrum, quod est Deus, est finis omnium sicut finalis causa omnium rerum... Tertio, est causa exemplaris, quia omnia distinguuntur secundum pulchrum divinum et huius signum est quod nullus curat effigiare vel repraesentare, nisi ad pulchrum." S. THOMAS, IV, lect. 5; 352,353, 354, p. 115.

38 The perfecting of natures comes about through their love of God. God does more than make things be. He moves them and conserves them. God is Beauty and His Beauty causes natures or creatures to desire Him. "Causa agens, quaedam agit ex desiderio finis, quod est agentis imperfecti, nondum habentis quod desiderat; sed agentis perfecti est ut agat per amorem eius quod habet et propter hoc subdit quod pulchrum, quod est Deus, est causa effectiva et movita et continens, amore propriae pulchritudinis." S. THOMAS, IV, lect. 5; 352, p. 115.

expression: "the being of the creature."

2. The fifth chapter of the De Divinis Nominibus

We now come to the explicit treatment of the existent. Immediately we are confronted with a problem of translation that has inescapable implications for the interpretation of both the Dionysian and Thomistic texts. Even the title of the fifth chapter presents a problem. Rolt's English translation of it reads so: Concerning "Existence" and also concerning "Exemplars".³⁹ If in some miraculous fashion English could have been made available to Denis and Thomas, they would have found it extremely difficult to find words in the technical lexicons of their own languages to correspond to this translation. While synonyms for the second part of the title would have been at hand, Concerning "Existence" would not have been a readily recognizable rendering of the Greek peri ontos. Nor do the various Latin versions of peri ontos warrant Rolt's "Existence". There are four Latin terms that appear in these versions: esse, ens, existens and id quod est.⁴⁰ St. Thomas was, of course,

³⁹ C.E. ROLT, Dionysius the Areopagite, p. 131. (Italics and quotation marks are the translator's.) Yet in the translation of the opening lines of the chapter, Rolt uses the term "Being" to translate Denis' ontos. *ibid.*

⁴⁰ Of the nine Latin translations reproduced by Chevalier, one renders Denis' peri ontos by De esse, one by De existente, two by De eo quod est and the remaining five by De ente. See DIONYSIACA I, p. 321.

familiar with all of these. It would seem, therefore, that equivalents in English should be found for these terms for two reasons; first, in order to express their Dionysian meanings; second, in order to show how the Thomistic meanings differ from them. We add, however, that any such linguistic undertaking cannot be regarded as a substitute for the contextual analysis that yields the more general doctrinal background against which these meanings must be viewed and judged.

First, let us dispose of the term Existence as an acceptable way of rendering either Denis' Greek or the Latin equivalents that appear in the translations and in St. Thomas' commentaries. While no misunderstanding arises from the simple etymological use of the word as designating the determination of things that stand away from or outside of their causes (ex-sistere), the word is more apt to mean for the modern reader something much more abstract and without reference to a productive cause. Contemporary existentialist usage of the term has further compounded the difficulties of using the word to translate what appear to be its linguistic equivalents in the older vocabularies. In ruling out the use of the term Existence as a suitable way of rendering existens and its synonyms, it should be understood that, in view of the inconsistencies that appear in the translations of Denis and Thomas into the modern idiom, the

term can be used (as we already have) to designate in a general way all that exists below Goodness or the One. If we say, for example, that for Proclus the One is above Existence, our statement would be true if the term were taken simply as a collective noun having ta onta as its referents. But as we have already intimated, the English word "existent" seems to be a suitable linguistic equivalent for Denis' Greek and for the Latin of Thomas and the translators. Thus the designation of the subject to be discussed in the fifth chapter as peri ontos, de ente or de existente is aptly expressed in English by "concerning the existent". Hilduin's de esse is best ignored because of the ambiguity of the term esse. Esse is best left untranslated and its meaning best determined by the context provided by the author's use of it.

As always the Areopagite's approach to the existent contains a reiteration of the avowed intention of the De Divinis Nominibus. The reader, therefore, should not expect him to deal with God as He is in Himself.⁴¹ Hyper-Entity remains incomprehensible. But the treatment of the existent falls within the competence of the affirmative theology, for every existent is in some way a manifestation of the divine Goodness. God or Goodness is perfectly one, super-existent,

⁴¹ See above, p. 70.

living and wise. These attributes are predicated per se of Goodness and are one with Goodness. There is no indication given here that any one of these per se perfections is subordinated to any other. But they are not manifested this way in any of the existents that participate in them. The affirmative theology discovers these perfections in things as proceeding from a single Source and as manifesting a single Providence. The problem that all this raises is how to say that whatever is denominated good, wise, living in the manifold of existents is perfectly one in Goodness.

One of the more profound aspects of this problem is revealed once degrees of universality are assigned to the names of the perfections. One name is more universally applicable than another, because it designates a more extensive range in which God's Providence is manifested. On this count the name Goodness is the most universal, because it encompasses the non-existent as well as the existent:

Etenim boni Dei-nominatio, totos causae omnium
processus manifestans et ad existentia et ad
non existentia extenditur et super existentia
et super non-existentia est.⁴²

It is now possible to apply this sort of argument to the range of universality that other names have. Thus the name "existent" embraces the living and the non-living.

⁴² DIONYSIUS, V, 1; 257, p. 228.

The name "wisdom" extends to all knowledgeable beings: angels, men and animals. But since there are things that live and do not know, life has a wider extension than wisdom. Assumed here, of course, is the entire Neo-Platonic scheme in which Goodness or the One at the summit is "super-existent" and the "mere" existent (that which neither lives nor knows) at the bottom is practically non-existent. Denis is aware of the fundamental flaw in this scheme, namely: It does not provide for a way of preserving the hierarchical order of beings within the universe. It does not explain why, if what is named "existent" is superior (in virtue of its universality) to what is named "living" and if what is named "living" is superior to what is named "wise" or knowledgeable, it is that the mentes (the highest intellectual substances) are not inferior to what is respectively termed "living", "wise" and "existent". So Denis asks:

Quare existente excedente vitam et vita sapientiam,
existentibus quidem viventia, viventibus autem
sensibilia, istis autem rationabilia et rationa-
bilibus mentes excellunt et circa Deum sunt et
magis Ipsi appropinquant?⁴³

Before looking at Denis' solution to this apparent circularity within the logical scheme of the universe, let us recall the Platonic and Proclean distinction between

⁴³ DIONYSIUS, V, 3; 259, p. 228.

intelligence (noesis) and discursive reason (dianoia).⁴⁴

The activity that is characteristic of intelligence is marked by its stability or permanence, while the activity of discursive reason is intermittent. What this suggests is that the permanence associated with the activity of intelligence is not only typical of the superiority of intelligence qua intelligence over discursive reason qua discursive reason, but also of the superiority it has as a higher kind of existent. "Aevum...", Denis writes, "est mensura existentium."⁴⁵ This is implied in the answer to his question the superiority of the mentes raises. They are superior not only because they are superior knowers:

Si autem et sunt divinae mentes super reliqua existentia et vivunt super reliqua viventia et intelligunt et cognoscunt super sensum et rationem et plus quam omnia existentia pulchrum et bonum desiderant et eo participant, ipsae magis sunt circa bonum abundanter ipso participantibus et plura et maiora ex ipso dona possidentes, sicut et rationabilia sensibilibus excellunt, abundantia rationis plus illis possidentia et quaedam sensu et alia, vita.⁴⁶

Included, therefore, within the definition of the mentes are the permanence they have as superior existents and the higher kind of life they enjoy. They are not just

⁴⁴ See above, p. 50.

⁴⁵ DIONYSIUS, II, 1; 67, p. 62.

⁴⁶ DIONYSIUS, V, 3; 260, p. 229.

wise. They are (eisin). They live (zosin). It is not one thing, then, to be an existent; another to be wise; and still another to live. There is no need, therefore, for a multiplicity of separate principles (Proclus' productive deities) in order to account for these perfections. Since they are one in their first Cause which is Goodness:

Non autem aliud esse bonum dicit et aliud existens et aliud vitam aut sapientiam neque multas causas et aliorum alias productivas deitates, excedentes et subiectas, sed unius esse omnes bonos processus et a nobis laudatus Dei-nominaciones.⁴⁷

Now if in virtue of its universality, the per se principle of the existent antecedes that of the living and that of the wise, it is because of its causal influence extends to all existents without exception. As such it enables us to name that which first participates in Goodness. That which first participates in Goodness is esse. Esse is the first gift that Goodness bestows on existents. Thus since Goodness, the supreme Donor, is infinitely above the first gift It bestows, It is appropriately titled praeesse and superesse (proeinai kai hypereinai).⁴⁸

⁴⁷ DIONYSIUS, V, 2; 258, p. 228.

⁴⁸ "Convenienter igitur cunctis aliis principalius sicut existens Deus laudatur ex digniore aliorum donorum eius. Etenim praeesse et superesse praehabens et superhabens ex ipso quod est, ipsum dico, secundum se esse praeexistere fecit, et per ipsum esse omne quocumque modo existens subsistere fecit." DIONYSIUS, V, 5; 266-267, p. 230.

We are now able to clarify the meanings of the terms Denis uses in describing the existent by relating them to one another and situating them in their proper context. Esse, in its Dionysian sense, is a principle in which the existent participates. It is a principle because it is that which the existent first participates: "...quaecumque existentia participantia, ante omnia illa esse participant ...".⁴⁹ Per se esse (autoeinaí), along with per se vita and per se sapientia, which we have already referred to as Powers, represents a qualified (by the per se) use of the term esse.⁵⁰ But the per se qualification does not identify esse (any more than vita or sapientia) with Goodness considered as Hyper-Entity (i.e. superessential or supersubstantial). It serves, rather, to distinguish esse, so considered, from subsidiary principles (the Ideas) in which existents participate and which determine the more particular manifestations of Goodness.

It should be pointed out here that in last resort it is Goodness that is the final determinant of each existent. For this reason the principle of propinquity, by which each existent takes its place in the universe

⁴⁹ DIONYSIUS, ibid.

⁵⁰ See above p. 91.

according to the distance between it and Goodness, overrides any consideration concerning esse.

This brings us to the very heart of the Dionysian doctrine of the created existent. The Creator is esse to or for existents: "Ipse est esse existentibus."⁵¹ There are various ways and contexts in which this succinct formula can be expressed. It is a way of saying that existents are in the Creator which, if said, enables us to understand that, if something is in something else, it is in it as the lower is in the higher (in this case in the highest). Thus the Creator may be entitled "Preexistent": "Dicimus quod omnibus existentibus est esse a praeexistente."⁵² Or it is a way of saying that the Creator is present to all existents because He does not recede from them: "Et omnia Ipse participant et a nullo existentium recedit et Ipse ante omnia, et omnia in Ipso consistunt."⁵³ Paradoxically, therefore, this formula expresses a close community between existents

51 DIONYSIUS, V, 4; 264, p. 229.

52 DIONYSIUS, V, 5; 265, p. 229.

53 DIONYSIUS, V, 5; 265, p. 230. As with Proclus no existent (or hypostasis) is ever cut off from Goodness or the One. The production of any existent by the first cause implies that it is distinct from it and outside of it, but inasmuch as it is from its cause it remains in it. See above, p. 55, n. 20.

and their Creator and, at the same time, the absolute transcendence of Goodness.

Only Goodness is One. Once the proliferation of existents begins, the transcendence of the One stands in contrast to the manifold It causes. Denis illustrates this with a circle whose centre represents the One and whose radii represent the emanations from It.⁵⁴ The farther one moves away from the centre, the more divergent the radial lines become. Thus those existents that are farther away from the One exist in greater separation from one another. Conversely those creatures that are closer to the One are more closely united to one another. This metaphor, because of its mathematical character, might be interpreted as symbolizing a necessitarianist emanationism. However, in view of the gratuitousness of the divine gifts that Goodness bestows on every existent, such is not the case.

Another illustration of the relation of the existent to the Creator can be found in a poetic rendition of

⁵⁴ "Et in centro omnes circuli lineae secundum unam unionem coextierunt et omnes habet signum in seipso lineas uniformiter unitas et ad se invicem et ad unum principium a quo processerunt; et in ipso quidem centro perfecte uniuntur, parum autem ab ipso distantes, parum et discernuntur; magis autem distantes et discernuntur magis; et simpliciter, in quantum centro sunt propinquiore in tantum et ipsi et sibi invicem uniuntur; et in quantum ab ipso procedunt, in tantum as se invicem discernuntur." DIONYSIUS, V, 6; 270, p. 231.

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the themes suggested by the "Ipse est esse existentibus."

It reads so:

Et ipsum autem esse ex praeexistente
 et Ipsius est esse et non Ipse est esse
 et in Ipso est esse et non Ipse est in eo
 quod est esse
 et Ipsum habet esse et non Ipse habet esse
 et Ipse est essendi aevum et principium
 et mensura ante substantiam existens et
 ante id quod existit et ante aevum
 et omnium substantificator et principium et
 medietas et finis.⁵⁵

God from Whom the creature comes is Preexistent.

Ipsum esse thus designates the existent. It would appear here that ipsum esse, if related to God as Preexistent, is to be taken as a particular manifestation of Goodness, and not as an effect referred to per se esse as its principle. The relation of existent-to-Preexistent, in other words, does not involve the intervention of per se esse.

The existent belongs to God. God has esse. In the Latin translation we find the genitive of possession (Ipsius) But the esse God has is not His esse, because as the rest of the line reads, He is not esse: "...non Ipse est esse."

55 DIONYSIUS, V, 8; 279, p. 243.

This corroborated by Denis' next line where he declares that there is no esse in God and that God is not in that which is esse. The same interpretation can be given to the line immediately following where God is said not to have esse and yet esse is said to have Him. God from Whom esse comes confers esse on the existent, but what is conferred is not His esse. It is the esse of the existent on which it is conferred. The existent, as it were, has God in that the ipsum esse it receives is God-given.

The remaining lines of the verse are very important for determining just what sort of a principle esse is in the Dionysian context. Here the transcendence of the Creator is emphasized in terms of the superessentiality or super-substantiality of Goodness. As Substantificator the Creator is Hyper-Entity. But now let us ask what is generally considered to be characteristic of substance or entity? We can answer by saying that substance always implies permanence or duration in that which exists, i.e. the existent. But permanence is also characteristic of ipsum esse. Thus Denis can say that God is essendi aevum and, at the same time, that He is the principle, the middle and the end of all things (existents). If so, esse is an essential or substantial principle, esse essentiae or esse substantiae. It is not, as in Thomas Aquinas, actus essendi.

Quite understandably, St. Thomas interprets Denis' remarks concerning ipsum esse as an effort to say in what way or ways the esse of the creature is related to God. But having taken notice of this, he gives an exposition of Denis' text in terms of a doctrine not to be found nor implied in it. This is Thomas' doctrine of esse commune:

Ostendit quomodo esse habeat ad Deum; et dicit quod ipsum esse commune est ex primo Ente, quod est Deus, et ex hoc sequitur quod esse commune aliter se habeat ad Deum quam alia existentia, quantum ad tria; primo quidem, quantum ad hoc quod alia existentia dependunt ab esse communi, non autem Deus, sed magis esse commune dependet a Deo; et hoc est quod dicit quod ipsum esse commune est ipsius Dei, tamquam ab Ipso dependens, et non ipse Deus est esse, idest, ipsius esse communis, tamquam ab ipso dependens.⁵⁶

Clearly something new is added. Even in those instances where St. Thomas uses the same terms, their meanings and relationships receive new qualifications. "Ipsum esse commune" is not Denis' "ipsum esse". This can be seen by considering the three ways in which ipsum esse commune is related to God.

First St. Thomas substitutes "ex primo Ente" for Denis' "ex praeexistente". God is, then, the first Being on which existents depend. But there is also a dependence of existents upon ipsum esse commune. It seems that the only thing that this can mean is that existents participate

56 S. THOMAS, V, lect. 2; 660; p. 245.

in a common esse. The causality which dependence always implies would in this case relate the existents paradigmatically to the common cause of their esse. However, God is in no way related to common esse. Rather common esse is related to Him. If, then, Denis says that God is not esse, he means that God is not common esse!

Next, as regards Denis' statements to the effect that things are contained in God, St. Thomas reads a new meaning into the words. God contains things under His power and things, so contained, are designated as esse commune:

Esse commune continetur sub eius virtute, quia virtus divina plus extenditur quam ipsum esse creatum; et hoc est quod dicit, quod esse commune est in ipso Deo sicut contentum in continente et non converso ipso Deus est in eo quod est esse.⁵⁷

This eliminates the ambiguity that the Dionysian virtus (per se esse) always conveys. For St. Thomas the divine power is God and extends to all created esse. It is not an attribute of common esse. To say, then, that common esse is in God, as the contained is in that which contains, is to say that created esse (which is coextensive with common esse) is referred to the divine power and, hence, not to an esse which conceivably could be a principle subordinated to it.

⁵⁷ S. THOMAS, *ibid.*

Finally, the remaining propositions in Denis' verse are exposed in the language of participation. Whatever participates in God is a likeness of Him. Created esse, since it is a participation in God, is a likeness of Him and so has this likeness. In having this likeness, it has Him:

Esse creatum est quaedam participatio Dei et similitudo Ipsius; et hoc est quod dicit quod esse commune habet Ipsum scilicet Deum, ut participans similitudinem Eius, non autem ipse Deus habet esse, quasi participans ipso esse.⁵⁸

Yet, if as Denis also avers, God does not have esse, it is because God participates in nothing whatsoever. All things participate in Him. The other ways in which the creature participates in God are variations of the same theme.

The liberal use that Denis makes of prefixes and prepositions that indicate temporal priority is reflected in this passage. But St. Thomas is quick to explain that they are not to be taken as such. When, for example, Denis draws a parallel between the past, the present and the future on the one hand and what has been made, what is becoming and will become on the other, St. Thomas immediately translated this into the language of causality:

Dicitur enim de Eo, quod erat et est et futurus est..., per quod intelligitur quod factum est, idest praeteritum et quod fit, idest praesens et quod fiet,

58 S. THOMAS, *ibid.*

idest futurum. Quod quidem non est intelligendum quasi esse divinum subiaceat tempori, sed per hoc significatur his qui possunt intelligere divina, ut decet secundum Deum, quod omne esse, secundum quamcunque rationem essendi, supersubstantialiter existit in Eo, qui omnium existentium est causa.⁵⁹

Thus what exists in God supersubstantially and causally is beyond time. The same is true of place. These determinants are ascribed to substantial realities, but not to the supersubstantial divine reality.

3. The being of the Creature

A summary consideration of what we have seen so far reveals that St. Thomas' commentaries have an order of their own. This ordering of Dionysian themes is made possible by the Areopagite's repetitiousness. Thus where Denis has no qualms about saying the same thing over and over again, St. Thomas injects variety into his commentaries by stressing one or some other aspect of Denis' doctrine. But in doing this St. Thomas gives his own interpretations. This would be much more evident if St. Thomas' commentaries were set apart and allowed to stand on their own. The structure that would appear would be that of a veritable Summa in miniature. This can be illustrated by taking some of the oppositions that are set up between the creature and

59 S. THOMAS, V, lect. 2; 661, p. 245.

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the Creator and by showing how St. Thomas has handled them.

The most basic opposition in Denis is between monadic Goodness and the manifold of existents. In its strongest and clearest expression, Goodness from which every existent comes is non-existent. This is arrived at by way of negation and by way of super-eminence. Oppositions that are derived from these ways are between Hyper-Entity and entity or existent; between the Superessential or Supersubstantial and the substantial; between the Preexistent and the existent; between the Cause of all existents and the existent; between the principal cause and the caused, etc.

Corresponding to the ontological are cognoscitive oppositions. Thus if Goodness is non-being, it is unknowable and since on the possibility of knowing depends the possibility of naming, Goodness is ineffable, and that which proceeds from Goodness has a diversity of names. Thus God who has no name because he is unknowable deserves all names and is known through the whole of his creation.

The oppositions serve to exalt the divine transcendence by diffusion and/or plentitude. Creatures emanate from their transcendent principle. But this emanation in no way compromises the divine transcendence. Creatures always remain in their appointed places. It seems that three principles are operative here. The first of these is the principle of receptivity whereby each creature receives

whatever it receives according to its capacity to receive. The second is that of proximity whereby all creatures are located in the hierarchy of existents according to the nearness to their Source. The third is that of propinquity which sets the lower and the higher in proper relation to one another within the hierarchy itself. Propinquity, of course, depends on proximity. And both depend upon the causal influence of Goodness.

The themes that run through Denis' ordering of these few principles are numerous, flexible and poetic. They are, therefore, easily transformed to suit the purpose of St. Thomas' exposition. The superlatives which Denis uses to describe the exaltation of Goodness can be readily adapted to a metaphysics that describes God as Being. Thus when "ex Ente primo" replaces "ex Praeexistente", the creature can be called, not only a being (an existent), but also a being having esse as its act (ens habens esse); and, in being so called, shares in the divine Being.

One of the more fruitful ways of appreciating the differences that one finds in Dionysian and Thomistic universes concerns the perfectibility of the being of the creature. Though in both universes the dynamism of plenitude is exhibited in the balanced movements of procession and reversion, the terms of perfectibility at which these movements aim are not coincident. Whether one regards these

terms as the Powers or the Ideas does not alter the fact that the Dionysian paradigmatic finality draws the creature to a point of perfection that ideally limited to the perfection of a type of being. Thus the reversive movement (apotheosis), so to speak, retraces the steps of the processive movement (theophany) in such a way that it regains the same perfections it had lost in moving away from its causes. In other words, reversion is not a continuation of the processive movement. For St. Thomas, on the contrary, procession and reversion are simply parts of the same movement whose term is the perfection of the esse of the creature. This movement is an expansion of the being of the creature finalized by Being.

In the next chapter we will provide a wider inductive ground for the doctrinal issues which our reading of Denis and Thomas has raised.

CHAPTER IV

A DOCTRINAL ANALYSIS

1. Preliminary Remarks

There was no time in his literary career that St. Thomas did not make generous use of Denis' texts. For this reason whatever doctrinal variations occurred in the course of his intellectual development are reflected in his interpretation of the Areopagite's words. For the same reason doctrinal constants are discernible. A study of both variations and constants is necessary, if a doctrinal analysis of St. Thomas' commentaries on Denis' texts is to be made.

Though our purpose in this chapter is, as in the last chapter, mainly expository, we have made interpretative judgments and allusions to present-day writers. The doctrinal issues raised in this discussion are limited to those already treated in our exposition of St. Thomas' reading of Denis' De Divinis Nominibus. Three headings are used to organize our remarks. These are analogy, causality and nature. We begin now with analogy.

2. Analogy

For about twenty years before World War II, thomists were so intensely interested in analogy that it became practically synonymous with metaphysics itself. This is no longer so. Recent research has inhibited the hope that analogy, even in its widest metaphysical application, should

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become the only indispensable instrument for metaphysical enquiry.¹ In the more broadly based metaphysics that contemporary thomists project, it is but one of several and more important considerations. Yet a significant paradox remains. St. Thomas does use the vocabulary of analogy when he discusses the being of creatures and their relation to their Creator. But he does not have a specific treatment of its possible application. He simply uses the traditional vocabulary and he uses it in a way far less systematic than the way it is used by authors who deal professedly with analogy itself. In his exploitation of the Dionysian themes on the being of creatures where the language of analogy is used, this becomes clear. The paradox remains only if one insists that there is a doctrine of analogy in St. Thomas that has a consistency independent of the matter he is

1 That analogy is now being treated quite differently than before when it was limited to a standard doctrine based upon Cajetan and Suarez is evident from recent literature on the subject. For an extensive bibliography on contemporary approaches to Thomistic analogy see G. KLUBERTANZ, St. Thomas Aquinas on Analogy, Chicago, 1960, p. 303-313. On the differences between analogy as interpreted by Cajetan and the Thomistic doctrine see M. O'NEILL, "Some Remarks on the Analogy of God and Creatures in St. Thomas Aquinas", p. 206-215; H. LYTTKENS, The Analogy between God and the World, Uppsala, 1952, p. 206-225. For the place that analogy has in contemporary metaphysics, see J. OWENS, "Analogy as a Thomistic Approach to Being", p. 303-322.

actually discussing when he uses its vocabulary. An analysis of pertinent texts bears this out.

The first texts we will examine are found in the Sentences. The question that St. Thomas asks and answers here is whether God is the esse of all things.²

The argument in the Solutio makes use of the language of analogy in a distinction of three modes of causa agens.³ The structure of this argument is quite simple. God cannot be said to cause equivocally nor univocally. He

2 S. THOMAS, Scriptum super Libros Sententiarum, 1, d. 8, q. 1, art. 2; t. 1, p. 197. The pagination is to the Mandonnet-Moos edition of St. Thomas' writings on Peter Lombard's Sententiae published at Paris in 1929. Further reference made to this work will be given simply as Sent. preceded by the number of the part and followed by the citation to the distinction etc. as above. For the parallel treatment of this question, see in the De Divinis Nominibus above, p.

3 "Invenimus enim tres modos causae agentis. Scilicet causam aequivoce agentem, et hoc est quando effectus non convenit cum causa nec nomine nec ratione: sicut sol facit calorem qui non est calidus. Item causam univoce agentem, quando effectus convenit in nomine et ratione cum causa, sicut homo generat hominem et calor facit calorem. Neutro istorum modorum Deus agit. Non univoce, quia nihil univoce convenit cum ipso. Non aequivoce, cum effectus et causa aliquo modo conveniant in nomine et ratione, licet secundum prius et posterius; sicut Deus sua sapientia facit nos sapientes, ita tamen quod sapientia nostra semper deficit a ratione sapientiae suae, sicut accidens a ratione entis, secundum quod est in substantia. Unde est tertius modus causae agentis analogice. Unde patet quod divinum esse producit esse creaturae in similitudine sui imperfecta: et ideo esse divinum dicitur esse omnium rerum, a quo omne esse creatum effective et exemplariter manat. 1. Sent., ibid., Sol. p. 198.

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must, therefore, be said to cause analogically. It is in this sense that He can be said to be the esse of all created things. Though St. Thomas shows why God cannot be said to cause in the first two ways, the reasons he gives for the third way do not depend solely on the arguments for the rejection of the first two.

In rejecting the first way, St. Thomas begins by pointing out that an equivocal cause agrees in neither name nor ratio with its effect. The sun is given as an example, since it imparts heat though it is not itself hot. But God and the effects He produces agree in some way in both name and ratio according to priority and posteriority and according to perfect and imperfect. A man, for instance, is caused to be wise by God's wisdom which is both prior and perfect with respect to its effect. Created wisdom is, therefore, said to be a similitude or likeness of uncreated wisdom. If this were not so, a man could not be wise any more than an accident could be without being in a substance. St. Thomas is not saying here that created wisdom is an accident of the wisdom that God has or is. He clarifies this by referring both substance and accident to being. Though both refer to the ratio of being (ratio entis), accident falls short of having the perfect ratio of being. Thus though in an imperfect and defective way, the created effect resembles the uncreated causal agent.

In rejecting a community of univocation between creature and Creator, St. Thomas presents no elaborate argument. A causal agent causing univocally agrees in name and ratio with its effect. That God is not such an agent seems to be clear enough from the example of one man generating another.

The way in which God is said to be a cause with respect to His creatures is, therefore, analogical. Esse Divinum produces the esse of creatures in an imperfect likeness of Himself. The types of causality in this production of created esse are expressly designated in adverbial forms. Thus the esse of creatures is said to emanate from the Esse Divinum effective and exemplariter. Both of these qualifying words rule out a solution in terms of intrinsic causality:

Ad secundum dicendum, quod esse creatum non est per aliquid aliud, si ly "per" dicat causam formalem intrinsicam; immo ipso formaliter est creatura; si autem dicat causam formalem extrarem, vel causam effectivam, sic est per divinum esse et non per se.⁴

The causal reference of creature to Creator is thus accurately set forth. God is not the being of creatures essentialiter or formaliter. He is the being of creatures causaliter: Deus est esse omnium non essentielle, sed causale

⁴ ibid., ad 2.

The precision that St. Thomas gives to the "per" in the phrase "per divinum esse et non per se" emphasizes the importance of regarding the analogy of creature to Creator in terms of efficient and exemplar causality. Though these two types of causality are coupled here, final causality is not excluded. Thus later on in the Sentences, St. Thomas speaks of the one Goodness, which he equates with the efficient and exemplar Cause, as that through which all things are good: "Una bonitas, qua sicut principio efectivo exemplari omnia sunt bona."⁵

If it is through (per) the divine esse that God is the esse of creatures, it seems that there can be nothing in creatures which mediates their esse. To designate any such principle in creatures seems to militate against the most important thing that the analogy of creatures to Creator demands, namely: the total causal dependence of creatures on the Creator. But it appears that there is such a principle. Whether it is expressed in terms of measure, mode or participation, it is the familiar principle of

⁵ 1 Sent. d. 19, q. 5, art. 2, ad 3, p. 493.

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receptivity.⁶ Thus whatever is received by or in the recipient is received according to the mode of the recipient or participant. In the strictly metaphysical and creationist context in which it is used here, the mode or measure according to which the recipient receives esse is restrictive or limitary. If so, the efficiency, exemplarity and Goodness through which creatures are or have esse encounter a source of limitation independent of the cause of their esse.

This objection derives its force from the ambiguity of the term "recipient" or, to the extent that it is an equivalent term, the word "participant". If "recipient" is taken to mean "something which receives" and at the same time "something which limits", it must have entity of its own. It must exist per se. This is true whether there is a direct reference made to the recipient or to the mode or measure according to which it is a recipient. It must be "there", so to speak, to be a recipient of esse and to be a recipient of the "amount" of esse to which it is entitled. It must be admitted that this way of stating the objection is imaginal or metaphorical as it is in the Dionysian

6 Fr. Klubertanz makes reference to two texts in the Sentences that use the language of receptivity to describe the imperfection of the creature, but accords this terminology "no discoverable metaphysical status". G. KLUBERTANZ, St. Thomas Aquinas on Analogy, p. 28. The texts to which the author refers are: 1. Sent., d. 3, Expositio primae partis textus, p. 106; 2. Sent., d. 37, q. 1, art. 2, sol. p. 946.

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sense.⁷ But even with this qualification, the basic ambiguity remains. Total causal dependence seems to demand that the recipient is nothing "before" it receives its esse. If it is nothing, it is a nothing that serves as a principle that modifies, limits the esse of the recipient. And since each recipient is or has its esse according to its own mode or measure, there must be a unique nothing for each recipient.

The absurdity of each creature having its own nothing can be relieved somewhat by shifting from nothing to potency as the limitary principle. But where receptivity accounts for the imperfect and defective character of created esse this is not implied. There seems to be little doubt, therefore, that the principle of receptivity is little more than a metaphorical adjunct to the metaphysics of created esse. As such it is an interesting Dionysian importation. None of this, however, should cause us to deny that the principle is useful in describing the way in which something already existing receives being from another. So used it would be applied in the order of univocal causation (as in the case of one man generating another) or possibly in the order of equivocal causation (as in the case of the sun imparting heat to something without it.)

7 See above p. 93.

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We have noted that there are three kinds of causes mentioned by St. Thomas when he refers to God as an analogical causal agent: efficient, exemplar and final.⁸ The esse of creatures is thus determined in these three ways. Being efficiently produced, the esse of the creature is a produced esse; as the effect of exemplar causality, it manifests its cause; as coming under the influence of its final cause, its esse is seen to have an end. In none of these ways of speaking of the creature's being caused does the creature limit or contribute to its being. The produced esse of the creature is totally produced. There is nothing in it that limits it. There is nothing in it that, so to speak, resists the divine causality in such a way that, if it did not, it would be one rather than many, perfect rather than defective, etc. As far as the creature's contributing anything to its being, the only thing that could be said is that the creature contributes its own defect or imperfection. But this way of speaking is simply another way of positing an independent limitary principle. The creature is the image

⁸ See above, p. 138.

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of its Creator, when the Creator is said to be the exemplar cause.⁹ The ratio imaginis, however, derives its meaning from imitation which usually stresses the asymmetrical relation of creature to Creator:

Dicendum quod inter Deum et creaturam non est similitudo per convenientiam in aliquo uno communi, sed per imitationem; unde creatura similis Deo dicitur, sed non convertitur, ut dicit Dionysius.¹⁰

9 "Imago" is usually exemplified by the analogy of artefact and artist. The statue is said to be image of its exemplar cause in the artist, but not the other way around. Thus the creature is said to be the image of the divine exemplar, but not conversely since there is an irreversible effect to cause relation: "Imago Herculis similatur Herculi, sed non e converso. Unde, quia verbum divinum non est factum ad imitationem creaturae, ut verbum nostrum, sed potius e converso." S. THOMAS, De Veritate, Q. IV, art. 4, ad 2. The term "similitudo" is more generic than image. Taken by itself it need not imply a causal reference. It can be used to express reciprocal likenesses, as when we say that things in the same order resemble one another. But if the causal reference is added, the meaning of similitudo can be contracted and can designate an image. Imitation can supply this causal reference: "Similitudo est de ratione imaginis, et imago aliquid addit supra rationem similitudinis, scilicet quod sit ex alio expressum; imago enim dicitur ex eo quod agitur ad imitationem alterius." S. THOMAS, Sum. Theol., I, Q. 93, a. 1, c. "Imago", moreover, is restricted to intellectual natures so that "Imago Dei" is said of angels simpliciter and of men secundum quid; whereas "similitudo" can be extended to all creatures. See S. THOMAS, Sum. Theol., I, Q. 93, a. 3, c. See also above p. 76-77.

10 1. Sent. d. 35, q. 1, a. 4, ad 6, p. 821; "Ista igitur docere convenit similia Deo et ea secundum divinam imaginem et assimilationem; neque enim ipsis Deum esse similem, quoniam neque proprie homo imagini est similis." DIONYSIUS, IX, 6; 374, p. 310.

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Finally all things are good through the divine Goodness in which they immediately participate. Though these remarks have a Dionysian ring, they cannot be derived from the Dionysian doctrine of analogy.

According to Lossky Dionysian analogy is the foundation for the affirmative theology.¹¹ Affirmative theology takes its departure from creatures considered as theophanies.

Assumed here is Denis' doctrine of causality where to cause is to make manifest or to theophanize.¹² One begins, therefore, with a knowledge of the theophanies and moves to a knowledge of their causes. Within the limits of human knowing, these causes are the powers (dunameis) which are at once identified with God and the principles or causes of things. Insofar as the powers are identified with God (but not with His substance), they remain unknown.¹³ But as causes of things they can be known in creatures. This can be stated also in terms of participation: creatures participate in the powers, but not in the imparticipable Godhead. Below and in the powers are the Ideas which,

11 "C'est l'analogia qui rend possible notre connaissance de Dieu qui se manifeste dans ses vertus; elle est ainsi le fondement de toute théologie cataphatique." V. LOSSKY, "La Notion des 'Analogies'", p. 288.

12 See above: p. 80.

13 "Les dunameis--vertus qui procèdent de Dieu--sont Dieu lui-même, quoiqu'elles ne sont pas sa substance... qui est inconnaissable." V. LOSSKY, art. cit., p. 284.

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unlike the powers, cannot be identified with the divine. The Ideas simply represent the many ways in which the perfections of the powers are realized in things.¹⁴

Now since analogy always implies some sort of comparison, it is obvious that Dionysian analogy cannot have as one of the terms of comparison the imparticipable God-head.¹⁵ For the same reason the affirmative theology is limited to a knowledge of the powers.

Analogy also implies a proportioning of one thing to another; of effect to cause, of recipient to the one giving, etc. One finds in Denis' use of analogy that the effect is proportioned to the cause according to the capacity of the effect or the recipient to participate in the cause. We have already seen that the circular or reciprocal causality that this implies is found in the Dionysian theory of illumination and love.¹⁶ The principle of receptivity is once more in evidence, this time in Denis' use of analogy. Analogy can be described, then, as the aptitude on the part

¹⁴ "Les idées sont les causes (aitiai) et les principes (archai) des choses, préexistants dans les vertus de Dieu; c'est par elles que Dieu peut et doit être connu comme la Cause universelle, la royauté de toutes choses." V. LOSSKY, art. cit., p. 285.

¹⁵ "Imparticipable" or "unparticipated" (to ameth-ekton), as used by Denis (and Proclus), should be taken here in its literal sense. See above, p. 60

¹⁶ See above p. 112

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of the recipient to receive whatever it can.¹⁷ It is the proportion of the recipient to its capacity.

The various uses of analogy that Lossky attributes to Denis have in common that they involve the relation of creatures to God inasmuch as they desire deification and the relation of God to creatures inasmuch as they manifest the divine Goodness.¹⁸ Given the incomprehensibility, inimitability and imparticipability of Goodness, Dionysian analogy applies only to creatures and what can be known of them in an affirmative way. This remains true even if the powers are identified with God, for the very identification makes them inaccessible. They are known only as principles or causes of things.

As we noted before, the line that divides creature and Creator in the Dionysian account does not coincide with the line that divides the first cause and its effects.¹⁹ For Thomas this is not so. There is no doubt that the

17 Lossky calls our attention to two instances where Denis uses the expression "kata analogian" to describe the aptitude of the creature to receive the divine: "1. faculté des esprits angéliques de se conformer à la lumière divine; 2. faculté de s'élever à l'imitation de Dieu." V. LOSSKY, art. cit., p. 289.

18 See V. LOSSKY, art. cit., p. 309.

19 See above, p. 86

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causal agent, that causes analogically all that is caused, is the Creator. We are able to have, therefore, an analogical knowledge of the Creator, however imperfect and defective this knowledge may be. Thomistic analogy is not restricted to the affirmative theology.

In any comparison between Denis and Thomas, the imprecision of Denis' expression always stands in contrast to the carefully elaborated technical propositions and arguments of Thomas. Because he fails to make careful distinctions, Denis leaves his texts open to many and conflicting interpretations. It is never quite clear, for example, where the universe of creatures begins. A further complication is introduced by the frequent and easy parallels that are drawn between knowledge and reality. This is not to say that St. Thomas does not make the same sort of comparisons. But when he does, the terms of the comparison are carefully described and qualified. Thus though it is possible to discover revisions of doctrine from one period to another in his literary career, there is never any doubt concerning the basic issues. This is true for his doctrine of analogy. What are these basic issues?

First, the line between creature and Creator is clearly drawn: "In Deo non est aliquid medium secundum rem

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inter ipsum et opus suum."²⁰ This is understood in all the texts in which there is an allusion to the creature-Creator analogy. No mediating cause is necessary to establish a relation between Creator and creature. Second, there is nothing to prevent our saying that there is a proportion between God and creature, provided that we realize that the passive potency of the creature is not commensurate with the Creator and that the difference between creature and Creator is infinite:

Nec oportet ut commensuretur potentia passiva recipientis ad potentiam activam agentis...Et ideo non inconveniens ut hic modus proportionis inter Deum et creaturam salvetur, quamvis in infinitum distent.²¹

Third, a parallel can be drawn between the causal proportion of creature to Creator and the cognoscitive or intentional proportion of the one understanding and that which is understood:

Proportio autem intellectus creati est quidem ad Deum intelligendum, non secundum commensurationem aliquam proportionem existente, sed secundum quod proportio significat quamcumque habitudinem unius ad alterum, vel materiae ad formam vel cause ad effectum; sic enim nihil prohibet esse proportionem creaturae ad Deum

20 1. Sent. d. 8, q. 4, a. 3, ad 3; p. 225.

21 3. Sent. d. 1, q. 1, a. 1, ad 3; p. 10.

secundum habitudinem intelligentis ad intellectum,
sicut et secundum habitudinem effectus ad causam.²²

Though conveniently reducible to these basic tenets, St. Thomas' analogy of creature to Creator is enriched by its many applications among which one can find various instances of analogy functioning to transform otherwise unacceptable doctrines. Platonic and Neo-Platonic theories of participation, for example, are inadequate for describing the creature to Creator relation. But St. Thomas is able to integrate these theories with his own theory of causality and purge them of their most unacceptable implication, namely: that both creature and Creator share in a prior perfection under which they can be subsumed and compared:

Creatura non dicitur conformari Deo quasi participanti eandem formam quam ipsa participat, sed quia Deus est substantialiter ipsa forma, cujus creatura per quamdam imitationem est participativa.²³

A similar case can be made for exemplarity. The Creator is the Exemplar of the creature. Once more the relation is causal and asymmetrical. Thus the ultimate identification of Goodness and the exemplar cause removes the

22 Contra Gent. III, c. 54. "Potest esse proportio creaturae ad Deum, inquantum se habet ad ipsum ut effectus ad causam, et ut potentia ad actum. Et secundum hoc, intellectus creatus proportionatus esse potest ad cognoscendum Deum." Sum. Theol. I, 12, 1, ad. 4.

23 De Veritate, q. XXIII, a. 7, ad. 10.

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difficulties inherent in the subordinationist notion of a merely paradigmatic exemplarity according to which things are independently determined. We are confronted here with one of the more puzzling problems that the tradition of the divine Ideas has raised. The use of plural and singular forms of the word Idea or Exemplar is always a source of confusion.

It is not necessary to reconstruct this history. It is well enough known that the Ideas or Exemplars in Plato's theory were many and subsistent, that with Plotinus they were contained in the Intelligence and that with Augustine they became the principal forms of things preexisting in the Divine Mind. St. Thomas makes no effort to discredit this development.²⁴ He is perfectly aware, nevertheless, of the threat that a manifold of Exemplars poses for the Divine simplicity. But he circumvents this difficulty by referring the plurality of the Exemplars to things:

Oportet dicere in divina sapientia sunt rationes omnium rerum, quas supra diximus, ideas, id quod est formas exemplares in mente divina existentes. Quae quidem licet multiplicentur secundum ad respectum ad res, tamen non sunt realiter aliud a divina

²⁴ "Exemplar est idem quod idea. Sed ideae secundum quod Augustinus libro Octog. trium. Quaest. dicit, sunt 'formae principiis...quae divina intelligentia continentur.' Ergo exemplaria rerum non sunt extra Deum." Sum. Theol. i, q. 44, a. 3, sed contra.

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essentia, prout eius similitudo, a diversis
participari potest diversimode.²⁵

It remains, then, that there is but one Exemplar and this is one with the Divine Mind. The causal dependence, which St. Thomas describes as an analogy, can be expressed in terms of participation and imitation.

To the objection that the powers as Denis describes them represent a triad of subordinated exemplars which cannot be identified with the Divine Mind, Thomas answers in the same way he disposes of the objection to the multiplicity of the Divine Ideas:

Dicendum quod, sicut dicit Dionysius, XI cap.
De Div. Nom. 'per se vitam et per se sapientiam'
quandoque nominat ipsum Deum, quandoque virtutes
ipsis rebus datas; non autem quasdam subsistentes
res, sicut antiqui posuerunt.²⁶

The "antiqui" here are, of course, the Platonici.

St. Thomas' use of analogy to describe the creature to Creator relation is much more effective than any comparable uses of it made by the Platonici, the Areopagite included. Part of this is due, as we have already suggested, to the limitations to be found in the Dionysian affirmative theology and the way of ignorance which appear as irreducible approaches to God. This stands in contrast to St. Thomas' integrated approach in which the ways of affirmation,

25 loc. cit. c.

26 loc. cit., ad 4.

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negation and supereminence complement one another.²⁷ However, the more sophisticated approach of St. Thomas makes no claim to traverse the infinite distance between creature and Creator. The deep respect for Denis' agnosticism remains wherever applicable. The essence of the Creator remains incomprehensible. What we are able to learn--and always in some analogous fashion--is that God, the efficient, exemplar and final cause of the universe, truly exists; that He has or is all the perfections found in creatures, but in a superlative way; that ontologically all creatures share in these divine perfections, but in an imperfect and defective way; and that our knowledge of the Creator can be compared to the imperfect and defective way in which things receive their being.²⁸

If there is a creature to Creator analogy, there is also a creature to creature analogy. Creatures are

27 "the positive theology has to be complemented everywhere by the concomitant negative theology." J. OWENS, "Analogy as a Thomistic Approach to Being", p. 315. "On voit bien que la théologie apophatique chez Denys ne joue pas un rôle effacé, comme dans la doctrine de S. Thomas, ou elle n'est qu'une correction nécessaire de la théologie cataphatique (positive); au contraire, la voie négative a primauté chez l'auteur des 'Aréopagitiques'. On ne peut pas réduire une voie à l'autre." V. LOSSKY, art. cit., p. 281-282.

28 This is a brief summary of what Klubertanz calls "Doctrinal Constants". See: G. KLUBERTANZ, St. Thomas on Analogy, p. 63.

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analogous on two counts: as the analogates of their first Cause and as analogates in relation to other creatures. It seems that in view of the foregoing treatment of the creature to Creator analogy it is now reasonable to determine the relation between the two analogies. To serve this purpose, we can ask whether the knowledge we derive from learning that God causes creatures analogically adds to the knowledge we acquire of the being of creatures through direct observation.

Although we have seen that the main weakness of the Dionysian analogy is the irreducibility of the way of affirmation; nevertheless, we can discover certain philosophical elements in the text of Denis which, when brought under the formative influence of the Thomistic approach, can be seen as contributions to a creature to creature analogy. In order to show this we will examine a sequence that begins with a causal creature-to-Creator analogy and ends with a consideration of an ordered universe which could be based on this analogy.²⁹ As it appears in Denis, the creature to Creator analogy at the beginning of the sequence moves from

29 "Etenim et hoc recte de Deo dicimus et existentibus universis laudatur secundum proportionem omnium quorum est causa; et est rursus divinissima Dei cognitio, quae est per ignorantiam cognita, secundum unionem super mentem, quando mens ab aliis omnibus recedens, postea et seipsam dimittens, unita est supersplendentibus radiis; inde et ibi non scrutabili profundo sapientiae illuminata." DIONYSIUS, VII, 3: 323. pp. 273-274.

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the universe of existents to their cause. Since God is the cause of every existent, we are able to say that He is known secundum proportionem omnium quorum est causa. This is an unmistakable instance of Dionysian affirmation. The analogy, therefore, is typical. It extends no further than this. The only reason for saying that it could extend beyond this is that its point of departure is the entire universe. This could suggest that God is not only the cause of individual existents, but also of the order that obtains among them. But no such development follows. The causal analogy tells us nothing of a creature to creature relation. However, Denis moves on to describe the highest wisdom of which men can have in this life. This "divinissima Dei cognitio" is attained through ignorance. Demanded of those who aspire to it is a complete renunciation of things and of oneself. But once attained, its possessor is able to view the universe as a beautiful and harmonious whole in which all things are ordered so that the end of what is primary is joined endlessly and indissolubly with the beginning of what follows. It is thus that the principle of proximity is derived from the way of ignorance. It is thus

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that Denis sees an ordered universe as the manifestation of divine wisdom.³⁰

St. Thomas' exposition of the two kinds of knowledge adds little to Denis' account.³¹ By analogy we know God as the cause of all things. Through ignorance we know that God is above all that we are above and above ourselves. But he gives this knowledge a positive value when he declares that through ignorance we at least understand that we do not comprehend what God is.³² To know that we do not comprehend is better than simply not to comprehend. However, when St. Thomas speaks of the universe of creatures as being produced by the divine wisdom, he supplies an example which clearly illustrates the analogous character of a creature to creature relation which is, at the same time, the effect of the divine wisdom. The example he uses concerns the way in which the human body, the highest of corporeal creatures,

30 "Et quidem ex omnibus, quod dixi, ipsa est cognoscenda. Ipsa enim est, secundum eloquium, quae est omnium effectiva et semper omnia concordans et indissolubis omnium concordantionis et ordinis causa et semper fines primorum coniungens principiis secundorum et unam omnium conspirationem et harmoniam pulchre operans." DIONYSIUS, VII, 3; 324, p. 274.

31 See S. THOMAS, VII, lect. 4; 732, p. 275.

32 "Quod etiam intelligamus Deum esse supra omnia non solum quae sunt, sed etiam quae apprehendere possumus, ex incomprehensibili profunditate divinae Sapientiae provenit nobis." S. THOMAS, VII, lect. 4; ibid.

is united to the human soul, the lowest of intellectual natures.³³ Elsewhere St. Thomas has made similar use of the principle of propinquity to relate the cogitative and memorative powers in man. The superiority these powers enjoy over their counterparts in animals, he tells us, is derived from their proximity to reason.³⁴ There is no reason why the same relations could not be found in those natures below man. Nor is there any reason for saying that such relations are not analogous.

The radical difference between creature-to-creature and creature-to-Creator analogies is found in the difference of the community expressed in each analogy. There can be no formal community between God and creature. Nothing, absolutely nothing, exists in the way God exists. But we can speak of a kind of community among creatures, since they belong to an order that relates them to common principles

33 "Modum autem huius ordinis subiungit, quia semper fines primorum, idest infima supremorum, coniungit principiis secundorum, idest supremis inferiorum, ad modum quo supremum corporalis creaturae scilicet corpus humanum, infimo intellectualis naturae, scilicet animae rationali unit; et simile est videre in aliis." S. THOMAS, VII, lect. 4; 733, p. 275.

34 "Dicendum quod illam eminentiam habet cogitativa et memorativa in homine, non per id quod est proprium sensitivae partis; sed per aliquam affinitatem et propinquitatem ad rationem universalem, secundum quandam refluentiam. Et idea non sunt aliae vires, sed eadem perfectiores quam sint in aliis animalibus." Sum. Theol. i, q. 78, a. 4, ad 5.

and finalities and in which they cooperate to attain the fullness of their being. Yet this community is never univocal, even when the name and ratio are said to be the same. It is possible to speak of a univocal community among members of the same species, where there is agreement in name and ratio. But in this instance, as St. Thomas allows, we are in the order of generated things, and not in an order that prevails in virtue of its members being created.

In our treatment of analogy we have stressed the importance of causality, for it is the causal relation of creature-to-Creator that determines the analogical community among creatures. Causality also determines the asymmetrical proportion of the creature to Creator that enables us to have some knowledge of the Creator through creatures. In the next part of this chapter we will show the relevance that causality has for an understanding of ways in which the creature depends totally on God for its being.

3. Causality

In its most general sense, Dionysian causality consists in making the Invisible visible.³⁵ Though this is, perhaps, more strictly applicable to the processive movement, it can be applied to the reversive movement inasmuch as it is balanced against procession. The cause in either movement

³⁵ See above p.93

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is Goodness, the One or the Thearchy. The effect, always manifold, is a theophany or apotheosis (on the reversive side).

Solar and light metaphors lend themselves well to the expression of Dionysian causality. The rays of the divine light shine upon all things. To the degree that all things are illuminated, they are or exist. According to Gilson's reading of Chapter IV, 2 of the De Divinis Nominibus, we should be careful to say that there is no distinction between the light and the thing illuminated: "This 'illumination' must not be conceived as a simple gift of light to already existing beings, but as a gift of light which is their very being."³⁶ This is not to be found in any individual texts of Gilson's broad citation.³⁷ Denis constantly assures us, however, that there is nothing in the theophanies that escapes the divine causality. Thearchical causality is universal.³⁸ There is nothing in the thing, therefore, that can be termed "mediate", if reference is

³⁶ E. GILSON, History of Christian Philosophy..., p. 83.

³⁷ See ibid., p. 507, n. 49.

³⁸ For an exact description of what the term "Thearcy" means for Denis, see R. ROQUES, L'Univers Dionysien, p. 111.

made to Goodness, the One or the Thearchy. God is the beginning, the middle and the end.³⁹ There is no positive darkness in the thing that stands over and against the light that it is.

The immediacy and universality of theophanic causality in no way compromise the divine transcendence. Whatever difficulty there is with the Dionysian doctrine of transcendence occurs with the possibility of secondary creative causes. Denis, as we know, is not altogether clear on this point and to make him consistent, in the face of this imprecision, might require reading too much into the text.⁴⁰ However, if all the objections to the transcendence of Thearchic causality cannot be answered, at least one of the more serious ones can. It can be shown that all theophanies are immediate revelations of the Thearchy and that this is not inconsistent with the hierarchic activity exercised by the theophanies themselves. The objection that can be raised against this concerns the progressive weakening of Thearchic causality as one moves down from the highest to the lowest order among natures that comprise the various hierarchies.

³⁹ See above p. 125.

⁴⁰ See above p. 92.

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To make sense out of this objection, it must be said that the activity communicated by the Thearchy is given to the highest order of nature which in its turn communicates whatever it has to communicate to the lower orders until there is nothing more to communicate. This would argue for a plurality of successive attenuations. But what is more important, it would imply that the causal communication to the first and highest order of nature would be the only one that could be called the immediate and exclusive effect of thearchic causality. Every nature thereafter would be a revelation of a revelation.

Roques reminds us, however, that Denis is careful to say that the causality of the Thearchy always surpasses the hierarchic activity of natures.⁴¹ Nothing, therefore, can be substituted for it. It is received not only by the first and highest order, but by every order of nature. This can be counted as evidence for a single Providence, yet need not be interpreted as a denial of hierarchic activity or of the possibility of the causality of secondary principal causes.

⁴¹ "Et l'activité hiérarchique est une activité participée: 'Chaque ordre, par une puissance qui est une grâce de Dieu, y accomplit des activités qui, par leur nature transcendante à toute nature, appartiennent à la Théarchie et que la Théarchie accomplit d'une manière, qui passe toute essence.'" R. ROQUES, *L'Univers...*, p. 113. The quotation here is Roques' translation of a passage from *De Coelesti Hierarchia*, III, 3; *DIONYSIACA* II, c. III, sec. 60, p. 798.

Instructive in this regard is Denis' exegesis of the biblical account of the visitation of one of the Seraphim to the prophet Isaeah.⁴² Usually angels of a lower rank are entrusted with the task of visiting humans. Why should this visitation be an exception?⁴³ Before resolving this question Denis reviews the interpretation of one unnamed exegete who sees the apparent anomaly as an intentional emphasis on the purgative character of the visitation. The use of the name "Seraphim", it is argued, merely calls the reader's attention to the "Seraphic" or fiery activity that the visitation demanded and does not, therefore, imply that the angel acting as messenger was one of the Seraphim. Clever as this reading may seem to Denis, his preference is for a second exegesis which better suits his purpose. The problem of whether or not it was a Seraphim that visited Isaiah now seems beside the point. The second exegesis affirms the pervasiveness, universality and irresistibility

⁴² What follows is a paraphrase of Chapter XII of Denis' *De Coelesti Hierarchia*. References will be given to the version of Johannes Saracenus as the text appears in *DIONYSIACA* II, c. XIII, sec. 69, pp. 942-979.

⁴³ Denis states the problem in this way: "Quare a Seraphim dicitur fuisse purgatus propheta Isaias. Age et hoc secundum virtutem inspiciamus cujus gratia ad unum theologorum Seraphim mitti dicitur; etenim dubitare possit aliquis: quod non subjectorum aliquis angelorum sed ipse qui dignissimis substantiis connumeratur purgat prophetam." *ibid.*, pp. 942-943.

of Thearchic causality.⁴⁴ Always mysterious and superessential, Thearchic causality need not produce its effect strictly according to what may seem to us to require this or that nature as an instrument. It may seem mysterious to us that one of the Seraphim should act as a messenger to a mere human. Yet there is no reason why it could not be. In fact to deny that it is possible could be interpreted as an endorsement of a necessitarianism in which each intermediary between the Thearchy and lower natures would transmit nothing but its own proper effect. The point to be made--and Denis makes it--is that it is the same light, the same activity and the same revelation, flowing from the Thearchy, that must pervade the hierarchical orders. If it was the case that one of the Seraphim actually did visit the prophet, no indignity was suffered and no disruption of the single Providential causality resulted.

Order on the side of nature, thus, remains intact. To express this Denis resorts once more to the familiar

⁴⁴ "Dicebat enim qui hoc dixit quod Thearchica virtus ad omnia veniens capit et per omnia non valens teneri transit, et omnibus rursus et non apparens, non solum sicut ab omnibus supersubstantialiter segregata, sed et sicut occulte ad omnia dimittens provisivas ipsius operationes." ibid., pp. 946-947.

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principle of receptivity.⁴⁵ Each nature receives according to its capacity to receive and transmits (the same Thearchic light, the same causality, etc.,) according to the capacity of the recipient to receive. Light and heat metaphors add clarification. In the light metaphor, receptivity is translated into translucence. In the heat metaphor, it is rendered as inflammability. But relative to translucence and inflammability are their respective opposites, opaque-ness and the property of resisting heat. Thus a translucent body is more easily made luminescent than one that is opaque. Similarly an inflammable substance has more affinity to heat and receives it more readily than one that is resistant to it. The translucent bodies closer to the sun are more resplendent with solar light than the more remote opaque ones. Now it is appropriate that some order of the transmitted light or heat be effected by intermediary agents. It is more appropriate, for example, that water whose nature resists heat be heated by an agent to which it bears a closer affinity than to be heated by an agent whose proper effect is to set fire to an inflammable body. What does this mean in relation to the irresistibility of Thearchic causality?

⁴⁵ "...et propriam luminis donationem tradens dignissimis substantiis, sicut primas, in subjectas ipsa beneornate distribuit, secundum uniuscujusque ornatus Dei conspectivam commensurationem." ibid., p. 948.

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It seems that we are confronted with either a contradiction or an obscurity: a contradiction if, as we have seen, it is the same causality (light, energy, activity, etc.) that pervades all things; an obscurity if we take into account the metaphorical language of Denis' exposition.

Let us first formulate the possible contradiction that our question suggests. Denis contends that Thearchic causality which is superessential or above nature is pervasive, immediate, universal and irresistible and, at the same time, that it can be refracted, diffused, distributed and canalized by agents or causes whose power is derived from their natures.⁴⁶ Texts to support either side of this contradiction are easily found, all of which leads us to think that Denis would like to have it both ways. It becomes a question, therefore, not so much of resolving the contradiction, but of giving it the kindest interpretation. This would seem one which make each theophany, for whose being or nature the Thearchic causality is already responsible, the principle by which it is able to resist or accept whatever it can of the Thearchic causality. If such were

⁴⁶ "Est igitur universis illuminatis principium illuminationis Deus quidem natura et vere et proprie, sicut luminis substantia, et ipsius esse et videndi causa; positione autem et Deimitatione particulariter superposita post ipsam unicuique in divina lumina per ipsam in illam supervehuntur." ibid., pp. 955-956.

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the case, Thearchic causality would not be thwarted for the simple reason that the source of resistance or acceptance is one and the same as the source of its being or nature. But this would preclude the possibility of intermediary transmission of Thearchic causality, a possibility for which Denis makes ample provision. The intrusion of intermediary agents as vehicles of Thearchic causality has the effect of shifting the responsibility for the acceptance or resistance from each theophany to the one immediately above it. All theophanies, including the highest but excepting the lowest, would function in this case as intermediaries.

Further analysis would simply set up more alternatives which would unduly complicate the presentation of the problem. What we must grant, as always, is that Goodness or the One stands over and above the universe. This means that the universe must be taken as a whole with respect to Goodness. Now if intermediaries are introduced in the way Denis introduces them, does the universe stand in the same relation to Goodness? The answer must be in the affirmative, if and only if there is nothing in the intermediaries with respect to which any part of the universe is necessarily determined. But is it true that Denis' universe is free from any sort of necessitarianist emanation? Roques, for example, believes that it is: "L'ordre dionysien ne

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dissimule nullement une philosophie de la nécessité."⁴⁷ Yet he also admits that the Ideas--the first intermediary principles?--are fixed by God and that they predetermine creatures and function as their measure.⁴⁸ It could be surmised that at this point the obscurity of Denis' metaphorical language is a welcome refuge.

But if this is admitted, several interpretations of Denis' doctrine are possible. The task becomes one of dispelling the obscurity and, at the same time, giving a plausible interpretation of Denis' words. It seems that only the metaphysical acumen of Aquinas is equal to this task, for he is successful in avoiding the pantheism of one possible interpretation and the agnosticism of another.

Generally and ideally, pantheism means one of two things. It means either the elevation of the creature to the level of the Creator, or the lowering of the Creator to the status of the creature. But it is impossible to do either of these two things without in some way doing the other. This is evident enough in Denis. The pervasiveness of Thearchic causality can be interpreted as pantheistic, in as much as it implies a divinization of the creature. On the other hand, this same divinization can be construed as

47 R. ROQUES, L'Univers..., p. 64.

48 ibid., p. 63.

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evidence for degrading Thearchic causality, in as much as its activity is subject to certain necessities that belong independently to creatures. Thus pantheism is not a clear-cut alternative to transcendence. In making agnosticism the alternative to pantheism, as Gilson does, the transcendence of the Creator is safeguarded.⁴⁹ To read Denis as though he were a pantheist or an agnostic (philosophical) does not require an interpretation of certain irresolvable obscurities as occur, for example, in those texts in which the Ideas are discussed.

To avoid the pantheism that the Dionysian doctrine of superessential and pervasive Thearchic causality suggests, St. Thomas must find a way of acknowledging the proper activity of natures without denying the creative and providential causality demanded by the doctrine of the total dependence of the creature on the Creator. It can be stated a priori that two positions militate against the establish-

⁴⁹ Gilson adopts these alternatives to circumvent the difficulties that have plagued historians and commentators who have tried to interpret Denis as though the choice were between making him "orthodox" (by identifying Goodness and Being) or pantheistic (by subordinating Being to Goodness): "Either they (the historians and commentators) perceive the danger and reintegrate being into Denis' One and so conform his teaching to the norm of orthodoxy, or they accept it literally, and give it a pantheistic flavor as they explain more fully." E. GILSON, The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, p. 138.

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ment of this thesis. The one would deny proper activity to any creature. The other would assign creative activity to one or more than one creature. To ignore either of these possibilities would take St. Thomas' own distinctive doctrine out of context, for each one is historically represented.

The first position is that of the Ashirites as this position is found described in Moses Maimonides' Guide of the Perplexed.⁵⁰ Nothing, we are told, can have an operation properly ascribed it. No created nature can act upon any other created nature, because God alone is responsible for every movement in the created universe. If it should be objected that something becomes hot as a result of being placed near a fire, the proponents of this doctrine would

⁵⁰ Maimonides sums up the position of the Ashirites so: "...God creates at every one of the instants--I mean the separate units of time--an accident in every individual among the beings, whether than individual be an angel, a heavenly sphere, or something else. This he does constantly at every moment of time. They (the Ashirites) maintained that this is true faith in God's activity; and that in their opinion, he who does not believe that God acts in this way denies the fact that God acts." MOSES MAIMONIDES, Guide of the Perplexed, I, 73; p. 203. St. Thomas' account is substantially the same: "Quidam enim loquentes in leges Mauro-rum...dixerunt, omnes huiusmodi naturales formas accidentia esse: et cum accidens in aliud subiectum transire non possit, impossibile reputabant quod res naturalis per formam suam aliquo modo induceret similem formam in alio subiecto; unde dicebat quod ignis non calefacit, sed Deus creat calorem in re calefacta." S. THOMAS, De Potentia, q. 3, a. 7, c. The second position discussed by St. Thomas as the other extreme is represented by Avicenna and Avicenna.

answer that God would not cause heat in the thing unless the thing were in the presence of a fire. Thus nature does nothing by its own power. The presupposition here is that every natural form is an accident. If an accident, it cannot be transferred from one subject to another. All natures, therefore, are simply juxtaposed. Whatever order seems to obtain among them is the result of God's creative action.

Against this occasionalism, three arguments are presented. The first shows that it violates the witness of sensation. The second shows that it is opposed to reason. And the third points out that the position is inconsistent with the doctrine which teaches that things resemble God not only in their being, but also in their activity.

The nature of sensation is such that it is not mistaken as regards its object. Essential to sense perception is the action of the thing sensed upon the sense organ. A clear instance of this is the action of fire or something hot upon the sense organ of touch. This action naturally produces the sensation of heat in the one sensing. If this sensation were produced by an agent other than fire or something hot, the one sensing would still judge that the agent producing this sensation is one capable of producing

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it.⁵¹ Naturally this agent would be judged to be fire or something hot. But this is precisely what the Ashirites deny, not only in this instance but in every other. In this argument St. Thomas displays his confidence in the reliability of sensation without presenting an elaborate epistemological defense. Sensation is taken simply as part of the order of nature. Thus the invocation of sensation as a "witness" does not involve the isolation of the thing sensed, nor of sensation.

In the second argument we are told that through reason we are able to appreciate purposiveness in nature. This can be illustrated in the many uses we make of natural forms and agencies when we wish to produce a desired effect. If we wish to cut something, we depend on the sharpness of the knife selected to do the job. There would be little point in using a knife to cut something, if the effect of cutting is produced directly by God. It is possible to generalize this sort of argument by applying it to every

⁵¹ "Haec autem positio est manifeste repugnans sensui: nam cum sensus non sentiat nisi per hoc quod a sensibili patitur, ...sequitur quod homo non sentiat calorem ignis si per ignem agentem non sit similitudo caloris ignis in organo ab alio agente fieret, tactus etsi sentiret calorem, non tamen sentiret calorem ignis nec sentiret ignem esse calidum, cum tamen hoc iudicet sensus, cuius iudicium in proprio sensibili non erat." S. THOMAS, *ibid.*

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quality, force or power in nature.⁵² As in the first argument, the order in which the proper effect is seen includes both the nature of the cause and of the effect. Thus the immediacy of the proper effect is never compromised.

The third argument, which asks us to consider the communicative power of divine Goodness, states that things are made to resemble God not only in their esse, but also in their activity.⁵³

Taken together these three arguments unmistakably affirm the reality of secondary principal causes. The subsisting natures from which their proper activities flow do not operate, however, without the power of the first Cause. Thus the dynamism of the natural cause is derived from its Creator as is its esse. It is for this reason that the third argument deserves special attention.

To say that activity (agere), as well as esse, is imitative of Goodness is obviously to add a new metaphysical dimension to the reality of secondary causes. If it does nothing else, this addition has the effect of raising serious doubts concerning the ontological status of the creature

⁵² "In rebus naturalibus nihil est frustra." S. THOMAS, ibid. It is this axiom which supplies the basic premise of the argument.

⁵³ "(Positio) repugnat etiam divinae bonitati, quae sui communicativa est; ex quo factum est quod res Deo similes fierent non solum in esse, sed in agere." S. THOMAS, ibid.

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conceived as a static existent that remains unaltered by its activity. But this is precisely what happens when the activity or operation of a created cause is conceived as an independent mode or detached accident. As such it is easily reified in the imagination and pictorially represented in the general scheme of the universe. Though St. Thomas makes a distinction between esse and agere in the creature, he does not so separate them that they are two things. It is the creature acting, producing, causing that is imitative of God.

Joseph de Finance has put forth a thesis in support of this interpretation of St. Thomas. There are those, he tells us, who do not forgive thomism for being a philosophy of being.⁵⁴ These critics see the exaltation of esse as radically opposed to the necessary emphasis that a true metaphysics must place on agere. A philosophy of being for them is inert, static, even dead. The relegation of operation to the category of accident, which has secondary ontological value, is seen to be an instance of this. A true

⁵⁴ "Combien d'esprits n'ont jamais pardonné au Thomisme d'être une philosophie de l'être! Il leur semble qu'exalter l'esse signifie nécessairement déprimer l'agere, comme s'il y avait entre l'une et l'autre opposition radicale, comme si l'être compartait essentiellement cette inertie, cette fermeture sur soi qui trahissent, dans les réalités de notre expérience, une pauvreté métaphysique." J. De FINANCE, Être et Agir, p. 2.

metaphysics of reality, on the contrary, gives prior consideration to action, life and experience. It accounts what has been done, especially in the moral order, as more important than what has been. The counter-thesis which de Finance wishes to establish is that thomism need not sacrifice esse and its primacy in order to do justice to the universal dynamism which the critics of a static metaphysics demand.⁵⁵

In making his point, de Finance effects what he no doubt considers to be a novel synthesis. But he does so by using traditional thomistic themes. Thus the emphasis he places on agere develops from a consideration of the primacy of act as esse, the limitation of act by potency and other familiar theses elaborated by contemporary thomists. What is distinctive, however, in de Finance's work is the dynamic aspect he finds even in those principles that were often used to explain the constitution of things in an essentialistic and static fashion. This is evident in the various

⁵⁵ "Montrer comment le thomisme grâce à l'approfondissement de la notion d'être et à la considération du mystère des origines, sauvegarde la réalité propre et fonde la nécessité de l'agir, fournit le vrai sens et la justification du dynamisme universel; rechercher, à la lumière de ces principes, au coeur même de l'être, l'amorce et l'exigence du déploiement opératif, nous pencher, en thomiste, sur la créature, et percevoir, au plus secret de sa substance la palpitation du désir primordial : le dessein de notre travail est là tout entier." J. De FINANCE, ibid., p. 27.

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ways he relates the potency-act and matter-form dyads to his theory of agere.

To say simply that potency and act are absorbed in their reciprocal functions as components of a nature does little to explain the activity of that nature. So conceived act merely determines potency, but makes no provision for the realization of further activity.⁵⁶ The new determinations that changing things obviously undergo need, therefore, to be explained in terms of a dynamic conception of act. As de Finance points out, the original potency-act theory of Aristotle was elaborated to account for substantial change. Yet the Stagirite had to add a third principle, that of privation (steresis) in order to account for the incessant appetite that matter, the potential principle, had for form, the active principle.⁵⁷ Act, as form, was not enough to

⁵⁶ "Concevons une acte tellement adéquat à la puissance qui le reçoit qu'il en sature toutes les possibilités: la composition d'acte et de puissance rendra raison des caractères statique du composé; elle n'en expliquera point le dynamisme; les deux composants resteront absorbés tout entiers par leur fonction réciproque. Mais l'on peut aussi concevoir que l'acte, tout en satisfaisant la puissance sous un certain rapport, n'en épuise pas absolument toutes les aptitudes permette, provoque même un enrichissement ultérieur." J. De FINANCE, L'Être et Agir, p. 160.

⁵⁷ "Car, puisque en définitive l'acte doit répondre à la puissance, il faut bien que soit donnée successivement à la matière une actuation qu'elle ne peut recevoir toute à la fois." ibid.

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account for the dynamism that Aristotle observed in things. The introduction of privation as a third principle leads de Finance to speculate on whether there is a place for it in the potency-act composition of creatures within the context of a creationist metaphysics. This "transcendental" notion of privation would not be limited in its application to change in corporeal substances. It would have to be conceived as the radical appetite that all creatures have for esse as act.⁵⁸ This appetite implies perfectibility through activity. Thus agere complements esse. Though esse remains the supreme principle in the order of formal causality, agere is act in the order of final causality. As de Finance

⁵⁸ The complex argument that de Finance presents in support of this conception can be reduced ultimately to the convertibility of ens and bonum and the perfective character of esse as act. This can be seen from his comments on St. Thomas' demonstration for the identity of ens and bonum where the actuality of esse appears as a middle term: "Dicendum quod omne ens, in quantum est ens, est bonum. Omne enim ens, in quantum est ens, est in actu, et quodammodo perfectum, quia omnis actus est perfectio quaedam est. Perfectum vero habet rationem appetibilis et boni... Unde sequitur omne ens in quantum huiusmodi, bonum esse." S. THOMAS, Sum. Theol., I, q. 5, a. 3, c. "Ici encore, nous avons affaire à une interprétation dynamiste de l'être, en dehors de laquelle le mot acte paraît vide de signification métaphysique. En concevant l'esse comme l'actualité suprême, saint Thomas affirme du même coup que les diverses natures ne doivent leur valeur de perfection et de fin qu'à leur rapport à cette perfection absolue." J. de FINANCE, L'Être et Agir, p. 208.

puts it, the creature exists through esse and for agere.⁵⁹ Does this radical reorientation of Aristotle's potency-act principle nullify its original value? Does the ancient theory of nature have a place in a metaphysics of the creature?

4. Nature

Let us say first that the hylomorphic dyad has its place in an account of substantial change and that the addition of privation as a third element has been introduced to express the perpetual appetite of matter for form. Conceding that it is correct as far as it goes, it remains merely a "physical" account. Though possibly the theory could be rehabilitated to give a plausible account of potency in a creationist context, the changes that would have to be made would destroy its original character. It would demand, among other things, a prolongation of hylomorphic potency-act theory which, in order to retain its essential character, would have to admit that there is matter in incorporeal substances.

The affirmation of a material principle in the angels served a double purpose. It emphasized the trans-

⁵⁹ "Il y a dans le thomisme, ordination complémentaire de l'esse et de l'agere. L'esse est acte suprême dans l'ordre de la causalité formelle; l'agere, dans celui de la causalité finale. L'être existe par le premier et pour le second." ibid., p. 250.

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cendence of the Creator in Whom there is neither matter nor change, and it provided a principle of mutability for intellectual and volitional changes in the angels.

Matter, then, is not the only principle of mutability in a potency-act composite, since angels change though they are without matter.⁶⁰ Having established this, St. Thomas is now able to extend his potency-act theory to the entire spectrum of created things. Without exception, the potency-act composition of the creature can be designated as the composition of essentia and actus essendi. The actus essendi to which essentia is referred and with respect to which essentia is in potency is called the act of acts, the perfection of perfections. All the other ways of describing the potency-act composition are ultimately subordinated to this one.⁶¹ Substantial form is the act of matter. Substance (as subject) is itself a potential principle when referred to new accidental acts or determinations.

60 "Dicendum quod licet in angelo non sit compositio formae et materiae, est tamen in eo actus et potentia." S. THOMAS, Sum. Theol., I, q. 50, a. 2, ad 3.

61 This is a clear application of the principle that the imperfect is always for the sake of the more perfect: "Semper enim imperfectum est propter perfectius; sicut igitur materia is propter formam, ita forma, quae est actus primus, est propter suam operationem, quae est actus secundus; et sic operatio est finis rei creatae." S. THOMAS, Sum. Theol., I, q. 105, a. 5, c.

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Similarly operation is the act of a power. Let us add now that there is no potency to non-esse.⁶² Potency is always directed to a positive and dynamic increase in the creature.

The composite nature of the creature, thus described, has no exact parallel in the metaphysics of the Areopagite. It is true that the creature in the Dionysian universe moves and strives to attain perfection in the re-verse process. But the highest perfection it can attain is paradigmatic. This perfection is found in the Idea (or Exemplar). Each Idea, as we have seen, represents a way in which the per se perfections of the powers can be realized.⁶³ Thus though ideally all the lines in the reversive movement converge in the One or Goodness, there is no real reason to extend them beyond the Ideas. The Idea is--according to Lossky and Gilson and, more important, according to Denis--

62 "Creaturarum autem naturae hoc demonstrant, ut nulla earum in nihilum redigatur; quia vel sunt immateriales, et sic in eis non est potentia ad non esse; vel sunt materiales, et sic saltem remanent semper secundum materiam, quae incorruptibilis est, utpote subiectum existens generationis et corruptionis." S. THOMAS, Sum. Theol., I, q. 104, a. 4, c.

63 See above p. 93.

a principle and a cause, and is a principle and a cause because it is.⁶⁴ Moreover, the Idea is a first. It is first in the order to created existents. Any other created existent takes its place thereafter in the total scheme of the universe. It follows that, if there is any composition in the existent comparable to that of potency and act, it is not to be looked for in the Idea for the Idea is already perfect in its own way. Its essence is achieved and is not, therefore, in potency to any further act.⁶⁵ It is not necessary to ask now whether there is a potency-act composition in existents other than the Ideas, for even if there were, it would be of some use in describing the relation of existents below the Ideas to the Ideas but not with respect to their Creator.

64 "Because they are, they are principles and causes: et sunt, et principia sunt, et primo sunt, deinde principia sunt. Only by an inevitable consequence, since they are, they are not God." E. GILSON, The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, p. 139. See also above p. ; p.

65 Neither Plato, nor any of the Neo-Platonists have said that the Ideas are in act. This is terminologically alien to their philosophies. However, a simple analysis of the nature of the Platonic and Neo-Platonic meaning of Idea shows that it can be said to be in act, if the meaning given to "in act" does not involve the technical rigour that is given to it by Aristotle and Aquinas: "Plato, like any other man knew the difference between 'to be' and 'not to be' and when he asserted subsistent Ideas he meant them to be actual." R. J. HENLE, St. Thomas and Platonism, p. 373.

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Though the potency-act couple, as St. Thomas conceives it, has no exact metaphysical correlative in the Dionysian universe, there is a composition of the non-existent and the existent with respect to Goodness which embraces them both.⁶⁶ St. Thomas does not hesitate to read back his own potency-act theory into the Dionysian text, and does a masterful job of making the non-existent correspond to potency and the existent to act.⁶⁷ This procedure, we know, is typical of Aquinas. It is seldom the literal, historical Denis that is integrated into Thomas' metaphysics of the creature.

The creature qua creature is immediately dependent on its Creator. To maintain this position, it must be shown that there is but one Creator, and this is to show that no intermediary cause is involved in creation. No creature can create. This is the second position which must be clarified before the total dependence of the creature on the Creator can be unequivocally affirmed.⁶⁸ As we have already suggested, the truth that the creature as such depends totally on the Creator must take into account the proper activity ascribed to the creature. In short, the activity

66 See above, p. 117.

67 See above, p. 104.

68 See above, p. 91.

proper to secondary principal causes in no way compromises the dependence of the creature on the Creator.

In his De Substantiis Separatis, an unfinished work, St. Thomas first deals with a series of philosophical problems concerning the origin of separated substances.⁶⁹ After resolving these problems, he considers their theological implications. It is curious to note here that in the philosophical part of the Treatise the name of Denis does not appear. His use of the Areopagite is, therefore, strictly as a theological authority. This is most interesting, for in the confrontation of the two theologians a clear and concise philosophical statement on the impossibility of vicarious creation appears.

That there is no doubt concerning St. Thomas' intention to use Denis as a theological authority is clear from both the title of Chapter XVII of the treatise and from the opening lines where he explicitly contrasts what he has done up to this point and what he intends to do now. The title reads so: "Quid secundum fidem catholicam de origine

69 "The Tractatus de Substantiis Separatis may be broadly divided into two main, although disproportionate parts: (a) an examination of the opinions of the various philosophers on separate substances and a critique of each position strictly on philosophical grounds; (b) an exposition of Catholic teaching as found in Sacred Scripture, The Fathers, and especially Dionysius... The first or philosophical part comprises Chapters I - XVI; the second part includes only Chapters XVII - XIX." F. LESCOE, De Substantiis.... pp. 8-9.

angelorum sit tenendum."⁷⁰ St. Thomas' introduction to the chapter is as follows:

Quia igitur ostensum est quid de substantiis spiritualibus praecipui philosophi Plato et Aristoteles senserunt quantum ad earum originem conditionem naturae, distinctionem et gubernationis ordinem, et in quo ab eis alii errantes disserunt, restat ostendere quid de singulis habeat christianae religionis assertio. Ad quod utemur praecipui Dionysii documentis, qui super alios ea quae ad spirituales substantias pertinent excellentius tradidit.⁷¹

We note that Plato and Aristotle are singled out as representative of the philosophical tradition, for in the first part of the treatise it is with reference to their positions that other philosophies are discussed, notably those of the Arabs and the Platonici. Denis, however, is placed in different company. His associates are Augustine, Jerome, Basil, Damascene and the authors of Sacred Scripture, men whose theological renown is greater than their reputation as philosophers.

In the sequence of texts that St. Thomas uses to show that Denis' doctrine conforms to, and explains, the tradition of the catholic faith on the origin of spiritual substances, the first is cited as an endorsement of an excerpt from the Psalms to the effect that God has created

70 S. THOMAS, De Substantiis..., XVII, 91, p. 134.

71 ibid., p. 134.

them:

Sed et Dionysius quarto capitulo Coelesti Hierarchiae hanc originem subtiliter explicat dicens, "Primum illud dicere verum est quod bonitate universali superessentialis dignitas eorum quae sunt essentias substituens, ad esse adjunxit"; et post pauca subdit quod "ipsae coelestes substantiae sunt primo et multipliciter in participatione Dei factae" et, in IV capitulo De Divinis Nominibus dicit quod "propter divinae bonitatis radios substituerunt intelligibiles et intellectuales omnes et substantiae et virtutes et operationes. Propter istos sunt et vivunt et vitam habent indeficientem". 72

Except for allusions to participation and the substance-power-operation triad, this statement contains little else than one which would say that spiritual substances are produced by God, share in his life and do so without deficiency. No attempt is made to isolate any philosophical meaning which the terminology may suggest. The statement is theological, dogmatic, canonical. But in what follows the question of the immediacy of God's causality is raised:

Quod autem a Deo immediate productae sint omnes spirituales substantiae et non solum supremae expresse in V capitulo De Divinis Nominibus dicit, "Sanctissimae, inquit, et provectissimae virtutes existentes, et sicut in vestibulis supersubstantialis Trinitatis collocatae, ab ipsa et in ipsa et esse et deiformiter esse habent; et post illas subjectae," id est inferiores supremis, "subjectae", id est inferiori modo esse habent a Deo, "et extremae", id est infimae, "extreme", id est infimo modo, "sicut ad angelos sicut ad nos autem supremum", per

72 ibid. pp. 134-135.

quod dat intelligere quod omnes spiritualium
substantiarum ordines ex divina dispositione
instituantur, non ex hoc quod una earum
causetur ab alia.⁷³

The consideration that raises the question of the immediacy of the origin of spiritual substances is that of their gradation. The lower depends on the higher.⁷⁴ The higher have their esse in a divine way (deiformiter). The lower have their esse in a lower way. Thomas assures us, however, that this does not mean that the lower do not have their esse from the higher, though this is not immediately conveyed to us by the text he quotes from Denis. St. Thomas interprets the term "subjected" (subjectae) with reference to God and not with reference to a higher spiritual substance. Spiritual substances have their esse from God, though only those who dwell in the vestibule of the Trinity have their esse and have their esse in a divine way.

It is more than possible that in using this particular quotation from the De Divinis Nominibus St. Thomas was aware of making connections which Denis himself did not make. This could be gathered from the expression "dat intelligere" ("He gives the understanding") which requires the reader to

73 ibid. XVII, 92, pp. 135-136.

74 "Lower" and "higher" can be said to correspond roughly to the Proclean division of ginomena and onta. See above p. 57-58.

supply the connection. By itself the text can be interpreted atomistically to mean that the higher or highest spiritual substances have their esse directly from God and the lower are subjected to them. The fact that St. Thomas reinforces the quotation from another source where the statement is more expressively (expressius) to the point seems to be an indication that an atomistic reading is plausible:

Et hoc expressius dicitur in IV capitulo
Coelesti Hierarchiae: "Est inquit omnium
 causae et super omnia bonitatis proprium ad
 communionem suam quae sunt vocare ut uni-
 cuique eorum quae sunt, ex propria definitur
 analogia"; unamquamque enim rem in ordine
 constituit qui competit suae naturae.⁷⁵

This text calls our attention to the fact that each thing is given its place in the total order of things by the cause of all things. But it does not say that each thing is immediately caused by the cause that gives order to the whole. It is St. Thomas who says that all creatures are immediately created by God, not Denis. In his reading of these texts of Denis, however, he does not separate what Denis has to say about the gradation of creatures and what he himself says about immediate creation.

The final consideration in this sequence of texts concerns the unicity of the supreme principle. Denis is now called upon to witness the truth that spiritual substances

75 ibid., p. 136.

do not require more than one principle or cause for all that they are. They are said to possess goodness, being and life. These perfections have a single source. The Platonici, as we have already seen, held for a plurality of productive deities. Here we need only be concerned with the fact that they regarded Goodness or the One as the supreme God and being (ipsum esse) as a subordinate deity. St. Thomas quotes two texts from the De Divinis Nominibus which deny the polytheism of the Platonici and affirm that there is but one principle or cause from which all things proceed. This principle or cause is, of course, Goodness:

"Non enim substantiam quamdam divinam aut angelicam esse dicimus per se esse quod est causa quod sint omnia; solum enim quod sint ex natura omnia ipsum esse supersubstantiale", scilicet summe Dei "Est principium et substantia et causa", principium quidem effectivum, substantia autem quasi forma exemplaris, causa autem finalis. Subdit autem, "Neque vitae generativam aliam deitatem dicimus praeter superdeam vitam, causam omnium quaecumquae vivunt et ipsius per se vitae" quae scilicet formaliter viventibus inhaeret: "neque ut colligendo dicamus, dicimus principales existentium et creativas substantias et personas quas et deos existentium et creatores per se facientes dixerunt".⁷⁶

This is a perfect instance of what Gilson attributes to Denis as "an acute, almost exasperated feeling for the divine transcendence."⁷⁷ St. Thomas exploits this

⁷⁶ ibid. XVII, 93, p. 137.

⁷⁷ E. GILSON, The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, p. 138.

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feeling for the divine transcendency and at the same time "explains" what Denis means by substance, principle and cause. God is a principle, but a productive principle (or, if you will, an efficient cause). He is a substance, but a substance after the manner of an exemplar cause or form. He is a cause, but a final cause. Ambiguities are thereby removed. Yet nothing is said of the plurality of exemplars and their identification with being, nor of the subordination of being to Goodness.

Taken negatively and individually, the positions of Denis and Thomas are opposed to the polytheism of the Platonici. This seems to be all that is demanded by the apologetic and polemic spirit of the treatise. The authority of Denis, whose Neo-Platonism is incidental to the doctrine, is used against the tradition of the Platonici whose Neo-Platonism is, of course, essential to the error that is being opposed. The polytheism of the Platonici is opposed to the teaching of the catholic faith. Denis is placed on the side of the faith. This is simple enough. But the thomistic texts we have read present a philosophical position in which Dionysian and Neo-Platonic elements are fused together and assimilated into Thomas' own philosophical position. This integrated doctrine stands in opposition to the error of the Platonici.

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The same may be said of the relation of St. Thomas' philosophy to other philosophies that are played off, one against the other. Thus it would appear that, in the first part of the De Substantiis Separatis, Plato and Aristotle are used individually to confute the emanationism of the Arabian philosophers. But actually it is neither Plato nor Aristotle. It is a composite of the two and as such it is a uniquely thomistic doctrine. Lescoe has pointed out that this composite doctrine, as it is elaborated in Vth to the XVIth chapters of the treatise, has prompted Fabro to argue for a real assimilation of Plato's theory of participation within the framework of Aristotelian metaphysics.⁷⁸ This interpretation, however, is doubtful. It is too simple. Even if we grant there is some sort of assimilation, it would not be the assimilation of Plato into Aristotle but, rather, the assimilation of both Plato and Aristotle into Thomas.

It is easy to find parallel arguments in the first of the treatise for the same doctrines presented in the second and unfinished part. We have seen in the sequence of texts we have examined in the second part where the authority of Denis is invoked that spiritual substances are immediately produced by God and that no intermediary crea-

78 See F. J. LESCOE, De Substantiis..., p. 167, n.12.

tive agent is involved in the production of any spiritual substance. We can now ask: Are there any intermediary creative agents involved in the production of material substances?

The answer to this question is facilitated by a distinction which St. Thomas makes in IXth chapter of the treatise. It concerns two essentially irreducible modes of production:

In omni causarum ordine, necesse est universalem causam particulari preexistere, nam causae particulares non agunt nisi in universalium causarum virtute. Manifestum est autem quod omnis causa per motum aliquid faciens particularis causa est; habet enim particularem effectum. Est enim omnis motus ex hoc determinato in illud determinatum, omnisque mutatio motus cujusdam terminus est. Oportet igitur supra modum fiendi, quo aliquid fit per mutationem vel motum, esse aliquem modum fiendi seu originem rerum absque omni mutatione vel motu per influentiam essendi.⁷⁹

In fine, what is distinguished here are the way in which things are generated and the way in which things are created. But in distinguishing these two modes of production, St. Thomas also points out that the one mode depends on the other. Nothing is produced per modum fiendi except through the power that produces per influentiam essendi. Thus no particular cause causes unless it is caused by the universal Cause. This is presupposed in a subsequent passage where

79 S. THOMAS, De Substantiis..., IX, 49, pp. 86-87.

the distinction and the relation of these modes of production are used in a discussion of the way in which generables come to be through the mediation of other causes:

Sed cum sit duplex modus productionis rerum: unus quidem secundum mutationem et motum, alius autem absque mutatione et motu..., in eo quidem productionis modo qui per motum est manifeste videmus hoc accidere quod a primo principio aliqua procedunt mediantibus causis secundis. Videmus enim plantas et animalia produci in esse per motum superiorum causarum ordinate usque ad primum principium.⁸⁰

Plants and animals, then, come to be through the mediation of superior causes. But this is not to say that mediation is creative, for these material substances are not said to come to be absolutely (simpliciter). The presence of intermediaries in the universe does not in any way argue against the pervasiveness of the creative first Cause. The entire order of causes and effects depend on this Cause which is God.

Let us return now to the first distinction made at the beginning of this chapter. We saw that there were three modes of causal agents: univocal, equivocal and analogical. The mode in which God is said to be the cause of all things is the analogical. Later we observed that there is a proportion between effect and cause. This proportion was found lacking in the Dionysian type of analogy which extended only

80 S. THOMAS, De Substantiis..., X, 55, p. 94.

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up to their exemplar or paradigmatic causes. No satisfactory creature-to-Creator relation could be established, if this limited kind of analogy is accepted. The only use that can be made of it is in emphasizing the divine transcendence. But if this use is made of it, one runs the risk of agnosticism for the reason that beyond the point that the via affirmativa (which determines the limits of Dionysian analogy) one discovers only the infinite abyss that separates the creature from an incomprehensible and inaccessible Thearchy. When St. Thomas affirms that there is an analogical proportion of creature to Creator, he does not traverse this abyss and stand triumphantly at the throne of a comprehensible Godhead. Rather he affirms that this God can be known inasmuch as He is the cause of the esse of creatures. Yet if God is the Cause of creatures, creatures are not thereby deprived of the dynamism proper to their natures. It is possible to maintain that the creature is totally dependent on the Creator and that what the creature is and has and does belongs to it. It is possible to say this, because God is not their formal Cause. Nor is there anything in Him that is their formal Cause. The total emanation of creatures from God is never paradigmatic: Deus est esse omnium non essenziale, sed causale.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

There is no opposition more radical than that which has Creator and creature as its terms. At the same time there is no relation more intimate than that of creature to Creator. This grand metaphysical paradox has no easy resolution. The total dependence of the creature on the Creator, which the creationist doctrine demands, seems to preclude the transcendence of the Creator over the creature. The total transcendence of the Creator over the creature, also demanded by the doctrine, seems to rule out the intimate relation consistent with dependence. Yet both of these demands are indispensable elements in a creationist metaphysics.

In the present work we have examined these elements as they appear in the doctrinal syntheses of Denis the Areopagite and Thomas Aquinas. We have found that the metaphysical resources of Denis' Neo-Platonism, which he used to articulate his own creationist doctrine, did not prove adequate to the task of resolving the creationist paradox. But we also found that this same doctrine had a considerable influence, both contributory and formative, on Thomas' own metaphysics of creation. This is evident when he uses the Dionysian text, not only in deference to its author's high

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rank as an auctoritas, but also in order to enhance the arguments he proffers as rationes.

In the recapitulation that precedes the statement of our conclusion, we follow the order of treatment found in the body of the work. This takes us through certain select themes that serve as an inductive basis for the conclusion. Roughly this takes into account the Classical Greek elements in the Neo-Platonic and Thomistic arguments. But this part of our recapitulation of the first and second chapters of our work is intended to present certain themes that have more of a contributory or material, than a formative influence on St. Thomas' interpretation of the Dionysian text. The formative influence is taken into account in the second part of the recapitulation where points of doctrine concerning the being of creatures are recalled. Our conclusion bears both on these points of doctrine and on way St. Thomas reads the De Divinis Nominibus. We return now to the Classical Greek period.

The Greeks first qualified themselves as philosophers by searching for first causes of the visible universe. How successful they were in this venture would depend upon whether or not the causes or principles they discovered were truly first. But it became evident that by the time of Parmenides that the search for first causes was accompanied by an equally engaging preoccupation with a single, unitary

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principle which would be first in the order of human knowledge, though not necessarily in reality. Thus two parallel dialectical movements can be discerned in the philosophical speculation of the Pre-Socratics.

With Parmenides these two movements became indistinguishable. What is first is one. This is to say of the first that It is (esti). If this is accepted, then to say that It is not is impossible. The first and only concern of the philosopher is to say that being is. Non-being is thereby excluded from the purview of philosophical speculation. It follows that whatever is many and changing is also excluded, for to be many and to change imply that being is and, at the same time, is not. What Parmenides problematized when he said the first is one was the opposition of the many to (the) One. Subsequent efforts to solve the problem had to take into account that Parmenides said the first is one and, therefore, immutable, imperishable and eternal. At the same time, there was also the inescapable realization that none of these attributes could be directly ascribed to the visible universe, the many and changing universe which demanded a first cause or causes.

If, as it did, the search for first causes continued, it would become apparent that compromises would have to be made. No philosopher after Parmenides ignored the visible universe. Nor did any philosopher fail to attempt

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to show that the many was in some way dependent on the One. In order to do this, some way would have to be found to re-introduce non-being into the general scheme of reality. This was done, but never without conceding something to the great Eleatic.

What Parmenides said of being, Plato said of his Ideas. To say that each Idea is is to ascribe to it the properties of Eleatic being. The esti, in short, is applicable to the Platonic Idea. But unlike Eleatic being, the Idea is more than one. It can be said, therefore, that each Idea is as many times as there are Ideas and that it is not as many times as it is not another Idea. Each Idea, in other words, is self-identical and, at the same time, is no other Idea. It was in this way that Plato re-introduced non-being into the intelligible universe. But it is not the non-being of Parmenides that is returned. It is, rather, the relative non-being of otherness. The inflexibility of Parmenides' dictum, "Either It is or It is not", is thus relieved. This permitted Plato to relate many things of the same kind to the Ideas.

So a theory of causality emerges. The lower which depends on the higher is said to participate in the higher. The many and the changing share in the immutable and imperishable reality of the Ideas. Thus though things in the visible universe individually perish, that which is

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intelligible in them perdures to the degree that they participate in archetypal Ideas. This does not mean, however, that the many and changing relatives of the visible universe depend on the Ideas for everything that they are. Even if these same Ideas are absorbed into a higher reality, as they afterwards were with the Neo-Platonists, their function as causes remains limited to the causality that Plato first assigned them, this being to make the many and the changing intelligible to the extent that this is possible. This, as we have seen, is the case all the way through to Denis the Areopagite. As best the Ideas are paradigmatic causes.

When Plato's Demiurge set out to fulfill his appointed role as world-maker, he used the Ideas as models. His first duty was to make things in the visible world conform to these perfect types of reality. But, as the story goes, he had to contend with Necessity over which he had no control. For this reason, he was never successful in bringing the intelligibility of the Ideas to the lower reaches of reality. We have compared the work of the Demiurge to that of the philosopher who is also a world-maker. The world that the philosopher makes is little different than the one the Demiurge projects. The matter in which the many is immersed evades his comprehensive grasp. The limits of the causal influence of the Ideas are, therefore, precisely those of philosophical intelligibility.

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If the causal influence of the Idea does not extend down to the lower part of Plato's universe, it is also true that intelligibility does not extend up and beyond the Ideas to the supreme principle, Goodness or the One. Goodness is the source of intelligibility, but is Itself unintelligible or superintelligible. This It must be in order to be perfectly one. The only way it can be perfectly one is to transcend the composition of being and non-being (or otherness) that characterizes the Ideas. This is another way of saying that It is beyond affirmation and negation, the logical elements of discourse (dianoia). Goodness or the One is posited, therefore, as the goal in which Plato's dialectic would ideally terminate. As such It is at the summit of the universe, but not above it.

The Platonic theme we have stressed here has more explicit consequences in Proclus who emphasizes the monadic nature of Goodness. Though Goodness and the One are identified, it is really the One from which whatever else there is in the universe emanates and to which all returns. Once more, however, the transcendence of the One is relative, as is the influence it exerts on the rest of the universe. Correlatively the dependence of the universe on the One is never total. The One, then, is best described as maximal unity. Matter at the bottom of the Proclean universe is described as minimal unity. Thus the entire universe is

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ranged between maximal and minimal unities. The One, since it is maximal unity, serves as a principle of unification for the entire universe which, therefore, is nothing more than a graduated system of unities (henads). Thus the One is, as in Plato's universe, the supreme principle within the system.

Goodness or the One, let us conclude, if taken as the supreme principle in relation to which all subsequent parts of the universe take their place, does not transcend the system. The superintelligibility of the principle, so considered, does not affect this conclusion. It simply underscores its unitary nature, thereby fulfilling the Platonic requirement that the source of intelligibility be no more than one.

It follows that Goodness does not "produce" the universe. Still less does It create it. The Proclean equation of noesis and to poiein is instructive in this regard. Creation, to the extent that the term is applicable to any productive activity in the Proclean universe, refers to contemplative activity. Contemplation is the "making" (to poiein) that emanates from intelligence (noesis). But even if we were willing to grant that this activity is creative, we would have to deny that it emanates from the highest principle inasmuch as intelligence comes after the One. Thus if contemplation is creation, creation cannot be attributed

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to the supreme principle. It remains that the only pervasive activity of the supreme principle is unification, and that It does not make or produce what it unifies.

What is said of unification applies also to the equivalent functions of perfection and illumination, for these activities presuppose that there is something to be perfected or illumined and that, as in the case of unification, that which is to be perfected or illumined must be first produced. But this is never the case in Platonic and Proclean systems.

No truly productive and transcendent cause is to be found in Platonically oriented cosmologies. We stress this point, because it affects our final conclusion concerning Denis the Areopagite's indebtedness to the Platonic tradition. Aristotle, however, was aware of the necessity of a theory of productive causality. His efficient or moving cause is an original contribution to Greek cosmology. But, as we were careful to say, the moving cause is not creative. This is best understood in terms of the effect it produces in the kind of universe it operates.

Aristotle's universe is a universe of substances. Substance (ousia) in his cosmos corresponds to Idea in Plato's. In fact one of the many words Plato used to designate the Idea is the term ousia. Substance, moreover, is the primary instance of being and is so regarded by Aristotle

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in his metaphysics whose object or subject is being as such. Thus the manner of philosophizing is not radically altered by the emphasis he places on substance. This is confirmed by the tradition that continues on through to Denis for whom philosophical cognition bears upon being or ousia.

But Aristotle repudiated Plato's doctrine of separated Ideas. Substances, as he found them in the sensible world, did not require corresponding Forms existing apart from them. The same can be said of the heavenly bodies existing above the sublunar world. What they did require was a cause of their movement. Aristotle defines movement in terms of potency and act. It is the act of a being in potency insofar as it is in potency. Accordingly the cause of movement reduces the moved thing from potency to act. In the sensible sublunar world this reduction is exhibited in the generation of new substance. Matter which is potency is thus determined by form which is act. The reduction of potency to act in the heavenly bodies is effected only with regard to place, since they have no further potency with respect to form. The effect the moving cause produces in them is simply that of circular movement which they eternally undergo.

That upon which all movement depends cannot itself be moved. Thus the first cause of movement is unmoved, has no potency and is, therefore, Pure Act. The first moving

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Cause, however, is not one. There are as many unmoved movers as there are distinct movements among the heavenly bodies. The fact that Aristotle said that the Unmoved Movers are more than one is not inconsistent with the purpose they serve in his system. As moving Causes they are not responsible for the universe as a whole, but only for the celestial and sublunar movements within it. Thus the heavenly bodies move because they are moved by Them, but they are not produced by Them. In the sublunar world new substances constantly arise out of the old, because of the first movers. But in coming to be they come to be from nature (physis) which Aristotle describes as autoenergeia and which exists independently of the movement caused in it by the first movers.

Finally, the Unmoved Movers are Intelligences. This follows from their being devoid of all potency and movement. Their perfect activity is contemplative and the object of their contemplation is their own being, if indeed we can speak of an "object" when it is identical with the subject.

Little else need be said about the Aristotelian universe and its causes in order to conclude that whatever is produced in it is created. If we regard the Unmoved Movers as the highest causes, we see them as being responsible for the movement of things in the universe. As the bottom of the universe matter is eternally present awaiting

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the reception of new forms. The perfection attained in this endless process is always substantial act or form. Neither the matter nor the substantial act are creatures, for they are not created. The resources of nature are sufficient to account for the constituted principles of the thing produced. If an extrinsic moving cause is also required for the production of the thing, it is never responsible for the total production of the thing. It is not a creative cause.

All in all, Greek metaphysics does not come up with a creationist doctrine. The One-over-many is never Creator-over-creature. Paradigmatic causality is not creative causality. The moving cause is not the cause of the creature's being. This, however, did not deter Christian philosophers from making use of these philosophical notions to describe a universe of things totally dependent of their Creator for their being.

Denis the Areopagite, we have said is a creationist. At least one can find statements in his writings to the effect that the Creator absolutely transcends what He creates. But Denis is one of the Neo-Platonists. He uses their terminology, and their principles control the structure of his philosophical arguments. Thomas Aquinas, we know, was well aware of this. For this reason he was often quicker to invoke the name of Denis as an authority than to make use of his argument. It can be objected on this account that the

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transcendence and correlative dependence, essential to a creationist metaphysics, are not really to be found in the philosophy of the Areopagite. This certainly would be true, for example, if the Proclean importations in Denis' text were taken in their literal philosophical sense. But all this would prove is that Proclus is not a creationist. A similar case could be made for the presence of Aristotelian tenets in the metaphysics of Aquinas. Our contention that Denis is a creationist, therefore, must rest on other grounds.

First there is no doubt whatsoever that Denis affirms the transcendence of God over the universe of creatures. The fact that there is no well worked out metaphysical demonstration in his writings to support this affirmation does not argue against the clear and unequivocal recognition of the divine transcendence, evidence for which appears on almost every page of the De Divinis Nominibus.

Second, Denis is deeply aware of the limitation of any created intellect (including the angelic) as regards its power to grasp the nature of the Thearchy. No mode of created cognition can even remotely encompass the divine nature. The philosopher whose knowledge stops short with a knowledge of being (ousia) is, of course, included among those whose minds are limited to a knowledge of finite beings. There is nothing unusual to be looked for in this

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concept of philosophical cognition. Traditionally philosophers are lovers, not possessors, of ultimate wisdom. But in the Dionysian account that with respect to which philosophical cognition is said to be deficient is not a dialectically inaccessible principle or cause. It is not a supreme principle which, if known by the philosopher or by a superior intelligence, would supply a point of departure for an exhaustive philosophy of the visible and invisible universe. With Denis, on the contrary, it is never a question of looking down from the supreme vantage point of the first principle but, rather, of looking up. Thus the via ignorantiae divides all created modes of knowing off from the Thearchy, Goodness or the One.

Third, Denis makes no exceptions among created existents as far as their dependence on the Thearchy is concerned. God is the cause of the beginning, the middle and the end of every created existent.

Now what all this should mean is that there is absolutely nothing, either in the creature or the Creator, that mediates creation, for this is precisely and ultimately what is demanded by absolute transcendence and total dependence. If one says that there is nothing in the Creator that mediates creation, it is because one must also say that the faintest trace of mediation in the Creator implies that there is something in the Creator that is created. Similarly

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if one says that there is nothing in the creature that mediates creation, it is because one must also say that any mediation in the creature implies that there is something in the creature that is not created. Is this true for Denis the Areopagite? Is this true for Thomas Aquinas?

These are simple questions which, however, do not have simple answers. This is especially true for Denis. The following recapitulates what we consider to be the most difficult objection to Denis' creationism, if creationism precludes mediation.

If we contend that there is no mediation in Denis' account of the emanation of creatures, we must make up our minds concerning the place of the Ideas or Exemplars in his system. The Ideas must be located in the Creator or in creatures. If we locate them in the Creator, we must deny what Denis definitely affirms of them, namely; that, as principles or causes of things (the existents), they are said to be. But as such they cannot be said to be in the Creator (as inseparable from Him), for as Denis repeats many times, the Creator is superexistent, superessential, etc., and, therefore, beyond anything that can be said to be. Thus it is contradictory to posit Ideas in the Creator and, at the same time, make them mediating causes or principles. If on the other hand we locate them among things (existents), we deny them the priority they must have as principles or

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causes of things. No other choices appear to be open. All that can be said is that there are other considerations in Denis' creationist doctrine that override this objection. We must conclude, then, that despite inconsistencies and contradictions in Denis' account of the emanation of creatures from God, he does affirm the transcendence of the Creator and the total dependence of the Creature.

Thomas Aquinas is perfectly consistent in his exposition of immediate creationism. The Ideas cannot be possible candidates as creative mediators, for he makes them inseparable from the Creator, and there is never any problem concerning their location among creatures. If there is any difficulty arising from locating Ideas in the Creator, it is merely linguistic. To say that there are Ideas in the mind of God is just another way of saying that God is entirely responsible for the manifold of perfections found in creatures. The divine simplicity remains intact.

Much the same sort of answer can be given if anyone should object to the persistent use of the language of receptivity to express the way in which the creature has its being from God. Receptivity implies that there is something that preexists and awaits the reception of its being through creation. If this were so, there would have to be something in the creature for which the Creator is not responsible. The very notion of "receptient", though metaphorically

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plausible, is alien to the productive totality of creation. Whether reciprocity is conceived as an essence, a mode or a possible does not matter. It has no place in the creature-to-Creator relation. This is not to say that the language of receptivity has no other value. It is practically indispensable for theologians who must find ways of explaining divine grace.

There is one more consideration, before we draw our final conclusions. It concerns the relation of one creature to another, more particularly, the causal relations that exist among creatures. Both Denis and Thomas readily recognize the reality of secondary causes. One angel illuminates another. Food sustains animal life. Men use instruments and tools to produce desired effects. More examples could be gathered from the texts of Denis and Thomas so ~~has~~ to cover the entire range of created beings. All creatures act. They are the cause of their proper activity. They also act on other creatures. The result of their activity is always ameliorative. Through their activity, they enhance and expand either their own being or the being of other creatures. Yet there is no effect produced by creatures without the pervasive influence of the first Cause. Though Denis and Thomas have different ways of saying this, they are in perfect agreement as far as the general truth expressed is

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concerned. There is a difference, however, in the way each philosopher envisages the term or end of the activity of the created cause.

Though the activities of creatures in the Dionysian universe ideally converge in Goodness of the One, what they actually become is predefined paradigmatically. In other words their formal perfectibility is predetermined by the causal influence of the Ideas. The Ideas are also volitional principles or wills (thelemata) that prescribe the limits of created perfection. This does not destroy the causal autonomy of the creature. The lower is influenced by the higher, and the higher is sustained by the lower. But ever anxious to preserve the transcendence of Goodness or the One, Denis interposes the Ideas between the Creator and His creatures. Thus the causal proportio of creature to Creator is deficient. Thus if one had a direct vision of the Ideas, one would understand perfectly all that the creature is and does.

The supremely perfect unicity of monadic Goodness is inimitable. This is a problem for Denis, but not for Thomas. It is not necessary to introduce principles of paradigmatic unification, in order to avoid the pantheistic conclusion to the effect that their activity aims at becoming the One. On the contrary, St. Thomas relates the activity of creatures to the divine creative act. Creatures

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imitate God not only in their being, but also in their activity. The activity of the creature, therefore, is perfective with respect to that act (its actus essendi) by which it is said to be or to exist. Whatever unification it achieves is subservient to this. The proportio between it and its Creator is established, therefore, as effect is to its efficient Cause.

In the comparisons and contrasts we have made throughout the present work, we are able to see the futility of making two unique philosophies coalesce. It is true that there are correspondences which arise from a common faith and from the common philosophical perspective this faith produces. But there is hardly one instance in which the theology that emerges out of a philosophically explicitated faith does not reveal the disparate metaphysical orientations of Denis and Thomas. It is also true that the masterful reading that Thomas makes of the Dionysian text obliterates this disparity. On this score the obscurity of Denis' language facilitates this sort of interpretative reading. For this reason the Dionysian philosophy never appears as it really is. We have tried to make this evident in our study of the two men, using the problem of the being of creatures as a common point of reference. What we have with St. Thomas, then, is not an expositio of Denis' doctrine but, rather, a commentary that stands on its own metaphysical merits.

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