

Laval théologique et philosophique



## Whether Everything That Is, Is Good

### Marginal Notes on St. Thomas's Exposition of Boethius's *De Hebdomadibus* (III)

M. Verda Clare, C.S.C.

---

Volume 5, Number 1, 1949

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1019819ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1019819ar>

[See table of contents](#)

---

Publisher(s)

Laval théologique et philosophique, Université Laval

ISSN

0023-9054 (print)

1703-8804 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

---

Cite this article

Clare, M. (1949). Whether Everything That Is, Is Good: Marginal Notes on St. Thomas's Exposition of Boethius's *De Hebdomadibus* (III). *Laval théologique et philosophique*, 5(1), 119–140. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1019819ar>

---

Tous droits réservés © Laval théologique et philosophique, Université Laval, 1949

This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/>

---

**é**rudit

This article is disseminated and preserved by Érudit.

Érudit is a non-profit inter-university consortium of the Université de Montréal, Université Laval, and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Its mission is to promote and disseminate research.

<https://www.erudit.org/en/>

# Whether Everything That Is, Is Good

---

## MARGINAL NOTES ON ST. THOMAS'S EXPOSITION OF BOETHIUS'S *DE HEBDOMADIBUS*

---

### III. SOLUTIONS TO BE REJECTED\*

Now that we are in possession of the principles, we enter into the problem that concerns created goods. But many ideas have passed through our minds since we stated the difficulty at the beginning of Section One;<sup>1</sup> hence it may well be repeated here: "It is said that created substances in as much as they are, are good; yet, on the other hand, it is said that creatures are not substantial goods, but that to be a substantial good is proper to God alone. Now whatever belongs to any thing in as much as it is, seems to belong to it substantially; and so if created substances, in as much as they are, are good, it seems that they are, in consequence, substantial goods."

And then, we put it this way: Good is a transcendental attribute of being. Hence, whatever is, is good in so far as it is. It would seem to follow, then, that substance, being *ens per se* should also be *bonum per se*. Yet, it is said that this is true of God only.—And this is what John did not understand.

The statement of the question rests on the presupposition, as we see, that every thing that is, is good. But this preliminary assumption of the Deacon's is now given the support of solid proof, based on reasons taken from what precedes concerning appetite. The argument<sup>2</sup> may be formulated thus: Every thing desires its like, so that whatever desires another, shows itself to be like that other. But every thing desires the good. Therefore, every thing is good.

Boethius had presented the principle: "every thing desires the good," as one commonly accepted by the wise. And we find it stated over and over again in the works of Saint Thomas, with or without the addition: "as the Philosopher says in the beginning of the *Ethics*." But now, in his

---

\* The first series of notes, covering Chapter One of SAINT THOMAS'S exposition, appeared in *Laval théologique et philosophique*, Vol.III, n.1, (1947), pp.66-76. The second series, concerning Chapter Two, appeared in Vol.III, n.2 (1947), pp.177-194. The present series concerns Chapter Three and Four.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Laval théologique et philosophique*, Vol.III, n.1 (1947), p.67.

<sup>2</sup> "Unumquodque tendit ad sum simile. Unde supra praemisum est: Quod appetit aliud, tale ipsum esse naturaliter ostendit, quale est hoc ipsum quod appetit. Sed omne quod est, ad bonum tendit."—SAINT THOMAS, *In de Hebdom.*, c.3.

exposition of the *De Hebdomadibus*, he does more than restate the principle, in his intent to have the whole solution stand firm. In a few deft words, he sets up a rigorous argument to prove it so:<sup>1</sup> The proper object of appetite is the good. Now, every thing has an appetite — intellectual, or animal, or natural. Therefore, every thing desires the good. — This reinforces the proof that every thing is good, for: “Just as sound is that which is perceived by every act of hearing, so good must be that to which every appetite tends.”<sup>2</sup> It further follows, then, that since every thing tends to its like, every thing is good.

Granted that all things are good, the problem still remains as to the manner in which they are good. Two possibilities present themselves: they are good either by their essence or by participation. Saint Thomas calls attention to the fact that Boethius presupposes here that “to be something by essence and something by participation are opposites”; and he shows the various ways in which these may be so taken,<sup>3</sup> by referring to the modes of participation given above.<sup>4</sup> They are opposed: (a) When a subject participates in accident, for the accident is manifestly outside the essence of the subject. Hence, that which is *per essentiam*, namely, the subject, is in opposition to that which is *per participationem*: the accident. (b) Likewise, when matter participates in form, since form is not of the nature of matter. (c) In the case of a species participating in a genus, one is not the same as another according to the opinion of Plato; hence, they are in opposition: “for the idea of animal is one thing and the idea of biped man, another.” But according to Aristotle “who posits that man truly is that which is animal,” then, something might be predicated by participation which is also predicated essentially. Hence, these two would obviously not be taken as opposite predications.

Saint Thomas says that for our present problem, Boethius speaks according to the first way; that is, “. . . According to that mode of participation by which the subject participates accident; and therefore, that which is predicated substantially is distinguished as opposed to that which is predicated by participation, as is clear from the examples he subsequently

<sup>1</sup> “Est enim proprium objectum appetitus bonum, sicut sonus proprium objectum est auditus. . . et ita, cum cujuslibet rei sit aliquis appetitus, vel intellectivus, vel sensitivus, vel naturalis; consequens est quod quaelibet res appetat bonum.”—*Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> “Unde sicut sonus est qui percipitur ab omni auditu; ita oportet bonum esse in quod tendit omnis appetitus. . .”—*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Cf. SAINT THOMAS, *ibid.*: “Ad intellectum hujus quaestionis considerandum est, quod in ista quaestione praesupponitur quod aliquid esse per essentiam, et per participationem sint opposita. Et in uno quidem supradictorum participationis modorum manifeste verum est: scilicet secundum illum modum quo subjectum dicitur participare accidens, vel materia formam (est enim accidens praeter naturam subjecti, et forma praeter ipsam substantiam materiae): sed in alio participationis modo, quo scilicet species participat genus, hoc verum est quod species participat genus. Hoc etiam verum est secundum sententiam Platonis, qui posuit aliam esse ideam animalis, et bipedis hominis. Sed secundum sententiam Aristotelis, qui posuit quod homo vere est id quod est animal, quasi essentia animalis non existente praeter differentiam hominis; nihil prohibet, id quod per participationem dicitur, substantialiter praedicari.”

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Laval théologique et philosophique*, Vol. III, n. 2 (1947), p. 180f.

gives."<sup>1</sup> The examples referred to are "white," "heavy," "round," "colored," "and the like." There would be no question here of the second mode, since we have in mind substances already determined by form; nor of the third, since we do not follow Plato in this respect.

Having made this neat distinction between that which is *per essentiam* and that which is *per participationem*, we run into an impasse, however, whether we say that created substances are good in one way or the other. For if we hold that substances are good by participation as a subject participates in accident, then they are not good *per se*, i.e. by themselves. And in order to make this clear, Saint Thomas reverts several times to the relevant meaning of *per se*. In one instance: "*Per se* is taken for whatever is posited in the definition of that about which it is said, just as man is *by himself* animal. For whatever is put in the definition of any thing pertains to its essence, and so it is not said of it by that participation of which we now speak."<sup>2</sup> And again, after quoting the example Boethius uses as an illustration: that which is white by participation is not white *by itself*, he adds: "That is, in that which it itself is, which pertains to the first mode of saying *per se*."<sup>3</sup>

Since we shall have further occasion to refer to them, we restate the four "modes of saying *per se*" on the basis of Saint Thomas's commentary on the *Posteriora Analytica*,<sup>4</sup> and of John of Saint Thomas's summary.<sup>5</sup> Thus we shall see more precisely the distinction at issue.

The *first mode* follows upon the formal cause. When that which is said of a thing, belongs to its form, it is said to be predicated *per se*. Hence, since the definition signifies the form and essence of a thing, whenever the definition, or anything included in the definition, is predicated of a thing, this is called *per se* according to the first mode.

The *second mode* involves the material cause, and occurs when a proper attribute is predicated of its subject. That to which a proper accident is attributed is its proper matter and subject — although it does not constitute it essentially — and is put in its definition. Accidents which do not include the subject in their definition, are predicated not *per se*, but *per accidens*.

The *third mode* is not one of predicating, but rather of existing, so that something "is" *per se* when it exists by itself and not in another.

<sup>1</sup> "Boethius autem hic loquitur secundum illum participationis modum quo subjectum participat accidens; et ideo ex opposito dividitur id quod substantialiter et participative praedicatur, ut patet per exempla quae subsequenter inducit."—*In de Hebdom.*, *ibid.* Cf. also JOHN OF SAINT THOMAS, *Curs. theol.*, T.I, disp.6, a.3, n.2, for this distinction.

<sup>2</sup> "... Per se [accipitur] inesse quod ponitur in definitione ejus de quo dicitur, sicut homo per se est animal: quod enim ponitur in definitione alicujus, pertinet ad essentiam ejus; et ita non dicitur de eo per participationem de qua nunc loquimur."—*Ibid.* "Homo per se est animal" means that man is animal, not by a form "animal," but by the very form of man.

<sup>3</sup> "... 'Nam id quod est album per participationem, non est album per se, id est in eo quod est ipsum', quod pertinet ad primum modum dicendi per se."—*Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Cf. SAINT THOMAS, *In I Post. Anal.*, lect.10.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Curs. phil.*, T.I, (REISER ed.), pp.769-770.

This will be true of those things in the genus "substance," but not of such things as inhere in another, such as "walking" and "white."

The *fourth mode* is one of causing, as when the proper reason of what is said is in the subject as its efficient cause, v.g., the builder builds, but not: the builder walks. Since essential identity suffices for the first mode, something could be in the first mode *per se* and not in the fourth; v.g., "animal" and "rational" are identified and belong to man *per se* according to the first mode, whereas "animal reasons" is not said *per se* according to the fourth mode, because *animal* does not contain the proper cause of *reasoning*.

For the purposes of our inquiry, we must make a clear cut distinction, because if there is any case in which something is *per se* in the subject and yet is predicated participatively, it will not be true to say that if substances are good by participation, they are not good *per se*. Now this is precisely the case of the proper accident, which is predicated according to the second mode of saying *per se*, and yet it is predicated of the subject participatively. Hence Saint Thomas says: "Boethius, therefore, takes participation here as a subject participates an accident, but he takes *per se* for what is posited in the definition of the subject."<sup>1</sup>

If we say, then, that substances are good by participation, it follows that they are not good in their own substance, *per se*, in "that which they themselves are," as we have noted in the example of white. And the same may be said for other accidents. The fact of a man's being tall or short, black or brown, just or unjust, does not penetrate at all into the constitution of his substance; it is "outside the essence of the subject." It is not the substance, as such, that is brown or tall; the substance remains "rational animal." Hence, neither would the substance be good if goodness were predicated of substance by participation as a subject participates an accident; the substance itself would not be good any more than it is brown or tall. Saint Thomas concludes this part of the investigation as follows: Therefore, if all beings are good by participation, it follows that they are not good *per se*, that is, by their substance. From this, then, it follows that the substance of beings does not tend to the good, and the contrary of this was granted above, namely, that all beings do tend to good. It seems, therefore, that beings are good not by participation, but by their substance.<sup>2</sup>

Having ruled out one possibility, we now take up the other. Are creatures good in substance, good *per se*, that is, by definition; hence, "necessarily good according to that very fact: that they are"? The reasoning proceeds in this wise:<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Sic igitur Boetius hic accipit participationem, prout subjectum participat accidens; per se autem quod ponitur in definitione subjecti..."—*In de Hebdom.*, c.3.

<sup>2</sup> "Sic igitur si omnia entia sunt bona per participationem, sequitur quod non omnia sunt bona per se, idest per suam substantiam. Ex hoc ergo sequitur quod substantiae entium non tendant ad bonum; ejus contrarium superius est concessum, scilicet quod omnia in bonum tendant. Videtur ergo quod entia non sint bona per participationem, sed per suam substantiam."—*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> "... Hoc enim ad substantiam ejuscumque rei pertinet quod concurrat ad suum esse. Sed quod aliqua sint, hoc habent ex eo quod est esse: dictum est enim supra,

The substance of any thing is in accordance with its *to-be*.

That things are, this they owe to their *to-be*: "a thing is when it has received *to-be*."

Therefore, if the subject of *to-be* is good, so is the *to-be*, itself.

Therefore, if all things are good by their substance, i.e. "in that which they themselves are," then the *to-be* of all things is good.

Conversely, "if the *to-be* of all things is good, then those things that are, in as much as they are, would be good; so that it would be the same thing for any thing whatever to be and to be good."

Now we have arrived at creatures that are good by their substance, *per se*, and find we have a world in which to be and to be good are the same absolutely. Then all would be substantial goods and would be like unto God, since in the First Good being and goodness are one and the same absolutely. But: "Nothing other than itself is like to it, namely, as to the mode of goodness"; and so it follows that all things would be the First Good itself: "If then all are the First Good itself, then since the First Good is no other than God, it follows that all things are God. And to say this, is blasphemous."<sup>1</sup>

Having reached this impossible conclusion, we must reject the premises. All things, then, are not substantial goods, nor is the *to-be* itself in them good; and so it is not true that all beings are good *per essentiam*.

We have shown that the substance of created things does not become good by participation in accident; we see that it is not good by its own substance. But substance and accident are all that make up the creature. It seems, then, that things are in no way good in themselves. Consequently, they do not tend to the good. But it was granted that they do. The solution must be elsewhere.

#### IV. SOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM

Our first inquiry into the goodness of created substances has come to an end in a neither-nor dilemma. Substances cannot be rendered good by participation in some accidental form of goodness. By such participation they would not be good at all in their own being, and therefore, would not tend to the good: a conclusion that is contrary to every best opinion. Yet, neither are substances good by reason of their own nature, *per se* good, necessarily and absolutely good in that which they are. For this would make all things to be substantial goods; it would endow every creature

---

quod est aliquid cum esse susceperit. Sequitur igitur ut eorum quae sunt bona secundum subjectum, ipsum esse sit bonum. Si igitur omnia sunt bona secundum suam substantiam, sequitur quod omnium rerum ipsum esse sit bonum. Et quia praemissa ex quibus argumentando processit sunt convertibilia, procedit e converso: sequitur enim e converso quod si esse omnium rerum sit bonum, quod ea quae sunt, in quantum sunt, bona sint: ita scilicet quod idem sit unicuique rei esse, et bonum esse."—*Ibid.*

<sup>1</sup> "Si ergo omnia sunt ipsum primum bonum; cum ipsum primum bonum nihil sit aliud quam Deus, sequitur quod omnia entia sunt Deus: quod dicere nefas est."—*Ibid.*



with the prerogative of the First Good; it would set up multitudinous gods. But it seems that they must be good either by their own essence, or by participation; and we have shown that they are neither. If there is no way to escape the dilemma, we are left with created substances closed to any and all ingress of goodness.

Here, the *De Hebdomadibus* brings into play our power of abstraction in order to examine the condition of things, prescinding, as it were, from the First Good. Before drawing the conclusions from this supposition, Saint Thomas briefly justifies the procedure adopted by Boethius. Since things are not in the knower by the same mode of existence that they have in reality, but rather by a second existence which is according to the nature of the knower, it is possible for the mind to consider separately the various formalities of a thing, although these are not actually separated in the thing. This use of the power of abstraction, if properly exercised, does not lead to falsehood, as some have thought. We must, however, be careful to distinguish its right use from the wrong, for abstraction may occur in two different ways:

First, by way of composition and division; and thus we may understand that one thing does not exist in some other, or that it is separated from it. Second, by way of a simple and absolute consideration; and thus we consider one thing without considering another. Now, for the intellect to abstract one from another, things which are not really abstract from one another, does, in the first mode of abstraction, imply falsehood.<sup>1</sup>

This falsification would occur in the first mode, for example, if the intellect were to consider man as a being entirely separated from matter as if to have a body were not of his very nature. Or, as Saint Thomas exemplifies in the *De Trinitate* where he treats this subject at greater length: if I should abstract man from whiteness by saying, man is not white, and should signify separation in the thing—whereas in reality man and white were not separate—the abstraction would be a falsification.<sup>2</sup> “But, in the second mode of abstraction, for the intellect to abstract things which are not really abstract from one another, does not involve falsehood.”<sup>3</sup> According to the second mode, one may reflect on the nature of a triangle apart from sensible matter. The reason for this is put simply, in the *De Hebdomadibus*:

Things are in the mind in one way and are in matter in another. It can be, therefore, that something, according to the way in which it is in matter, might have an insepar-

<sup>1</sup> Dicendum quod abstrahere contingit dupliciter. Uno modo, per modum compositionis et divisionis; sicut cum intelligimus aliquid non esse in alio, vel esse separatum ab eo. Alio modo, per modum simplicitatis: sicut cum intelligimus unum, nihil considerando de alio. Abstrahere igitur per intellectum ea quae secundum rem non sunt abstracta secundum primum modum abstrahendi, non est absque falsitate.”—*Ia*, q.85, a.1, ad 1.

<sup>2</sup> “Et quia veritas intellectus est ex hoc quod conformatur rei . . . intellectus abstrahere non potest vere quod secundum rem conjunctum est, quia in abstrahendo significatur esse separatio secundum ipsum esse rei; sicut si abstraheo hominem ab albedine, dicendo: Homo non est albus, significo separationem esse in re. Unde si secundum rem homo et albedo non sunt separata, erit intellectus falsus.”—Q.5, a.3, c. (Parma ed), p.384b.

<sup>3</sup> “Sed secundo modo abstrahere per intellectum quae non sunt abstracta secundum rem, non habet falsitatem.”—*Ia*, q.85, a.1, ad 1.

able union with something else; yet, according to the way it is in the mind, not have an inseparable union with it, because the notion of one is distinct from the notion of the other.<sup>1</sup>

For instance, the notion of triangle and the notion of chalk or of wood are distinct. Thus, where two notions are distinct, one may be considered without the other, according to the second way of abstraction, without falsification.

Now, if we were to separate all creatures from the First Good in the first way, as if creatures could be without any dependency on the First Being and Good, this would be false, as it is false to separate man from body. But according to the second way: "Nothing prevents the effects of the Highest Good from falling under our consideration without our considering the First Good itself."<sup>2</sup> This is because we know the sensible effects of God before rising to a knowledge of their First Cause; hence, the effects can be considered apart from their cause. So in order to proceed with the inquiry into the goodness of creatures, we are asked to prescind from the existence of the First Good, for the time being, although we can know "from the judgment of the learned and of the unlearned and even from the religions of uncivilized peoples"<sup>3</sup> that the First Good exists. Our procedure will be this: "The First Good having been prescinded from by the intellect, let us posit that other things are good. . . . Then let us consider in what way they could be good, if they had not proceeded from the First Good."<sup>4</sup>

Our first conclusion from this will be that in created things, to be good would not be the same as to be absolutely, or to be any other thing; the substance of the creature would not be good. But to arrive at this conclusion, we must give attention to the nature of virtue. "For the goodness of each and every thing is understood to be its virtue by which it effects a good operation. For it is virtue that makes the thing having it good and its work good."<sup>5</sup>

Here, Saint Thomas refers us to the Philosopher in the book of *Ethics*. The matter of virtue is, in fact, too important for a right understanding

<sup>1</sup> "... Cujus ratio est, quia alio modo sunt res in anima, et alio modo in materia. Potest ergo esse quod aliquid ex eo ipso modo quo est in materia, habeat inseparabilem conjunctionem ad aliud; et tamen secundum quod est in anima, non habeat inseparabilem conjunctionem ad ipsum, quia scilicet ratio unius est distincta a ratione alterius:..."—C.4.

<sup>2</sup> "... Et ideo nihil prohibet in consideratione nostra cadere effectus summi boni, absque hoc quod ipsum primum bonum consideremus."—*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> "Hoc enim 'cognosci potest ex communi omnium sententia tam doctorum quam indoctorum' et ulterius etiam 'ex ipsis religionibus gentium barbarum,' quae nullae essent, si Deus non est."—*Ibid.*

Cf. also: *Ia*, q.2, a.1, and ad 1. The proposition: God exists, is self-evident *quoad se* but not *quoad nos*. "To know that God exists, in a general and confused way, is implanted in us by nature . . . but not to know absolutely that God exists."

<sup>4</sup> "... Remoto per intellectum primo bono, ponamus quod cetera sint bona. . . . Consideremus ergo qualiter possent esse bona, si non processissent a primo bono."—*In de Hebdom.*, c.4.

<sup>5</sup> "Intelligitur enim bonitas uniuscujusque rei virtus ipsius, per quam perficit operationem bonam. Nam virtus est quae bonum facit habentem, et opus ejus bonum reddit. . . ."—*Ibid.*



of how created things are good, to let pass without further observations. The virtue of which we speak ordinarily is human virtue, since this is the main concern for each of us. Yet, virtue may be understood in a more general and original sense. Such expressions as: "the virtue has gone out of it," applied to remedies; or: "it has not great virtue," applied to herbs, and the like, remind us that in its primary signification virtue stands for an efficacious power. In Saint Thomas's commentary on the *Ethics*, this is further confirmed:

He says, therefore, that every virtue both makes the thing of which it is the virtue to be good and makes the work of that thing to be good. As, for instance, it is the virtue of the eye by which the eye is good and by which we see well, for this is the proper work of the eye. Likewise, it is also the virtue of the horse which makes the horse good and which makes it do its work well, which is to run fast, to carry its rider gently, and courageously to await the enemy.<sup>1</sup>

A reason is then added why it is the virtue of a thing from which springs its goodness and the goodness of its work; for virtue is considered to be the ultimate in the capability of a thing, and this is the perfection of its power: "The virtue of any thing at all is taken according to the ultimate reach of its power, as for instance, in one that can carry a hundred pounds, its virtue is determined not from the fact that it is carrying fifty, but from the fact that it carries a hundred, as is said in the first book, *De Caelo*."<sup>2</sup>

In the *Quaestio disputata de Virtutibus in communi*, Saint Thomas again treats of virtue as the "perfection of power." He begins by giving this as its nominal definition and proceeds to show how virtue is thus the root of goodness of a thing. For power has reference to act; hence, the perfection of a power will be its perfect operation. And since every thing is for the sake of its operation, its proximate end will be its perfect operation. Thus, the goodness of a thing is concomitant with its complete ordination to its end, or the perfection of its power; and this it has through its virtue. Hence it is, that virtue "makes the thing and its work good" — whether this be the virtue of a horse, a stone, or of a man, or of any other thing.

We must not, however, take virtue univocally in all these instances. While a stone may be said to have virtue, it does not have it in the same way that a man has virtue, nor that a horse does. Virtue may be predicated analogically in these instances. We find in the treatise just mentioned, on the virtues, that the root of the analogy is in the diverse condition of the powers. The substance of the passage where this diversity is explained,<sup>3</sup> may be summed up as follows. Some powers are only active; some are

<sup>1</sup> "Dicit ergo primo, quod omnis virtus subjectum cuius est, facit bene habere, et opus ejus bene se habens. Sicut virtus oculi est, per quam et oculus est bonus, et per quam bene videmus, quod est proprium opus oculi. Similiter etiam virtus equi est, quae facit equum bonum, et per quam equus bene operatur opus suum, quod est velociter currere, et suaviter ferre ascensorem, et audacter expectare bellatores."—*In II Ethicorum*, lect.6 (ed. PIROTTA), n.307.

<sup>2</sup> "Et hujus ratio est, quia virtus alieius rei attenditur secundum ultimum quod potest, puta in eo, quod potest ferre centum libras, virtus ejus determinatur non ex hoc quod fert quinquaginta, sed ex hoc quod centum, ut dicitur primo Caeli."—*Ibid.* n.308.

<sup>3</sup> *De Virtutibus in communi*, q.un., a.1, c.

only acted upon, or moved; and some are both active and acted upon. In the first group, the virtue of the power is the very power itself; such are: the divine power, the active intellect, and the natural powers. In the second group, it is not in the powers to act or not to act, except as they are moved by others; and they act according to the impetus of the mover. Such are the sense powers, considered in themselves. These powers are perfected for their acts by something superinduced, not as a form remaining in a subject, but only in the mode of a passion, as a likeness is in the pupil of the eye. In the third group, the powers that are both active and acted upon, are perfected for acting by something superinduced in them, not in the manner of a passion, but rather in the manner of a form remaining in the subject; yet, in such a way that the power is not of necessity compelled to one determinate mode of acting. These powers are rational in some way, and dominate their act. Moreover, to quote the summary statement: "The virtues of these latter powers are not the powers themselves; nor passions, as in the sensitive powers; nor qualities acting of necessity as are the qualities of natural things; but they are *habitus* by which any one can act when he will."<sup>1</sup>

We need not here go into the whole theory of virtue and *habitus*. Our immediate interest is to know what the substance of a thing has to do with the goodness of things; how created things are good. We have seen that the goodness of things must be considered in relation to their virtue. And Boethius has said that if we prescind from the First Good, we shall find that any goodness that the creature may have, will be extraneous to its substance; the substance will not be good. Taking things as they are, it is by their virtue that they are rendered good. With this in mind, let us return to the diversity of virtues, and to the examples cited in the texts.

The divine virtue is the divine power, the divine omnipotence. Since in God, there is absolute, simple identity of substance and *to-be*, nothing is wanting to His perfection. He is omni-potent; all power in Him is perfect, and every perfection is His power. The divine virtue is the divine goodness, in complete one-ness of divine Being.

But in the creature — we may see from the texts quoted that the virtue, in which consists the ultimate goodness of a thing, is something other than the substance itself, for in each instance cited, the virtue could be decreased or even lost while the substance remained the same. The eye, for example, can possess its power with greater or less strength, with no change in the substance. A horse, too, would still be a horse if it developed a limp in running, threw its rider, and ran from the attack of the enemy; but it would not be a good horse absolutely. In man, although the agent intellect is a necessary property of his rational nature, and the "virtue of the power is the very power itself," yet, it is not of equal strength in all men; but their humanity itself is equal. Moreover, it is rather by those virtues of

<sup>1</sup> "Harum potentiarum virtutes non sunt ipsae potentiae; neque passiones, sicut est in sensitivis potentiis; neque qualitates de necessitate agentes, sicut sunt qualitates rerum naturalium; sed sunt habitus, secundum quos potest quis agere cum voluerit. . ."—*Ibid.*

the third group, subjected in, or participating in, the passive intellect and the will, that man is perfected in his operations; most especially by the virtues of the will, since it is the latter that desires the good under the precise formality of the good.<sup>1</sup> Now a man, while remaining a man, can turn away from the truly good; but he will not be a good man absolutely. We may here conclude, then, that the virtue is not the substance; for, when of two things, one changes while the other remains constant, it is obvious that they are not identical. Hence, if we consider creatures *as if* there were no First Good and still suppose them somehow good, we find that the root and perfection of their goodness is in the accidental order and is, consequently, necessarily other than the substantial being of a thing.

The *De Hebdomadibus* proceeds in another way to the same conclusion, namely, that having removed the presence of the First Good by abstraction, the goodness of things would be other than their being. It has been said that if we prescind from the First Good, then the substance of a creature would be one thing, its roundness another, its color another, and so on. Now, having said that it is the virtue of anything that makes this thing and its work good, Saint Thomas adds:

That this is something distinct from the substance of the thing, he [Boethius] proves by this, that if each of the foregoing were the same as the substance of the thing, it would follow also that they all would be identical, one with the other, namely that weight would be one and the same as color; one and the same as good, and as white, and as round; for things that are the same as one and the same thing, are identical with each other. But nature does not allow all those to be identical.<sup>2</sup>

Here we have a number of accidents: weight, whiteness, roundness, goodness; and to assert that these are identified with the substance and, therefore, essentially identified with one another, is entirely inconceivable in the nature of things. We must conclude, then, that to be absolutely, would not be the same as to be this or that: good or white or anything else. Hence, it follows that in creatures, *to-be* would not be the same as to be good; their very being would not be good. Good must take its place outside the substance along with any other accident. For having prescinded from the First Good, we must deal with things solely on the basis of their own composition; and according to this, good has the status of an accident. Thus, granted even that a goodness belonged to every thing, this goodness would in each case be exterior to the substance, since it could not be identified with it. As the text says:

And thus, the aforesaid position having been taken, things might indeed be good, yet their very *to-be* would not be good. Thus, therefore, if in some way things were, not from the First Good, and yet were good in themselves, it would follow that it

<sup>1</sup> Although it is by the will that man is rectified in his desire of the end, he can not possess the end by an act of the will, since this is not a power of possession. It either desires before the end is attained, or enjoys after attainment.

<sup>2</sup> "Quod autem ista sit aliud quam substantia rei, probat per hoc quod singula praemissorum si essent idem quod rei substantia, sequeretur etiam quod omnia illi essent eadem ad invicem; scilicet quod idem esset gravitas quod color, et quod bonum et quod album, et quod rotunditas: quia quae uni et eidem (eadem) sunt, sibi invicem sunt. Hoc autem natura rerum non patitur quod omnia ista sint idem."—*In de Hebdom.*, c.4.

would not be the same thing that they are such as they are, and that they are good; but their *to-be* would be one thing, and to be good would be another.<sup>1</sup>

If, to avoid the consequences of that conclusion, we were to maintain that in created things, to be absolutely is the same as to be good, we would again find ourselves in a position we were obliged to abandon in the preceding chapter. For to be good by essence is to be simply and necessarily good, to be essential goodness — not just a good man or a good horse or a good stone, but goodness unreceived, unlimited, existing as such; it is to be the first principle of things. Hence, we would be saying of each and every thing that it is the first principle of things. We would then be in a pantheistic position, for “there is only one that is of such a nature that it is just good and nothing else”.<sup>2</sup>

No creature, then, is by its own substance, good. The essence of this rose is not, to-be-good; nor of this horse, nor of this man. Neither is the essence of the sun, the moon, the stars, nor of the angels, to be good. To say otherwise is to make the creature like unto God, as Boethius and Saint Thomas have established.

Thus, by the device of precluding from the First Good, we have come to see that apart from God, there is no possible way in which any other substance can be good in itself. Even granted that things might in some way be good, this would be by an accidental goodness which would be an adjunct to the substance, as is whiteness or roundness. This goodness would not be predicated essentially. On the other hand, to say that things are good *per essentiam* “is blasphemy.” There is nothing whose essence it is to be good, except God. With these points in mind, we shall the better understand how created substances are good, in very truth — no supposition made of abstraction from God.

Now to show this, we return to the principles which concern the *one*, and we recall that no created thing has absolute simplicity; that only God is perfectly one, perfectly simple. There is more or less composition in everything else. All other things are such that “since they are not simple, they could not have been at all unless that which alone is good had willed them to be.”<sup>3</sup> The root of this impossibility of the creature to be unless that which is good had so willed, is in the fact that every composite must have a cause, “for things in themselves diverse, cannot unite unless something causes them to unite.”<sup>4</sup> Hence, those things whose essence is not

<sup>1</sup> “. . . Et sic, praedicta positione facta, res essent quidem bonae, non tamen ipsum eorum esse esset bonum. Sic ergo si aliquo modo essent non a primo bono, et tamen in se essent bonae, sequeretur quod non idem esset in eis quod sint talia, et quod sint bona; sed aliud esset in eis esse, et aliud bonum esse.”—*Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> “. . . Quia solum unum est quod est hujusmodi ut sit tantummodo bonum, et nihil aliud.”—*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> “Quae quoniam non sunt simplicia, esse omnino non poterant, nisi ea id quod solum bonum est, esse voluisset.”—BOETHIUS, *op. cit.* c.4.

<sup>4</sup> “Omne compositum causam habet. Quae enim secundum se diversa sunt, non conveniunt in aliquod unum, nisi per aliquam causam adunantem ipsa.”—*Ia*, q.3, a.7, c.

their *to-be*, would never come to be, without a cause uniting existence to essence. And this causality must be traced ultimately to the one, simple, uncaused, subsisting *to-be*.<sup>1</sup>

That the existence of all things must have its ultimate reason in that alone whose nature is *to-be*, is well explained in the *De Potentia*. In the first place, diverse causes having diverse natures and forms, have diverse proper effects, since a proper effect follows from the nature or form of the cause. Now, when diverse causes, besides producing their proper effects, produce an effect in common, this common effect must be in virtue of some higher cause of which it in turn is the proper effect. And this is the case of *to-be*, throughout creation:

All created causes have in common one effect which is *to-be*, although each and every cause has its own proper effect, in which respect they are distinguished. For heat makes warmth to be, and a builder makes a house to be. Therefore, they agree in this: that they cause *to-be*; but they differ in this: that fire causes fire, and a builder causes a house. There must, therefore, be some cause higher than all, in virtue of which they all cause *to-be*, and whose proper effect is *to-be*. And this cause is God. Now, as to the proper effect of any cause at all, it is issued according to a similitude to the nature of the cause. Hence, it must be that that which is *to-be*, is the substance or nature of God.<sup>2</sup>

We see from this text that God is the only *per se* cause of *to-be*, properly speaking, in the fourth mode of saying *per se*.<sup>3</sup> The passage also brings into clearer light a distinction already made between *esse in commune* and *esse in causando*.<sup>4</sup> All things created share universally in *to-be*. But this *to-be* does not exist *qua* universal, except in the intellect; its foundation in the real order is the *to-be* of each and every thing. To identify this universal *to-be* with God, would be a grave error. It is obvious in the text just quoted, that *to-be* "*in commune*" is a universal effect of the one *to-be* "*in causando*," whose very nature is *to-be*. Saint Thomas points this out in the reply to an objection in the same article of the *De Potentia*: "The divine *to-be*, which is His substance, is not *to-be* taken in its community, but is *to-be* distinct from any other *to-be* whatever."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Contra Gentes*, II, c.15.

<sup>2</sup> "Omnes autem causae creatae communicant in uno effectu qui est esse, licet singulae proprios effectus habeant, in quibus distinguuntur. Calor enim facit calidum esse, et aedificator facit domum esse. Conveniunt ergo in hoc quod causant esse, sed differunt in hoc quod ignis causat ignem, et aedificator causat domum. Oportet ergo esse aliquam causam superiorem omnibus cujus virtute omnia causant esse, et ejus esse sit proprius effectus. Et haec est Deus. Proprius autem effectus cujuslibet causae procedit ab ipsa secundum similitudinem suae naturae. Oportet ergo quod hoc quod est esse, sit substantia vel natura Dei."—SAINT THOMAS, *De Potentia*, q.7, a.2, c. This participation of the created *to-be* in the divine *to-be* is according to the third mode of participation previously mentioned. SAINT THOMAS did not take up the third mode because his concern was with things as we find them in the created order. Cf. *Laval théologique et philosophique*, Vol.III, n.2 (1947), p.181.

Cf. also: *Ia*, q.65, a.1, c. Also: that God is the one cause of all *to-be*, *Contra Gentes*, II, c.15; that God's essence is His *to-be*: *Ia*, q.3, a.4, c.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *supra*, p.122.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Laval théologique et philosophique*, Vol.III, n.2 (1947), p.190f.

<sup>5</sup> "... Esse divinum, quod est ejus substantia, non est esse commune, sed est esse distinctum a quolibet alio esse. Unde per ipsum esse Deus differt a quolibet alio ente."—A.2, ad 4. Cf. also: *Contra Gentes*, II, c.52.



We have already seen that of no other being can it be said that its essence and its *to-be* are identical; that *to-be* is its very nature. We know from Holy Scripture that in speaking to Moses, God Himself gave His name as *He Who Is*.<sup>1</sup> Any thing else that is, must have its *to-be* by participation from God, the First *to-be*, and self-subsisting.<sup>2</sup>

Now, He who is self-subsisting by essence, is also goodness essentially. The proof is given thus: "In any thing, to be in act is the good of that thing. But God not only is being in act, but is His very *to-be*, as we have shown above (c.22). He is, therefore, not only good, but is goodness itself."<sup>3</sup> And we might well add two other proofs, based on principles considered in the second chapter.<sup>4</sup>

That which is can participate in something else; but the very *to-be* can not participate in anything else.

For that which participates is potency; but *to-be* is act.

But God is the very *to-be*.

Therefore, He is not good by participation, but is essentially good.<sup>5</sup>

Also:

Any thing simple has its *to-be* and *that which is*, as one.

For if these were diverse, simplicity would already be lacking.

But God is entirely simple.

Therefore, in Him, to be good is not other than Himself.

Therefore, He is His goodness.<sup>6</sup>

Hence, just as God is the unlimited perfection of *to-be*, so He is the unlimited good, infinitely perfect: "For the divine *to-be* contains the whole fullness of perfection. . . Therefore, since a thing is good so far as it is perfect, the divine *to-be* itself is His perfect goodness."<sup>7</sup>

Now, just as created things could not *be* unless *He-Who-Is* had willed them to be, so neither could their substance be good had they not come from Him whose essence is His goodness. In truth, then, they are secondary, participated goods, derived from the First Good who is good in that He is. Goodness penetrates all that they are, concomitantly with the *to-be* that brings them to absolute actuality. "Since, therefore, the *to-be*

<sup>1</sup> SAINT THOMAS gives the reason why *He Who Is*, is the proper name of God: *Ia*, q.13, a.11, c.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Ia*, q.44, a.1, c.

<sup>3</sup> "Esse enim actu, in unoquoque est bonum ipsius. Sed Deus non solum est ens actu, sed est ipsum suum esse, ut supra (cap.22) ostensum est. Est igitur *ipsa bonitas*, non tantum bonus."—*Contra Gentes*, I, c.38.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Laval théologique et philosophique*, Vol.III, n.2 (1947), p.180; p.187.

<sup>5</sup> "Id quod est, participare aliquid potest; ipsum autem esse, nihil: quod enim participat, potentia est; esse autem, actus est. Sed Deus est ipsum esse, ut probatum est (cap.22). Non est igitur bonus participative, sed essentialiter."—*Contra Gentes*, I, c.38.

<sup>6</sup> "Omne simplex suum esse et id quod est unum habet: nam si sit aliud et aliud, iam simplicitas tolletur. Deus autem est omnino simplex, ut ostensum est (cap.18). Igitur ipsum esse bonum non est aliud quam ipse. Est igitur sua bonitas."—*Ibid*.

<sup>7</sup> "Ipsum enim divinum esse omnem plenitudinem perfectionis obtinet. . . Unde, cum unumquodque in tantum sit bonum in quantum est perfectum, ipsum divinum esse est eius perfecta bonitas."—*Contra Gentes*, III, c.20. Cf. also: *Ia*, q.4, a.2, c.

of all things has flowed from the First Good, it follows that the very *to-be* of created things is good, and that any created thing in so far as it is, is good. But thus, created things alone would not be good in that they are, if their *to-be* had not come from the Highest Good."<sup>1</sup> Saint Thomas presents a brief summary in order to make the position of Boethius clear:

Therefore, his solution comes to this: the *to-be* of the First Good is according to its proper nature good, since the nature and essence of the First Good is nothing else than goodness. But the *to-be* of the secondary good is indeed good, not according to the nature of its proper essence, because its essence is not its goodness, but is either humanity or something else of this sort; but its *to-be* owes what goodness it has to its habitude to the First Good which is its cause.<sup>2</sup>

That created substances are not good "according to their proper nature," but that their goodness is derived, with their *to-be*, from the First Good to whom they are compared as to their first principle and last end, is given further emphasis in the text by drawing a parallel between the substance of the creature thus related to its cause, and something that is called healthy from the fact that it is ordered to the end of health. Now this latter is so called by an analogy of attribution; the health is properly in the animal, and that which is ordered to this and so may be called healthy, is in no way properly healthy itself. That it is called so, is entirely consequent upon its being ordered to health. So with the essence of a creature. It could in no way be called good if it were cut off from the First Good; it is humanity, or horse-ness, or gold-ness, or something else, but it is not goodness, nor good. That the human person in his essence, for instance, or that any other created essence is called good, comes from the ordination of its *to-be* to God, the one substantial good. And Saint Thomas completes this parallel with the more specific example: as a thing is called medicinal in that it is from an effective principle of the medical art, which better conveys the notion of a property flowing from cause to effect.<sup>3</sup>

Although dismissing Plato's theory of separated subsistent forms of natural things, Saint Thomas gives credit to his identification of absolute being and absolute one with the highest good which he called God, and from whom all other things have a participated good. The *Summa theologica* states:

It is absolutely true that there is something first which is essentially being and essentially good, which we call God. . . Aristotle agrees with this. Hence, from the first being, essentially being and good, everything can be called good and a being inasmuch as it participates in the first being by way of a certain assimilation, although distantly and defectively.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Cum igitur esse omnium rerum fluxerit a primo bono, consequens est quod ipsum esse rerum creaturarum sit bonum, et quod unaquaeque res creata, in quantum est, sit bona. Sed sic solum res creatae non essent bonae in eo quod sunt, si esse earum non procederet a summo bono."—*In de Hebdom.*, c.4.

<sup>2</sup> "Redit ergo ejus solutio ad hoc quod esse primi boni est secundum propriam rationem bonum, quia natura et essentia primi boni nihil aliud est quam bonitas; esse autem secundi boni est quidem bonum, non secundum rationem propriae essentiae, quia essentia ejus non est ipsa bonitas, sed vel humanitas, vel aliquid hujusmodi; sed esse ejus habet quod sit bonum ex habitudine ad primum bonum quod est ejus causa: . . ."—*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> ". . . Tamen hoc absolute verum est, quod aliquid est primum, quod per suam essentiam est ens et bonum, quod dicimus Deus. . . Huic etiam sententiae concordat

We should here note that this consideration brings us back to the third mode of participation, namely, "as an effect participates in its cause" that Saint Thomas set aside while he was showing that substance is not good *per participationem* according to the first and second modes.<sup>1</sup>

These conclusions, then, have been reached concerning the substance of created things:

A thing is not good by reason of its substance.

The substance, considered in itself, prescinding from the *to-be*, is not actually good.

The substance cannot be made good by participation in an accidental goodness, "for the accident is manifestly outside the essence of the subject."<sup>2</sup>

Prescinding from the First Good, goodness and being are other; i.e., to be good and to be are different. Hence good must be considered only as an accident and as such it is extraneous to substance.

Granted the presence of God, the being of created things must be said good since it flows in fact from Him Who Is, and in whom being and goodness are simply one. And thus, in answer to John, we may say that creatures are essentially good, but not that creatures are good through or by their essence. Their substance is not *bonum per se, per essentiam*. It is a participated good, according to the third mode.

This same teaching may be gathered from another passage in the *De Veritate*:

Nothing which is said of a thing by participation belongs to it by its essence. But a creature is called good by participation, as is clear from Augustine, *De Trinitate*, VIII, c.3. Therefore, the creature is not good by its essence.

Moreover, every thing that is good by its essence is a substantial good. But creatures are not substantial goods, as is plain from Boethius in the *De Hebdomadibus*.<sup>3</sup>

And in the *Summa theologica*, to give but one more citation: "Although every thing is good in that it has *to-be*, yet the essence of a creature is not the very *to-be*, and therefore it does not follow that a creature is good by its essence."<sup>4</sup>

It must be further noted that the goodness that any created thing has because its absolute being proceeds from the First Good is not its absolute goodness, its goodness *simpliciter*. It is a goodness *secundum quid*, a goodness *as to something*. If the goodness of its substance were

Aristoteles. A primo igitur per suam essentiam ente et bono, unumquodque potest dici bonum et ens, in quantum participat ipsum per modum cuiusdam assimilationis, licet remote et deficienter. . . —*Ia*, q.6, a.4, c.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Laval théologique et philosophique*, Vol.III, n.2 (1947), p.180f.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *supra*, p.120, where St. THOMAS opposes *per essentiam* to *per participationem*.

<sup>3</sup> "Sed contra, nihil quod de aliquo per participationem dicitur, convenit ei per suam essentiam. Sed creatura dicitur bona per participationem, ut patet per Augustinum, VIII de Trinitate, cap.III. Ergo creatura non est bona per essentiam suam. Praeterea, omne illud quod est bonum per essentiam, est substantiale bonum. Sed creaturae non sunt substantialia bona, ut patet per Boetium in libro de Hebdomadibus. Ergo creaturae non sunt bonae per essentiam."—Q.21, a.5.

<sup>4</sup> "Dicendum quod licet unumquodque sit bonum in quantum habet esse, tamen essentia rei creatae non est ipsum esse; et ideo non sequitur quod res creata sit bona per suam essentiam."—*Ia*, q.6, a.3, ad 2.

its absolute goodness, it could never grow in goodness; this would be as invariable and fixed as the nature of its substance which, in itself, never changes. It does not admit of the slightest more or less; as a circle, for instance, cannot be more or less circle. A comment of John of Saint Thomas points the way in this regard:

Substantial goodness does not vary in creatures, but absolute and complete goodness which depends on accidents does; yet, this substantial goodness is had by participation and according to its *to-be*, and dependently on the first *to-be*. Saint Thomas allows, therefore, that some substantial and invariable goodness is given, and this goodness he distinguishes from absolute and complete goodness which is goodness *simpliciter*.<sup>1</sup>

We know from common experience that things do, in fact, change; they both grow and deteriorate in goodness. Their ability to become good is of much wider extent than their substantial being. When they fall short of what they *should* be, we say of them that they are no good. Think, for instance, on blighted crops, a blind horse, stunted trees, a man without virtue.

Hence it is that Saint Thomas points out a twofold goodness in the creature and shows wherein it lies. In the *De Hebdomadibus* he says:

It is to be noted according to what has previously been said that in created goods there is a twofold goodness. One is that goodness according to which they are called good with regard to the First Good; and according to this, their *to-be* and whatever is in them from the First Good, is good. But another goodness is considered in them absolutely, namely, in that any one thing is called good in so far as it is perfect in its *to-be* and its operation. And in truth, this perfection does not belong to created goods according to the very *to-be* of their essence, but by reason of something super-added which is called their virtue, as was said above; and in this sense, the *to-be* itself is not good.<sup>2</sup>

Another statement of this doctrine is found in the *De Veritate*. Saint Thomas has just said that, as being is either substantial or accidental, so also is the good. Yet, there is a difference:

Anything is said to be a being absolutely on account of its substantial *to-be*, but not so on account of its accidental *to-be*: hence, since generation is motion toward *to-be*, when anything receives substantial *to-be*, it is said to be generated absolutely; but when it receives accidental *to-be*, it is said to be generated *as to something*; and the same is true of corruption by which *to-be* is lost. But the reverse is true of the good. For according to its substantial goodness a thing is said to be good *as to something*; but is called good absolutely according to its accidental goodness. Hence, we do not call an unjust man absolutely good, but only *as to something*, in as much as he is a man; but a just man we call absolutely good.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "... Substantialem bonitatem non variari in creaturis: bene tamen absolutam et completam, quae ex accidentibus pendet; quamvis haec ipsa bonitas substantialis habeatur per participationem secundum esse, et dependenter a primo esse. Fatetur ergo D. Thomas dari aliquam bonitatem substantialem invariabilem, quam distinguit a bonitate absoluta et completa quae est bonitas simpliciter."—*Curs. theol.*, T.I. disp.6, a.3, n.10.

<sup>2</sup> "Est enim considerandum secundum praemissa, quod in bonis creatis est duplex bonitas. Una quidem secundum quod dicuntur bona per relationem ad primum bonum; et secundum hoc esse eorum, et quidquid est eis a primo bono, est bonum. Alia vero bonitas consideratur in eis absolute, prout scilicet unumquodque dicitur bonum, in quantum est perfectum in esse et in operari: et haec quidem perfectio non competit creatis bonis secundum ipsum esse essentiae eorum, sed secundum aliquid superadditum, quod dicitur virtus eorum, ut supra dictum est; et secundum hoc, ipsum esse non est bonum..."—*In de Hebdom.*, c.4.

<sup>3</sup> "Quia aliquid dicitur ens esse absolute propter suum esse substantiale, sed propter esse accidentale non dicitur esse absolute: unde cum generatio sit motus ad esse, cum aliquis accipit esse substantiale, dicitur generari simpliciter; cum vero

Again in Question V of the *Prima Pars*, there is an even more explicit passage. We do not hesitate to quote it in full:

Although good and being are the same really, nevertheless, since they differ in notion, a thing is not said to be a being absolutely and good absolutely, in the same way. For since being properly signifies that a thing is properly in act, and since actuality properly correlates to potentiality, a thing is absolutely called a being according as it is first distinguished from that which is only in potency. Now, this is the substantial *to-be* of each thing. Hence, it is by its substantial *to-be* that each and every thing is called a being absolutely, but by any additional actuality, it is said to be *as to something*. Thus, to be white signifies to be *as to something*, for to be white does not take away to be in absolute potency, since it is added to a thing that already exists in act. But good expresses the idea of the perfect, which is desirable, and hence it expresses the idea of what is ultimate. Hence, that which is perfected to its ultimate is said to be good absolutely. But that which has not the ultimate perfection which it ought to have, although it has some perfection in so far as it is actual, is not said to be perfect absolutely nor good absolutely, but only *as to something*.—Therefore, viewed in its first *to-be*, which is substantial, a thing is called a being absolutely and good *as to something*, that is, in so far as it is a being; but in its ultimate actuality, a thing is called a being *as to something* and good absolutely. Hence the saying of Boethius that “in things, the fact that they are good is one thing, and that they are is another” is to be referred to “to be good absolutely” and “to be absolutely.” Because, regarded in its first actuality, a thing is a being absolutely; and regarded in its ultimate actuality, it is good absolutely. And yet, in its first actuality it is in some way good, and in its ultimate actuality, it is in some way being.<sup>1</sup>

These texts trace, as it were, the unfolding of the creature in the order of being and in the order of good. That it may reach its completion, there must be added to the essence a threefold perfection from additions accidentally supervening: its *to-be*, its operation and its end. John of Saint Thomas writes the reason thus:

The goodness of a thing results from the fact that it has the perfection which is due and suitable to it, since good expresses the nature of “perfect” which is appetible: and if it is good absolutely, it must be perfect absolutely. Therefore, it must have not only its first actuality, but also the consummate and ultimate actuality from

---

accipit esse accidentale, dicitur generari secundum quid; et similiter est de corruptione, per quam esse amittitur. De bono autem est e converso. Nam secundum substantialem bonitatem dicitur aliquid bonum secundum quid, secundum vero accidentalem dicitur aliquid bonum simpliciter; unde hominem injustum non dicimus bonum simpliciter, sed secundum quid, in quantum est homo; hominem vero justum dicimus simpliciter bonum.—*De Ver.*, q.21, a.5, c.

<sup>1</sup> “Ad primum ergo. Dicendum quod licet bonum et ens sint idem secundum rem, quia tamen differunt secundum rationem, non eodem modo dicitur aliquid ens simpliciter, et bonum simpliciter. Nam cum ens dicat aliquid proprie esse in actu, actus autem proprie ordinem habeat ad potentiam; secundum hoc simpliciter aliquid dicitur ens, secundum quod primo discernitur, ab eo quod est in potentia tantum. Hoc autem est esse substantiale rei uniuscuiusque; unde per suum esse substantiale dicitur unumquodque ens simpliciter. Per actus autem superadditos, dicitur aliquid esse secundum quid, sicut esse album significat esse secundum quid; non enim esse album aufert esse in potentia simpliciter, cum adveniat rei iam praeexistenti in actu. Sed bonum dicitur rationem perfecti, quod est appetibile, et per consequens dicitur rationem ultimi. Unde id quod est ultimo perfectum, dicitur bonum simpliciter. Quod autem non habet ultimam perfectionem quam debet habere, quamvis habeat aliquam perfectionem in quantum est actu, non tamen dicitur perfectum simpliciter, nec bonum simpliciter, sed secundum quid.—Sic ergo secundum primum esse, quod est substantiale, dicitur aliquid ens simpliciter et bonum secundum quid, id est, in quantum est ens; secundum vero ultimum actum, dicitur aliquid ens secundum quid, et bonum simpliciter. Sic ergo quod dicit Boethius, quod ‘in rebus aliud est quod sunt bona, et aliud quod sunt,’ referendum est ad esse bonum et ad esse simpliciter; quia secundum primum actum est aliquid ens simpliciter, et secundum ultimum, bonum simpliciter. Et tamen secundum primum actum est quodammodo bonum, et secundum ultimum actum est quodammodo ens.”—*Ia*, q.5, a.1, ad 1.



those things which are due it. But a created substance cannot in its own self have all the perfection which is consummately and ultimately due it, except by something superadded to it accidentally.<sup>1</sup>

And he further states that this "perfection suitable to a thing is threefold, namely, its *to-be*,<sup>2</sup> its operation and the end to which it is ordered. All those perfections are accidental and not essential to a thing, and without these a thing is not said to be something perfect absolutely."<sup>3</sup>

Now, it is obvious that a thing must first of all *be* before it can become actually an object of appetite. For considered absolutely in its constitutive notes alone, the essence is neither properly being nor properly good, but awaits, as it were, existence to establish it in actuality and in partial goodness — its substantial goodness which is further ordered to operation and end in order that the thing may reach its goodness absolutely.

For we have already seen that the absolute being of a thing cannot change, while it remains the substance that it is; not the least variability toward more or less can touch it. The thing is what it is: a star, a rose, a bird, a man, an angel, without ever increasing or diminishing in starness, rose-ness, humanity, and so on. If these all remained at the level of their first, absolute being, however, they would be miserably dwarfed. They would surely not be as they should be, i.e. appetible: an object of desire. In that state, they are not accounted good, taken in its full and proper sense: to be perfective in the manner of a final cause. But a thing *is* for the sake of the operations which proceed from its nature; and again, these are beyond its essential being. In the *De Veritate*, Saint Thomas says:

A thing is perfected in itself so that it may subsist by essential principles; but in order to be in the manner that it should be towards all the things that are outside itself, it is perfected only by means of accidents superadded to the essence; for the operations by which one thing is joined to another, proceed from the essence by means of the virtues superadded to the essence. Hence, it does not attain goodness absolutely, except as it is complete according to both substantial and accidental principles.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, substantial being as subjected to existence is the root and cause of further perfections which, like *to-be*, are not essential to it, do not consti-

<sup>1</sup> "*Ratio est: quia bonitas rei resultat ex eo quod habet perfectionem sibi debitam et convenientem: siquidem bonum dicit rationem perfecti quod est appetibile; et si est bonum simpliciter, debet esse perfectum simpliciter. Ergo non debet solum habere primam actualitatem, sed etiam consummatam et ultimam ex his quae sibi debentur. Sed non potest substantia creata per se ipsam habere omnem perfectionem sibi debitam consummate et ultimate, nisi per aliquid sibi accidentaliter superveniens.*" — JOHN OF SAINT THOMAS, *loc. cit.*, n.5; cf. also: nn.3, 7, 8, 10, 13, 14, 22; and SAINT THOMAS, *De Ver.*, *loc. cit.*; and *In de Hebdom.*, *loc. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> Although existence is not among the predicamental accidents, yet, since there is no intrinsically necessary connection between the essence and the *to-be* of any creature, *to-be* is attributed to a created subject in the mode of a predicable accident. Any act must be in the same genus as the potency it perfects; hence, no substance could be actualized by a *to-be* in the genus of predicamental accident. But, on the other hand, neither is the *to-be* any part of the essence of a thing. The *to-be* of the creature is a terminal perfection, an *actus secundus*, accidentally supervening and terminating the substantial actuality of a being, whereby it is said to be absolutely.

<sup>3</sup> JOHN OF SAINT THOMAS, *loc. cit.*

<sup>4</sup> "In seipso autem aliquid perficitur ut subsistat per essentialia principia; sed ut debito modo se habeat ad omnia quae sunt extra ipsum, non perficitur nisi median-  
tibus accidentibus superadditis essentiae; quia operationes quibus unum alteri con-  
jungitur, ab essentia median-  
tibus virtutibus essentiae superadditis progrediuntur; unde absolute bonitatem non obtinet nisi secundum quod completum est secundum  
substantialia et secundum accidentalia principia." — Q.21, a.5, c.

tute its nature, but enrich and complete it. In the order of being these accidental perfections obtain more than they give. They have no existence of their own apart from the substance. They are "being of being"; they make the thing to be in a certain way. Entitatively the most tenuous, they nevertheless bespeak the finest perfection. It is true that they do not have the status of absolute being; they are being only *as to something*. Their nature and aptitude is to inhere in a subject. Yet, it is such "being of being," the "accidental," such "what is not in itself" that brings the subject to its perfection.

Without its operations, a substance could not tend to any end. We do, however, see things achieve ends which they did not have in the beginning. Therefore, besides the accidental added perfections of *to-be* and operation, there is a third perfection extraneous to the essence, namely the end for which the activity strives. This is ultimate perfection, proportionate to and consummating every creature, beyond which it can not reach nor be. It is one with the fullness of being of the thing; it marks its absolute goodness, considered precisely in its formality of *end*, diffusing itself in the manner of a final cause, moving the appetite and perfecting the appetent. This status of a final cause, creatures have only through their participation in the goodness of God, the ultimate end and perfect good of all.<sup>1</sup>

In the order of being, then, a creature is a being absolutely by reason of its substance; it acquires all the further actuality which completes and perfects it by additions which are being only *as to something*. Since these are not identified with the essence, the substance holds them in itself with more or less firmness and security, and for this reason, as Saint Thomas says, "Complete and absolute goodness in us may be increased and diminished and totally lost . . . although substantial goodness always remains in us."<sup>2</sup> And again, he replies thus to an objection which asserts that the creature must be good by its essence since this is derived from the First Good: "It is not possible for a creature not to be good by that essential goodness which is a goodness *as to something*, yet it is possible for it not to be good with that accidental goodness which is goodness absolutely."<sup>3</sup>

In the texts cited, Saint Thomas makes it plain that the order of good is the reverse of the order of being. The absolute being of a thing, which it has according to its essential, substantial nature, is not its absolute good, but is a goodness *secundum quid*, derived, as we have seen, from its dependence on the First Good. The absolute goodness of a thing, on the other hand, comes to it from accidental perfections which are only being *as to something*. Hence, that which is greater in created being is the slightest in good, and the greatest in good is slightest in being.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Contra Gentes*, I, c.50; III, c.17.

<sup>2</sup> "Et pro tanto bonitas completa vel absoluta in nobis et augetur et minuitur et totaliter aufertur, non autem in Deo; quamvis substantialis bonitas in nobis semper maneat."—*De Ver.*, q.21, a.5, c.

<sup>3</sup> "...Creatura non potest esse non bona bonitate essentiali, quae est bonitas secundum quid; potest tamen non esse bona bonitate accidentaliter, quae est bonitas absolute et simpliciter."—*Ibid.*, ad 1.

Thus we see, to recall again John's problem, that creatures are not substantial goods in the sense of *bonum per se*: they are not good *by* their substance. We may say: Creatures are substantial goods, or substantially good, if we take substantial as opposed to accidental, and understand that they attain their absolute good in the accidental order as explained. Only in God is substance good *per se*, absolutely good in and by itself, underived, and with no addition possible.

In his commentary on the *De Ente et Essentia*, Cajetan, too, brings out the significance of the proposition: A thing is perfect *simpliciter* not by reason of its first, but by reason of its ultimate perfection. After quoting from the present chapter of Boethius's *De Hebdomadibus*, and referring to a text from Saint Thomas, he takes up for analysis another text from the *Summa theologiae*,<sup>1</sup> treating of perfection. Saint Thomas has asked "whether to be essentially good belongs to God alone," and opens his reply with a quotation from Boethius: *all things but God are good by participation*. He asserts that only God is good essentially, by showing that whereas the perfection of any thing created is threefold, in God, perfection is one with His essence. As to this triple perfection, we shall read Cajetan's words: The first is that according to which a thing is constituted in its *to-be*, as the first perfection of a man is his substantial *to-be*; the second is that according to which he is proximately capable of his perfect operations, as the powers of the soul and *habitus* informing them, by which man is able to issue perfect operations; but the third perfection is that according to which he is joined to his end, as by speculation which unites man to separated substances.<sup>2</sup>

Cajetan continues by saying that from this it is manifest that a man who enjoys the goodness of his nature alone is not perfected absolutely, nor is one who is far from his proper end. He then concludes that the order of absolute being and being *as to something* is the reverse of the order of absolute goodness and goodness *as to something*.

Hence, the relation of being *simpliciter* to being *secundum quid*, is the opposite of the relation of perfected *simpliciter* to perfected *secundum quid*; for according to his substantial *to-be* a man is called a being absolutely, but perfected *secundum quid*. For he who has no other perfection except the fact that he is a man, is not claimed to be perfected absolutely; but rather, with qualification we say that he is perfected according to his substantial *to-be*. But according to accidental *to-be*, such as is that of *habitus* and operations, a man is said to be being *secundum quid*, but perfected *simpliciter*; for nothing then is wanting to him of those things which are required for perfecting a man. Therefore, the meaning of the proposition is clear, namely, that a thing is perfected *simpliciter* from its ultimate perfection.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Ia*, q.6, a.3, c.

<sup>2</sup> "...Prima secundum quam res constituitur in suo esse, sicut prima perfectio hominis est esse suum substantiale; secunda vero est secundum quam est potens proxime ad suas perfectas operationes sicut vires animae et habitus eas informantes, quibus homo in perfectam operationem potest exire; tertia autem perfectio est secundum quam conjungitur suo fini sicut speculatio quae hominem substantiis separatis unit." — CAJETAN, *op. cit.*, c.5, n.104: *Secunda propositio est*.

<sup>3</sup> "Manifestum est autem non esse hominem simpliciter perfectum qui sola naturae bonitate gaudet aut qui a proprio fine procul est; unde ordo entis simpliciter ad ens secundum quid oppositus est ordini perfecti simpliciter ad perfectum secundum quid; secundum namque esse substantiale homo ens simpliciter dicitur, perfectus autem secundum quid. Ideo enim qui nullam aliam perfectionem habet nisi quia est homo, perfectus non asseritur simpliciter, sed cum additione dicimus quod est perfectus secundum esse substantiale. Secundum vero esse accidentale quale est habituum et operationum, ens secundum quid homo dicitur, perfectus autem simpliciter; nihil enim tunc sibi deficit eorum quae ad perficiendum hominem exiguntur. Patet ergo intentam propositio quod scilicet res est perfecta simpliciter ex ultima perfectione." — *Ibid.*

The twofold goodness in creatures makes it evident that no matter to what heights their final achievement in perfection may take them, they can never be like the First Good because their absolute being will never be absolutely good of itself, but good only as to something, in so far as they flow from the First Good. They can never *be* their goodness. As the *De Hebdomadibus* says, referring to their absolute good: "This perfection does not belong to created goods according to the very *to-be* of their essence, but belongs according to something superadded which is called their virtue, as was said above; and according to this, the *to-be* itself is not good."<sup>1</sup>

Thus, created substances are good in that they are, by reason of their order to the First Good; but they are not good absolutely in that they are, nor in every way that they are. The *to-be* of created things is not in any single case the *to-be* of an absolute good. God alone is the pure actuality of goodness, of perfection: *ipsum esse subsistens; He-Who-Is*. The *to-be* of the creature is of a very limited perfection: it makes a man to be, or a tree to be, or a rock to be, but never makes absolute goodness to be. But since this *to-be* could not be unless it were derived from the First Cause of all being, who is also the First Good, so, as it participates in the very *to-be*, it participates by that same fact, in goodness. In contradistinction, there is the absolute perfection of God whose very *to-Be* is His essence and absolute goodness: "But the First Good has perfection in every respect in its very *to-be*, and therefore, its *to-be* is good of itself, absolutely."<sup>2</sup> Or, more pertinent still are the words of the *De Veritate*:

Whatever perfection a creature has from its essential and accidental principles conjoined, God has as a whole in His one simple *to-be*; for His simple essence is His wisdom and His justice and His fortitude, and all such perfections which in us are superadded to essence. Thus, absolute goodness in God is the same as His essence; but in us it is considered according to those perfections which are superadded to essence... In this way Augustine seems to say (*De Trinitate* VIII, c.3) that God is good by essence, but we by participation.<sup>3</sup>

Besides explaining the mind of Augustine, Saint Thomas in the same passage refers to the authors of the *De Causis* and of the *De Hebdomadibus* for other differences between the goodness of God and that of the creature. One difference is taken from the fact that no created thing has the nature of good in its essence alone, considered as a nature; it must have existence as an individual, for "the good is in things." Now, whereas the divine

<sup>1</sup> "...Et haec quidem perfectio non competit creatis bonis secundum ipsum esse essentiae eorum, sed secundum aliquid superadditum, quod dicitur virtus eorum, ut supra dictum est; et secundum hoc, ipsum esse non est bonum." — SAINT THOMAS *In de Hebdom.*, c.4.

<sup>2</sup> "...Sed primum bonum habet omnimodam perfectionem in ipso suo esse, et ideo esse ejus est secundum se et absolute bonum." — *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> "Quidquid autem creatura perfectionis habet ex essentialibus et accidentalibus principiis simul conjunctis, hoc totum Deus habet per unum suum esse simplex; simplex enim ejus essentia est ejus sapientia et justitia et fortitudo, et omnia hujusmodi, quae in nobis sunt essentiae superaddita. Et ideo ipsa absoluta bonitas in Deo idem est quod ejus essentia; in nobis autem consideratur secundum ea quae superadduntur essentiae. Et pro tanto bonitas completa vel absoluta in nobis et augetur et minuitur et totaliter aufertur, non autem in Deo; quamvis substantialis bonitas in nobis semper maneat. Et secundum hunc modum videtur Augustinus dicere (VIII de Trinitate, cap. III), quod Deus est bonus per essentiam, nos autem per participationem." — Q.21, a.5, c.



nature or essence is its own *to-be*, the nature or essence of any created thing has its *to-be* by participation; hence, even if the absolute goodness of a creature were the same as its absolute being, this goodness would still be by participation.

Thus in God there is pure *to-be* since God Himself is His subsisting *to-be*; but in a creature *to-be* is received or participated. For this reason I say that if absolute goodness were predicated of a created thing according to its substantial being, it would nevertheless still remain true that it has its goodness by participation just as it has participated *to-be*. God, however, is goodness by essence in as much as His essence is His *to-be*. This seems to be the meaning of the [author] of the *De Causis*.<sup>1</sup>

The next difference is from the point of view of final cause; "for goodness has the nature of final cause." It is clear in the *De Causis* that in all secondary causality there must be an influx of the First Cause. Hence, no creature can be a good, finalizing as an end, without the concurring causality of God, the ultimate end:

Now God has the nature of final cause since He is the ultimate end of all things, just as He is the first principle; from this it must be that every other end does not have the condition or nature of end except by reason of its order to the First Cause, since the secondary cause does not flow into the caused, unless the influx of the First Cause be presupposed, as is clear in the book *de Causis* (prop. 1). Therefore, the good, which has the nature of end, cannot be predicated of the creature unless there be presupposed an order from the Creator to the creature.<sup>2</sup>

And the last difference that is given here, brings us back to the *De Hebdomadibus* and the meaning of Boethius. In this, Saint Thomas makes an extreme hypothesis to show the extent to which the created good is inescapably and only a good by participation. For:

Granted that a creature were its own existence just as God is; yet, the existence of the creature would still not have the nature of the good without presupposing an order to the Creator. For this reason it still would be called good by participation and not absolutely in that it is. The divine Being, however, which has the nature of the good without having anything presupposed, has of itself the nature of the good. This seems to be the meaning of Boethius in the *De Hebdomadibus*.<sup>3</sup>

Beyond this last possibility, there is no other. We are left to meditate the words from Saint Matthew:

"None is good but God alone."<sup>4</sup>

(Concluded)

SISTER M. VERDA CLARE, C.S.C.

<sup>1</sup> "Et sic in Deo est esse purum, quia ipse Deus est suum esse subsistens; in creatura autem est esse receptum vel participatum. Unde dico, quod si bonitas absoluta diceretur de re creata secundum suum esse substantiale, nihilominus adhuc remaneret habere bonitatem per participationem, sicut et habet esse participatum. Deus autem est bonitas per essentiam, in quantum ejus essentia est suum esse. Et haec videtur esse intentio Philosophi in lib. de Causis... qui dicit solam divinam bonitatem esse bonitatem puram."—*Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> "Deus autem habet rationem causae finalis cum sit omnium ultimus finis, sicut et primum principium; ex quo oportet ut omnis alius finis non habeat habitudinem vel rationem finis nisi secundum ordinem ad causam primam; quia causa secunda non influit in suum causatum nisi praesupposito influxu causae primae, ut patet in lib. de Causis (prop. 1); unde et bonum quod habet rationem finis non potest dici de creatura, nisi praesupposito ordine creatoris ad creaturam."—*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> "Dato igitur quod creatura esset ipsum suum esse, sicut et Deus; adhuc tamen esse creaturae non haberet rationem boni, nisi praesupposito ordine ad creatorem; et pro tanto adhuc diceretur bona per participationem, et non absolute in eo quod est. Sed esse divinum, quod habet rationem boni non praesupposito aliquo, habet rationem boni per seipsum; et haec videtur esse intentio Boetii in lib. de Hebdomadibus."—*Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> XIX, 17.